

Feedback of the Diocesan Synod to the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

Introduction

Our Diocese is currently undertaking a synodal journey listening to, dialoguing and discerning how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church. It involves two distinct but interrelated events – Plenary Council 2020 and the Diocesan Synod.

Background

The **Plenary Council 2020**, a formal gathering, has the highest level of legislative and governance authority with its resolutions binding on the Australian Catholic Church. The **Diocesan Synod** is a formal assembly of representatives of the Diocese convoked to advise the Bishop on matters concerning the good of the diocese, discern future directions, and frame our participation in the Plenary Council.

Plenary Council 2020	Diocesan Synod
Stage 1: Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1: Listening and Dialogue 	Session 1: Celebration and Exploration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23 November 2019 Open to all Deliberations broken open by Council of Priests, Council for Mission, Plenary Council and parishes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2: Listening and Discernment. Both phases inform agenda for the first session of the Council. 	
Stage 2: Celebration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Session 1: October 2020 Session 2: May 2021 Two sessions to enable deeper discernment and the opportunity to write/rewrite as appropriate. 	Session 2: Discernment: 22 November 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of themes emerging from local discernment and the Plenary Council. Postponed due to COVID-19
Stage 3: Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing process of applying the decrees/decisions to our Church. 	
	Session 3: Enactment: 21 November 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process to enact Diocesan Pastoral Plan and Plenary Council decrees/decisions.

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted, and will result, in changed timetables, the People of God in communion are walking together, gathering in assembly and actively participating in the mission of evangelising. They are communally discerning how as individuals, and Church, we can be

1. Missionary and evangelising
2. Inclusive, participatory and synodal
3. Humble, healing and merciful
4. Prayerful and Eucharistic
5. A joyful, hope-filled and servant community
6. Open to conversion, renewal and reform

Who is called?

267 delegates from across Australia have been called to attend the Plenary Council. Those called from our diocese are

- Most Reverend William Joseph Wright DD
- Very Reverend Andrew Peter Doohan VG
- Dr Helen Maria Belcher
- Ms Bernadette Frances Gibson

Session One of the Diocesan Synod was open, but it is possible that delegates drawn from across the diocese will be called to the Second Session. If that is the case others may be invited to attend as observers.

Diocesan Synod Working Party

The Council for Mission, a key strategic diocesan advisory group to the Bishop, has established the Diocesan Synod Working Party to organise the processes for the Diocesan Synod. It adopted the following planning model.

In order to address the tasks identified during Phase One Plenary Council and Session One of the Diocesan Synod the working Party identified the need for

- Four Diocesan Synod Focus Groups - Foundational Guiding Principles, Discernment of Data, Diocesan Directory and Governance/Guiding Principles,
- Regional gatherings to discern the *sensus fidelium*, and
- Formation and reflection days.

These will assist in the preparation of the documentation for the Second Session of Synod, and in the formation of our people.

For further information see <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/>

