



DIOCESAN MEDIA OFFICE

Dated: Monday 24 August 2024

Subject: **Catholic Diocese of Geraldton Concludes Historic First Synod**

At 5.00 pm on Friday 23 August 2024, in the lands of the Southern Yamatji Peoples, the Catholic Diocese of Geraldton concluded its first ever Synod since the diocese was established in 1898, with a special Mass held at St Francis Xavier Catholic Cathedral, Geraldton.

Catholic Bishop of Geraldton, Most Rev Michael Morrissey, said he was delighted with the synodal journey the Diocese of Geraldton has been on, and its future mission orientation.

"I am grateful to all of the delegates who have so generously given their time and prayerful consideration to this process. It gives me great joy that clergy, lay people, young and old who have a diversity of faith experience can work together in unity as one body of Christ.

I approach this future with an open heart", said Bishop Michael.

The theme of the Synod, *Janus Patet Cor Magis*, (the door is open, the heart even more) are words inscribed on the doorway of Our Lady of Mt Carmel Presbytery, Mullewa. This theme permeated the 3-day gathering of over 70 people which included lay people students from Nagle Catholic College, Religious Sisters and Clergy delegates.

The process of being synodal was thoughtfully and professionally facilitated by Dr Mark Copland, Director of Pastoral Projects, Catholic Diocese of Broome, and Ms. Alison Ryan, Facilitator for Mission Enhancement Team, Catholic Diocese of Parramatta.

Two major inputs were provided by Rev Fr Orm Rush, Associate Professor at Australian Catholic University and an appointed member to the Commission of Theologians supporting the Synod on Synodality. Fr Rush provided a pre-recorded presentation on an understanding of synodality.

The second presenter was the respected theologian, Dr Angela McCarthy, Adjunct Professor in Theology, Notre Dame University, who spoke on ways of implementing synodality in the Geraldton Diocese.

Delegates were afforded opportunities to pray, listen, reflect, discern, read and discuss key themes which emerged from a diocesan-wide listening process over the past year. In excess of 200 submissions were received from Catholic people responding to the Key Question:

How is the Holy Spirit calling us to be more open-hearted to the challenges of Mission in our diocese today?

From the submissions, the hopes, disappointments, fears and dreams were shared within a working document (or *instrument laboris*) by a writing group under the leadership of Rev Fr Gerard Totanes and lead writer Dr Jim Cregan.

The five themes deliberated on contained 20 proposed resolutions, drawn from each theme, and were voted on by Delegates. These themes were:

- Engagement and Communication
- Intergenerational Connections
- Outreach and Welcome
- Dignity and Authenticity
- Spirituality and Secular Life.

The voting and counting of each resolution were overseen by Rev Fr Stephen Ochola, Canon Lawyer, Catholic Archdiocese of Perth. 20 resolutions were passed in the affirmative.

The task ahead will be to develop a Diocesan Pastoral Plan which will set the pathway for the Diocese into the future.

End Statement.

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