



MEDIA STATEMENT

OCTOBER 25, 2025

## Australians gather in Rome for Synod reflection

A contingent of 24 Australians is in Rome to celebrate the Church's commitment to walking together in hope and mission.

The men and women from across the nation are attending events being held to mark the Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies, including an audience with Pope Leo XIV.

Pope Leo XIV welcomed about 2000 members of synodal teams and participatory bodies in the Paul VI Audience Hall in the Vatican.

The Pope expressed hope the Church in Oceania would continue to grow in communion through the spirit of synodality and stressed the urgency of action to address climate change, poverty and injustice.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, led a seminar which looked at authentic synodal decision-making processes.

He noted Pope Leo, reflecting on the work of Pope Francis, had described synodality as “a style, an attitude that helps us to be Church by promoting authentic experiences of participation and communion”.

“A truly synodal Church ... cannot, or at least should not, be divided into active members and passive members; into those who give and those who receive; into those who act and those who are acted upon,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

“Rather, every member of the Church is meant to be an ‘actor’ in the lives of others and equally someone who is willingly acted upon by others.”

Archbishop Costelloe said examining structure should not occur without also looking at “culture”.

“If you put all your energy and time into the reform of structures without also, and even more insistently, putting energy and time into the question of culture, then in fact very little will change,” he said.

“We must, I believe, keep a number of fundamental things in mind, and first among them is the question of fidelity to the gospel and to our fundamental identity as disciples of Christ.

“Our task is not to remake the Church but to play our part in ensuring that the Church is faithful to its Lord: that we are faithful to the Lord. One of the essential dimensions of that fidelity is our recognition that the Church is fundamentally missionary in nature.”

He said all decision-making bodies needed to ask the question: “How does or will this ... assist those involved in it and those whom it seeks to serve, be credible witnesses to the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ?”

Speaking about authority in the Church, he said leaders needed to ensure consultation processes were well prepared and conducted, open and honest, and clear in terms of their outcomes.

They should also treat the outcomes with great seriousness and deliberation, recognising the action of the Holy Spirit, and committing the Church to the implementation of its recommendations.

The activities during the jubilee celebration also include a pilgrimage and passage through the Holy Door at St Peter’s Basilica, workshops, a Marian prayer vigil and a Mass presided by Pope Leo.

## **BACKGROUND**

Those in attendance include:

### **Australian Catholic Bishops Conference**

Fr Chris de Souza (General Secretary)  
Bishop Gregory Bennet (Vice President and Bishop of Sale)  
Dr Trudy Dantis (Director, National Centre for Pastoral Research)

### **Archdiocese of Brisbane (Queensland)**

Deacon Peter Pelicaan  
Eric Robinson  
Stephanie Jorna

### **Diocese of Cairns (Queensland)**

Ms Anne Chellingworth

### **Diocese of Parramatta (New South Wales)**

Mike Schembri  
Sr Ailsa Mackinnon

**Archdiocese of Perth  
(Western Australia)**

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB (President ACBC and Archbishop of Perth)  
Rev Fr Nelson Po  
Mr Daniel Lynch  
Dr Debra Sayce  
Ms Tara Peters

**Diocese of Bunbury  
(Western Australia)**

Rev Fr Pierangelo dela Cruz Repuyan  
Dr Deborah Robertson  
Kerrie Merritt

**Diocese of Broome  
(Western Australia)**

Mrs Naomi Martin

**Diocese of Geraldton  
(Western Australia)**

Very Rev Gerard Totanes

**Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Melbourne**

Fr Sijeesh Pullankunnel  
Dr Jaisy Jimmy Arikatt  
Mr Joby Philip  
Mr Sojin Sebastian  
Dr John Joseph

**Australia and Synodality**

Synodality is derived from the Greek words "sýn" (together) and "hodos" (way or journey). In other words: "journeying together".

In October 2021, Pope Francis announced there would be a Synod on Synodality in 2023.

He said at the time: "Synodality is the way of being the Church today according to the will of God, in a dynamic of discerning and listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit."

Australian dioceses marked the opening of the first phase of consultations with celebrations on 17 October 2021.

The theme for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was set: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission".

Australian Catholics began exploring issues such as how they dialogue in parishes and dioceses; how they make decisions; who takes part in decision making; and how to ensure those on the margins have a say.

Submissions were collected from around Australia through an online portal from mid-October 2021 to February 2022.

In May 2022, the National Centre for Pastoral Research presented the synthesis of reports from the various diocese and other entities to the Vatican. This was known as the [Australian synthesis](#).

Five months later, in October 2022, the Holy See released the [Working Document for the Continental Stage](#).

Each Continental region in the world was invited to engage with the document.

The NCPR was commissioned to coordinate a second round of consultation on that document and in December 2022 published a synthesis of the submissions.

The thoughts of those in the Oceania region were reflected in the document *Oceania Discernment on the Working Document for the Continental Stage* which was submitted to the Holy See in early 2023.

The announcement in April 2023 that Pope Francis would be granting voting rights at the Synod to non-bishop members - priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, and secular men and women - was a groundbreaking development.

Women had been appointed as "auditors" in previous synods; however, this was the first time they were granted voting rights.

On 29 May 2023, the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the First Assembly of the Synod was released.

The list of participants was announced on 7 July 2023, which included five voting participants and six experts and facilitators from Australia.

The First Assembly of the Synod was held from 4 to 29 October 2023 in Rome.

The assembly involved more than a dozen Australian Catholics from a range of backgrounds.

Based on the discussions of those at the assembly, first, a [Letter to the People of God](#) was published, followed by the [Synthesis Report](#).

In March 2024, the General Secretariat of the Synod released two documents in response to the desire to continue the synodal journey on themes raised at the First Assembly.

The [first document](#) detailed five perspectives to be explored at the Second Assembly.

The [second document](#) outlined the study groups to examine 10 topics.

In May 2024, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference submitted the [Australian Summary from the 2024 Consultation](#) to the General Secretariat of the Synod. The Report summarised

the reflections provided by Australian dioceses and other Church organisations in response to the [Synthesis Report](#).

In July 2024, the General Secretariat of the Synod presented the [Instrumentum Laboris](#) for the Second Session of the Assembly.

The second session in October 2024 involved 14 ordained and lay Australians, including three archbishops - Timothy Costelloe (Perth), Anthony Fisher (Sydney) and Patrick O'Regan (Adelaide) – as well as Bishop of Sandhurst Shane Mackinlay and President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania and Bishop of Broken Bay, Anthony Randazzo.

The approval of the *Final Document* of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops marked the end of one phase, and the beginning of another.

Pope Francis called this document a fruit of years of listening, discernment, and dialogue.

From late 2024, the Church entered a new phase: implementation. It was not about applying rules from above but receiving the Final Document in local contexts—through prayer, dialogue, and discernment.

Local Churches were invited to form or renew synodal teams—made up of clergy, religious, and laypeople—to guide this process. Their mission: to bring the Synod's vision to life in ways that reflect their unique cultures and needs.

At the same time the 10 international study groups and a canonical commission are completing their work, exploring complex issues raised during the Synod process and proposing paths forward for the Church.

The Interim Coordinating Group for the Synod was established in 2025 to track, collate and disseminate information from dioceses, committees, agencies, ministries and communities of the Church in Australia.

In 2025, the Vatican released a [guide](#) called *Pathways for the Implementation of the Synod*—a roadmap to help local Churches walk together, share experiences, and deepen communion.

Throughout 2025 to 2027, dioceses, episcopal conferences, and other entities will evaluate how the Synod's teachings are being lived.

In the first half of 2027 there will be evaluation assemblies in dioceses and eparchies;

In the second half of 2027, evaluation assemblies will be held in national and international bishops' conferences, Eastern hierarchical structures, and other groupings of churches;

Continental evaluation assemblies will be staged in the first half of 2028.

And in October 2028, the journey will culminate in a post-synodal Ecclesial Assembly in Rome.

This won't be another Synod, but a moment of shared reflection—bringing together the fruits of years of work.

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