

## Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc.

11 April 2022

Mr Michael McKenna  
Director – Chancery Services  
Catholic Archdiocesan Centre  
Tower Road  
Newtown 7008

Dear Michael

### **Seeking clarification on matters concerning the faithful in Tasmania**

Thank you for your letter dated 30 March 2022.

As you no doubt appreciate, many of our questions relate to the initiatives of Pope Francis and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and stem from official Church documents. We sought to canvass what our Archdiocesan response would be.

Your letter was discussed at our committee meeting on Monday 4 April 2022. It was resolved that we reply to your letter and that we should provide our members and others with a copy of relevant correspondence which should be posted on our website.

Below is a summary of your responses to our concerns, as we read them, received from you, writing on behalf of the Archbishop.

#### **1 Diocesan Pastoral Councils**

##### **Your response**

You did not answer questions seeking the pastoral reasons for not having a Diocesan Pastoral Council and about any progress in this direction.

##### **Our comment**

It seems that our Archbishop is not prepared to move ahead until he sees what everyone else is doing after the Synod (and the discernment time that will happen after that). We can expect no progress for a number of years.

Given that our Archbishop will turn seventy five on 5 June 2024, is required to tender his resignation then and the Synod does not commence until October 2023, it is hard to escape the conclusion that this is a decision to do nothing

## **2 Implementation of recommendations from ACBC commissioned report on Church governance, The Light from the Southern Cross.**

### **Your response**

You did not answer direct questions asking what processes are in place to address the recommendations of the report for our Archdiocese, or any progress on moving towards a synodal Church.

### **Our comment**

Despite many things being within his episcopal responsibility, the Archbishop is not committing to progress until he sees what others are doing.

Given that the final Plenary Council session will conclude in July 2022 and that will be followed by a legislative response to be approved in Rome and that by then the Archbishop's resignation will be imminent, it is hard to escape the conclusion that this is a decision to do nothing.

## **3 Financial reporting to the faithful of the Archdiocese**

### **Your response**

You provided no reason as to why there is not a practice of regular financial reporting providing transparency and accountability to the faithful of our Archdiocese. The letter suggested this is under "active consideration" but highlights the need to be careful to ensure a balance between transparency and "**commercial in confidence**".

### **Our comment**

Financial reporting entails providing an income and expenditure statement and a balance sheet and those documents do not need to disclose commercial confidential dealings. Consequently, your response is misleading.

## **4 Media and Communication**

### **Your response**

You did not answer questions regarding access to The Standard for other contributors, including to promote faith related events and suggesting a broader based advisory body. You seem to have simply restated the Archbishop's position that the *Catholic Standard* is the official Church publication for the Archdiocese and should, by implication, only contain the official voice.

### **Our comment**

You introduced the irrelevant matter of a ‘glossy’ being impractical. This is not what CCT requested or raised. It seems that our Pope’s call for open discussion and diverse opinions is not being heeded by our Archbishop.

## **5 Preparation for Synod**

### **Your response**

In answering our question seeking information on the way in which the Archdiocese is consulting to assist in preparation of the Archdiocesan response to the Synod, you informed us that no consultation is planned.

Our question about how we will be informed of the Archdiocesan submission was not answered.

### **Our comment**

CCT notes that the faithful were not given any information about the outcomes from the Plenary consultations held last year, nor about any submission sent to the Plenary from the Archdiocese which purported to represent our views. It seems that this will also be the case for the Synod.

Hence, we are of the firm view that in our Archdiocese no real attempt has been made by our Archbishop to follow the preliminary Synod processes laid down in the relevant documents and that the Archdiocesan ten-page submission required to be written cannot faithfully represent the views, thoughts and hopes of the faithful in Tasmania.

Pope Francis has called all the baptised to ‘walk together’ in a synodal process where all are invited to express their hopes and ideas for our Church and our world. The role of the Archbishop is to faithfully bring the fruits of this synodal process forward via the ten-page Diocesan submission. Catholics in our Archdiocese have no idea what if anything has been expressed by the Tasmanian faithful in relation to the Synod. This is contrary to the advice, found on the Vatican Synod website, which has been provided to the bishops to assist them in drafting the ten-page submission to be made on behalf of each diocese. That advice states that the bishop needs to ensure that *‘the text is the fruit of an authentically synodal journey and is respectful of the synodal process that actually took place’*. (see <https://www.synod.va/en/news/suggestions-for-dioceses-and-episcopal-conferences.html>).

There is no evidence that the recommended processes have been followed here in Tasmania, as has happened in so many other dioceses around the world, even in poor countries which do not have access to the level of resources and opportunities for online or face-to-face dialogue that we are blessed to have at our disposal. Nor do we feel that the very limited Plenary consultation is sufficient, as some are suggesting, to prepare a synod response. The questions are different; the intent is different; the participants for a Synod submission should have been more broadly based.

We feel duty bound to draw to the attention of relevant Church authorities the failings of our Archdiocesan process and to this end will be writing to both Archbishop Mark Coleridge and the Synodal secretariate in Rome pointing out that any Archdiocesan response received should not

be seen as an authentic representation of the faithful here in Tasmania. Many Catholics are dispirited and sad about the failure of our Archdiocese to collaborate and adopt synodal approaches actively and openly in both the Plenary Council and the Synod processes. Both of those opportunities, sadly, are now lost opportunities for the Tasmanian Church to shine more clearly as a beacon of hope for our people, our state and the world.

Finally, and once more we urge you and our Archbishop to embrace synodality and to allow in the planned liturgical gatherings at the end of this month sufficient time for our Archbishop to 'walk together' with the faithful and seek their views, encouraging them to express their hopes for a synodal Church.

Yours sincerely

Kim Chen

**Chair - Concerned Catholics Tasmania**