

Bunbury Clergy Gathering Charts a Synodal Future

“If we are to be a synodal Church, we need more than strategies. We need courage – not the courage of human strength, but the courage that comes from faith.”

With this invitation from newly ordained Bishop George Kolodziej SDS, clergy from across the Diocese of Bunbury gathered in Busselton recently for a powerful and engaging Clergy Conference centred on *Nurturing a Culture for a Synodal Church* — a clear sign of the value the newly installed Bishop places on walking the synodal path together.

The gathering brought together diocesan and religious priests, retired clergy, lay principals, leaders and diocesan staff — a rich mix of voices and charisms that fostered a truly synodal spirit. In his homily at the Conference Mass, Bishop George shared, *“We come not simply to study a process, but to walk together, to listen to the Holy Spirit, and to renew our courage for the mission ahead.”*

The Conference was facilitated by Patti Beattie, Head of Pastoral Discernment and Accompaniment, and Kelly Paget, Head of Mission and Chancellor — both from the Diocese of Broken Bay. Throughout the two days, Kelly shared her extraordinary personal experience of serving as a non-bishop member of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Across the sessions, clergy and lay leaders explored synodality through theological grounding, listening exercises, and concrete examples of parish and diocesan practice. Many highlighted a particularly powerful moment: the humility with which both clergy and lay leaders acknowledged the need to grow in synodal ways. One participant reflected, *“For the first time I’ve actually understood what synodality means.”*

The two-day conference immersed participants in the heart of synodal practice through Conversation in the Spirit — offering depth, practical formation, and tools currently used across the Diocese of Broken Bay. Participants were invited to reflect on how similar frameworks, structures and processes might inform their own pastoral planning and parish renewal in Bunbury. As Bishop George reminded those gathered, *“The call to synodality invites us to change how we walk together, how we listen, and how we discern.”*

The Diocese of Bunbury has begun this journey with hope and courage — grounded in faith, guided by listening, and committed to walking together. Bishop George closed the Conference by inviting “all of you — clergy and faithful alike — to begin walking this synodal road together, trusting that the Holy Spirit is leading us. May our Diocese grow ever deeper in communion, ever stronger in participation, and ever more courageous in mission.”

Reflecting further after the Conference, Bishop George added:

“After listening prayerfully to my priests and lay faithful during our recent conference, I am strongly convinced that walking together is the way forward for our Diocese. We are called to be a fully alive Church—a community where everyone is welcome, where synodality is not simply a concept but a lived reality, and where the spirit of co-responsibility is embraced by all.”