

PRAYER, LISTENING AND REFLECTION

- ✠ Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, the Holy Father Pope Francis said:

... The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of *synodality* which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.

... A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realises that listening “is more than simply hearing”. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of Truth” (*Jn 14:17*), in order to know what He “says to the Churches” (*Rev 2:7*). ...

Let us listen now attentively
to the words of our brothers and sisters from across the diocese
and through the invocation of the Holy Spirit
may we discern His voice through and among the many,
that He might lead us into all truth as Christ Jesus promised.

Voice 1 We “walk together”, grow in faith and build relationship with Jesus very effectively when, in small groups, we pray, study scripture and read or listen to inspirational speakers. In contrast, the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of the institutional church makes “walking together” difficult. It excludes many of the laity from liturgical celebrations. Locally, we need to do more to embrace cultural minorities within our parishes. At a diocesan level, Synodality is not practised.

Voice 2 Participants agreed that three endeavours were fundamental to the renewal of the Church in Australia:

- To clean up our own act by going on mission to ourselves.
- To explicitly promote and foster the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- To embrace the traditions of our faith, both in the liturgy, and in our daily lives.

Voice 3 It was generally felt that many Catholics were no longer confident in the Faith today, with all the changes which have been introduced over these past 50- 60 years. You can verify this by the small attendance at Sunday Mass especially in the country, and lack of lusty singing! Many people are no longer sure of who they are as Catholics. Since the lockdown last year, many think it is not essential to attend Mass and that they can watch it on TV instead.

ALL **Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, bestower of most precious gifts, grant to me a strong and living faith, and a most confident hope in all divine promises, which prompts me to abandon myself unreservedly to You and Your guidance.**

Pause in silence for reflection.

Voice 2 Young Catholics want authentically Catholic teaching. If the Church was more vocal in proclaiming the fulness of its Social Magisterium – including workers’ rights, the preferential option for the poor, and protection of refugees and creation – many young people drawn to social justice would not simply dismiss the Church as reactionary but would understand Christ’s full message it teaches.

Voice 3 As Companions on the Journey, we are conscious of those on the margins of both our Church family and the wider community. We acknowledge the call of the Spirit to be people who are unafraid to listen from the heart to the stories and challenges of others; especially those who do not easily feel at home in our company. We identified those estranged from the family of the Church: abuse victims, their families, the divorced and remarried, LGBTQI+ people.

Voice 1 It was labelled as ‘unfair’ that many young adults must turn to the internet to learn about the Church’s teachings on matters such as the human person, and relationships. Participants thought that these teachings should be embedded in Catholic education and parish formation. The Church is being called to reclaim its teachings on who we are, what love is, and God’s vision for the family, particularly so that parents can form their children.

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Voice 3 Communication is essential for Communion. The lack of communication between the various levels of the local Church hinders ongoing growth in Communion. We see the need for a Diocesan Pastoral Council to enhance Communion and to give people a voice, and to allow the abundant gifts of the local Church to find expression in our journeying together.

Voice 2 Young faithful Catholics have a desire, above all, for authenticity in the Church. They desire reverent, humbling, Christ-centred liturgy. Many are drawn to authentic expressions of Catholic tradition: chant, incense, and processions, while many also like more contemporary forms of worship. Young people of all stripes flock to these, and to Eucharistic adoration and confession. The Church could do better at understanding and responding to this desire for liturgy in which both clergy and faithful seem full of prayer, and appear to believe in what Christ is doing in the Mass.

Voice 1 The call of Pope Francis for a synodal Church captures our hopes for our Church. If we are to journey together, there must be serious engagement with and redefinition of issues related to governance and ministry, especially the position of women in our Church, an end to clericalism and a Christ-like exercise of authority.

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Voice 1 Young Catholics want authentically Catholic service, actively proclaiming the Gospel with both words and deeds. Parishes rarely have, or even advertise, opportunities for volunteering to help the poor, yet young Catholics desire to put their faith into action. Many young people are turned off the Church as they do not get to see it putting its words into actions.

Voice 2 We believe that the Church is being called to grow authentic Christian communities enabling ongoing conversion through Christ-centred friendships, where spiritual gifts are prayed for and nurtured. We are called to a radical openness to the Holy Spirit through daily examines, prayer, praise, healing prayer and the promotion of the love of sacred Scripture.

Voice 3 Our Archbishop neglects our concerns and suggestions about liturgy, ministry, inclusivity, and governance. To be synodal, therefore, we need a means of making our Archbishop listen before he acts. We should have some say in the appointment of our leaders, both clerical and lay. We must have some institutional means to address structural problems, such as an episcopal ombudsman.

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Voice 2 There is a fear of speaking the truth with courage and honesty. In order to build confidence for missionary discipleship there is a chronic need for personal, spiritual formation and adult education in the faith. To be effective missionary disciples the baptized need to be equipped to analyse, to discern and to evaluate. The Church needs to be full of people in relationship with the Lord, rather than dispensing a formula or recipe.

Voice 3 The Church understood through the lens of synodality risks leading us towards a horizontal form of understanding the nature of the Church and our place in it. All Communion flows from that outpouring of life and love that is the inner life of the Trinity and in which we are called to share, and we can only experience true communion between believers if we are dwelling continually at the well-spring of Trinitarian communion.

Voice 1 Vatican II (Lumen Gentium 8) proposed a model of Church which included all who would believe in Christ. Therefore, we maintain and develop relationships with other Christian traditions and denominations in response to Jesus' prayer that "they may be one". The pressures of life and work make it hard for many to be involved in extra commitments, but people can live and act ecumenically in their everyday life. We need people with sufficient knowledge and understanding of ecumenism, theology and Church teaching to engage at a leadership level and to inform and encourage others.

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