



PASTORAL LETTER - YEAR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

TIME TO GATHER FOR AN ARCHDIOCESAN ASSEMBLY – WITH A VIEW OF RE-ESTABLISHING A DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

Dear FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

8th AUGUST 2022 - 8 AUGUST 2023

YEAR OF WALKING TOGETHER.

We are coming towards the end of our Walking Together Year. This time has always had modest expectations. It arose immediately after the Plenary Council of Australia. The focus was on its themes of synodality. It asked the Archdiocese to scrutinise how she can truly Walk Together in evangelisation.

I have observed that the expression itself is now quite widely used around the Archdiocese. It carries a hope of listening better together. Another hope is the networking of our pastoral activities more acutely towards evangelisation. This latter aim has been difficult to activate. We tend to do what Pope Francis warns us against: "walking together in parallel lines that never meet".

8th AUGUST 2023 – 8th AUGUST 2024

YEAR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - "IT SEEMED GOOD TO US AND THE HOLY SPIRIT" (Acts 15/28)

I believe it is now time for us to journey the next steps together in a focussed manner. The next year is to focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

We need to gather for an Archdiocesan Assembly with a view of re-establishing a Diocesan Pastoral Council.

To move towards this end under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, four important focus areas need thorough discussion in our parishes and local communities of faith.

FOCUS ONE: AN ARCHDIOCESAN UNDERSTANDING OF EVANGELISATION.

We need an articulated and shared understanding of evangelisation within the Catholic Tradition. This forms a pastoral/theological foundation for all that follows.

Recently the Australian Bishops have published a short and helpful document articulating just this from a biblical/theological perspective. It is titled: "**Evangelisation: Encounter, Discipleship and Mission**". In our listening / sharing circles, we are to deepen our communal understanding of this vision of evangelisation.

FOCUS TWO: EVANGELISATION IN A SYNODAL AND MARIAN WAY.

Following on from this agreed understanding, we then examine how evangelisation is expressed in a synodal and Marian way. This dynamic topic is the source of much present day global discussion within the Catholic Church. Also, past Synods of the Archdiocese still offer us wisdom for the future.

We examine how this arises from our shared Baptism (Confirmation/Eucharist).

The Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn



The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelisation. This belief involves examination of the charisms of the Holy Spirit in our lives of faith. What Holy Spirit gifts do we discern in our own lives and the lives of others to project forward the mission of the Church in the world of today?

There are many new and helpful statements on these topics on the national, regional and international levels. We can examine some of these to assist us in our local and communal discernment.

FOCUS THREE: SPECIFIC AREAS OF EVANGELISATION.

Responding with the above foundations, we can then consider a local appropriation to the 8 main Decrees of the 8th Plenary Council of Australia.

Just recently, a helpful Australian pastoral resource has become available for us to gather in evangelisation circles and consider these Decrees.

FOCUS FOUR: ARCHDIOCESAN ASSEMBLY.

With the above sensibilities in mind and heart, we can gather as an Archdiocese and share the fruits of our listening to the Holy Spirit together. Relying on the movement of the Holy Spirit, we discern, for example, the exact nature of a Diocesan Pastoral Council for our Archdiocese.

Learning from the creative ways we responded electronically to the Covid pandemic, we could utilise the multi-modal ways of gathering not simply physically in one place but in many places simultaneously around our rural diocese.

We need to pose the question also during this assembly regarding the move towards an Archdiocesan Synod in the near future and what form such a formal gathering would take.

I notice that the young adults of our Archdiocese have shown conspicuous leadership in gathering using all the electronic means available. They have developed also creative ways of leading such discussions. Perhaps they could offer some leadership in advancing an Archdiocesan Assembly. Maybe we could gather in the second half of 2024.

I suppose when we place our own present day challenges and hopes in advancing the great mandate of the Lord Jesus to evangelise, we can look contemplatively to the *Acts of the Apostles* for biblical leadership and pastoral authority. After all their communal discernment of the Holy Spirit in the particular pastoral problems of the apostolic times, they concluded by using a wonderful expression that ought to animate our own humble attempts. Before articulating a specific response to an issue, they exclaimed:

“IT SEEMED GOOD TO US AND THE HOLY SPIRIT” (Acts 15/28)

Let us pray that as we set out on a new journey of evangelisation as an Archdiocese, we can reach this same statement of faith in a synodal and Marian way.

Soon a further document will be sent out with further details and resources listed.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse

27th June 2023

The Memorial of St Irenaeus