

Come, Holy Spirit

**Executive Summary
Archdiocesan Assembly 2024
19 October 2024**



Come,
**take your place on this pilgrim journey
as an Archdiocese.**



**Catholic Archdiocese of
Canberra & Goulburn**



Executive Summary

Archdiocesan Assembly, 19 October 2024

“Come, Holy Spirit”

On October 19, 2024, more than 550 members of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn convened to reflect on the theme “Come, Holy Spirit” through the spiritual exercise called the ‘Conversation in the Spirit’. This gathering was part of an Archdiocesan Assembly group of events within an ‘Assembly Festival,’ which included several significant events such as the ordination of Fr. Mark Ha, the Archdiocesan Assembly which included an Ecumenical Prayer Vigil, and the annual Marian Procession.

The Assembly aimed to discern “what seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28) and focused on three fundamental aspects of church life: encounter, discipleship, and mission. These elements were explored through various activities and discussions in six hubs, with an additional 500 participants joining via live stream. 5,243 responses were collected online, supplemented by insights from over 100 small group gatherings.

In preparation for the Assembly, over 20 schools within the Archdiocese contributed reflections on engaging young people with the Church. Additionally, ten Archdiocesan Roundtables and numerous Conversations in the Spirit took place during the ‘Year of the Holy Spirit,’ laying the groundwork for the Assembly’s themes.

The Archdiocesan Assembly builds upon past decisions and events, including the Australian Bishops’ Plenary Council (2017) and Pope Francis’ Synod on Synodality (2021-2024). It is also rooted in the historical context of previous Synods and Assemblies under Archbishops Carroll and Coleridge.

Key themes emerged through the Conversations in the Spirit:

- Encounter addressed the dual identity of individuals as both independent beings and community members, emphasising growth and transformation.
- Discipleship recognises the community’s unity through faith in Jesus Christ and a shared baptismal vocation that enriches humanity.
- Mission focused on translating the common baptismal vocation into practical ways of proclaiming Jesus.

These initial reflections are part of ongoing discernment efforts, with a more comprehensive discursive report pending. The Archdiocese invites continued engagement with these themes, encouraging members to contribute to the dialogue about the Holy Spirit’s call to the community.

Encounter

Introduction

The theme of “Encounter” centres on a profound personal experience of God through Jesus Christ. Participants consistently emphasised that these encounters are realised through relationships, community, and a sense of welcome. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Archdiocese is encouraged to foster a community of encounter by reaching out, supporting others, and nurturing opportunities for prayer and spiritual formation.

Key Themes

1. Personal Relationship

A significant aspect of encounter is the personal relationship characterised by authenticity, vulnerability, and deep spiritual intimacy. Through prayer, sacraments (particularly the Eucharist), and meaningful connections, individuals are invited to deepen their relationship with Jesus and each other. Authentic relationships built on trust and generosity are seen as essential.





2. Prayer, Worship, and Formation

Encounter is deeply rooted in prayer, worship, and faith formation. The sacraments, worship, and opportunities for spiritual growth, such as retreats and Eucharistic Adoration, encourage members to deepen their faith. The Holy Spirit inspires a culture of ongoing intentional formation.

3. Community and Belonging

A sense of community is central to encounter, characterised by belonging, welcome, and mutual support. The Holy Spirit guides the Archdiocese to create inclusive communities, bridging connections between schools, parishes, and groups to ensure no one is left out and everyone feels valued.

4. Engaging Young People and Families

There is a focus on engaging youth and families, highlighting the importance of multigenerational programs and strengthening connections between schools and parishes. Creating spaces where young people feel valued is vital for fostering supportive programs that encourage faith and engagement.

5. Authentic and Service-Driven

Encounter Participants believe the Archdiocese is called to foster authentic and service-driven communities that embody the Gospel in action. This involves openness to new approaches, collaboration, and challenging norms to reflect Christ's love. A community that is approachable and responsive to societal needs provides genuine encounter opportunities.

Conclusion

In conclusion it was highlighted that Encounter is a multifaceted experience involving personal relationships, community engagement, worship, and service. The Holy Spirit guides the Archdiocese to develop inclusive, authentic, and service-oriented communities that nurture spiritual growth and meaningful encounters with God and each other.

Discipleship

Introduction

We prayerfully focused on the theme of Discipleship within the Archdiocese, exploring how individuals become disciples of Jesus through commitment and community involvement. Respondents highlighted several areas for growth and nurturing discipleship, emphasising community, inclusivity, and lay leadership.

Key Themes

1. Formation of Young People

Emphasised was the importance of forming young disciples through youth ministries, school-parish partnerships, and intergenerational initiatives. Responses highlighted the desire to build relationships that help emerging generations and their families grow in faith and understanding. Participants noted that initiatives like Christian Meditation in schools and youth ministry activities provide significant encounters with Christ.

2. Sacramental Life and Faith Formation

Sacraments were underscored as central to discipleship, anchoring spiritual growth and providing encounters with Jesus. Respondents emphasised the necessity of lifelong learning, ongoing spiritual development, and formation opportunities suitable for every life stage. Participants noted an increased opportunity for the laity to engage in missionary discipleship and a renewal of love for the Universal Church and its sacraments.

3. Community Building and Relational Discipleship

Respondents highlighted that discipleship is strengthened through relationships and community. Building supportive communities within parishes, schools, and small groups was crucial. Being present, listening, and accompanying others was central to fostering a sense of belonging and shared growth.





4. Inclusivity and Invitational

Creating an inclusive and invitational environment is vital, as the Archdiocese is encouraged to be inviting and embrace everyone, especially those marginalised or disconnected from the Church. The focus is moving away from judgement and fostering a culture of invitation and value for all individuals.

5. Lay Involvement and Leadership

Empowering lay individuals to take active roles in leading and building faith communities is essential. Responses called for individual charisms to be recognised and the involvement of lay leaders in pastoral initiatives. Encouraging lay people to take responsibility and contribute their gifts was central to responding to the Baptismal call.

6. Listening and Accompaniment

It was stressed that discipleship should include attentive listening and accompaniment, especially for young people and those in vulnerable situations. Walking alongside individuals and sharing faith stories can nurture a culture of genuine relationships and discipleship.

7. Tradition and Modernity

Balancing Church tradition with modern societal contexts was identified as important in forming disciples. The need to uphold core teachings while being adaptable was highlighted, including using digital platforms for outreach and understanding cultural shifts.

Conclusion

The Archdiocese's focus on Discipleship, emphasises community, inclusivity, and lay involvement in fostering faith. Key aspects include nurturing young disciples, ensuring sacramental life supports spiritual growth, and building strong relationships. Empowering lay leaders and encouraging listening and accompaniment are vital for guiding individuals in their faith journeys. Balancing tradition with modernity ensures the Church remains relevant, highlighting the essential role of relationships and shared mission in deepening discipleship.

Mission

Introduction

Participants explored the collective mission of being missionary disciples, achieved through proclaiming the word, celebrating sacraments, and extending charity. Insights emerged from participant responses, highlighting the significance of evangelisation and outreach, service and presence, community and inclusion, formation and growth, courage, and the role of sacraments in mission.

Key Themes

1. Evangelisation and Outreach

This theme emphasises mission as active evangelisation. Participants viewed it as a proactive endeavour to reach marginalised communities and create opportunities for faith encounters. Key elements include taking the initiative and expanding God's kingdom through authentic faith sharing.

2. Service and Presence

Service extends beyond grand gestures to include everyday acts of kindness and support. Participants underscored the importance of charity and hospitality, emphasising that service involves being a positive and supportive presence in people's lives.

3. Community and Inclusion





A missionary community should embody inclusivity, inviting and supporting everyone, especially youth and marginalised groups. Discussions focused on creating spaces that foster dialogue and acceptance and reflect Gospel values through a welcoming and inclusive environment.

4. Formation and Growth

Formation is the foundation of mission, empowering individuals and communities through ongoing catechesis and spiritual growth. This preparation enables effective evangelisation, equipping people with confidence and depth to engage in mission-driven activities.

5. Courage

Courage emerged as crucial for mission work, involving boldness and taking risks to challenge the status quo. Participants stressed the need for public witness and advocacy, encouraging engagement with diverse communities, even when uncomfortable or challenging.

6. Evangelisation and the Sacraments

Sacraments provide essential nourishment for mission, forming a spiritual foundation for outreach and service. The Eucharist and other sacraments are vital for sustaining the missionary spirit and fostering an encounter with Christ, integrating spirituality into the mission.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the collective call to mission was highlighted, encouraging individuals and communities to engage boldly and compassionately in outreach and service. The importance of formation, community, and sacraments in fostering spiritual growth and inclusivity was stressed.

Initial Convergences

Five emerging themes for reflection within the Catholic community have emerged:

1. **Intergenerational and Interparish Renewal:** This theme emphasises the importance of engaging young people in the Church's life and mission, fostering collaboration across parishes, and valuing diverse communities and partnerships. The focus is on renewal through community and relationships, where love, connection, and belonging drive the life of a missionary disciple.
2. **Culture of Belonging and Invitation:** Moving beyond merely 'welcoming,' the goal is to create an 'invitational' community that embraces faith traditions while inviting others to belong. This reflects the Church's teaching on Parishes as sanctuaries and centres of outreach.
3. **Reaffirming Faith Tradition:** The importance of the Church's Faith Tradition was underscored mainly through sacraments, scripture, and prayer. Participants deliberated how 'New ways' might be a re-presentation of 'old' truths, ensuring relevance and engagement for children and vulnerable community members.
4. **Community and Relationship-based Encounter:** Genuine relationships form the basis of witnessing faith. The focus is on accompanying and inviting others to encounter Christ in various settings, including workplaces and communities. Examples include youth engagement and school-parish relationships.
5. **Formation for Mission:** This involves a call for deeper catechesis and understanding of evangelisation, with the Eucharist at the heart of the mission. The objective is to move from maintenance to mission, emphasising unity through the Eucharist and serving those Jesus loves, especially the marginalised.



Initial Divergences

While the Assembly was positive, some divergences were noted:

1. **Questions of Focus:** There was a perceived dichotomy between 'society' and 'the Church,' with concerns about inclusion and the Church's relevance. Some emphasised 'Truth,' while others focused on 'Witness,' highlighting a need for balanced communication in the modern age.
2. **'Being' vs. 'Do-ing':** Divergence existed between being Christian and performing Christian activities, raising questions about the sufficiency of faith alone versus actions combined with faith.
3. **Impatience for Action vs. Listening for the Spirit:** Some participants desired immediate action, while others preferred discerning the Spirit's will, leading to a contrast between concrete actions and abstract planning.
4. **Locus of Activity:** Opinions differed on whether decision-making should occur at local or Archdiocesan levels. Strong leadership at the local level was highlighted as necessary for effective action.

Response

The Archdiocese outlines two levels of response:

1. We request that the Archdiocese respond by December 15, 2024, to the questions below, considering the synthesis and Assembly experience. Ideally, responses should come from parishes, schools, or ministries represented at the Archdiocesan Assembly. However, due to time constraints, individual and small group responses are also welcome. Please send your responses to hello@cg.org.au.
2. By Pentecost 2025, all parishes, schools, communities, and groups are encouraged to hold their own Conversations in the Spirit using the provided Engagement Toolkit. This may include a Parish Assembly. The results from these local discussions will be gathered and addressed in future Archdiocesan gatherings and initiatives in 2025 and beyond.

Questions

We invite the Archdiocese to now discern the following questions in response to Archdiocesan Assembly:

1. What has been the grace received in the Archdiocese through the Assembly?
2. What faith or pastoral responses are now needed in every parish, school, community, ministry or group following the Assembly?
3. What are the implications for the way we live out of baptismal vocation as a Synodal Church?
4. What is your response - as individuals and as communities - to this report?
5. Moving into the Year of Hope and reflecting on the contents of this report, what are you hopeful for?

Please submit your reflections on these questions via our digital platform at cgevangelisation.org.au/response or email us at hello@cg.org.au.



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