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MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Global Catholic Leaders gather in Rome to advance Synodal Governance

Rome, 3–5 June 2026 — Forty theologians, canon lawyers, bishops, religious, lay leaders and governance practitioners from around the world will gather at the Australian Catholic University Rome Campus for the **2026 Inclusive Governance in a Synodal Church Symposium**.

The three-day symposium will contribute to work underway to inform the Church's implementation of the Synod on Synodality. The Synod Secretariat has announced an Ecclesial Assembly in 2028.

Project Lead **Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe AM** said the gathering comes at a significant moment in the life of the Church.

"We are living in a period of renewal in the Church, with renewed recognition of the of the missionary calling of all the Baptised."

The ACU symposium will explore the biblical, historic, theological and canon law underpinnings of lay participation in the life of the Church with a particular focus on their contribution to governance. It will look at the practice of governance across dioceses, parishes, religious institutes and ministerial public juridic persons (MPJPs), particularly places where there is a focus on inviting the gifts of all of the People of God.

Cardinal Mario Grech will open the Symposium, which features international speakers including **Sr Nathalie Becquart XMCJ**, **Prof Massimo Faggioli**, **Archbishop Mark Coleridge**, **Prof Catherine Clifford**, and **Prof Maeve Heaney VDMF**, alongside experts from Africa, Europe, Oceania and the Americas.

Key themes include:

- The theological and canonical foundations of lay participation in governance
- Synodal leadership, discernment and decision-making

Supporting the *Inclusive Governance in a Synodal Church* project

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- Formation for lay and ordained leaders
- Emerging governance models across the global Church
- New research on synodality, governance and Catholic identity

A major focus will be the formation of leaders for shared governance, responding to the Synod's call for priests, religious and lay people to learn and lead together.

Looking ahead, organisers have announced plans for a broader international conference in 2027-28, opening the conversation to all interested theologians, Church leaders and practitioners in preparation for the 2028 Ecclesial Assembly.

"The future of synodal governance requires more than structural reform," Professor Pascoe stated. "There were continued calls during the Synod on Synodality (2021-24) for a conversion of hearts, minds and relationships, so that the whole People of God can contribute more fully in the Church's mission."

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Attachments – Inclusive Governance in a Synodal Church logo
Photo Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe AM
Inclusive Governance Symposium Program

Interviews are available on request.

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