



We proclaim a crucified Christ

1Cor1.23

17 October 2021

To all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

**The XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
For a synodal Church:
*communion, participation, and mission***

My dear friends,

It would seem during this time of ‘lockdown’ and physical isolation, that the impulse to seek ways of hearing each other’s voices, of listening deeply and of finding life-giving pathways together, have resonated deeply within each of us. Here in Melbourne, we have begun the journey towards personal and parish renewal; Australia-wide we have only just finished the first Session of the National Plenary Council; and this week we launch, in its local context, the Diocesan Phase of the Synod of Bishops. (The ACBC website has some helpful timelines to note: <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>).

Whilst this might seem to be a case of challenging diary management, particularly during this time of uncertainty, there is no ‘chance’ occurrence of the interweaving between our Take the Way of the Gospel, the Council, and the Synod. At the local, national, and universal levels – the Holy Spirit’s compelling call to all the people of God, the Body of Christ in the world, towards paths of profound renewal are reverberating loudly through every facet of our lives.

With this letter I launch and invite you as faithful of Melbourne into the synodal journey for the universal Church that was commenced with the official opening of the XVI Ordinary General Synod of Bishops on 10 October. It is now our opportunity to begin engagement in this important two-year convocation that seeks to hear and consider how we are walking together as a synodal Church in our announcing of the Gospel? And what steps the Spirit invites us to take in order to grow in our “walking together”?

To do this, the Church is seeking to draw in the participation of the greatest number of people in order to listen deeply and attentively to the living voice of the entire People of God. The

purpose of this first phase is consultation at our local level, and the Proclaim Team will be co-ordinating how we can capture the richness and wealth of our experiences of lived synodality across our Church here in Melbourne. You will be hearing more in the coming weeks, please take some time to read more in preparation: <https://www.synod.va/en.html>

I strongly encourage your participation, and there will be varying mechanisms for individual and group submissions. Beautifully, the preparatory document has also encouraged us not to merely think of producing mere documentation of activity – but offer a dialogue, as the Holy Father reminds us, “*to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, yearn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands.*” (Pope Francis 2018)

In the opening ceremony last week, Bro Alois, the Superior of the Taizé community, was invited to share some thoughts:

“This synodal process comes at a crucial moment when we can see two contradictory developments. On the one hand, humanity is becoming more clearly aware that we are all linked to each other and to the whole of creation. On the other hand, polarisation is growing in the social, political, and ethical domains, causing new divisions in societies, between countries, and even within families. Unfortunately, between our churches and also within them, there is a trend for differences to become polarisations that separate people, at a time when our witness to peace is vital...How can we move Christian unity forward?”

This certainly is what we have been asking of ourselves locally, nationally, and now globally. It is not a ‘dragging of feet’ against the tide – but a joyful embracing of the Holy Spirit’s call as to what is possible. Again, there is no ‘chance,’ we only need to open our ears and hearts.

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus*, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” This same prayer was invoked during the first Session of the Plenary Council, and I share it with you now...

*We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path*

nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity

so that we may journey together to eternal life

and not stray from the way of truth

and what is right.

All this we ask of You,

who are at work in every place and time,

in the communion of the Father and the Son,

forever and ever. Amen.

With every grace and blessing

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter A. Comensoli', with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne