

## **Vox Episcopi (The Voice of the Bishop)**

1 November 2023

As I arrive back in Sydney from Rome I join with you in prayer for All Saints Day as we remember all the saints and martyrs, known and unknown. Tomorrow, 2 November we remember all the faithful departed, not only our loved ones but all those around the world who we have not and will never meet. Through the mercy of God they will rest in peace.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you my gratitude for your support and prayers for me and Kelly Paget and all the members of the Synod. While it has been a marvellous encounter, it has also been quite exhausting. The programme was relentlessly full-on. Kelly and I arrived in Rome at 1.30PM and we were both on the steps of Saint Peter's Basilica by 3PM. It did not slow down at all for the next month.

And yet, I must say that it has been a most graced time. I cannot imagine all the details that must have demanded the attention of Cardinal Grech and the Synod Team, and yet each time I had the opportunity to meet with him or speak with members of the Team, they were gracious, hospitable, and fraternal. As you well know, it is not possible to keep everyone happy all the time, and yet such a demonstration of charity and care was, I felt, exemplary of what is needed in a Synodal Church. Patience, charity, and kindness go a long way in making the Gospel real in our lives.

I was also quite humbled by the opportunities that were given to me to contribute, by presiding at Mass and preaching, leading the prayer in the Synod Hall, participating in the Commission for Information, and leading the Oceania Bishops in fraternal dialogue with Cardinal Grech and Cardinal Hollerich.

The Oceania Team was front and centre every day for the month. Apart from eight bishop members, there were 10 non-bishop members, four facilitators, and one theological peritus. For a continent of almost seven million Catholics (that is, the smallest Catholic continent) we were very well represented and extremely well engaged. The number of times people commented to me positively about the Oceania Team, and in particular Kelly Paget, was quite overwhelming, and I hope that our not-so-small contribution was positive and that we have in some way contributed to building the culture of a Synodal Church.

These next eleven months, I pray, will be a graced time of reflection, prayer, discernment, participation, and action in the Church. When we open ourselves to the regenerating love and mercy of God, the Holy Spirit does great things in and through us.

My prayers and blessings.  
+Anthony