

Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide

Towards the Second Assembly - 2024 Diocesan Summary

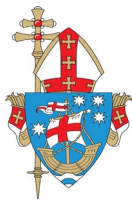
1. Introduction

We are grateful for the opportunity to reflect on *A Synodal Church in Mission - Synthesis Report* an Archdiocese, and to provide feedback. We also recognise that we benefit from the unique privilege of having an Archbishop who is also a Synod member. Listening to the Archbishop share the story of the Synod, its gifts and challenges, has been an integral aspect of several of our consultation forums. The People of God in the Archdiocese of Adelaide desire to be a synodal Church on mission. We recognise this is a journey which requires conversion, not only of heart, but of culture and structures. All pilgrimage requires sacrifice and hard work, and the synodal processes of the past several years have proven that the Church in Adelaide is committed to this journey.

2. Consultation Process

Several leadership groups, councils and commissions in the Archdiocese of Adelaide were invited to provide feedback to particular sections of the Synod Synthesis Report. In March, an opportunity was offered for wider public consultation. We made sure to include a diversity of voices and perspectives which could respond to various sections of the synthesis report.

Groups Consulted and Number of Participants	Sections Discussed	Reason for Discussion
Bishops Council of Priests 14 Participants	11,18	These sections were chosen due to the nature of the Council and their focus and the time allotted in the schedule. The substance of the conversation centred mostly on section 18.
Diocesan Pastoral Council 18 Participants	1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18	The Diocesan Pastoral Council spent significant time in small groups to discuss the sections of the report to which they felt were most relevant to their work.
Archdiocesan Pastoral Services Team 6 participants	4, 5	These sections were chosen because they reflected the work of those who participated in the conversation.
Catholic Education South Australia - Leadership Team and Catholic Identity and Mission Team. Unknown number	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 18	These sections were chosen because they reflected the work and professional responsibilities of those who participated in the conversation.
Council for Ministry with Young People 10 participants	16	The Council felt this section best represented ministry with young people.
Archdiocesan Commission for Formation 9 participants	14	This Commission is responsible for discerning formation in the diocese.
Diocesan Liturgical Commission 6 participants	3, 5	These sections intersect with the work of the Liturgical Commission.
Public Consultation Forum	1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10,	We provided an opportunity for people in the Archdiocese to discuss as much of the synthesis report as we felt was



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62 participants	14, 16, 17, 18	relevant. Participants chose a section to discussion in a small group using an abbreviated version of conversations in the Spirit.
Worldwide Marriage Encounter, South Australia	8, 10	Unknown Feedback was sent to the Archdiocese on the independent initiative of the group.
Unknown number		
South Australian Catholics for an Evolving Church	1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18	Unknown Feedback was sent to the Archdiocese on the independent initiative of the group.
Unknown number		

3. Reflection on the Consultation Process

Several reoccurring themes emerged during the consultation process:

a. Language and Terminology

- Language in the report was difficult for some people to grasp. Some people asked for a glossary of terms and meanings of theological and technical words such as: synodality, mission, formation, clericalism.
- Consistent requests for inclusive language to reflect the diversity and equality of peoples in the community.
- Some Church documents were also unknown to people, an index or explanation of these documents was desired.

b. Consultation practices and fatigue

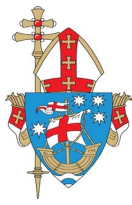
- People appreciated the opportunity to engage in consultation and the conversations in the Spirit method. It has both inspired and challenged people.
- The timelines for gathering input into consultations for the Synod have often been too short to be able to engage the greatest number of participants. There is also desire to see action and outcomes following the number of consultations and synodal assemblies.
- There has been difficulty in creating ways to adequately and authentically listen to people on the margins. Developing trust through relationships over time is the best way to engage in listening to those on the edges. This style does not always fit well with consultation timelines. We have reflected that these relationships should already be in place and not established for solely for consultation.
- Many have become fatigued or disenchanted with consultation fatigue, especially in Australia where we have had many rounds of consultation in recent years.

c. Women

- The role and equal dignity of women in the life, mission and ministry of the Church are regularly discussed with passion. There is a strong call to respond to discrimination and address the equal dignity of women and men seriously, especially in visible leadership roles within the liturgical and governance structures of the Church.

d. Co-Responsibility

- New structures for leadership and governance in the local churches are required to fully embrace co-responsibility for the Mission of the Church by both lay and ordained.



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e. Freedom to Try New Approaches

- Although there is enthusiasm for new structures and ways of being there remains a fear or hesitation to try new approaches, particularly in regard to the role of laity, especially women, governance, liturgy and the formation of seminarians. There is a desire from the people to be given freedom to experiment and discern appropriate new approaches without fear of punishment.

f. Canon Law, Church Teaching, Customs and Liturgical Practices

- Several responses noted that current church practices, Canon Law and aspects of Church Teaching can be limiting and do not adequately engage with contemporary experiences.

g. Formation

- The call for more formation resounds in every discussion and synodal assembly. However, there is a lack of consensus on what is meant by ‘formation’, how to provide and receive formation, and what it means to approach formation synodally.

4. Responding to the Questions: “HOW can we be a synodal Church in mission?” and “HOW can we enhance the differentiated co-responsibility in the mission of all the members of the People of God?”

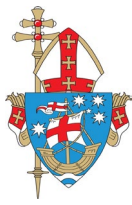
Consistent reference was made to Pope Francis’ prophetic vision in *Evangelii Gaudium*, “I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with him” (27).

The renewal of structures, customs and language that open up the participation in the Mission of the Church to all of the People of God, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, or ecclesial stature are a basic requirement in order to meet the demands of the Mission of the Church in the 3rd millennium. Becoming a more synodal Church in mission will require continual discernment, review and renewal in a multitude of dimensions. The inclusion of lay women and men as co-equal partners in the mission and ministry of the Church requires discernment about new ecclesial roles and ministries in which the particular charisms of an individual are recognised and called upon for the good of whole Church based on baptism rather than ordination. At its foundation, these changes necessitate formation for a deeper understanding of baptismal dignity and responsibility for all of the People of God.

Synodal bodies and practices such as Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Councils, assemblies and synods must be adequately reflected in Canon Law to ensure the ongoing development of a synodal Church. Canon Law alone is not enough to ensure good pastoral practice, measures for accountability and review must also be in place. Formation and use of listening and discernment methods such as *Conversations in the Spirit* are helpful and should become regular practice at all levels of ecclesial life and should include those whom decisions affect. Liturgical customs and practices which include a diversity of leadership roles and responsibilities shared by the ordained and laity should be explored.

5. Synthesis Consultation Responses

The following points are a sample of direct quotes from the various feedback responses, therefore further explanation is not available. These quotes give an indication of the discussions of those who participated in the consultation, but do not necessarily reflect the wider Archdiocese.



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Section 1 - Synodality: Experience and Understanding

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- The emphasis on a synodal *style* is helpful.
- The renewed practice of synodality is welcomed, though we need more.
- The term ‘synodality’ still unknown and misunderstood by most people.

Further Thinking and Questions

- Synodality is better understood at the diocesan level. How can we embed synodality at the local and parish level? Some schools do this well.
- There remain many aspects of church practice, Canon Law and the Catechism that do not support synodality.
- Renewal of Christian communities beyond the traditional Church structures would assist in promoting synodality.

Proposals

- Include processes for accountability at every level.
- Review church practices, Canon Law, the Catechism and liturgical language in light of the synodality and co-responsibility of all of the People of God.
- Clarify the meaning of ‘synodal church in mission’ in the language of human experience.
- Promote the practices of conversations in the Spirit, discernment and theological reflection among the faithful, including discussion on core church doctrine and moral positions.

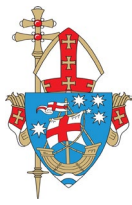
Section 3 - Entering the Community of Faith: Christian Initiation

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- Initiation as a ‘first encounter’ with synodality (3b) is helpful and inspiring.
- Liturgical language needs to be more accessible and contextual (3l).

Further Thinking and Questions

- Why can’t we challenge ‘continuity and tradition’ (3l) in order to ensure accessibility of the Eucharist and liturgies?
 - This should include considerations of children and young people, local culture and multicultural dimensions, inclusive language.
- Liturgical language is more than words.
 - How might all of the elements of the celebration of Eucharist and other liturgies (art, music, gestures, architecture, etc.) become more accessible and inclusive?
- How can we be more open to receiving the gifts of the ‘other’? Multicultural realities beyond the Eurocentric Church? To the desires and needs of various generations?
 - Sometimes the way we consult is alienating to other cultures.
 - When change isn’t desired, is that respected?
 - How do we hold the tensions of differing opinions?



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Proposals

- The accompaniment the Church provides to those discerning initiation through listening and responding to ‘doubts and questions’ should be a more prominent feature initiation processes and continued Christian life.
 - We need space for questioning and testing without fear of being ostracised or punished.

Section 4 - People in Poverty, Protagonists of the Church’s Journey

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- Poverty is everywhere and takes many forms. Poverty in our own communities is not well known.
- Work to alleviate poverty is happening on all levels (local, national, global), it can come across as impersonal and removed from one’s reality (e.g. We create agencies to deal with the poor leading to fewer opportunities for a person encounter with people facing poverty.
- The importance of deepening understanding Catholic Social Teaching, especially the themes of preferential option for the poor and subsidiarity must not be underestimated.

Further Thinking and Questions

- How are the voices of those facing poverty and injustice considered when developing the responses to their situations? How is their personal agency engaged?
- There is tension between building people’s capacity for a ‘full life’ and the reliance on charity. Charity only supports people’s need in the short term.
- People experiencing poverty often do not feel welcomed in our churches, especially in middle class Western society.
- Integral ecology in this section is too limited and needs to be more of a focus.

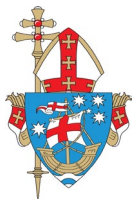
Proposals

- We must discern ways to bring the Baptised into closer encounter with those in poverty and need, to remove the ‘red tape’ and resist the over-reliance on agencies and organisations who provide charity and service on behalf of the Church.
- The formation of seminarians and ongoing formation for clergy and lay pastoral ministers should include a significant period of service-based encounter with the poor.

Section 5 - A Church “out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation”

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- Our Church and our local communities are changing. We are greatly affected by migration and expanding multicultural realities.
- We must create opportunities for listening, dialogue and accompaniment with migrants and refugees, to become more open and welcoming communities.



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- Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and education must be a key feature of diocesan and parish life.

Further Thinking and Questions

- The use of the term, ‘missionary’ needs to be carefully considered. In many cultures, *missionary* is linked to *colonisation*. How do we untangle the negative connotations of colonisation from the work of evangelisation and outreach to all peoples?
- How do we build communion in our parishes and communities amidst the growing diversity of cultures and experiences?
- There are tensions in parishes between existing parishioners and newly arrived migrants regarding religious expression and expectations. Sometimes this includes clergy.

Proposals

- Diocesan and parish pastoral councils should reflect the cultural diversity of the local community.
- Inclusive language includes accessibility to local church documents in diverse languages. Provision must be given to translate important documents in a diversity of languages.

Section 7 - On the Road towards Christian Unity

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- Ecumenical dialogue and collaboration is a gift and a necessity of our contemporary reality.

Further Thinking and Questions

- What opportunities can be provided at the most local, parish level for ecumenical dialogue and collaboration?

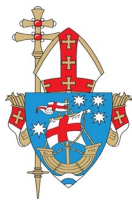
Proposals

- Recognise love, care and concern, wherever and in whoever they are found, as the basic and core characteristics of Catholicism and Christianity.

Section 8 – Church is Mission

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- The Church is Mission (8a)
- All the baptised are called to missionary discipleship, and to participate in the mission through the use of each one’s charisms. (8b)
- “Pastoral structure need to be re-organised so they can readily ***recognise, call forth and animate*** lay charisms and ministries, inserting them into the missionary dynamism of the synodal Church.” (8l)
- Family is the pillar of every Christian community (8c) and the first locus of missionary activity.



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Further Thinking and Questions

- In parish and ecclesial community settings where clergy are in short supply, the ministerial roles led by laity must not be considered a ‘substitute’ for clergy. Rather, they must be recognised and appreciated.
- Clericalism often prevents laity from participating in the mission to the fullness of their capacity. There should be a seamless ownership between clergy and laity in the ministry and mission of the Church and in the world.
- The Sacraments confer a responsibility - the exercise of co-responsibility is essential for synodality.

Proposals

- Recognise love, care and concern, wherever and in whoever they are found, as the basic and core characteristics of Catholicism and Christianity.
- In order for all of the baptised to participate more fully in the mission of the Church, there needs to be:
 - a deeper theological understanding of Mission;
 - urgent action for canonical provisions to catch up with theological understanding and pastoral realities/needs;
 - re-organisation of pastoral structures for a genuine synodal church;
 - more creativity in establishing governance that responds to mission needs.

Section 9 - Women in the Life and Mission of the Church

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

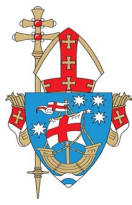
- Women must not be reduced to a problem or an issue.
- Women continue to cry out for justice in all societies.
- Equal access to women and men to formation programs and theological training.

Further Thinking and Questions

- We agree if we continue *talking about women* as an issue we continue to diminish the church as a whole.
- There are concerns regarding the continual distinction *between* men and women rather than co-responsibility and equal consideration of men and women and all people.
- There is no theological reason why women should not have access to every position and ministry in the church.

Proposals

- Inclusive language that does not alienate a person based on gender is not an ideological preference.
- We must create more opportunities and formation for women to give homilies and break open the Word in liturgies.
- Recognise love, care and concern, wherever and in whoever they are found, as the basic and core characteristics of Catholicism and Christianity.
- Serious and urgent consideration must be given to women’s ordination to the permanent diaconate.



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Section 10 - Consecrated Life and Lay Associations and Movements: a Charismatic Sign

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- Greater attention must be given to the gifts of religious congregations and lay associations and movements.
- Both religious congregations and lay associations have been a gift to the local and universal Church.

Further Thinking and Questions

- Lay associations often do not receive the recognition they deserve.

Proposals

- Review and dialogue with Religious Congregations to determine how their charism/governance informs their structures for the benefit of the whole church.
- Encourage and facilitate people in consecrated life and lay associations and movements to be creative in using their gifts and charisms to the full.

Section 11 – Deacons and Priests in a Synodal Church

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

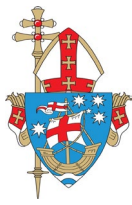
- Priests and deacons collaborate with the Bishop. Being a priest or deacon is not about power or prestige, but it requires accountability and a commitment to working together with the Archbishop.

Further Thinking and Questions

- The term *clericalism* is too broad. The attitudes and actions of those who see themselves as over and above others is present not just in clergy, but very strongly in lay people as well.
- Many priests and deacons exclude themselves from the mission of the Church – this can lead to clericalism.
- What is role of the priesthood as numbers of people attending Mass shrinks? How do we preach the Gospel to the people of today? How do we understand the Church, our ecclesiology (e.g. Lumen Gentium)?
- The restrictions around women in visible leadership roles in the church limits the efficacy of mission delivery and the credibility of the church in the world today.

Proposals

- We are at a moment in the Australian church where there is opportunity for an urgent re-think about the initial and ongoing formation and expectations of Priests and Deacons.
- We must be open to all possibilities including the ordination of women to the diaconate and married clergy.



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Section 14 – A Synodal Approach to Formation

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- Every baptised person is responsible for their own formation (14a). How many are aware of this responsibility? How many communities are able to respond to support the formation of all the baptised?
- 14e is a good list of skills for ministry for a synodal Church.
- A relationship with Jesus Christ is central to all formation. We must create environments that provide opportunities for encounter with Christ.
- We must create cultures of ongoing, lifelong formation for all.
- Formation for seminarians must take place in inclusive spaces with lay women and men.

Further Thinking and Questions

- Formation is seen as primarily a top-down exercise where people are trained according to a pre-determined format.
- The personal gift of a sense of the faith, deep in the heart of all Catholics, is most often, not recognised.

Proposals

- Ensure that the sense of faith of the faithful, as expressed through the worldwide consultation is truly reflected in Synod discussions and decisions.
- Review seminary formation in the light of synodality.

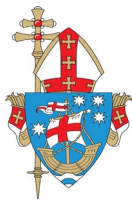
Section 16 – Towards a Listening and Accompanying Church

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- The experience of being listened to is deeply meaningful when it is authentic and generates a response from the listener.
- Going to the margins is important, but no one is at the margin of their own world, they are at the centre of their own world. We must meet people at ‘their centre’. Referring to them as being ‘on the margins’ only further marginalises them.

Further Thinking and Questions

- ‘Listening’ is a shift in the culture of the Church and may be strange to those who don’t know why they would want to be listened to, or believe that they are only meant to hear (receive) by Church leaders.
- How do we ensure safe spaces for listening, especially to the most vulnerable?
- Growing on the experience of the Australian and global synodal process, we have an opportunity to embed:
 - a shared understanding of what the purpose of listening is –
 - To give a space for people’s voice to be listened to deeply
 - To allow what is heard to shift and direct us to authentic change
 - listening to the voiceless, marginalized groups –



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- naming these groups (including those who are missing/absent)
- Listening without conditions

Proposals

- Provision for everyone in a church and school leadership role (clergy/parish leaders/ principals/ religious educators) to engage in a communications and relationships building program that includes 'how to lead listening'.
- Encourage and facilitate people in consecrated life and lay associations and movements to be creative in using their gifts and charisms to the full.

Section 17 – Mission in the Digital Environment

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- Use the digital environment to advertise the importance of personal relationship building.
- Communication between parents and teenagers/children (continuation of relationship)
- Aware of dangers with individual use of technology creates poor social skills.

Further Thinking and Questions

- Many in the Church continue to regard the internet as a tool for ministry and communication rather than a 'place' for mission and ministry.

Proposals

- Use the technology available to develop ways of reaching a wider audience, educate people and clergy, make recent advances in spirituality and theology more widely available and in readily accessible forms e.g. Zoom and MS Teams for meetings and small group activities, liturgies and theology in dialogue.
- Develop systems for improving our knowledge and understanding of our people.

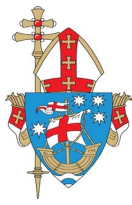
Section 18 – Structures for Participation

Points of Agreement with the Synthesis Report

- Co-responsibility between the ordained and non-ordained is essential for the life and mission of the Church.
- The role of Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Councils cannot be underestimated. This is a key body of leaders who practice co-responsibility in the parish.

Further Thinking and Questions

- The cultural challenges of secularism as well as the religiosity and expectations of new arrivals to Australia pose challenges for the participation of all the baptised and their willingness to take up responsibility in the life, ministry and mission of the Church.
- We need to break down the barriers that prevent laity from taking up responsibly to the ministry and mission of the local parish and wider world.



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- There is a tendency for some people to engage with the Church in a transactional way rather than to participate and take up their responsibility to the ministry and mission. The work of the Church is often misunderstood – many think it is just up to clergy, consecrated religious and volunteers to do everything.
- There is a disconnect between the *desire* to participate and the *opportunity* to participate in a way that is meaningful.

Proposals

- Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Councils should be mandatory.
- Formation for all people is needed to better understand their baptismal dignity and responsibility for participation in the life and mission of the Church.
- We need to provide skills formation of those on existing councils/commissions.
- Develop and model new ways of celebrating liturgically.