



DIOCESE of
PARRAMATTA



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SYNOD DIRECTORY
2023-2025

1. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE SYNOD

The Code of Canon Law provides nine canons (Canon 460 to 468) about the Diocesan Synod. A Synod is convoked to discern the pastoral activities for ‘the good of the diocesan community’. This is the final object of the Synod.

In 1997 the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples issued an Instruction on Diocesan Synods.

The Instruction sets out the Nature and Purpose of the diocesan Synod which may be summarised as follows:

- Canon 460 of the Code of Canon Law describes the diocesan Synod as an ‘assembly of selected priests and other members of Christ’s faithful of a particular Church which, for the good of the whole diocesan community, assists the diocesan Bishop’.
- The Synod offers the Bishop the opportunity of calling to cooperate with him and with his priests some members of the laity as well as some chosen religious.
- The Bishop determines the Synod’s convocation, and following consultation, proposes the questions to be discussed in the Synod, and presides at the synodal sessions.
- The Bishop is the sole legislator who signs the synodal declarations and decrees and orders their publication.
- The work of the Synod is to promote acceptance of the Church’s salvific doctrine and to encourage the faithful in their following of Christ; to further that apostolic zeal which inspires so many ecclesial activities.
- The Synod aims to build up and foster ecclesial community and ongoing unity in the declarations and decrees. As such, the synodal documents should accurately reflect the universal Magisterium of the Church and apply common canonical discipline to the circumstances in the diocese.
- The Synod will evaluate the adequacy of pastoral programmes already in place, and with the help of divine grace, propose new pastoral plans where such are deemed desirable.

2. CONVOCAATION OF THE SYNOD

‘It is the sole prerogative of the diocesan Bishop, in his prudent judgement and having consulted with the council of priests, to convoke a diocesan Synod.’ (Can. 461). The following was released to the public on the 2nd Sunday of Lent.

Dear friends in Christ,

Not long after my Installation as your pastor, I desired to hold a Diocesan Synod in order to develop a pastoral plan which would follow my predecessor’s “Faith in Our Future” and chart a new pathway for the Diocese. However, we had to wait for the long-delayed national Plenary Council to conclude.

Today, after much prayer and consultation, I formally announce the convocation of the Synod in the Diocese of Parramatta. This will be the first Synod in the history of our young Diocese. Like the national and universal synods, ours will be also held in two phases. The first assembly will be held from Thursday 12 to Sunday 15 October 2023 and the final assembly will be held near the middle of next year 2024.

Recognising the fruits of the Plenary Council and in the spirit of synodality, to which you have already contributed so deeply, I invite you to walk with me as we discern further a framework by which we can revitalise our Church in the Diocese and discover together a path of renewal for all of us.

I have appointed a Preparatory Commission to lead this process, chaired by Sr Ailsa Mackinnon RSM, Chancellor of Ministries and Qwayne Guevara as the Lead Facilitator.

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God into a journey of listening and discernment, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide us towards personal conversion and renewal in the Church. Pope Francis explains that ‘The journey of synodality is the journey that God wants from His church in the third millennium’.

In preparation towards the Synod, I encourage you to participate in prayer, listening, discernment and local action, guided by the Holy Spirit, as we seek to witness to the Gospel and foster a more welcoming, compassionate, and humble Church. The Diocesan Synod will have a significant impact on the way in which we live out community and mission.

The time is now, here in the Diocese of Parramatta, for us to ‘go out into the deep’ (Luke 5:4) and step into the future that awaits us – one that is inspired by the deep understanding that God’s love is



not reserved for a few, but for all. Let us accompany one another along this path with firm hope and abiding trust in our God who desires our good, and who dwells among us.

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv.

Bishop of Parramatta

A liturgy of Convocation will be held on The Solemnity of Pentecost on 28 May 2023 at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta. All people of God in Western Sydney and Blue Mountains are invited.

3. SYNOD MEMBERSHIP

The diocesan Bishop presides over the Diocesan Synod. The Code of Canon Law (Can. 463) sets out those persons who are members of the Synod. The law provides also that other members are to be elected in such a way that the membership, like the membership of the diocesan pastoral council, 'truly reflects the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the diocese, taking account of the different regions of the diocese, of social conditions and professions, and of the part played in the apostolate by the members, whether individually or in association with others.' (Can. 512.2)

As indicated by Canon 462.5, lay members of the Christian faithful, even members of institutes of consecrated life, are chosen by the Diocesan Pastoral Council, in a manner and number to be determined by the diocesan bishop. Information about the process will be released in due course.

- The diocesan Bishop shall communicate in writing to members, their designation as members and likewise, members, not bound ex officio and de jure, shall communicate their acceptance in writing.
- Synodal members once lawfully designated, have a right and duty to participate in the sessions of Synod. If they are unable to attend a proxy cannot be sent in his or her place.
- One may lose one's membership by reason of loss of title - that which qualified one to become a member - or by removal by the Bishop for a lawful reason.

As provided in Can. 833, before commencing the Synodal discussions, the members of the Synod, as ecclesial officers, shall make the Profession of Faith and an Oath of Fidelity.

The diocesan Bishop may invite to the diocesan Synod as observers some ministers or members of Churches or ecclesial communities which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, but who can play an important role in the renewal of the Catholic Church.

4. OFFICERS OF THE SYNOD

President

Bishop Vincent will preside over the diocesan Synod. He may however, delegate a Vicar General to fulfil this office at individual sessions of the Synod. (Can. 462.2)

Moderator

The diocesan Bishop appoints a Moderator to oversee the preparatory stages of the Synod and to coordinate the offices and commissions of the Synod and to moderate the sessions of the Synod. (Instr. III. B. 2.3)

Bishop Vincent, in consultation with the Curia has appointed Lead Facilitator, Qwayne Guevara, as moderator.

Secretariat and Communications

The Bishop shall make provision for the establishment of a synodal secretariat which shall be directed by a member of the Preparatory Commission, The Secretary. 'The function of such a secretariat is to assist the Synod as far as organisational matters are concerned: transmission and archiving of documentation, drawing up minutes, direction of logistical matters, as well as matters relating to finances and accounting.' (Instr. III, B, 1)

Information concerning the Synod is disseminated to the media by means of press-releases, website material, supplements and social media. 'All should be informed with regard to the nature and purpose of the Synod and the scope of its deliberations'. (Instr. III, C, 1)

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|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Secretariat | |
| Sr Ailsa Mackinnon | Chancellor of Ministries |
| Qwayne Guevara | Lead Facilitator, Diocesan Synod |
| James Camden | Head, Mission Enhancement Team |
| Kristal Moses | Administration Assistant, Mission Enhancement Team |

The Mission Enhancement Team will assist in the work in the Preparatory stages leading towards and during the Synod.

5. COMMISSIONS

Preparatory

The Bishop is obliged to constitute a Preparatory Commission. 'The members of this preparatory commission are chosen by the Bishop from amongst the clergy and other faithful who are distinguished by their pastoral prudence and by their professional competence and who, in so far as possible, reflect the various charisms and ministries of the People of God. Some members should be expert in the disciplines of Canon Law and Sacred Liturgy.' (Instr. III, B, 1)

Its tasks are principally; to assist the Bishop in matters pertaining to the organisation and preparation of the Synod; in drawing up and publishing the synodal Directory; in the designation of the synodal members, with the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and in his determining the questions to be proposed for synodal deliberation.

The diocesan Bishop presides over the meetings of the preparatory commission. If he is unable to preside, his delegate does so.

| Preparatory Commission | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sr Ailsa Mackinnon | Chancellor of Ministries, Vicar for Consecrated Life |
| Ms. Qwayne Guevara | Lead Facilitator, Diocesan Synod & Manager, Catholic Youth Parramatta |
| Mr. James Camden | Head, Mission Enhancement Team |
| Mrs. Kristal Moses | Administration Assistant, Mission Enhancement Team |
| Mrs. Anita Sulentic | Head of Communications and Engagement |
| Very Rev. Robert Riedling | Dean and Administrator, St Patrick's Cathedral |
| Very Rev. Paul Marshall | Rector, Seminary of the Holy Spirit |
| Ms Tessie James | Member, Diocesan Pastoral Council |
| Ms Bella Reyes | Chair, Diocesan Pastoral Council |

Consultative

To assist the diocesan Bishop, whose prerogative it is to propose topics for the consideration of the Synod members, the faithful shall be afforded the opportunity of expressing their needs, desires and opinions with regard to the topics to be dealt with in the Synod.

Moreover, the clergy of the diocese shall be asked separately to formulate proposals by way of response to the pastoral challenges with which they are confronted. This latter shall be done at meetings of the clergy in the Pastoral Areas, convened for that purpose, and at diocesan gatherings of the clergy. (Instr. I, 1 & III, C, 2)

The consultation shall endeavour to reach all ‘vital forces’ of the People of God present and operating in the Diocese. To assist with this, Bishop Vincent has proposed the following anchor question for the Synod:

*“In light of the call to become a more synodal Church,
where is the Holy Spirit calling us to in the Diocese of Parramatta?”*

The recent Australia Plenary Council and the Roman Synod on Synodality have provided a platform to launch the local consultations of this Diocesan Synod. All people of God in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains are encouraged to participate in their local consultations through their parishes, deaneries, schools and organisations.

The following provides an overview of the strategy to gather submissions.

| Table 1 | Month/s | Stakeholders |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Synod Information Sessions | April | Teachers, Parish Staff, Parents |
| Training Volunteer Facilitators | April | Volunteers, Teachers, Ministry Leaders |
| Local Consultations | May, June, July | All People of God including but not limited to, local parishes, ecclesial movements, schools, chaplaincies, service agencies and organisations. |
| Existing Programs of MET | May, June, July | Audiences of MET |
| Deanery Consultations | May, June | Northern, Mountains, Eastern, Western, Central |
| Final Date for Submissions | July 31 | |

There will be different modes made available for the Collection of submissions:

- Online at www.parracatholic.org/synod2023
- Via mail to Synod c/o Bethany Centre, 470 Church Street, Parramatta NSW 2150
- In person at your local Listening Consultations in your Parish or Deanery

To expand the Synods capacity in collecting submissions, the following resources will be created and distributed.

| Table 2 | Purpose | Stakeholders |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| What is a Synod? What is a Diocesan Synod? | Explainer: Canons, Process, Implications | Parishes, Schools, Catholic agencies |
| Spiritual Conversations | Formation and 'how-to' | All People of God |
| Planning a Gathering | Equip local leaders | Volunteer Facilitators, local leaders |
| Video Series on Listening | Formation | Schools, Parishes |
| Online content | Ongoing Awareness and Sharing | All People of God |

The submissions will help to form the questions to be presented to all members of the Synod for consideration, discernment, discussion, and voting.

'In providing suitable directives for consultation, unjustified expectations with regard to the acceptance of proposals should be avoided.' (Instr. III, C. 2.) For this reason the Instruction provides that: 'In view of the bonds uniting the particular Church and her Pastor with the universal Church and the Roman Pontiff, the Bishop has the duty to exclude from the synodal discussions theses or positions - as well as proposals submitted to the Synod with the mere intention of transmitting to the Holy See 'polls' in their regard – discordant with the perennial doctrine of the Church or the Magisterium or concerning material reserved to Supreme ecclesiastical authority or to other ecclesiastical authorities.' (Instr. IV, 4; CD 8; Can. 381)

Spiritual, catechetical, and formational preparation

'The celebration of the Synod affords the Bishop a privileged opportunity for the formation of the faithful. It leads to a well-articulated catechesis of the faithful with regard to the mystery of the Church and the participation of all the faithful in her mission. Such catechesis is carried on in the light of the teaching of the Church's Magisterium and particularly that of the Second Vatican Council. To this end, concrete directives can be given to priests for preaching.' (Instr. III, C, 1) See above. Further resources will be developed to assist in the ongoing formation on listening and discernment to foster a culture of Synodality during and beyond the Synod.

Determining the questions

At the conclusion of the consultative process, with the assistance of persons, expert in the various disciplines and pastoral spheres, and with the assistance of the preparatory commission, the Bishop shall proceed to determine those questions on which the synodal debate will concentrate. Finally, the approved texts of these

questions should be transmitted to the members of the Synod and sufficient time allotted for them to be studied before the initiation of the synodal sessions. (Instr. III, C, 3)

Legal Commission

The Legal Commission shall have the function of ensuring conformity, in all things pertaining to the Synod, with the General Law of the Church, avoiding matters which are ultra vires, and shall, with others expert in ecclesiastical disciplines, assist the Bishop in Drafting the Decrees and Declarations of the Synod.

Liturgical Commission

The Liturgy Commission through its Synod Liturgy Working Group and diocesan Liturgy Office shall oversee the preparation of the Liturgies associated with the Synod and promote prayer for the success of the Synod.

Liturgies associated with the Synod include:

- Convocation Liturgy
- Opening Liturgy
- Daily Mass during the Diocesan Synod
- Closing Liturgy

Prayer promoting the success of the Synod shall include:

- a Synod Prayer
- a selection of petitions for inclusion in the Universal Prayer at Sunday mass and other occasions as appropriate leading up to the Synod
- a resource encouraging weekly prayer with the Sunday Gospel for the period determined by the Preparatory Commission

6. DECREES AND DECLARATIONS

There will be voting on a variety of Proposals for Action at the Synod. These Proposals, if adopted, then become recommendations to the Bishop for his consideration as possible actions appropriate to the needs of the Diocese. The Bishop then has responsibility to draw up decrees and statutes based on these recommendations. He does this, cognisant of the needs, wishes and desires of the People of God but also cognisant of the general law of the Church.

The Diocesan Bishop alone signs the synodal declarations and decrees, by which means he promotes and fosters the pastoral norms for diocesan life.

A Diocesan assembly will be held in 2024, to discern the next steps to ensure that the Synod decrees are actioned in a timely manner.