



**SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

# Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Report on Submissions

**MARCH 2022**



Report prepared by: National Centre for Pastoral Research  
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
GPO Box 368  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Australia

Telephone: +61 (02) 6201 9812  
Email: [ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au)  
Web: [www.ncpr.catholic.org.au](http://www.ncpr.catholic.org.au)

## Table of Contents

<b>About This Report</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Number of Submissions Received – Canberra &amp; Goulburn</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Number of Participants .....	2
Individual Submissions .....	2
Group Submissions.....	4
<b>Responses to Synod Questions</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Submissions made under the ‘Communion’ Theme .....	7
Submissions made under the ‘Participation’ Theme .....	8
Submissions made under the ‘Mission’ Theme .....	11
Submissions made under Multiple or All Themes .....	13
Submissions made under No Themes.....	28
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix A: Online Portal</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix B: Full List of Questions</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix C: Coffee Conversation Brochure</b> .....	<b>41</b>

*This page is left intentionally blank*

## About This Report

The National Centre for Pastoral Research (NCPR) is pleased to provide you with this report on the contributions from your diocese to the Synod of Bishops process.

Together with the related data, the report collates the submissions made by people within your diocese through the online process which opened on 17 October 2021 and closed on 13 March 2022. A copy of the content of the online portal is provided as *Appendix A*.

The findings include data from all submissions received online, along with some received via email and post. Where the submissions received through email and post were too long (over 250 words), a summarised version was recorded through the portal and the entire submission was then sent to the relevant diocese.

The analysis provided in this report is mainly quantitative in nature and explores the demographic characteristics of individuals and groups that participated in the process. The report also includes a list of themes that were discussed by participants, along with the complete text of their submissions.

We have attempted to provide you with as much detail as possible to help you focus your efforts on groups that might be underrepresented in your diocese. For example, if your report shows that most of your submissions were from people over the age of 60, perhaps you could encourage discussions with younger people in your diocese before the diocesan consultation period closes (30 April 2022).

Following closure of the diocesan consultation period, the diocesan synthesis report needs to be prepared and sent to the NCPR.

We hope you find this current report insightful and helpful as you continue your diocesan consultation phase, and we proceed with our work on the Synod project.

Trudy Dantis

Stephen Reid

## Number of Submissions Received – Canberra & Goulburn

From the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn, we received a total of 41 completed responses in the period from October 2021 until 13 March 2022. Of the 41 submissions, six submissions were from groups or organisations and 35 submissions were from individuals (See Table 1).

Table 1: Number of submissions received	N.	%
As a group, organisation or family	6	14.6
As an individual	35	85.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Number of Participants

There were 35 individuals who made submissions and 75 people represented through the six groups. Overall, the total number of individual and group participants from your diocese was 110.

## Individual Submissions

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2022, a total of 35 individual submissions had been received from your diocese through the online portal.

### Age of Respondents

Table 2 shows the ages of individual respondents from Canberra & Goulburn. About 69% per cent (24) were received from those aged 60 and over. The greatest number of submissions were received from those aged 60-79 years (20 responses).

Table 2: Age of individual respondents	N.	%
16-17 years	0	0.0
18-29 years	1	2.9
30-59 years	10	28.6
60-79 years	20	57.1
80 years and over	4	11.4
No response	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.0</b>

At the close of submissions, there was one individual submission received from those aged under 29 years.

## Sex of Respondents

As Figure 1 shows, well over half the number of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (60%), while about 34 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 12 men and 21 women who made submissions. There were two respondents who preferred not to state their sex or chose not to answer this question.

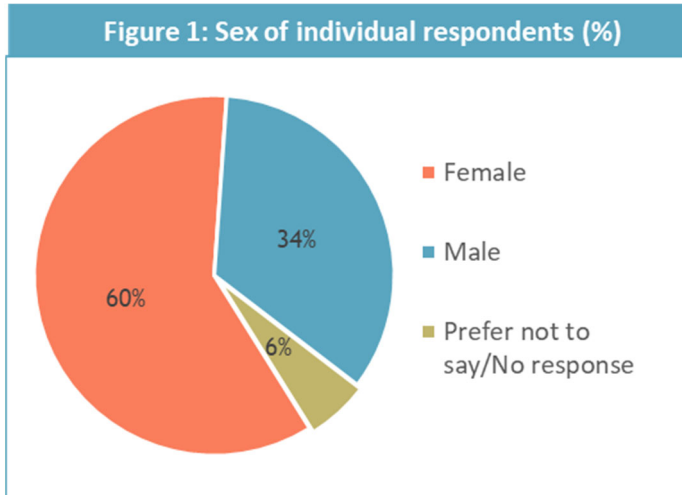


Table 3: Sex of individual respondents	N.	%
Female	21	60.0
Male	12	34.3
Prefer not to say/No response	2	5.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Group Submissions

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2022, there were six group submissions made from your diocese. Around 75 individuals were represented through these groups.

Table 4 shows a list of group submissions from the diocese with the number of members in each group. The submissions include one group, comprised of three sub-groups, each of which made a submission to an individual theme. The largest group was Women and the Australian Church (WATAC Inc) - Group 3 with 19 members.

Table 4: Names of group submissions	Group size
Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn	16
Holy Rosary Parish, Watson, ACT	5
Women and the Australian Church (WATAC Inc) - Group 1	16
Women and the Australian Church (WATAC Inc) - Group 2	15
Women and the Australian Church (WATAC Inc) - Group 3	19
Group of four women	4
<b>Total represented in groups</b>	<b>75</b>

## Age of Group Members

Group respondents were asked to estimate the ages of members represented in their group. All groups answered this question, the results of which are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Age of group members	N.	%
0-17 years	0	0.0
18-29 years	6	8.0
30-59 years	17	22.7
60-79 years	36	48.0
80 years and over	16	21.3
No response	0	0.0
<b>Total represented in groups</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The 60-79 years age group was the largest group represented by 36 members. There were no members aged 17 years and below within the groups.



## Responses to Synod Questions

The three Main Themes of the Synod were Communion, Participation and Mission. Each Theme had a number of subthemes as follows:

### COMMUNION

- Companions on the Journey
- Listening
- Speaking out
- Celebration

### PARTICIPATION

- Authority and participation
- Discerning and deciding
- Forming ourselves in synodality

### MISSION

- Sharing responsibility for our common mission
- Dialogue in Church and society
- Ecumenism

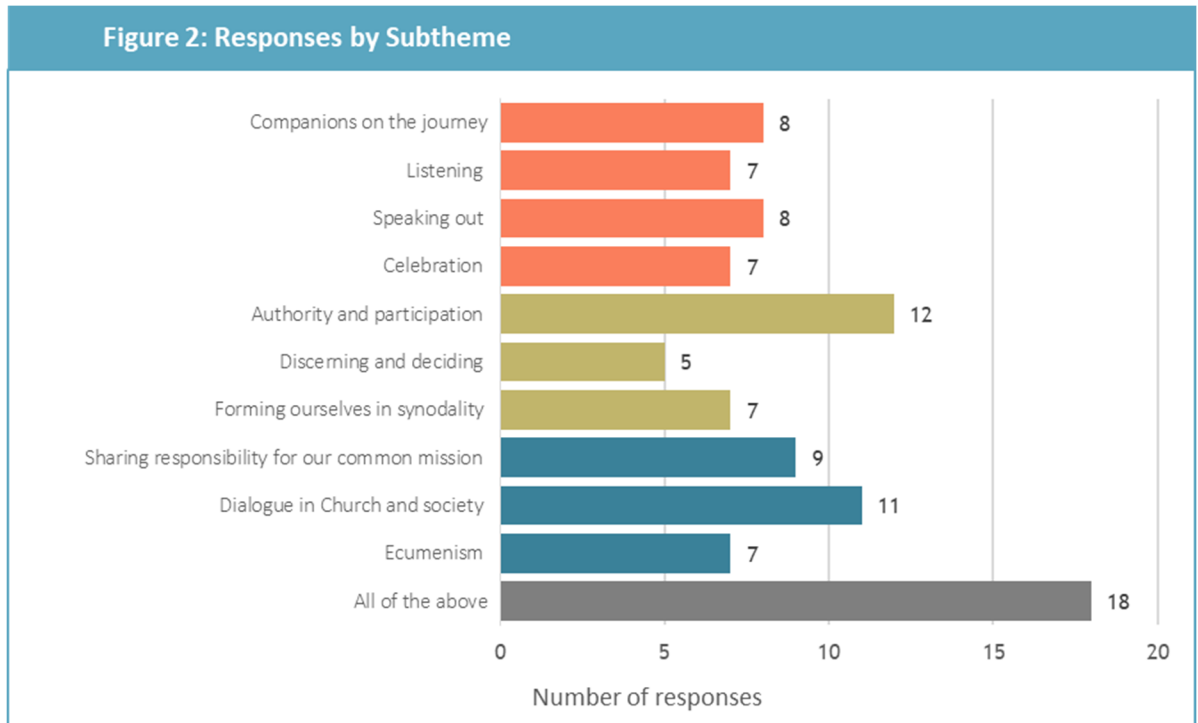
Each subtheme had a number of related questions upon which participants were invited to reflect. A full list of the questions is provided as *Appendix B*. A simpler version of these questions was included in the 'Coffee Conversation' brochures. This is attached as *Appendix C*.

Table 6: Responses by Subthemes		N.	%
<b>COMMUNION</b>		<b>30</b>	
Companions on the journey		8	19.5
Listening		7	17.1
Speaking out		8	19.5
Celebration		7	17.1
<b>PARTICIPATION</b>		<b>24</b>	
Authority and participation		12	29.3
Discerning and deciding		5	12.2
Forming ourselves in synodality		7	17.1
<b>MISSION</b>		<b>27</b>	
Sharing responsibility for our common mission		9	22.0
Dialogue in Church and society		11	26.8
Ecumenism		7	17.1
<b>All of the above</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>43.9</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>99</b>	<b>241.5</b>

*Note: Total exceeds 100% because respondents could choose more than one response*

A wide range of subthemes was discussed in the submissions from groups and individuals in your diocese. Participants were allowed the option to reflect on and respond to any number of subthemes. Some responded to one or two subthemes within a particular Main Theme (e.g. Communion), whereas others picked several subthemes across all three Themes. Still others selected the option ‘All of the above’ to reflect on all the questions collectively.

Table 6 is the list of subthemes, with the number of responses made within each subtheme by individuals and groups. Figure 2 is graphical representation of the same table.



Among the three Main Themes, the area of ‘Communion’ was most frequently chosen by respondents with a total of 30 responses under the theme. The most frequently selected subthemes were ‘Authority and participation’ (29%), ‘Dialogue in Church and society’ (27%) and ‘Sharing responsibility for our common mission’ (22%).

In the following pages, the submissions from your diocese are grouped under five headings: Communion, Participation, Mission, Multiple or All Themes and No Themes. They include the complete text of each submission made by individual or groups. Where submissions were provided exclusively under one theme, they have been displayed under that heading. Where submissions were provided under two or more themes, they have been displayed under Multiple or All Themes. As indicated earlier, where submissions were received by the NCPR via email and post, a summarised version was entered through the portal and the entire submission was sent to the relevant diocese. The submissions have been deidentified (names removed) where necessary.

## Submissions made under the 'Communion' Theme

There were two submissions made *exclusively* under the Communion Theme from your diocese.

I am concerned that women are blamed for having abortions, taking contraceptives, going into prostitution and suffering domestic violence. I think it is high time that we changed the conversation to the responsibilities of men treating women with such high respect that women do not have to injure these denigrations!

### III. COMMUNION

Communion is about sharing, about relationships, about walking together, about participation by all, about being in the presence of God and recognizing God in others. Communion is circular rather than hierarchical.

Communion is experienced at parish level when there is acceptance and personal connections. Often it is best experience in small groups within the parish that have a special focus, for example the choir, St Vincent de Paul, a reading or study group. The opportunities for groups to meet in preparation for the Plenary Council was positive.

We yearn for a Church that is open and accepting, not burdened by rules.

In an era where we are aware of our place in the environment and where we are called to be stewards of creation, many old ways of thinking no longer have a place. Let's try and operate in the world as it is not as it was.

Becoming a multicultural community can be difficult. There are diverse expressions of Catholic spirituality. It has been a struggle to adapt to priests who have been brought in from overseas with little awareness of Australian cultural norms.

We have a passion for God, for people of the margins and for new ways of knowing and doing.

We want to embrace those who are different and who are on the fringe.

We believe in the power of personal relationships.

We yearn for a Church that is appealing to young people.

We want to be part of genuine communities.

## Submissions made under the 'Participation' Theme

There were four submissions made *exclusively* under the Participation Theme from your diocese.

I have now worked for reform within a hierarchical church for five years. This includes being [position] of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn and a Member of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia.

My overall conclusion is that the Church leadership still has much to learn about co-responsibility with lay Catholics. Walking together will only succeed if Church structures become much more inclusive, accountable and transparent. Yet passive and active resistance to the incorporation of these principles continues.

Two examples support my conclusion.

First, the construction of the Official Agenda for the First Assembly of the Plenary Council appeared to be consciously designed to avoid open, focussed discussion about the full inclusion of women in Church decision-making and ministry. If not deliberate, then this omission revealed a serious blind-spot among officialdom towards the most important issue facing the Church today. It must face this issue head on.

Secondly, discussion of the introduction of Diocesan Pastoral Councils, a prime synodal mechanism, has been consciously conducted behind closed doors. The historical research commissioned by the bishops in response to The Light from the Southern Cross report has not been released despite its obvious relevance to a synodal church and Plenary Council discussions.

Both cases demonstrate that open-ness and accountability have not yet become embedded as necessary for a truly synodal church.

Fake synodality will be the last straw for the Catholic community. A superficial exercise will be a major disappointment. What we want is frank reporting of the views of Australian Catholics.

As the rock on which to build his Church, Jesus chose, not a celibate, but a married man - Peter. In addition, we have no reason to assume that the other eleven apostles were all bachelors. The Western Catholic Church is desperately short of priests. There is no theological impediment to clergy being married. Eastern Catholic Churches already have married priests. For myself, as an ordinary parish Catholic, I would be very happy to have a married parish priest.

I think the Catholic Church should rescind the celibacy rule. Priests should be allowed to marry. There are men in our society who left the priesthood to get married. A useful start would be to extend an invitation to any of them that are willing, to return to the priesthood.

Your Holiness, Pope Francis:

As you are aware, one of the Australian Bishops' responses to the Royal Commission

into Institutional child sex abuse has been to run a Plenary Council.

At the start of this process (3/4 years ago), we were invited to a discussion session to develop ideas on what the Plenary should be about. I had four key non-negotiable planks that I put forward as a starting point for my active participation.

I continue to strongly believe that:

1. Bishops' accountability is paramount for their behaviour that led us to a situation where sex abuse is endemic in the life of some sectors of the Australian church.
2. It was crucial that a woman be co-chair of the plenary council.
3. Bishops needed to state at the start that the vote of the lay plenary members was final and would go unimpeded to Rome.
4. The actions of inclusivity, starting with deliberate pathways for ordained women, indigenous and rainbow people had to be priorities.

Not only have the Australian Bishops done none of those things, except for some indigenous matters, they excluded them entirely from the discussions (in 2021) and conclusions to be discussed at the second of the meetings of the Plenary Council, due in July 2022.

Your Holiness, given the above points I am unclear as to whether we have an Australian Bishop with the demonstrated leadership, competence and confidence of the people of the Australian church to lead a discussion on synodality.

Your Holiness, Thanks for this opportunity to express my heartfelt opinions on these issues. Please stay well. [Name], [Parish], Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn, 27th Feb 2022.

## I. PARTICIPATION

Participation is a requirement of faith received in Baptism if we want to achieve Communion.

In parish life there is much frustration and many painful experiences. Too much is left up to the parish priest. Mostly we see a very narrow vision of Church.

Many decisions about parish finances, employment of parish staff, and whatever participation by parishioners is allowed is made solely by the parish priest. Employees have experienced being terminated with no explanation.

Some parishes are run by overseas priests with poor English language and few pastoral/administrative skills.

The Church is disappointing - but this doesn't stop my love of God.

There are some wonderful exceptions. One city parish in which the priest encourages participation by laity has a large congregation of people who came from all over the city.

Women who contribute so much behind the scenes remain invisible. Women should be allowed to do more.

In Diocesan offices lay people, priests and religious can work collaboratively together –

but there are few structures of accountability, and regular professional evaluations of staff or programs were few.

Lay people too can be slow to come forward, to make their voices heard. There are no structures to encourage it. Anyone who speaks out is seen as “out of place” and disruptive.

We finished with a mixture of anger and hope. Other Churches have processes of consultation of the people when appointing parish clergy. There needs to be structural change and change in canon law.

## Submissions made under the 'Mission' Theme

There were three submissions made *exclusively* under the Mission Theme from your diocese.

I'm a divorced, guilt-ridden Catholic. I struggle to come to terms with the fact that a church that gave me no choice in joining it at my birth can then scorn me, reject me, consider me a pariah, prevent me from participating in the Eucharist - because I am a divorced and remarried Catholic. The divorce from my first wife was entirely my fault; it brought much pain to my family and myself. Even now, many years after it happened, I struggle with what happened. But how can third parties, including the Church, understand the complexities and trapped corners with which someone may find themselves. Does the Church and especially its unmarried clergy and religious really understand the pressures of married life, the pressures of raising a young family. Things happen which we can't explain and where forces occur due to laws of their own making. Yet the Church will simplistically penalise us divorced Catholics anyway. The Gospels and the life of Jesus bring great comfort to me. Yet again, I have never felt the Church has been able reconcile its Mosaic legal inheritance with the pastoral, loving, forgiving nature of the Christ. The Church, my church, must not just be a church for the pure, the idealised, and the cross the T's, dot the I's, Catholics. Pope Francis says it can be a field hospital. The Church should put that into action, put it into Canon Law, amend its Catechism, ditch the Latin, learn to speak the real language of so many of its faithful in their jurisdictions throughout the world, and really itself listen to, and discern, the word of Christ and understand the suffering of so many which the Church itself is, in part, responsible for.

### II. MISSION

All of us are passionate and active about God's mission to the world, but some of us have given up on parish and church. All of us, even those who have satisfying ministries within the church, are aware of serious roadblocks within the current structures. What energises us most of all is the work of the reform movement, both nationally and globally, which has provided for us, during the time of pandemic, alternative and parallel ways of being church, inspiring us with hope that we can help to create a church that welcomes diversity and practises loving inclusiveness, that recognises the dignity of all the baptized, and that recreates trust between laity and the ordained so that we can learn together to speak honestly, listen respectfully, and prayerfully discern positive ways forward in this time of crisis. Synodality, to have our voices heard and acknowledged, is something we long for.

We live in the disappointment of knowing that the laity are generally neither empowered nor authorized to go forth and serve, except in paid employment in Church organisations. So much pastoral activity is dependent on the whim of priests and bishops, there is a lack of ongoing formation and support for those engaged in

such work, and the top-down structures and lack of pathways for local leadership create a situation where there is little witness to co-responsibility or shared decision making. The Spirit is calling us to structural and cultural change, without which the mainstream Church's future looks bleak.

One of the ways that I have been involved in dialogue with those from other Christian traditions and faith communities has been with the Canberra Women's Interfaith Network.

As one of two Catholic members, I have been participating in this network for four years. The membership consists of one to three members from Christian denominations or other faith traditions. There are currently members from the Anglican and Uniting Churches, the Church of Christian Scientists, Quakers, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and the Baha'i faith. The network comes together on the last Monday of each month, except for December, however we do try to gather at the end of the year for a shared meal. Members range in age from 30 to 75, alternately provide a venue and hospitality when it is possible to gather in person, and online gatherings have become the norm during COVID. The network group whilst small, provides a very trusting environment for sharing of information so that we learn from each other about our respective beliefs and practices. The questions asked by members and the discussions are very respectful of each person's faith tradition and are answered with truth. In January of this year, one of our members passed away and we were able to meet online and offer prayers from our respective faith traditions, taking time to remember this beautiful and unique woman. It is such a privilege to share not only our faith, but also our life experiences, within this network.



## Submissions made under Multiple or All Themes

The submissions in this section were made by individuals and groups who picked two or more subthemes across all the three Main Themes, or those who selected the option 'All of the above'. A total of 30 submissions were made within this category.

The Reflections provided and the questions for discussion mention Christ once and the name of Jesus is never mentioned - hence there is no clear Christological foundation. This in turn implies an ecclesiology that I am not familiar with, or sympathetic to. It follows that there is no framing of the reflections/questions within the vision of the Church as the living presence of the risen Christ in the world - prophet, priest and king CCC783. The reflections/questions perhaps might be more appropriate for other Christian groups - there is not a strong sense of a Catholic ecclesiology implied in the questions. At a very theologically superficial level these are questions which would I think only draw out some simplistic humanistic responses. The value of which I think would be questionable. Were any Catholic theologians involved in the development of these reflections/questions? One would have to wonder...

If the Lord does not build the house in vain do the builders labour - Ps 127

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn (CCCG) is a significant, growing association of Catholics, advocating for meaningful church reform. CCCG has hundreds of active associates and supporters, not just in the Canberra Goulburn Archdiocese, but across Australia. Feedback from the recent Plenary Tracker program, produced on-line nightly during the Plenary Assembly One, revealed strong engagement from Catholics around the country. CCCG therefore speaks confidently on behalf of thousands of Australian Catholics.

This submission has been prepared by the executive committee of CCCG, on behalf of the wider network of supporters. It references and builds on the February 2019 submission, lodged for the Plenary Council Listening phase. CCCG considers that the five key focus areas identified in that submission remain relevant and pertinent to the scope and key areas identified in the Synod documentation, namely Communion, Participation and Mission.

Overall, the key points raised in this submission are:

The need for a church that is Transparent, Accountable, Non-Clericalist, Fully Inclusive and Truly Humble. These areas were first outlined in the submission to the Plenary Council and are emphasised again here.

The additional topics addressed relate to:

- Synodality;
- learnings from the Amazon Synod;
- concern that Clericalism is not being seriously addressed;
- the need for women to be engaged in church decision making and mission;
- implementation of the Report of the Light from the Southern Cross;
- a call to review the Church's position on Human Sexuality; and
- concern the processes of the Plenary Council are falling well short of true Synodality.

My reflection is in terms of my experience in my parish, rather than diocese, as this is where I have the strongest sense of connection. I think for the people who participate in the parish Sunday Masses etc there is a sense of belonging (communion), but our numbers are dwindling, including amongst the middle aged and elderly, not just the young people. People obviously do not see a reason to stay or join. Given the official Church's stance on issues such as sexuality, gender, contraception, transparency, accountability etc this is not such a surprise, but it is still sad, as people miss out on the other positive aspects of parish life as well. Some people participate fully in the life of the parish, but others are almost invisible. We need to do better at convincing everyone they have a role by virtue of their baptism, and to offer ongoing adult faith formation. Because we have virtually outsourced faith education to schools, our faith journey seems to stop at school level, and it is up to individuals to seek out their own ongoing faith development. If lay people are to take on more roles etc, we need help to do this! Parish Pastoral Councils are a great idea to generate participation and leadership within a parish, but without support and formation they will never realise their potential. Dioceses need to offer this on a yearly basis. In terms of 'Mission', this is rarely related to the lives of ordinary parishioners. It is still linked to missionary activity in faraway countries. It is of great sadness to me that much of the ecumenical fervour of previous times has slowly disappeared over the decades. We need to reclaim the importance a shared Christian life!

Although there are a lot of important issues being brought up, I am disappointed that there appears to be no focus on abolishing mandatory celibacy. The Royal Commission reported that this was a significant issue, and a participating factor in the child abuse problem. They recommended that celibacy be optional. I feel this recommendation has and is being ignored by the Church. Also, the fact that priests from other denominations can become Catholic priests and bring their families. This is very unfair to our priests. Pastors who are married with children have a deeper insight into family life. The first 39 popes were married. I hope this will be discussed seriously soon.

“Journey together” is not happening today in our local church except for ecumenical activities for youth with the Anglican church.

Our local church and more widely in some Australian dioceses, the Church is moving back to olden times in its teaching, liturgy and outreach. Latin Masses, ultra conservative approaches and homilies are indoctrinating congregations. Off shoots of these ultra conservative groups are causing alienation and frustration since they contravene the teachings and instructions of the Pope. Their focus is more around piety and fear of God with an absence of pastoral support for the vulnerable and the true message of the gospel.

The spirit invites us to journey together with Jesus Christ in humility and compassion to reach out to the marginalised, the poor, elderly, sick, isolated and lonely (singles). Jesus calls each of us to celebrate the Eucharist and spread the true message of the gospel in word and deed, to heal those who are broken, hurt, and downtrodden, each day. With COVID, natural disasters, domestic

violence, sexual abuse and neglect there are so many people in need of this support.

We are invited to:

instil God's love

take inspiration from creation

learn from and model Jesus, Mary our mother, and Saints

listen, discern and consider others within the church and ecumenically in a safe environment

where all are welcome to participate

have a voice in society as a unified Christian community on issues of social justices and behaviours or approaches that contravene Christian values

and pray for all.

If Jesus had only 250 words what would he say?

In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.

And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.

Anyone who welcomes one little child like this in my name welcomes me.

But anyone who is the downfall of one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone round his neck. Matthew 18

A question for the synod. Does the clerical structure of the church, priests, bishops and cardinals, want to be vulnerable, powerless, and humble like a child?

Those of us sitting in the pews watching all of these conferences, councils and now synods are wondering why we are still here. We are tired.

I have read all accompanying documents and participated with feedback whenever called upon.

From the summaries and recommendations provided so far, I am not sure there is anyone listening with the openness of a child. Acting upon and living the Gospels is required.

We in the pews are passing on the teachings of Jesus to our families but they are not sitting in church with us. Because, they say, it is not their church.

They have witnessed children hurt by abuse, discrimination, abandonment, poverty, and predators. They are standing with Jesus in the light and walking His way of truth, justice and love.

Their families and friends are their church. They are breaking bread together. Caring for each other and their planet.

We are proud of them living the Gospels.

They are not lost. The clerical church is lost. Hopefully the good shepherd will find you.

I find this engagement disheartening and a representation of how the Catholic Church leadership in Australia does not truly want to listen "to the smell of the sheep".

Firstly, how can one respond in 250 words or less when the questions in total are over 700 words in length? The diocese does not have a clear process for longer submissions as emails go unanswered.

Secondly, the Plenary Council process produced an excellent document - Listen to what the Spirit is saying. However, all papers since then seem to disregard that document and reinforce tradition and dogma. If the Church leadership truly wanted to consult with the laity, they would set up processes to help resolve dogmatic and tradition issues head on rather than just say that those matters are out of scope. The first session of the Council from the outside seemed disorganised. Minutes of the sessions are still not published almost six months on. And there is no consultation by the writing groups with the laity at large until one month prior to the second meeting. How is everyone meant to feel that they have been engaged?

Thirdly, there is a lot of chatter about the importance of synodality but there is little clear and concise guidance on what it is and how it is done. The publicly available material seems scant on detail.

In closing, the Church leadership in Australia can demonstrate their embrace of synodality by demonstrating this in the lead up to the second meeting of the Plenary Council. In particular, more openness is needed. If they do not, I have little faith that Church leadership will truly represent the laity of Australia at this synod.

While my parish is welcoming and invites participation on the parish pastoral council and various ministries, the Church overall is not attractive to young people or those who have left it. Church leadership should have made an official apology for not responding adequately to sexual abuse and is out of touch and is reactionary. Until governance issues are dealt with, and the bishops show they are listening, willing to serve, and more inclusive of women and more transparent in decision-making, I fear for the future of our Church.

With the notable exception of Pope Francis, the public perception of Church leadership is very poor, and the selection of bishops needs to change. It's all very well to be inclusive at the parish level, but first you need to get people through the door and that's unlikely to happen unless the bishops show that they want to be more service oriented and humble and less defensive.

The People of God are called to "maintain the unity of the Spirit" (Eph 4:3) marked by unity and cooperation (Phil 1:27), striving "to excel in building up the church" (1 Cor 14:12). Vatican II and *Ut Unum Sint* make it clear that the Spirit is at work in all churches and ecclesial communities, while Yves Congar argues that corporate expressions of this fuller unity are a necessary condition of the Spirit's anointing upon the institutional Church (Acts 2:1). How in our particular, local and universal contexts are we fulfilling this condition? Who are our ecumenical partners at the synod opening new channels of grace & fresh perspectives, as they did at Vatican II? (cf. John O'Malley).

In our parish, ecumenical mission initiatives like Alpha, youth activities, men's groups and local outreaches call us all to conversion and attract notice. Our relationships in Christ and desire to be together underpin this.

Without assembling "all those who participate in the Holy Spirit," (Phil 2:1-2) the life and mission of the universal Church is deficient. How is the synod humbly addressing this? The quality of our relationship with Christ and each other is the measure of our communion (Phil 2:5). At all levels, what steps of humility, forgiveness and reconciliation need taking? (Phil 2:1-11). Unity is God's gift

“so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). How can we practice “receptive ecumenism” as a path of humility & conversion, acknowledging our need to mutually receive the gifts of God from other Christian communities and seek their help? Our different poverties and weaknesses provide us with a precious opportunity to receive the gift of God, for the salvation of the world.

The Australian Catholic Church must be shaped by Aboriginal culture and spirituality for it to be authentically a Church in this land.

When the Australian Catholic Church sinks its roots deep into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, she will authentically be a Church in the land with a new vision and energy for mission.

The framing of the questions suggests a certain prejudice, so I've suggested some alternative questions.

#### Communion

1. & 2. It is in God that we find our unity. For ourselves, we listen to everyone and test everything. Are we using the Church to pursue partisan politics, activist agendas and faddish theories? Are we playing identity politics? Are we engaged in group think or the confirmation bias of experts?
3. Do we know what we are talking about (competence) or are we just seeking approval and caricaturing different points of view into binary opposites of good and bad like the media?
4. Are we obedient in how we undertake the public liturgy of the Church or are we seeking to dominate it and exclude others with our pet views?

#### Participation

2. How do we ensure that those in positions of authority don't shirk their responsibility by hiding behind synodality? How do we ensure those running the synod process don't usurp their position to dominate the 'discernment' of the synod?
3. How do we ensure that we are not using synodality to further our own agenda/prejudices rather than discerning the Holy Spirit? How do we ensure that we are not using synodality and the Church to spiritually bypass the complexities, compromises, realities and constraints in fulfilling our temporal responsibilities?

#### Mission

1. Why are the examples so elitist & political, what about serving soldiers, prison warders, truck drivers etc?
2. To what extent are we dialoguing about doing practical service rather than about our trite ideas for fixing the problems of the world?
3. To what extent are we being true to our faith and genuine with others?

Below is a message from the Virgin Mary in Medjugorje explaining why the world has no future unless we accept the Commandments (Natural law).

The only way forward - let's see if any politician attempts to save our future during the election campaign - is to retreat from feminism, adultery, gay marriage, euthanasia, fornication (permission granted of course), contraception, wives submitting to husbands, etc. and greed in a massive

promotional campaign.

[Name]

[Address]

"February 25, 2022 - Monthly Message to Marija

"Dear children! I am with you and we pray together. Help me with prayer, little children, that Satan may not prevail. His power of death, hatred, and fear has visited the earth. Therefore, little children, return to God and to prayer, to fasting and to renunciation, for all those who are downtrodden, poor, and have no voice in this world without God. Little children, if you do not return to God and His Commandments, you do not have a future. That is why He sent me to you to guide you. Thank you for having responded to my call." "

1. Some Catholics have felt unwelcome in our church. A more inclusive, welcoming Church would reach those who have felt marginalised through personal invitations to join in parish events and groups. Notices of welcome could also be made from the pulpit, parish bulletins and websites.
2. Many people are "turned off" by the formal, outdated language of the liturgy and by its male bias. A revision of liturgical language is recommended to ensure it is inclusive and comprehensible.
3. Many Catholics "finish" their faith formation early in their lives, not progressing further in the understanding and deepening of their faith. Opportunities to develop our relationship with God and deepen our understanding of our faith should be promoted and accessible to all. Christian meditation, centering prayer and scripture study are examples.
4. The lack of participation in decision-making by lay members and exclusion of women from ordained ministries could be addressed by strategies such as 1. Mandatory parish and diocesan councils that meet regularly with the votes of each member being of equal value. 2. Dialogue about women's admission into ordained ministries that results in putting the question to vote at a global convocation of clergy and laity.
5. Ecumenism through shared worship, dialogue and action on social justice issues should continue to be encouraged and supported.
6. To ensure future clergy experience "the smell of the sheep" they should live and work within parish communities during training which should include prior tertiary qualifications to aid their personal development and maturity and be spiritually based without the present emphasis on philosophy and theology.

I stay within and involved in the Church because it's so sad and disappointing that we are on a road to self-destruction. Bishops, are you listening?

For me, a truly synodal Church will be less overtly hierarchical and will acknowledge the harm of clericalism. A gospel-led Church "journeys together." But in my church, drawbridges, once raised for the People of God in Vatican II, are now in front of me, everywhere.

The fruits from a synodal church will replace an autocratic clericalist culture. They will bring humble leadership, inclusivity for women, and transparency. We will listen to all baptised people.

Synodality has no meaning in a guarded church media or within parishes that exclude information pertaining to renewal. Walking TOGETHER, really? Shamefully, local Catholic media in my Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn, recently censored retired Archbishop Francis Carroll. He was shut down when he dared to speak for a synodal outlook living up to Vatican II open doors and aspirations.

A synodal pastoral Church will not accept inertia and obfuscation – clerically sanctioned coverup which has to be named. These are not the tools of a synodal Church.

Pleasingly, there are exceptions, courageous priests and parishes that ARE engaged with diverse opinion in parish print- and e-bulletins, newsletters. Such priests express Pope Francis' urging, to become synodal and welcoming. As opposed to the empty rhetoric found in much of hierarchical Church, pastoral priests and parishes that live synodally actualise the vision of Vatican II for a synodal Church. They give me hope for a renewed Church in which inclusive decisions respect local cultures, communities, and circumstances.

#### Submission to Synod

The Catholic Church has placed their own interests ahead of the interests of the people they are supposed to serve

Catholic Church seems more concerned with Doctrine and self-preservation than with charity and service.

Values of Integrity, Transparency and accountability are missing. This Institutional arrogance is very dangerous.

The Lack of moral standards and of moral leadership are extremely worrying.

What happened to the love your neighbour commandment ? justice, fairness, gender equality. Serve the poor, compassion, charity are all missing .

What a tragic and sad time this is for our church.

Kind regards,

[Name]

[Address]

#### Submission to Synod

I feel that the Catholic Church has lost much in today's world and society; in my opinion has lost relevance, credibility, access, importance and trust from the people that the Church is supposed to help, serve and guide.

I see all the above in every aspect, events and everyday life.

But don't get me wrong, I do not meant the above as a way back to the old ways; on the contrary, I wish the Church grows and understand that forming part of society by becoming more accountable, transparent, accessible to all is the way forward as I feel Jesus wants us to be: united, helping and caring for each other.

Morality, justice, charity for the poor and disabled, those values have disappeared and that's why people feel disenfranchised and unrepresented by the Catholic church and are looking or moving to other places and faiths that may better show them those values.

What happened to the leadership that people yearn for in troubled times as the present and future? Silence there, and I'm worried.

Hope that these few words may find resonance with one of the church leaders and help to start a move, even a small move in the right direction. That would be enormous.

Regards  
[Name]

To grow in our "journeying together" and experience renewal, the Church needs to get back to basics. The Church today, as always, can only be reformed and transformed by sanctity.

As Cardinal Ratzinger, as he then was, said "what the Church needs in order to respond to the needs of man in every age is holiness, not management." \* Spirituality leads to the search for holiness. Being holy is a moment-to-moment attitude that should envelop our hearts and direct our priorities. With this as a starting point, Church leaders must exhort the faithful, and each person who seeks to live and love in communion with the Mystical Body of Christ must encourage one another:

- to live true, profound and convinced faith, the kind that involves effort, decision, dedication and commitment; and
- to obey the Commandments, as a matter of necessity, as the way to salvation; and
- to walk towards God, by living in His Divine Will.

None of this is new. However, it appears that rather than being lost in God, many today are lost in themselves, and walk with an understanding towards what is easy, what does not demand effort and does not take one away from one's comfort zone. It is as if sin does not exist (or the cross is one that is complacent towards sin) and one counts on going to Heaven as a matter of course.



If our efforts at renewing the Church are to bear any fruit, we must become more spiritual, solidify our foundations and walk towards God. For “without God [, and true knowledge of Him,] man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is.” #

\* The Ratzinger Report, p 144.

# Caritas in Veritate by Pope Benedict, 29 June 2009, 77.

Submission to Synod on Synodality 2022

Dear Pope Francis

I stood in St Peters Square the night you were elected when you said quietly, with a smile to the thousands “good evening (and after a slight pause)..... please pray for me,” it was one of the most sacred and precious moments of my life, the silence was palpable, the Holy Spirit hovered above us and you imbued all with humility. I give thanks to God for you on a daily basis even though I disagree with one or two things.

I and my husband, a former Catholic priest, author, broadcaster and previously Head of Religion for the National broadcaster, with colleagues from twenty national renewal groups and four international groups, including senior religious and priests, through the Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform ACCCR, have worked for church reform for years to spread Christ's message of love and justice. Guided by your radical exhortations, we do this in a synodal way. Though that is difficult in a monarchical model of Church that has lost credibility with our world. A world which is blinded to the value of our faith because our Church did not “recognise the signs of the times”.

Now we pray the 2022 Synod guided by the Holy Spirit will change this, through a spirit of synodality and equality for all, opening the order of diaconate to all the people God and to all ministries, thus making our faith accessible to future generations and present in the public and political discourses of nations. Our world cries out for a humble and inclusive church, lay lead, transparent and accountable that restores respect for our Catholic Faith. Sincerely, [Name], Catholics Speak Out, CCCG, ACCCR.

Australia, the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. The Church must take this seriously in developing Gifts and Charisms of the Holy Spirit in bishops who discern training and appointment of priests and others in leadership. Development of these same, in all the baptised is paramount following the treasure promised and sent at Pentecost for the fulfilment of the mission of sanctification of the world. All sacramental celebrations centre on this and cultivation of gifts and charisms must follow through education and pastoral care. The celebration of liturgy, remembering, petitioning and praising, be steeped in prayerfulness and seeking Holy Spirit's guidance in everyday life according to one's calling. Remember, “the Church is the Trinity's missionary arm” to convert the world to God's purpose”, not to be converted by the world. Why

did we need a Royal Commission rather than the Holy Spirit to become our guide in Australia?  
Because we cannot give, we do not have, all members in leadership need empowerment through the gift of prayerful discernment. Those baptised members, who possess this Charism might be sought to assist bishops who humbly seek assistance so that all might benefit. If we don't know of the spiritually gifted in our parishes we must ask, "why is this so?"

May the Holy Spirit guide us all in our love of the mission of the whole Church.

What can we learn from Catholics who have gone to Pentecostal Groups who emphasise the Holy Spirit. What are they seeking and why is this not available in the communities in which they were baptised as members?

The miracle of the Eucharist is the greatest gift we have because of the action of the Holy Spirit at Mass.

**Background:**

I believe that the future Australian Church will draw on each person's gifts and talents, regardless of gender, ordination, marital status or ethnic background. The Church will be led by representatives of ALL its people and the laity will, over time, join the clergy to co-lead the Church's operations.

**Mission:**

1. An "arms wide open" church, welcoming all and excluding none.
2. Enhanced, equal roles for women across the Church.
3. Focus on social justice as the heart of the Church's teaching and action.
4. To care and act for the whole of God's creation (Laudato Si and Fratelli Tutti).
5. To embrace the spiritual and temporal practices of our first Nation's sisters and brothers.

**Participation:**

1. Improved, effective and open governance with the sharing of power with the laity.
2. Reform of the recruitment and training of the clergy. Encouragement of older vocations, return to full vocation of married priests, optional celibacy and practical training in managing a parish.
3. Removal of impediments to full participation in the sacraments for divorced people and unmarried couples.

**Communion:**

1. Repair our relationship with young people and listen to and act on their spiritual needs.
2. Ensure a just and equitable response to the damage suffered by victims of sexual abuse by clergy and religious and the placement of that behaviour in a criminal context.
3. Insist on effective liturgy and music suitable to the time, place and people.

[Name]

[Parish]

[Email]

For whom it Concerns at the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference.

I live in Canberra diocese it very much operates like a rural diocese in demographics. The path for young people between the ages of 23 -30 seems limited. As an active member of the laity including the St Vincent de Paul Conference, though I have met people who are like minded they are retired. I remain the only young person within the conference program within Canberra diocese. I would like the Catholic Bishops to advise people within my diocese to expand this area of ministry within the Australian Catholic University Campus. Additionally, what can be done to expand networking for Catholics in their mid-20s to network and meet others who have likeminded interests. There used to be events for this age group in the 50s and that idea could be reintroduced to young Catholics within the Church community. These events should cater for people who are lapsed but still identify as Catholic culturally. I would like a bishop to make contact with me about these issues, just to know if other people have expressed similar concerns and thoughts other than myself. The Church has a pastoral role and parish communities have this role to develop their young people and form them into strong Catholics.

I am a cradle Catholic who attends Mass weekly. My inner-city parish is small and increasingly elderly. I seek formation and community outside the parish construct through Catholic lay women's ministries.

My husband, extended family and friends have long since left the institutional Church. They view it as irrelevant – in the way it presents itself - especially the many canons of outdated and time-locked patriarchal social teachings. However, their spiritual hunger for the core message of Jesus Christ remains, but the Church sadly is not connected to it.

While the secular world is busy setting targets to achieve gender equality, the institutional Church speaks about complementarity to justify male privilege and clericalism. Where the Church speaks about morality, Australians speak of relational ethics with a focus on person centred care. Increasingly, the way Australians live our lives is in conflict with the life of the Church and many of the baptised are no longer listening. Language and culture matters. I dismiss church teachings on women, reproductive rights and homosexuality and encourage my children to do the same.

If nothing changes the institutional Church will continue to fade into irrelevance, impeding its core function to reach out and bring all people to God. I want my three young children to inherit a Church that is vibrant, inclusive and humane, accepts the equality of women in governance and ministry and is free from clericalism. I want a welcoming Church that respects all people and models the very best of Christian values.

Our groups looked at Celebration, Synodality and Mission

On Synodality

The Church according to Lumen Gentium is a sacramental communion in the paschal sacrifice of

Christ, the People of God called by him, the Body of Christ. Structures are necessary, but the Church is first a communion of love in 'obedience to the truth ... the living and abiding word of God' (1 Pet 1: 22-3). All human community is ordered to it as its divine end. We need to keep faith uppermost in mind, lest the process become a pseudo-parliament.

A correct exercise of synodality must contribute to a better articulation of the ministry of the personal and collegial exercise of apostolic authority with the synodal exercise of discernment on the part of the community.

#### Mission

The People of God are called to "maintain the unity of the Spirit" (Eph 4:3) marked by unity and cooperation (Phil 1:27), striving "to excel in building up the church" (1 Cor 14:12). Who are our ecumenical partners opening new channels of grace & fresh perspectives, as they did at Vatican II? (cf. John O'Malley). Without assembling "all those who participate in the Holy Spirit," (Phil 2:1-2) the life and mission of the universal Church is deficient. How is the synod humbly addressing this?

#### Celebration

Many Catholics today have grown up with a narrow understanding of the Third Commandment as calling us to keep holy the Sabbath day by going to Sunday Mass or to the Vigil Mass on Saturday evening. We need to be taught and to teach the attending of Holy Mass not just as a Sunday duty but also as a most profound privilege meeting our deepest needs, a privilege that we should seek to exercise as often as we can.

Baptism is a gift. From the priests to the Pope, there should be no hindrance or barriers to a child seeking Baptism.. Jesus himself said

'Suffer the little children to come unto me '

Matthew 19: 15

#### Diversity and inclusion/ People with a psychological disability and the church

According to Wikipedia there are about 1.329 billion Catholics on planet Earth. Each Catholic is important to Jesus. 1 in 5 people suffer from a mental illness and almost 50% of people have suffered from a mental disorder at some time in their life. Since these numbers are so high the place of someone with a psychological disability should be important to the life of the church. In Australia, many people with a psychological disability live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical and existential peripheries of this world.

I submit that these often-disadvantaged people should hear a message from the church which is one of welcome, friendship and communion. A psychological disability can affect a person at any age. These people should find a safe place in the church.

These people should be able to participate fully in the life of the church. "All faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit in baptism" (Vatican website).

Once people with a psychological disability find a safer place in the Church, they can be witnesses

of the Gospel to similar people who live outside the church.

People with a psychological disability are very capable and with the assistance of some reasonable adjustments they can bring much life to the church. Importantly, a person with a psychological disability should be encouraged to recover from their illness.

The Catholic Church is in crisis. Where do we focus on our missionary obligation of inclusivity? The Church does not actively create environments to include those identified as the marginalised amongst our church people, including women, those who identify as LGBTQI, divorced or victims of sexual and family violence. Where are we changing to create a faith that is relevant to future generations? Our committed faithful are turning away as actions and life events lead to people feeling they are outside the Church. All who are baptised and exploring Christianity are not outside the Church. How are we including those voices and supporting alternative practices amongst the faithful? Those who have left the fold have often lost faith in the Church's practices - not God. Those wishing to participate in a more inclusive church are not party to influencing the decision-makers so as to effect change. Many attempts by the marginalised and socially excluded to be heard through channels such as the Plenary Council 2020, groups of concerned Catholics encouraging decision makers to engage discernment and recommendation from the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse fall on deaf ears by those who can effect change. Those who speak on behalf of the Church do not represent our diverse society. At every turn the male clergy in Australia block change in the name of the practicing faithful. It is time for Church decision making forums to represent our diverse community; lay ministry cannot enable change - not for want of trying. The Church hierarchy are neither listening nor discerning. It's time to massive change to sweep through the Church to once again grow our numbers.

What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation?

The rich teaching of the Church, since *Nostra Aetate* (1965), concerning respect for Muslims and the indispensability of relations and dialogue with them, is not widely known and understood. Therefore, many Catholics' dealings with Muslims are likely to remain standoffish, judgmental and superficial. Pope Francis' example, along with that of prominent Muslim leader, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar (Cairo), and the Document on Human Fraternity they have produced together, need to be highlighted at diocesan and parish level so that fraternity becomes integral to the warp and woof of Christian spirituality and life. Amply celebrating the UN International Day of Human Fraternity on 4 February each year would enliven and energize this process.

How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

Christian principles of social justice can be proclaimed and rehearsed over and over again, but, as far as many professional economists are concerned, the faith-motivated Christian voice can sound

shallow and out of touch, and can thus elicit the reaction that the religious worldview and its proposed remedies to poverty and inequality are quite inadequate to the complex structures and issues at hand, both locally and globally. This calls for sustained interdisciplinary effort and creativity, with theologians respecting "the requirements intrinsic to [the economy's] very nature" (Caritas in veritate 45), and vice versa.

#### AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

- How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Australia has a strong St Vincent de Paul Society, with its first female national president, who is doing a great job. It has a strong commitment to spirituality and social justice.

- How do synodal bodies function in the local Church?

At the two parishes I'm involved in, pastoral councils are inclusive and work well. Both have female chairs. Pastoral councils are in all the parishes I have visited and on the surface run well. No Australian archdiocese has a pastoral council and fewer than half of the remaining dioceses do.

[https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Report\\_Diocesan-Pastoral-Councils\\_-\\_Damian-Gleeson.pdf](https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Report_Diocesan-Pastoral-Councils_-_Damian-Gleeson.pdf)

- How can we foster a more synodal approach?

Re-introduce inclusive archdiocesan pastoral councils soon.

#### 2. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

- How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? The Australian Plenary Council is the opportunity to do this, but it is not being led effectively to do this.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5930ee9129687f4cfdceb6a/t/62018fc46a432803590c0a19/1644269509649/220208+-+MEDIA+RELEASE+-+Synod+Submission+-+CG+Catholics+call+for+authentic+renewal.pdf>

- What issues do we need to pay more attention to? Eliminating clericalism, women's role, modern approaches to sexuality, a focus on the vulnerable & a church more open and appealing to today's young parents & their children.

- How does the Church dialogue with other sectors of society: politics, economics, culture, civil society, people who live in poverty? The bishops should be open to the ideas of the laity, where such expertise abounds.

1. All roles should be shared within the Church which includes women and lay men having positions of authority.

2. The language of the liturgy is very male dominate, and not inclusive. Many women feel they people are left out or not wanted.

3. Elocution classes need to be mandatory to assist priests from overseas, deliver the word of God so it can be understood.

4. Many people are no longer attending Mass because they think it is irrelevant to their lives.

5. Celibacy should be voluntary for priests.

6. Priests should participate in sessions to learn to prepare and deliver sermons that have content which will assist the people in the pews increase their knowledge and love of God.]

7. Lay people be given the training and opportunity to write the Prayers of the Faithful which are relevant to their parish.
8. Smaller church groups, so all can feel welcome and be an active part of the group.

The role of the theological knowledge of lay Catholics needs to play a part in these considerations. The minds of young, middle-aged and more elderly men and women have a great deal of relevance for this journeying together. The sense in which 21st century Catholics, who have received secondary or tertiary education and/or have some access to contemporary concepts (e.g., others science), can feel fully authentic in liturgical services etc is a question of some importance. As is the question of how 'religious' concepts in different work and social spheres can be authentically articulated by ordinary people - beyond talk of social justice. Theological concepts and content need to be accessible to lay people that adequately take account of contemporary understandings in the sciences including cosmology; and that take account of encounters with death and decisions about morality. Turning the mind off in relation to Church, and looking for the good that can be found, will only go so far: young and middle-aged men and women are disarmingly honest, and they want more. Service and community are freely available outside the church. And though there are groups (including young people) who are happy with the intellectual nurturing they are given by the Church; it is sad to look around and see the loss: the emptiness and need at critical junctures in peoples' lives. So many feel they are left to think things out by themselves and build their own authentic life adventures, true to and limited by contemporary understandings formed outside the Church.

## Submissions made under No Themes

There were two submissions where the respondents did not select any of the options provided.

"My comments reflect my deep concern that much more is required by our bishops to address child sexual abuse that has plagued our Church for more than 50 years.

I see that maintaining structures to reduce woman's participation in ministry and all levels of decision making, is sending a message of injustice and discrimination against woman in our Church.

I would also hope that our Church follow the gospel messages of inclusiveness, particularly in relation to those who identify as LGBTQI. As we are all created equal, our church has a responsibility to include everyone. "

I hope that the Catholic Church returns to the traditional Latin Mass in order to unite the Church across the world, and thus draw others to it through a universal Mass, a universal feeling of togetherness. By continually dissecting the Church and dividing the Church and the people via diverse groups, languages and races it is causing the division that none of us want. By showing solidarity through our 2000 yearlong traditions proves we are united in our mission, in love, faith, compassion to spread the message of Jesus, for the conversion of sinners, and care for the sick, the poor, showing love for every single man, woman and child.



## Conclusion

Together with a demographic analysis, this report presented the collated submissions that were received from your diocese through the online portal in the diocesan consultation stage of the Synod of Bishops. The submissions were made under the three Main Themes of the Synod: Communion, Participation and Mission.

The purpose of the diocesan consultation is to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit through the responses shared by the People of God about their insights, joys and challenges of the synodal experience. Dioceses are encouraged to use the submissions contained in this report to prepare their diocesan synthesis. Other useful sources of data include:

- Synod submissions sent directly to the diocese via post or email.
- Diocesan Reports from the Plenary Council Phase 1  
(available at: <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/reports/>).
- Diocesan reports prepared from the 2017 Australian Catholic Bishops Youth Survey  
(If you do not have this report, your diocesan contact person may request a copy from the NCPR).
- Information from diocesan synods and gatherings that have taken place in recent years.

Resources to help you complete the diocesan synthesis can be found on the Australian Synod of Bishops website at <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch#Synthesis>. The diocesan synthesis will need to be sent to the NCPR by Sunday, 1 May 2022.

The National Centre for Pastoral Research sincerely thanks all the people from your diocese who participated in the consultation and those who continue to be engaged in the journey towards the Synod of Bishops 2023.

## Appendix A: Online Portal



### FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION



As the Synod of Bishops prepares for its XVI Ordinary General Assembly in October 2023, Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: Synodality. He writes:

*"It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium. This journey, which follows in the wake of the Church's 'renewal' proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task."*

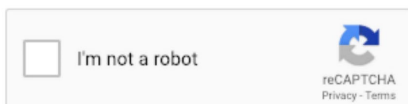
The Australian Bishops are inviting you to contribute to this consultation. You would have already reflected on the questions. If not, please click this link to access the Synod Listening and Discernment Adult Session Guides: [www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch](http://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch)

If you have already summarised your or your group's reflection, this short submission process should only take 5-10 minutes to complete. If you do not want to answer any question, move on to the next one.

This portal accepts submissions of 250 words or less. If you would like to make a larger submission, please send it directly to your diocese

If you are aged under 16, please have a parent or guardian complete the submission on your behalf. You can make your submission anonymously or you can provide your details at the end. This submission portal will remain open until **Sunday 13 March 2022**.

Before you commence the submission process, please complete the following task so we know you're a real person . .



In which diocese are you or your group located?

*(Note: Eastern Rite dioceses/paparchies and Ordinariates are listed underneath the geographical dioceses.)*

Are you responding on behalf of a group or as an individual?

- As a group, organisation or family  
 As an individual

What is the name of your group?

Please describe briefly the people in your group, such as the type of group, special characteristics, its ethnic makeup, interest area, etc. Some examples could be:

*We are a group of 25 Catholics of all ages and ethnicities passionate about social justice issues.*

or:

*Our group is a family of five who are actively involved in our local parish.*

How many people in your group are in each of the following age groups?

0-17 years

18-29 years

30-59 years

60-79 years

80 years and over

How old are you?

*(Note: if you are aged under 16, please ask a parent or guardian to complete this submission on your behalf.)*

- 16-17 years
- 18-29 years
- 30-59 years
- 60-79 years
- 80 years and over

Are you . . .

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Which of the following ten themes did you or your group reflect upon? (Please select as many as you like.)

If you are unsure, please click on this link to learn about the ten themes in greater detail:  
[www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch](http://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch)

### Communion

- Companions on the Journey** - In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road
- Listening** - Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice
- Speaking out** - All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity
- Celebration** - "Walking together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist

### Participation

- Authority and participation** - A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church
- Discerning and deciding** - In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community
- Forming ourselves in synodality** - Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning

### Mission

- Sharing responsibility for our common mission** - Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate
- Dialogue in Church and society** - Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding
- Ecumenism** - The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey
- All of the above**

Please provide a summary of your or your group's reflection in 250 words or less.

*Because of the nature of this synodal process and the short timeline, we regret that we are not able to accept additional information.*

**OPTIONAL.** If you would like to include your contact details, please do so below. If not, simply click through to the next page to make your submission.

Name

Email address

Thank you for participating in the local consultation for the Synod of Bishops.

Please submit your response by clicking the ' -> ' button below. You will then have the option of downloading a copy of your response.

Once submitted you will be unable to go back.

*For technical assistance in completing this submission,  
please contact the ACBC National Centre for Pastoral Research via email at [stephen.roid@catholic.org.au](mailto:stephen.roid@catholic.org.au)*

Powered by Qualtrics

## Appendix B: Full List of Questions

### XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

#### Questions for Reflection



A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church?

What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

## COMMUNION

By His gracious will, God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, through the covenant that He offers to His people. The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church, and grounded in the *sensus fidei* [sense of faith] that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God’s call for his people.

### SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS

- Matthew 25:31-46
- Luke 12:35-40
- Mark 9:38-48
- Luke 14:12-14

### RELATED QUESTIONS

#### 1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

**In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.**

- In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart?
- How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

## 2. LISTENING

**Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.**

- How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore?
- How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries?
- How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated?
- What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalisation, or social exclusion?

## 3. SPEAKING OUT

**All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity.**

- What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us?
- How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)?
- Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

## 4. CELEBRATION

***“Walking together”* is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.**

- How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions?
- How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy?
- What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?



## PARTICIPATION

A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit. In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will. Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the involvement of those at the margins or who feel excluded.

### SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS

- Matthew 25:31-46
- Mark 9:38-48
- Luke 12:35-40
- Luke 14:12-14

### RELATED QUESTIONS

#### 1. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

**A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.**

- How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken?
- How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?
- How are evaluations conducted and by whom?
- How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted?
- Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)?
- How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

## 2. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

**In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.**

- What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved?
- How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures?
- Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God?
- What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability?
- How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

## 3. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

**Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning.**

- How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue?
- What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?

## MISSION

The Church exists to evangelise. We can never be centred on ourselves. Our mission is to witness the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deep missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelisation in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God's kingdom.

### SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS

- Matthew 9:35-37
- Matthew 28:16-20
- Luke 10:1-9
- Luke 10:17-24

### RELATED QUESTIONS

#### 1. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

**Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate.**

- Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptised from being active in mission?
- What areas of mission are we neglecting?
- How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)?
- How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way?
- How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

## 2. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

**Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.**

- To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church?
- How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.?
- How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed?
- What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?
- What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation?
- How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

## 3. ECUMENISM

**The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.**

- What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together?
- What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties?
- How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

National Centre for Pastoral Research | Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
GPO Box 368 Canberra ACT 2601  
E: [ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au) | <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>

## Appendix C: Coffee Conversation Brochure

### 10. WALKING WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS/ ECUMENISM

Walking with other Christians is essential to our mission to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

- How well do we as Catholics know our sisters and brothers in other churches?
- What do we share and how do we journey with Christians from other churches (denominations)?
- Why don't we do more together?

### RESPOND

You are invited to listen to each other carefully and prepare a response of up to 250 words. The submission can consider points like:

- Is there a common thread in what was shared? Is there something missing that you had expected would be said?
- Have you received any particular insight or revelation? What is it?
- Where did you experience a sense of harmony with others as you shared with one another?
- What are the feelings of the group? Is there consensus or disagreement?
- What is the way forward?

### HAVE YOUR SAY

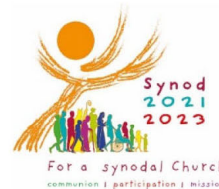
1. Online, by 27 FEBRUARY 2022 using the **SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE HERE** button at <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>  
Or use the QR Code below to visit the page.



2. While online responses are preferred, you may wish to contact your local Diocesan Pastoral Office to submit your response by 18 FEBRUARY 2022.

### MORE INFORMATION

Website: [www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch](http://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch)  
Email: [ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au)



*Material adapted from the Archdiocese of Wellington Synod Resource. Used with permission.*



## COFFEE CONVERSATIONS

**Preparing for the Synod:  
Let's walk together with one another**

### Prayer for the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey together to eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.

**Welcome and thank you for participating!**

We want to hear from you!

To start your conversation, choose one or more topics from 1-10, then reflect on the questions.

## COMMUNION

### 1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

**Jesus wants us to walk together, side by side.**

- How do you feel we as Catholics are doing at walking side-by-side?
- Who do you feel is included / welcome on the church's local journey?
- Who is not included or welcomed?

### 2. OUR LISTENING

**Listening is the first step - it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.**

- How good are we Catholics at listening?
- Who do we need to listen to more? (Consider – women, young people, lay people, those on the margins of society, minority groups, the socially discarded and excluded.)
- What stops us from listening more carefully?

### 3. OUR SPEAKING OUT

**Everyone is invited to speak boldly and courageously in freedom, truth and love.**

- How good are we as Catholics at speaking out in public?
- How do we say what is important to us as Catholics?
- What helps or hinders our public visibility?

## 4. OUR CELEBRATION

**For Catholics, 'togetherness' is based on gathering to explore the Gospels (Word) and to break bread (Eucharist).**

- Are our Catholic gatherings achieving their purpose for our people?
- How does our gathering for prayer (including Mass) meet people's needs?
- How do they fail to meet people's needs?

## PARTICIPATION

### 5. SHARING AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

**Our Church is all about participation and shared responsibility.**

- Catholics aim to balance authority and governance with teamwork and co-responsibility. How well do we achieve this?
- How could we balance these better?
- How do we encourage lay involvement, participation and leadership?

### 6. OUR DISCERNMENT AND DECISION-MAKING

**Our aim is to make decisions by discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.**

- How well do you feel we do this?
- What methods or processes do Catholic communities use to include people in discernment and decision-making?
- What do you think we should do to improve our efforts in this?

## 7. BEING FORMED TO JOURNEY TOGETHER

**All of us need to be open to change and receive ongoing learning and formation to be Synodal.**

- To what extent do you find Catholics are open to change and new learning?
- How do we as a Catholic community form our people to listen, participate and be open to change?
- Have you found Church leaders to be willing to listen, participate and remain open to new ways?

## MISSION

### 8. OUR COMMON MISSION

**Walking together enables us all to accept our mission to share the Good News.**

- Do we as Catholics take this mission seriously?
- How exactly do we as Church members spread the Good News of Jesus Christ?
- What stops us from being active in mission?

### 9. OUR CONVERSATIONS

**Genuine conversation requires perseverance and patience but leads to understanding.**

- As Catholics, how good are we at conversation – both listening and sharing?
- Good conversation (dialogue) leads to collaboration – how, and how well, do we collaborate as Catholics in our local community?
- In what ways could we dialogue and collaborate better with others in society (e.g., in politics, economics, culture, civil society, and those who are poor or disadvantaged?)

*This page is left intentionally blank*

Guided by the Holy Spirit, we make up the  
living stones through whom God builds up the  
Church that He desires for the third millennium  
(1 Peter 2:5).



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

National Centre for Pastoral Research | Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
GPO Box 368 Canberra ACT 2601  
E: [ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au) | <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>