



## PLENARY COUNCIL – WHAT NEXT FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE?

### - YEAR OF WALKING TOGETHER -

**Dear Friends in Christ,**

Just a few weeks ago, I offered you all a **REPORT on the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASSEMBLY of the 5<sup>th</sup> PLENARY COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA.**

I wish now to follow up on an immediate way forward for us in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

#### **WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

Over four years the Catholic Church in Australia has been attempting to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance on three issues. Firstly, how may we open ourselves up to an increase of faith? Second, co-ordinating some common pastoral actions. Third, to direct our evangelising efforts in a united and disciplined manner.

Many motions have now been agreed nationally in response to these fundamental purposes of a Plenary Council. Once we finalise these ways forward and seek the discernment of the Holy See, Catholic Australia will begin to implement them appropriately on the local level.

In the meantime, we need to prepare the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn to pour this "new wine into fresh wineskins" (Mark 2:22).

#### **"YEAR OF WALKING TOGETHER".**

With great joy, I announce that the Archdiocese immediately embark on a **YEAR OF WALKING TOGETHER.** Just as the Risen Lord *walked alongside* (SYNODALITY) the disciples on the road to Emmaus and drew them from anxiety to hope, may we open ourselves up to do the same. In this year we will actively pursue solidarity as an Archdiocese, fostering a "mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all" (*Evangelii Gaudium* n. 188).

Two compass points ought to guide us.

Firstly, let us consider our response to the Plenary Council so far. It would be true to say that only certain groups in our Archdiocese have engaged with this communal discernment/spiritual conversation process to date. This has happened for all sorts of reasons. However, it is difficult to see united pastoral advancement deepen unless we firstly get to know each other better. As Archbishop, I can observe many great pastoral initiatives taking place but, too often, they are being celebrated in an isolated manner. We need to share with each other how we are practically living out our common baptism.

It is important to listen to the life/faith stories of each other so we can join each other in our united spiritual journey. As Pope Francis has taught about our shared humanity, our life together is not simply time that passes but opportunities for interactions (*cf Fratelli Tutti* n. 66).

Second, let us be enriched by our Catholic love of the Scriptures and Tradition, especially the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the recent motions of our Plenary Council. This will reveal that the Church has faced so many challenges over the centuries. Yet, at the same time, she has sought to remain faithful to her original mission of evangelisation whilst adjusting to new circumstances.

**The Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn**



This great redemptive pattern of "God with us" needs a fresh expression now in our Archdiocese, in union with the entire Church.

Let us reaffirm that Jesus is the centre of our common Emmaus walk. Without the Holy Spirit guiding us and our listening to the Spirit's whisper, all our efforts will ultimately prove fruitless.

Let us be also convinced that our ultimate Emmaus aim is to return to the Calvary peripheries of today, refreshed by the Sacramental food of the Eucharist and the "burning within us" of the Saving Word. This is the way of evangelisation in a Synodal way.

Like Mary, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, let us give birth to a renewed faith and united pastoral action in this Archdiocese for the many years ahead.

### **"WALKING TOGETHER" TASKFORCE.**

I have appointed a taskforce to offer practical ways forward for this year ahead:

- Lara Kirk: Marriage, Family and Relationships Manager; trained teacher, works in schools and in marriage preparation; brings together various networks across these areas, plus Disciples of Jesus Community and member of Yass parish from Murrumbateman.
- Pradeep Sornaraj: Member of Gungahlin Parish and Parish Pastoral Council; has networks among a variety of multicultural communities (Filipino, Indian and African); brings insights about how a large and diverse parish builds community and brings people together as a local parish community.
- Christopher Gilroy: youth ministry coordinator, young family, 10<sup>th</sup> child of 13 children. Has a passion for developing communities of organic interest within and alongside Church – previously a cheese maker.
- Sharee Thomas: REC in a Catholic school, mother of young children, an indigenous woman rediscovering her cultural roots and identity. Has been part of the Archdiocese and Catholic education since infancy.
- Jeanine Doyle; supporting the Archbishop in effective communications; came on board in 2012 as a digital media designer, has now moved to manager of communications and has pursued a digital first strategy. Studying theology. Has the task of presenting our mission in the public sphere.
- Patrick McArdle: Chancellor, former academic theologian and university administrator.

The Year will begin on the Solemnity of the Australian Saint, St Mary of the Cross Mackillop – 8<sup>th</sup> August 2022. It will include on the same date in 2023.

St Mary of the Cross is our great Australian intercessor, along with Mary, the Mother of the Church and all the Saints who name our parishes. It is now our time to do together what these great saints are experts at flowering – making Jesus known and loved in our world of today.



May I suggest the following:

- Regularly have a cuppa following weekend masses;
- Encourage parish participation in whole of diocese events such as the Marian Pilgrimage at Galong and the re-opening and dedication of Sts Peter and Paul's Old Cathedral in Goulburn;
- Promote and attend the Caring for Creation Conference (Saturday 17 September hosted by Holy Spirit Parish, Gungahlin);
- Focus on events that provide links between parish, school and community such as Remembrance Day, Parish/School Feast Days; ANZAC Day; NAIDOC Week;
- Widely distribute the "Year of Walking Together" prayer card and include one of the intercessory prayers regularly during Sunday mass;
- Draw attention to the calendar of events compiled by the Taskforce and published regularly in the Catholic Voice;
- Create a Parish calendar of events in the parish, school and associated groups to ensure everyone is aware of the rich life and activities that already exist.

The Taskforce will regularly send ideas for activities and invitations to possible events to parishes.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse  
Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn