



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Local consultation opens for global Synod of Bishops

MEDIA RELEASE

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Catholics are invited to join local consultations about their experience of synodality within the Church as part of a two-year journey towards the next international Synod of Bishops, set for October 2023.

Dioceses across the world hosted local Synod celebrations on Sunday, a week after Pope Francis officially opened the global process for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

The Synod theme is “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission”.

The local launches also marked the commencement of a period of diocesan consultations to help the Synod’s preparation. Ten areas of synodality are being explored with questions in each area across those themes of communion, participation and mission. Catholics are invited to pray with, reflect upon and respond and to help develop a process of communal spiritual discernment.

Trudy Dantis, the director of the National Centre for Pastoral Research and national coordinator for the Synod of Bishops process, said the Synod is seeking to understand how people see the Church as a place where they can “journey together” as fellow pilgrims.

“As the key documents for the Synod outline, the Church’s mission requires all the People of God to walk together, with each member playing their particular role in communion with their sisters and brothers,” she said.

“This Synod is trying to move beyond intermittent moments of synodality towards ‘walking together’ as a norm within the Church.”

Dr Dantis said the Church in Australia has, in many ways, been living that out in recent years. The current journey of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia is a clear example, and it will assist with this related, but separate, Synod of Bishops path.

“One thing we learned during the dialogue and discernment phases of the Plenary Council was the power of a guided process of prayer, reflection, listening and speaking that invites God into the conversation,” she said.

“We will draw upon those lessons and encourage people to approach this Synod of Bishops journey with a spirit of openness to the Holy Spirit and the power of prayer.”

A new online portal has been set up to receive submissions across the various questions the Synod’s preparatory document poses. Those submissions will initially be considered at the diocesan level, and then be used to develop a national report.

That national report will be provided to the Synod of Bishops secretariat for the drafting of key documents to support the Synod process.

Dr Dantis said all Catholics in Australia are invited to participate in the Synod of Bishops process. The process of prayer and reflection is designed for group discernment, but an individual guide has also been created for those unable to join a communal process.

Find out more and access the resources at: <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>