



DECREE

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

On Pentecost Sunday, 28 May 2023, I formally convoked the first Synod in the Diocese of Parramatta in accordance with Canons 460-468 of the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Instruction of Diocesan Synods* (1997). The Synod opened on Friday 13 October 2023 and closed on Sunday 15 October 2023 on the theme “Behold I am doing a new thing”, Isaiah 43:19.

The purpose of the Synod was to identify priorities for the development of a Pastoral Plan to deepen communion, participation and mission, and become a more synodal church.

Preceding the Synod, the Diocese of Parramatta engaged in a process of prayer, listening, dialogue and discernment to learn and understand the path to becoming a more synodal church. The fundamental question that guided the synodal process was: “*In what ways can we respond to the call of the Holy Spirit to be a more synodal Church in the Diocese of Parramatta?*”

In recognition of the composition and diversity of the Diocese, deliberate and intentional processes were used to engage a broad range of people from all walks of life. This process of listening and discernment included families, clergy, religious, young people, children, work-teams, schools, community services and parish communities. The consultation processes encouraged voices of people that are not often heard, including First Nations peoples, the poor, homeless, refugees and asylum seekers, migrants, LGBTIQ+ individuals, those with disabilities, the elderly and those who spoke in advocacy for creation. Over 5,000 individuals were engaged in the process.

Through a combination of prayer, analysis and discernment, six key themes were identified and presented in the Working Document: “*Becoming a more synodal Church in the Diocese of Parramatta*”:

1. An inclusive and welcoming Church
2. A humble and healing Church
3. A listening Church
4. A Church renewed in spirit and prayer

5. A Church that reaches to the margins
6. A Church walking together

Each theme contained multiple resolutions for prayer, discernment and voting by the members of the Synod assembly.

The Synod assembly was composed of 195 members, eight observers and four *periti* (experts). During the Synod assembly, 24 of 25 resolutions were affirmed, having received at least a two-thirds majority of votes cast, excluding abstentions.

The resolutions are:

Theme 1: An Inclusive and Welcoming Church

1A. To take active steps to build a culture of welcome, hospitality, and meaningful community across the Diocese.

1B. To create a safe and welcoming environment for all, especially the divorced, people with disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

1C. To intentionally seek out the gifts and talents of the members of our parishes to strengthen communion, participation, and mission.

1D. To prioritise resources that support parishes and ministry groups in our work with families in all their diverse structures and circumstances.

Theme 2: A Humble and Healing Church

2A. To continue to offer, its unreserved and deepest apologies to those who have been betrayed through sexual, and other forms of abuse by clerical and lay representatives of the Church, and to further processes for safeguarding, healing, and support.

2B. That, given the high population of Indigenous people in our Diocese, we continue meaningful dialogue with local Aboriginal communities, to find opportunities to listen and share stories and learn from their wisdom and relationship with the land.

2C. That, in the service of reconciliation, parishes and diocesan agencies discern appropriate ways of acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land.

2D. That, parishes will help build united and harmonious civic communities by working collaboratively with like-minded organisations and individuals for the common good.

Theme 3: A Listening Church

3A. To prioritise the allocation of resources towards sustaining existing youth ministries and co-creating new forms of engagement with young people within parishes, schools and beyond.

3B. To commit to working collaboratively with other faith-based and civic organisations at local levels to promote care for the earth and more sustainable stewardship of our common home across every parish, school, and agency, especially by joining the Laudato Si' Action platforms.

3C. To promote the rich and faith-filled multicultural diversity within the Diocese and explore ways to integrate cultural traditions in our parish ministries, while respecting our theological and liturgical principles.

Theme 4: A Church Renewed in Spirit and Prayer

4A. To strengthen adult faith formation through regionally focused programs that draw on Biblical studies, rich and diverse Catholic spiritual traditions, Church history, liturgy, theology and Catholic social teaching.

4B. To continue preparing and commissioning women and men in various liturgical ministries including lectors and acolytes (*Spiritus Domini 2021*).

4C. To enhance the experience of liturgy through resourcing and preparing those involved in the celebration of the Mass that inspires communion, participation and mission.

4D. To re-affirm the importance and impact of the homily on our daily lives and explore synodal ways of enhancing its relevance to all.

Theme 5: A Church That Reaches the Margins

5A. To strengthen our commitment to respect and protect the dignity of human life, from conception through to old age and natural death.

5B. To strengthen our commitment to welcome, support and advocate on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers and work together in partnership with current and new agencies.

5C. That each of our local communities will take steps to reach out and identify the greatest needs of their people and prioritise and allocate resourcing to address those needs.

5D. To engage experts in research, social sciences and organisational best practice in exploring emerging models of pastoral care, leadership and ministry.

Theme 6: A Church Walking Together

6A. To provide ongoing formation that enhances a culture of synodality for those preparing for ordination, clergy and all others in leadership roles in parishes, agencies, ministries and councils.

6B. To engage experts in ecclesiology for facilitating discussion on models of parish and faith community to better respond to contemporary pastoral care, leadership and ministry issues.

6C. To provide women with opportunities for mission, formation and education in a variety of leadership roles in the Church, supported by appropriate resources.

6D. To institute, where absent, a pastoral council at the diocesan, deanery and parish level (including ethnic chaplaincy), as a principal form of collaboration, dialogue and discernment (*Christifideles Laici #25*) in accordance with the law of the Church.

6E. To continue to promote interfaith and ecumenical dialogue and shared endeavours among our parishes, schools, agencies and ministries.

Having listened to the people of God, and judging it to be good for this local Church of Parramatta, I, the Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv, by this decree do promulgate the 24 resolutions above to inform the development of a pastoral plan for the Diocese of Parramatta.

Given at Parramatta this fifteenth day of January 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vincent Long Van Nguyen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv STL DD
Bishop of Parramatta