



A letter to the People of God in the Diocese of Broken Bay

Thursday 28 October 2021

My dear sisters and brothers,

On Sunday 10 October 2021, Pope Francis celebrated a Mass to commence a world-wide process for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2023. The Synod has as its theme, *“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.”* The Holy Father has invited the entire Church to participate in this journey, keeping before it in a particular way, the question: How does this “journeying together” take place today 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?”

The Church in Australia entered this journey through a range of means on Sunday 17 October. This engagement will culminate in each Diocese, submitting the fruit of its reflection at the end of February 2022, such that the Australian synthesis can be sent to the Secretariat of the Synod in April 2022. The Australian website for the Synod of Bishops is <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>. There you will find many resources and, also, in time, the link to make an individual contribution to the process.

The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, with the conduct of the First Assembly from 3-10 October 2021, has been an illustration and demonstration of the synodal processes into which Pope Francis invites us. As you will appreciate, the work of the Plenary Council is ongoing. Through the First Assembly, many members made personal contributions and ten small groups attended to fourteen of the questions presented as the Agenda of the Assembly. Now, through a process of discernment on all that was proffered, clear propositions will be formulated by the Plenary Steering Committee in consultation with many others for consideration at the Second Assembly in July 2022. From these, decisions will be made that fulfil the mandate of the Plenary to be at the service of increasing the faith, the organisation of pastoral action, the regulation of morals, and the observance of common Church practice. I thank the delegates of our Diocese who joined me at the First Assembly: Fr David Ranson VG, Mr Danny Casey, Mrs Alison Newell and Mr Raj Rajasingam. It was a very full week, and given that it was entirely online, quite demanding. However, all of us completed the week with hope that the Spirit of God was guiding us forward, even if the outcomes will take a little further to gain clarity. The work of the Plenary Council and its outcomes has now also been correlated with the intention and timeline of the General Synod of Bishops.

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Our Diocese of Broken Bay will participate in the journey onto which Pope Francis has invited us through a variety of ways and mindful of the special pastoral circumstance in which we find ourselves – the emergence from lockdown, the end of the year which loom before us, and the forthcoming summer holidays.

Firstly, I have established a Task Force representative of all sectors of our Diocese to review the submissions provided as part of the Listening Phase of the Plenary Council in 2019 and to bring this into summary in light of the Synod's questions. This will be of assistance in our Diocesan contribution to the Synod.

Secondly, on Sunday 31 October at 12.30pm I will launch online, a significant initiative to discern the pastoral needs of the Central Coast region of our Diocese. This will invite participation and contribution from individuals, parishes, schools, agencies, and community groups to consider the question as to how we can evangelise more effectively in this territory with its unique pastoral and social context. This will be a most practical application of the very process into which we are being invited by the Holy Father. It's timeline, too, is corelated with the Australian engagement of the process towards the Synod of Bishops.

Thirdly, in the coming weeks I will also launch our Diocesan Pastoral Mission subsequent to the Diocesan Vision on a Page that I have published. This Mission will have six goals to:

1. Empower communities for evangelisation;
2. Form missionary disciples;
3. Build community;
4. Promote our vocational call;
5. Advance the common good;
6. Embrace the poor and the vulnerable.

Each of these goals comes with its question:

- *How does our Church community identify its evangelisation objectives and the steps to achieving those objectives?*
- *How is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church as missionary disciples?*
- *How do we promote collaboration with religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, schools, CatholicCare, neighbouring dioceses, etc., for the upbuilding of the Church, in faithfulness to our mission?*
- *How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community?*
- *What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?*
- *What groups and individuals are left on the margins in our Church community and how can we better walk together with them?*



Over the coming months, Evangelisation Broken Bay will suggest means of engaging these questions and I invite individuals, parishes, and other communities from our Diocese to offer their responses ahead of the publication of the Pastoral Mission in March 2022. These contributions, too, will be an important way of entering the Synod journey.

In these ways, I am confident that we can both respond to the invitation of the Holy Father for the involvement of every local community of the Church in the process of the General Synod of Bishops in 2023 and reflect that way of being Church into which Pope Francis invites us: a Church distinguished by communion, participation, and mission.

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace.

*We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
with You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.*

*Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from
the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the
Father and the Son, forever and ever.*

Amen.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL
Bishop of Broken Bay