

Archdiocese of Adelaide

# Diocesan Report to the 2023 Synod of Bishops

## **1. The Pilgrim Journey**

Over the past several years, the synodal path of the Archdiocese of Adelaide has been a sacred pilgrimage filled with blessings and challenges. As we set out to engage in listening, dialogue and discernment together, we have certainly encountered difficulties and challenges, but we have also found new walking partners, discovered new voices, and we have been given new maps for the journey ahead. We know full well that pilgrimage roads are rarely straight or easy. The path is often a winding and confusing road, encountering unforeseen obstacles, crossroads, and dead ends. The pilgrimage road can also be surprising, offering the occasional vista to inspiring horizons, much needed waypoints, places to receive rest and nourishment to continue the journey.

Many sacred paths are well-worn by previous generations of pilgrims and are memorialised by old maps. The Old maps are valuable as reminders of the way things once were. They show us how we understood the world ‘back then’, and they remind us of where we have come from. However, as the landscape changes the old maps lose their relevance, they are no longer as effective to guide the contemporary pilgrim on their way. Some sacred journeys require us to take risks and ‘blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy (Pope Francis, World Youth Day Prayer Vigil, 30 July 2016). New maps are required for new times, and as we blaze new trails, *we* must be the ones to draw the new maps so that others may follow.

Moments of listening and discernment with others have been opportunities to redraw the old maps and to explore new paths. Through listening to the stories and experiences of others, we have begun to change – our thinking, our behaviours, our relationships – and because we have changed, the Church has changed. We have discovered the importance of ‘walking together’, that the pilgrim journey is not something we are meant to do alone. Rather, the synodal path must literally be ‘together on the way’.

We have also learned that when we walk together we must take turns leading the way. One person may take the lead for a portion of the journey, and another may step forward to lead another portion. Often it is the unexpected leader, the person coming from the periphery, the one urging reform or renewal who is able to guide us on new and necessary paths. At other times we must be led by those who studied the old maps and know the landmarks, the potential pitfalls and have wisdom to discern the forking pathways.

Additionally, we have learned that it is not enough to listen and consult with people. We must respond to the real needs and desires of people with timely, concrete action. Responsiveness not only builds trust and goodwill, but it draws us closer as a community and encourages participation and collaboration. Above all we are learning to be better listeners to the Holy Spirit, to be guided by the Spirit’s promptings, and to trust in the Spirit’s voice.

### ***Adelaide’s Synodal Experience***

The Archdiocese of Adelaide, like many dioceses in Australia and the Western world, has seen a distinct shift in the participation of people in the local Church. Following the Second Vatican Council, the Archdiocese of Adelaide was energized and developed new models of participation through adult theological education, co-responsible leadership through Diocesan Pastoral Councils and Parish Pastoral Councils, and the development of lay leadership formation. However, diocesan leadership changed, Australian culture became more secular, and as scandal rocked the global Church, many became angry, disappointed, and disinterested, and so they left. Interestingly, as parish worshipping communities diminished, Catholic schools maintained or increased enrollment, and Catholic social agencies such as Vinnies and Centacare have grown their employment and volunteer base.

The faithful in Adelaide are a diverse group. There are those who seek reform, co-responsible leadership and adaptation to contemporary society. There are others who would like to see the Church return to a pre-Conciliar liturgy with greater authority from clergy and the Church in

matters of doctrine, culture and morality. And there are those who like things the way they are and have no desire to increase their participation or to see change in any form. Migrant communities, especially recent arrivals, bring a new vibrancy and piety to parishes and cultural communities. When it comes to the issues of importance to these groups, for every matter raised by one an equal and contradicting point is raised by another. Therefore the work of listening, dialogue and discernment together has been deeply important, and in some cases, transformative.

In recent years, the Archdiocese of Adelaide has been on an intentional synodal path prompted by the announcement in 2017 of the Fifth Australian Plenary Council. We have been engaged at every level in listening, dialogue, discernment and the development of responsive action. There was great excitement and hope at the beginning of the consultation processes and many people in parishes, schools, communities and Catholic agencies were actively engaged in the listening and dialogue processes. While listening and dialogue have taken many forms, one on one and small group spiritual conversations have been the most transformational. These encounters invite people to share their stories and experiences uninterrupted, while others listen in prayerful silence. From the early stages of the Plenary Council listening and dialogue sessions, it became clear to us that the Church progresses when we are truly listening to the other, and together discern the will of God and movement of the Holy Spirit. If we allow ourselves to be changed by the testimony of the other, the Church is already changing.

We are learning to make listening and consultation part of who we are as the Church of Adelaide. In addition to the 2023 Synod consultation and Plenary Council listening processes, we have also engaged in consultation with young people for the 2018 Synod of Bishops, listening forums with the archbishop on the national report on Church governance, *From the Light of the Southern Cross*, and significantly, a consultation process in the lead-up to our 2021 Diocesan Assembly. These consultation processes involved thousands of people from every corner of the dioceses representing a diverse demographic.

In a particular way, the 2021 Diocesan Assembly has had a significant impact on our local Church. The purpose of the Diocesan Assembly was 1) to prepare the archdiocese for the Plenary Council, 2) to develop a new vision for the Archdiocese of Adelaide, 3) to establish a new Diocesan Pastoral Council. We began with a simple question, “What do you think are the most important things to be discussed at the diocesan assembly?” We received over 1500 responses through a variety of methods (e.g. reply-paid postcard campaign, online survey, discussion groups, one on one conversations) which led to the development of six discussion themes: Leadership and Leadership Formation; Faith Formation and Spiritual Development; Parish Life and Liturgy; Outreach and Accompaniment of Children, Families and Young People; Inclusion and Healing; and A Church that hears and responds to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor.

At the Diocesan Assembly held on 17-23 September 2021, 460 representatives from parishes, communities, schools and Catholic agencies gathered over three days to pray, discuss, and commune as they discerned recommendations for the archdiocese. 255 recommendations were developed by the 60 discussion groups. These are now being discerned further by the newly established Diocesan Pastoral Council and by local parishes, communities, schools and agencies who will provide feedback on the recommendations for the next Diocesan Assembly in October 2022.

The 2023 Synod was announced during the 2021 Diocesan Assembly. We committed to sharing the responses of the discernment of the Diocesan Assembly and previous consultations while working to seek out the voices of those who had not yet been consulted or who chose not to participate in the processes. These are also included in this report.

## **Additional Learning**

### ***The Importance of Engaged Leadership***

The most engaged communities in the work of listening and discernment were places where the pastoral leadership, clergy and lay leaders, were actively participating in the process alongside of the members of the community. They were already modeling synodality, walking together.

When Archbishop O'Regan was installed in 2020, one of the first things he did was to re-engage the archdiocese in the preparations for the Plenary Council. Archbishop O'Regan held several public listening forums on the national report on Church governance, *Light from the Southern Cross*, and for the discernment process of the Plenary Council. Archbishop O'Regan also called for the 2021 Diocesan Assembly as a way to reengage with the Plenary Council, to prepare our local Council members, and to begin to plan for the future of the diocese. Through his energetic and engaged leadership, the Archdiocese of Adelaide has become a model for synodality within the Australian Church.

### ***Some Challenges***

At the beginning of the Plenary Council listening and dialogue process, our previous archbishop, the late Philip Wilson, was embroiled in court proceedings due to an accusation of the mishandling of reporting child sexual abuse at the hands of a priest nearly 30 years prior. The court proceedings had a profound affect on the morale of the archdiocese, its employees and all the faithful. When Archbishop Wilson was found guilty of failing to report abuse of a minor (although later acquitted), a cloud hung over the archdiocese for many years and impacted people's desire to participate in the listening and dialogue processes, their trust in Church leadership, and ultimately their affiliation with the Catholic Church.

Another significant challenge was our inability to adequately find and listen to the voices of people on the peripheries. While we are delighted at the level of participation throughout the listening and dialogue over the past five years, there are many people who have been left out of the conversations. Those who have intentionally chosen not to participate, and those we have failed to invite into the conversations.

Finally, the processes for listening and consultation have all been designed as group encounters. Where this has happened, it has largely been successful and transformative. However, where there has been an opportunity to participate as an individual, online, in written form, on a survey, etc., there is a noticeable disconnect with the process. Where group experiences offer an encounter with 'the other', with Christ, individual responses have largely been reactionary, one-sided and agenda-pushing. Responses that come after a group dialogue tend to be nuanced, spiritual, visionary. While all responses, from groups and from individuals, are valued, we wish everyone had the opportunity to participate in the group listening, dialogue and discernment.

## **2. Assessing the Changing Landscape**

This section is divided into seven subsections based on the discussion and discernment themes of our 2021 Diocesan Assembly. The subsections are structured thus: Theme heading, synthesis of the consultations, quotes from the consultations, and a synthesis of the recommendations developed by participants of the Diocesan Assembly. The final subsection includes other major topics and quotes not captured in the previous subsections.

### **2.1 Inclusion and Healing**

Many people asked, "how can we be a more welcoming and inclusive Church?" with particular emphasis on Aboriginal people, women, LGBTQIA+ persons, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, people with differing abilities, divorced Catholics and those who have left the church. Many others named protection for the vulnerable, the unborn, those in poverty, people living with illness, and the elderly, as important issues. There were divided responses on issues relating to family planning, end of life decisions and gender. Many called on the Church to acknowledge its part in the abuse and harm of vulnerable people and children, particularly in regard to clergy sexual

abuse, bullying by clergy, and institutional abuse of Aboriginal peoples. Other called for a formal reconciliation process, liturgy or ritual from the Church as a way to begin the healing process.

*"Inclusivity: We have lost many faithful people in recent times who are feeling disillusioned with our Church. How do we engage with them, invite them to conversation and listen and learn with them so that we can become a more relevant church in a modern world? Likewise with others on the margins, how do we continue to truly hear their voices and be inclusive of them as part of church?"*

*"How we can make church more accessible and engaging for young people, a more inviting environment for disabled people, LGBTIQ people and indigenous people."*

*"Deepening the engagement of a newly formed multicultural Church. Addressing racism within the Church is an important part of this subject. As well as avoiding the mistakes of the past century in the Church in structurally sidelining ethnic communities through such structures as the well intentioned but disastrous migrant chaplain program of the bishops conference."*

*"When not all are able to receive the Eucharist, how do we still engage them in the Holy Mass?"*

*"A return to the Third Rite [of reconciliation] where, as a community, we acknowledge that we fail, but with the help and encouragement of our Lord and with the support of each other, we move forward in our service to our God and to each other."*

*"I work in the Psychology and Education field. I see much fear in our society, leading to loss of hope and despair. I have concern with the fear that is being cycled in our society from Covid and also subsequently in our Church."*

### ***Synthesis of the 2021 Diocesan Assembly Recommendations***

- Recognise Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander peoples by strengthening and expanding good practices and pastoral supports.
- Develop inclusive reconciliation processes that begin with acknowledgement/apology of the harm, pain and lack of inclusion on behalf of the church and work toward healing and becoming a more open and inclusive community (e.g. Conduct a Rite of Healing and lamentation).
- Create a council or working group for inclusion, healing and diversity whose work will be to develop action plans, resources, training, and support across the archdiocese.
- Employ the use of inclusive language, particularly in liturgies (scripture and prayers).
- Create opportunities for ongoing listening and dialogue at all levels.
- Develop opportunities for participation in the full life and mission of the church, including areas of leadership and decision making.
- Develop strategies and actions to be a more outward focused, welcoming and inclusive communities, parishes and schools.

### **2.2 Leadership and Leadership Formation**

Many people offered responses that dealt with leadership, directly and indirectly. There is great concern for issues relating to clergy, particularly the priesthood. Many are worried about the decreasing number of active clergy and low numbers of those entering the seminary. Clericalism and bullying, of both lay and ordained, was a significant concern. Many perceive their parish priests to be overworked, and stretched, some are detached from community life. Many are asking for the priesthood to be reimagined by being inclusive of married men, ordination of women, and laity. Clergy formation, before and after ordination was also a concern for many people. Several people expressed gratitude for the missionary and international priests serving in parishes in the Archdiocese but are concerned for their formation and wellbeing in a new culture.

People are seeking a greater understanding of the role of the laity in church leadership, particularly for women and young people, and seeking greater collaboration between lay and ordained leaders. People are also seeking opportunities to develop leadership skills in ministry, governance, and pastoral life. Respondents also asked for guidance regarding pastoral councils, transparency of Church authorities and governance, and a more visible presence of the archbishop in the diocese.

*"To utilize the skills, knowledge, experience and faith-filled commitment of lay leaders in our parish communities e.g. to provide homilies that bring scriptures to life by speaking to the social issues and daily realities of people's lives, work and community experiences."*

*"The gender imbalance in the Church is problematic. Not only is the hierarchy a "boys only" club, but even God gets reduced to being considered male."*

*"Education of priests and ministers in current theology, scripture scholarship, pastoral issues - to improve the quality of the sermons (so many are v. antiquated theology) and how priests treat those of us in the pews."*

*"Allowing our clergy to have the option of marrying, this could be a way of opening the path to once again increasing numbers that can lead the Catholic faith with confidence, and being able to relate more consistently with family life."*

*"Allowing women to be ordained as Deacons, with a view to becoming priests, thus moving the church into the 21st Century and onwards!!!"*

*"The appointment of bishops to include genuine consultation with laity who can call forth suitable persons for their diocese."*

*"Good governance through accountability, transparency, inclusion and subsidiarity"*

*"Identifying and promoting models of Church reflecting Gospel values appropriate for 21st century Australia."*

*"The role and formation of lay leadership in the diocese should continue to be advanced. We need to continue to promote senior female leadership, openness, visibility, and good governance, particularly in the light of the findings of the Child Abuse Royal Commission."*

### ***Synthesis of the 2021 Diocesan Assembly Recommendations***

- Continued discernment, development and implementation of new models of leadership for clergy and laity to minister and govern collaboratively, synodally in the Church today.
- Enable opportunities for all the laity, but especially women, to undertake roles of leadership in all areas of Archdiocesan life including parishes and communities,
- Enhance and promote leadership formation and education opportunities through new and existing platforms (e.g. CESA, ACU, MFP, Centacare etc.) for lay and ordained.
- Provide resources for parishes and communities to employ pastoral and administrative staff.
- Support collaborative governance in parishes with the provision of guidelines and resources for parish pastoral councils and other leadership councils and committees.
- Provide significant support to clergy in the areas of wellbeing and mental health, ongoing formation and spiritual development, change management, workload and interpersonal relationships.
- Encourage greater collaboration in parishes, communities and schools between clergy and laity, particularly in liturgical life
- Develop ways to mentor and empower young people as leaders

### **2.3 Faith Formation and Spiritual Development**

Many people expressed a deep longing for faith formation and spiritual guidance. Many people asked for programs, resources and multi-modal learning opportunities to be provided at diocesan, deanery, parish, home, and individual levels. Respondents suggested a variety of kinds of formation: religious education in Catholic schools, catechetical programs, scripture study, theological education, Catholic social teaching, spiritual direction, sacramental preparation programs, adult faith formation, youth and young adult programs, service-learning, online options and small group settings.

Other responses included the promotion of commitment to prayer, experiencing different spiritual practices in the Christian tradition, and offering new opportunities to engage with and promote praying the rosary and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Some respondents spoke about their experience of a particular devotion, spirituality, or community and their desire for others to know about them.

*"How do we as a faith community support individual faith response in children and adults that accentuates agency, conscience, freewill and responsibility"*

*"How can the young people access the "Word of God" in a language they can understand - Art, music, lifestyle etc."*

*"Adult Faith Formation: sharing of current theology, scripture, social justice, ecumenism to support people in our parishes to be more empowered with knowledge and understanding of our faith in today's world."*

*"More prayer opportunities as a community; Rosary, Holy Hour, 24 hour adoration"*

*"As the Spirit leads Catholics to "grow up" in their Faith - this causes internal chaos at times... more Spiritual Directors are needed and funding for more lay people to be trained who can't otherwise afford the time or cost."*

*"The integration of school and parish communities - finding/creating new models"*

*"Our parish has an R-12 college with over 1000 students of which 60% are reputed to be non-Catholic. Only 13 students made their First Eucharist this year. None of these have been sighted in the church either before or after making their First Communion. No youth over 10 attend Sunday Mass"*

### ***Synthesis of the 2021 Diocesan Assembly Recommendations***

- Provide diverse, high-quality, multi-modal faith formation, catechesis, theological education and spiritual development opportunities, programs and resources for all ages, with a particular emphasis on adult faith formation.
- Develop a diocesan faith formation team to oversee
- Review policies and frameworks for all sacramental preparation and develop realistic, relevant resources for individuals, parishes, schools and communities.
- Provide support for enhancing partnerships between parishes, schools and communities for faith formation and sacramental preparation.
- Improve communication of and accessibility to faith formation resources, policies, and expectations
- Provide faith formation and spiritual development programs for religious education teachers, catechists, and other faith formation leaders/ministers.

### **2.4 Parish Life and Liturgy**

Parish and community life were of great concern to people as these are the primary reference points for church for most people. Many people asked the questions, "Why are people no longer attending Mass" and "How can we become a more welcoming and inclusive church?" Some people expressed concern and sadness at the decreasing number of people involved in parish life in the

wake of the pandemic. Others offered suggestions for improving community life by developing more contemporary liturgies, offering programs and activities for children, families and young people, building stronger relationships between schools and parishes, and engaging in the wider community outside the church walls. Several people mentioned the growing cultural diversity of the Archdiocese as both a gift and a challenge.

People were concerned about church finances, upkeep of buildings and properties, employment of parish workers, regional communities, and finding new leaders and volunteers.

Liturgy was also a significant theme for many people. Some are looking for new and inclusive language for readings and prayers, others are advocating that more traditional forms of the liturgy, such as the Latin Mass, be promoted. Respondents were divided on how Mass should be celebrated (contemporary or traditional), what music is appropriate and what would attract non-church-goers to Mass, especially young people. Many indicated that homilies need better preparation and should reflect the assembly in the light of the readings.

*"Encourage a sense of community within each of the parishes by welcoming new parishioners and supporting social activities across all cultures."*

*"As each Parish forms its own vision, the vision should be owned by the Priest, The Pastoral [Council], all Ministries and the Parishioners."*

*"What can be done to help our many rural and remote parish communities continue to have a spiritually functional, healthy and sustainable Catholic faith?"*

*"Address the Sacramental and pastoral life of the Church and what might enable us to live even more our faith in this place, and celebrate in diverse ways to meet diverse needs, all within the Unity of being Church with and for each other and for our world."*

*"The centrality of the mass to the Faith. Joyful services that avoid sermons that are overlong religious lectures without contemporary relevance."*

*"Making the readings at Mass more accessible to the congregation as the readings are difficult for the congregation to grasp on hearing."*

*"Introduction of inclusive language in all areas of church liturgy. At present it is degrading for women to be totally ignored in the wording of scripture, prayers some hymns used in our liturgies."*

*"The youth need to be inspired, young families need their needs met. Old people need to be uplifted. We need charismatic preachers that have tasted the love of God and can share."*

### ***Synthesis of the 2021 Diocesan Assembly Recommendations***

- Develop strategies, resources and formation for parishes and communities to be places of hospitality, welcome, inclusion and belonging
- Develop strategies, resources and formation for parishes and communities to become outward focussed and engaged in mission.
- Develop strategies and practices for greater collaboration and partnerships between parishes and schools
- Support shared, collaborative leadership between clergy and laity, recognising the gifts of one another.
- Review and improve communication methods between the archdiocese and parishes/communities/schools and the people.
- Develop resources and support structures for faith formation, catechesis and sacramental preparation for all ages.

## **2.5 A Church that Hears and Responds to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor.**



People are concerned about the role of the church in responding to various crises facing the poor and vulnerable, locally and globally. There were significant responses seeking leadership in the area of climate change and working to end poverty and homelessness. Others asked how the Archdiocese can lead in areas of social and political topics (e.g. abortion, euthanasia, refugees and migrants, and reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples), and defend the rights of the most vulnerable in society. People are looking for opportunities to engage in action and advocacy for social justice. Many want to see greater collaboration with other Christian denominations and organisations as well as expanded opportunities for ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue. There is little knowledge of the work the Archdiocesan ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue groups.

*"Can we have a church where Social Justice as of Jesus of Nazareth is at our core - homelessness, underemployment, abuse of nature, asylum seekers, Indigenous welfare, suicide etc."*

*"A church that is actively present in the "existential peripheries" - a church that is poor and is with the poor (e.g. Aboriginal people, the unemployed, the homeless, etc.) A church that is attentive to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth"*

*"We must prioritise care for the earth, there is no time more important than now. There are so many switches we can make and initiatives we can implement."*

### **Synthesis of the 2021 Diocesan Assembly Recommendations**

- The Archdiocese develops a strategic plan to lead in the areas of social justice and integral ecology, beginning with a review of its own practices, investments and commitments.
- The Archdiocese provide opportunities and resources for education and faith formation in the areas of Catholic Social Teaching, social and ecological justice for all ages.
- The Archdiocese develops effective, multi-platform communication strategies aimed at elevating the 'brand' of the Archdiocese, inspiring people to live the mission of the Gospel, and promote practical action and engagement with social justice issues.
- The Archdiocesan Council for Integral Ecology provide visible, transparent leadership in collaboration with other diocesan councils, agencies and leaders.
- Greater collaboration and partnerships are developed between the archdiocese, parishes, schools, communities, agencies, families, other churches and religious groups, non-church organisations, etc. to work for justice, peace and an integral ecology.

### **2.6 Outreach and Accompaniment of Children, Families and Young People**

Many people asked the questions, "where are our young people? How can we bring them back to church?" Others asked, "how can we support young people, children and their families?" Some people are asking for advice for outreach and engagement with young people, others look to young people as a solution to diminishing Mass attendance, but they do not know how to attract them. Many are wondering how to support parents of young children and strengthen family life. How can communities welcome and support families, children and young people?

Young people under the age of 30 asked for mental health support, for the parish community to be open to the ideas and leadership from young people, opportunities to connect and serve in the community, and they are asking for guidance and accompaniment from elders. People also asked for communities to be more supportive of families, to engage children through programs and activities, and offer age-appropriate faith formation and liturgies.

Several respondents called for a re-commitment to providing safe environments for young people in our parishes, schools and communities.

*"It seems very apparent that many young people are totally switched off from religious contact, but at the same time are very caring, loving and responsible youngsters of whom we as parents are very proud. How can we the church ignite their enthusiasm"*

*"Provide support and listen to the voice of the Youth. Create opportunities for young people to participate in the leadership."*

*"Accompaniment of children and young people, including those experiencing diverse gender identity."*

*"Young people and mental health issues is also a major issue that should be discussed, Things like providing more mental health services/funding is something the church can help with."*

### ***Synthesis of the 2021 Diocesan Assembly Recommendations***

- Develop strategies and best practices to strengthen partnerships between schools, parishes, Centacare and other agencies and organisations to support children, families and young people.
- Develop age and life-situation appropriate programs, resources and strategies to assist children, families and young people in faith formation spiritual development.
- Develop strategic plans for youth gatherings and events at local and diocesan levels, and share resources, practices and
- Develop more ways for young people to engage in 'faith in action' through justice and service initiatives.
- Provide and promote a diverse range of opportunities for young people to encounter Christ and the rich traditions of the Church in prayer, formational and catechetical programs, events and pilgrimages.
- Develop strategies and practices for communities to become places of belonging, connection, collaboration and mission.
- Engage in ongoing listening and consultation with children, families and young people.

### **2.7 Additional consultations**

#### ***Ecumenical and Interfaith***

The Archdiocese of Adelaide has long been involved in dialogue and relationship-building with other Christian churches and other religions and faith communities, however, many Catholics are unaware of this work, and several people in the consultations asked for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and partnerships. Those from other faith communities also participated in the consultations. There was the recognition that working together for justice is important and achievable.

*"We must hear the cries of our people, including illness, disasters, economic situation, housing affordability."*

*"Walking with our indigenous peoples towards reconciliation."*

*"If God and Jesus ask us to love how are we including the voices of: indigenous Australians, LGBTQIA+ people, those at the margins refugees."*

*"God is asking us to be more missionary."*

*"Listening the voice of young people, children and young families."*

#### ***Chaplains in Prisons and Hospitals***

*"The importance of the small conversations – one to one or in small groups – cannot be over stated. We need more opportunities for these."*

*"I have gratitude for my ministry in chaplaincy. To be the face of the Church to the marginalized."*

*"We must first know ourselves before we know how we make space for others and assist them through difficulties."*

*"[Chaplains] have a ministry of presence – we are an 'active listening ear'."*

### **LGBTQI+ Persons**

People want the Church to know their realities in all their joy and their suffering (people experiencing illness, incarceration, and loneliness). They want the Church to accept them in their realities and to accompany them without judgment.

*"We are a faithful Catholic couple who just happen to be two men."*

*"Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual people do not wish to live their lives as a 'trial'. They want to live in the freedom of the children of God, valuing who they are and accepting themselves as God has made them."*

### **Being Church Today**

*"Can we talk about new ways of being the church, being missionary disciples, taking on the model of Christ as wounded healer, and empowering ALL who are called to lead and serve in ministry."*

*"To be truly missionary we need to return to our basic principle of being a Christ-centred church, embracing and nurturing small communities, which are able to foster formation, spreading the Gospel and support the local priests."*

*"Those disconnected from the church need to be actively engaged with-particularly those marginalised by outdated attitudes."*

*"In my local church, it seems that people who work in senior positions within the diocese or Catholic organisations, older people and well-organised activists are listened to. Those who are left out include: young practising Catholics, those who are not in senior positions in the Church or society, people from migrant/ ethnically diverse communities, international priests, and seminarians."*

*"To be connected and build a new culture of respecting, listening, uplifting, accepting, caring, sharing, every step let's ask personally, as a community, what will Jesus do to bring this new society"*

*"Learn to be open to change, not too ready to disapprove of change - think about it and pray about it."*

## **3. Conclusion: Drawing New Maps**

It is clear that *synodality* is not just a buzzword, rather it is the necessary model of Church for this new millennium. This is both an encouragement and challenge. Our experience of listening leads us to believe that the synodal way is greatly desired and needed. It is a way of engaging the whole People of God in communion, participation and mission, though most people still do not know what synodality means or how to be a synodal Church. There are also those who oppose the idea of synodality, believing that it causes confusion, dilutes the core teachings of the Church and is ineffective. Yet this last stance is built upon misunderstandings. The practice of synodality was integral to the church of the first millennium. In his October 2015 speech, Pope Francis emphasised that "church and synod are synonymous." The practice of synodality does not lessen the role of bishops but heightens their role, and calls them to be dialogical, discerning shepherds. In the Archdiocese of Adelaide, we are committed to the synodal path, and we will work to accompany all people along the way.

One of the challenges of synodality is that it is a longer, slower path. It requires more stops to consult the map and to walk at the pace of others. It oftentimes feels like an uphill climb along a path with loose rocks and unsure footing. Although it is a harder way, synodality has the ability to be more agile and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, precisely because it is *of* the Spirit. Therefore, because we believe synodality is *of* the Spirit, we in the Archdiocese of Adelaide are committed to it and we see it as *the way* forward, especially at the most local levels where accompaniment and mission become reality. We are willing to accept the challenges of synodality, to take the longer, slower path if it means we all journey *together on the way*.

### ***Together on the Way***

Recognising the interconnectedness of the 2023 Synod, Plenary Council, Adelaide Diocesan Assembly and other synodal initiatives, we have adopted this phrase “Together on the Way” as a slogan for our synodal work in our diocese. Some of the initiatives that have been inspired by our consultations over the past few years include:

- Re-establishment of a Diocesan Pastoral Council
  - The Diocesan Pastoral Council is working to develop a new vision for the diocese with synodality as a central principle.
  - The DPC has real authority in collaboration with the archbishop and the Council of Priests.
- Commitment to gathering regularly for a Diocesan Assembly every 1-3 years and will include regular consultation with the people of the archdiocese.
- The appointment of two lay persons (female and male) to the roles of Director and Assistant Director of Pastoral Life and Mission, senior leadership positions in the diocese.
- Re-orientation of Diocesan Pastoral Services to be more collaborative, empowering, and responsive the needs of parishes and communities.
- Collaboration with Catholic Education South Australian to revisit *Being Church Together*, a document on the relationship of parishes and schools.
- Development of a handbook and norms for Parish Pastoral Councils with an emphasis on synodality.
- Many parishes, schools, communities and agencies are continuing the work of listening and discernment, particularly in regard to the recommendations from the 2021 Diocesan Assembly, and are working toward becoming more synodal in their leadership and community life.

### ***Our Hope for the Future***

We desire to be a Church that proclaims and embodies the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and ascended.

We desire to be a Church that is synodal; that walks with all peoples and all of Creation, that listens intently so as to discern the *sensus fidei* in particular contexts, and that engages others in dialogue as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

We desire to be a Church that demonstrates inclusive leadership for all who have been called to lead in the Spirit.

We desire to be a Church that engages in good governance, which is transparent, accountable and responsible.

We desire to be a Church where all are welcomed into communion, participation and mission, where all may find healing and belonging in an encounter the transformative love of Christ.

We desire to be a Church that is a diverse tapestry of cultures, styles of prayer and worship, yet able to gather around the table of the Lord in communion.

We desire to be a Church that is unafraid to be a prophetic voice on behalf of the vulnerable and voiceless, that challenges the *status quo* with courageous action and meaningful change.

## APPENDIX

### Links and Supporting Documents

All links and supporting documents can be found online at [www.adelaidediocesanassembly.org/resources](http://www.adelaidediocesanassembly.org/resources)

#### About the Archdiocese of Adelaide

- Introduction video from the 2021 Diocesan Assembly ([video](#))
- 2016 Diocesan Census information ([pdf](#))

#### 2021 Diocesan Assembly Materials

- Consultation Data ([pdf](#))
- Recommendations ([pdf](#))
- Website and additional resources ([website](#))
- Event photos ([photos](#))

#### 2023 Synod Consultation Data

- Responses from people in the Archdiocese of Adelaide ([pdf](#))

#### Plenary Council Data

- Archdiocese of Adelaide Listening and Dialogue Report ([pdf](#))

#### Young People

- 2017 Listening to the Voices of Young People Report ([pdf](#))
- 2019 World Youth Day Mural Wall ([photos](#))
- 2021 Diocesan Youth Assembly ([website](#))

#### Together on the Way

- Discernment and Feedback Process ([link](#))
- Informational Resources ([link](#))