



## OPENING OF TWO YEAR SYNOD IN ROME

While the Church in Australia was caught up with the Plenary Council, the the Synod for a Synodal Church opened in Rome. During the next two years every part of the global church is invited to participate in the Synod for a Synodal Church.

## REFLECTIONS FROM AN AUSTRALIAN IN ROME

Susan Pascoe is a member of one of four commissions supporting the work of the Synod for Synodality. She is a Melbourne Catholic who has held many senior roles in Church and government. At the conclusion of the opening week in Rome, Susan wrote:

*In reflecting on the past few days, I'm struck by the extraordinary opportunity this Synod offers the Church for renewal. The cynics have called it a meeting about meetings, but that misses the point that, like the Plenary Council, this is an exercise of prayer, reflection, listening to one another, creating space for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and discerning together. The Pope uses the imagery from Vatican II of a pilgrim people journeying together - people and pastors together.*

## THE DOCUMENTS OF THE SYNOD

The theme of the Synod is:

**For a Synodal Church:  
Communion, Participation and Mission**

Australian Catholic Bishops Website  
<https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>



The website holds the major documents for the Synod, such as the Handbook, timelines for consultation, prayers and a brief YouTube explanation of Synodal Church.

Listening & Discernment guides for groups on Communion, Reflection and Mission are available for download. Also a guide for individual reflection with a study guide.



## IMAGINING A DIFFERENT FUTURE FOR THE CHURCH

The **Handbook for the Synod**, (the Vademecum) states: *'While the Synod of Bishops has taken place up until now as a gathering of bishops with and under the authority of the Pope, the Church increasingly realises that synodality is the path for the entire People of God'*

## A CRUCIAL MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Reading and reflecting on the Synod Handbook will provide a thorough appreciation of just how significant the Synod for Synodality will be in the life of the whole Church. What follows are some excerpts for reflection.

## THE AIM OF THE SYNOD

The current Synodal Process we are undertaking is guided by a fundamental question: **How does this 'journeying together' take place on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel? And what steps is the Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?**

In fact, the whole Synodal Process aims at fostering a lived experience, participation, and co-responsibility, where a diversity of gifts is brought together for the Church's mission in the world.

It is clear that the purpose of this Synod is not to produce more documents. Rather, it is intended to **Inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.**

Thus the objective of this Synodal Process is not only a series of exercises that start and stop, but rather a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in the third millennium.

This journey will call on us to renew our mentalities and our ecclesial structures in order to live out God's call for the Church amid the present signs of the times.



## COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, MISSION

There is a dynamic relationship between the three dimensions of the Synodal Church theme.

**COMMUNION:** By his gracious will, God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, through the covenant that he offers 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. ... We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people.

**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 to God's will. Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.

**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 deeply 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.

The entire People of God shares a common dignity and vocation through Baptism. All of us are called in virtue of our Baptism to be active participants in the life of the Church. In parishes, small Christian communities, lay movements, religious communities and other forms of communion, women and men, young people and the elderly, we are all invited to listen to one another in order to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who comes to guide our human efforts, breathing life and vitality into the Church and leading us into deeper communion for our mission to the world,...