

## **Sense of the Faithful Newsletter No 10 – 25 June 2023**

The purpose of this Sense of the Faithful Newsletter No 10 is to let you know about the changes to our website during June 2023, including information on our planned future activities, related to important ongoing change processes within the Church.

### **1. June 2023 additions to the website**

The Voice to Parliament referendum. The current revision of the website includes a joint statement from the Editorial Committee on the need for the Bishops, on behalf of the Church, to support publicly a ‘Yes’ vote on the Voice in the coming referendum. This referendum poses a clear moral choice about the recognition and future role of Indigenous people in Australia. While each individual Catholic must be free to vote according to his or her own conscience, it is time for the Church as a whole to stand up and be counted.

We conclude the statement with a call for bishops, parish priests and lay parish leaders to encourage parishioners to come together to pray, reflect, listen, discuss and discern on these crucial issues of Aboriginal recognition and the Indigenous Voice to Parliament. This synodal experience and process, we believe, may help individuals come to a decision on how they will vote in the referendum later in the year.

We have also uploaded to the website two valuable documents concerning the Voice. One is the statement released in late May 2023 by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) – a key adviser to the Bishops Conference – expressing its support for the Voice, as a significant stride forward for Indigenous peoples. We also re-publish an article from *The Good Oil* in March 2023 by Sister Patty Fawkner SGS entitled *Saying ‘Yes’ to the Voice will herald a better future for us all*.

Farewell to Editorial Committee member Therese D’Orsa and Fr Bob Maguire. We at SOF were deeply saddened to learn of the sudden death of our Editorial Committee member Emeritus Professor Therese D’Orsa on 7 May 2023. Therese was a leading Australian Catholic teacher, researcher and theologian, who contributed greatly to SOF. We are pleased to publish an appreciation of Therese by fellow committee member Rowan Ireland.

A key focus of Therese’s recent work has been a true understanding of the mission of the Church, stressing that this is about taking the kingdom of God to the world as it is, with all its messy realities, rather than building a safe and secure enclave. Not long before her death, Therese completed her final revision of an earlier article on mission. We are pleased to publish this article on the website.

The well-known Melbourne priest, Fr Bob Maguire, was a person who lived the sense of mission that Therese proclaimed with a life-long passion and commitment. We pay tribute to him and mourn his loss. We are pleased to be able to republish the tribute to Bob provided by Archbishop Mark Coleridge in his homily at his funeral on 3 May 2023.

SOF’s Program after the Plenary Council (PC). The Editorial Committee is developing our plans for our post-PC program. Our particular focus is on monitoring the follow-up to the PC and on the development of synodal processes, in Australia and globally. This includes the setting up of Diocesan Synods in Australia, mandated by the PC, and the worldwide Synod of Bishops, the first session of which will be held in Rome in October 2023.

## 2. Key document for the first Assembly of the Bishops' Synod just released

Dr Judy Dantis, National Coordinator, Synod of Bishops 2021-2024 and Director of the National Centre for Pastoral Research, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, has advised those registered as coordinators for the consultations for the Bishops Synod that on Tuesday, 20 June 2023, the Holy See published the *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL) for the First Assembly of Synod in October. This is available on <https://www.synod.va/en/synodal-process/the-universal-phase/documents.html>.

Dr Dantis notes that the IL consists of a text and fifteen worksheets. The text and worksheets highlight the characteristics of the synodal Church, which have emerged through the experience of the last two years. The document then identifies three priority issues that have emerged from the process and that require further in-depth discernment. Each of these priorities is explored further through a series of five worksheets aimed at supporting the discernment of the next steps for the Church to become more synodal.

The IL is mainly addressed to the participants of the first session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. However, it is also a valuable tool for groups at the parish, diocesan and national levels so that they can continue their journey of reflection and discernment on how we walk together as a Church; and carry out ecclesial initiatives.

Dr Dantis notes that, unlike the previous stages, we are not asked to consult nationally in relation to this document and provide a response. However, we do encourage you to connect with your diocese, parish or other interest groups and continue this synodal journey with them.

The ACBC's media release statement discusses the way forward and highlights the provision of additional resources that will be produced in the coming weeks to help the faithful support the ongoing journey. This document is available here: <https://mediablog.catholic.org.au/church-leaders-in-australia-welcome-synod-working-document/#more-9561>.

### ***Together Prayer Vigil***

As the Church prepares for the Synod, all members are invited to join in preparation for the *Together* ecumenical prayer vigil, which will take place in Rome on 30 September 2023, prior to the Opening of the Synod. To support preparations, there are various liturgical resources on the *Together* website available for use. Each month new resources are added, including prayers, songs, readings, and suggestions for reflections and activities. These monthly offerings are available on the *Together* website under "Support Documents":

<https://together2023.net/info-page/monthly-support-documents/>

### ***Examples of Synodality***

An article recently published in CathNews on 16 May 2023 highlighted the establishment of Mercy Ministry Companions – Australia's newest ministerial public juridic person and how it demonstrates the synodal journey: <https://cathnews.com/2023/05/16/establishment-of-mmc-shows-the-church-journeying-together/>

If your diocese or group has other examples of synodality, we would love to hear about them and publish them more broadly. Please contact us if you have anything you would like to share. Thank you all for your continued interest and support.

### **3. Spirituality in the Pub in early August**

St Andrews Hotel 128 Nicholson Street Fitzroy date in early August, date to be confirmed.

#### ***What prospects for a synodal Church in Australia and elsewhere?***

Richard and Jan Curtain, St Carthage's Parish. The talk will make use of documentary evidence to show what changes are being made or proposed for Catholic dioceses in Australia and other countries such as England and Wales. The main evidence presented comes from an analysis of all the diocesan summaries of the consultations conducted for the 2023–24 Bishops Synod. We will report on which diocesan syntheses did, and which did not, include information on the current and proposed changes the diocese is committed to undertaking.

We want to leave plenty of time to discuss the implications of these findings. These include identifying the changes still needed to maintain the momentum for change generated by the Plenary Council and the Bishops Synod.

### **4. Pope Francis on the role of the laity**

#### **Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the Plenary Assembly of Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.**

On Saturday, 22 April 2023, in the Clementine Hall in Rome, Pope Francis gave an important address on the role of the laity. Lisa Zengarini of Vatican News has provided the following summary:

#### ***The origin of the ministeriality of the Church***

Referring to the theme of the three-day session, Pope Francis reflected on the meaning of ministeriality in the Church and on the role of laypeople in this context. He noted that when we speak of Church ministries in general, the thought immediately goes to “instituted” ministries such as the ones of lector, acolyte, and catechist “which are all well known”.

However, he said, these instituted ministries “do not represent the full extent of the ministeriality of the Church, which is broader and, ever since the first Christian communities, regards all the faithful”.

#### ***The common priesthood of all the faithful based on Baptism***

The Pope recalled that its origin lies in Baptism and in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Sacrament is “the root of the common priesthood of all the faithful which is in turn expressed in the ministries”. This is because all the baptised – whether lay people, celibate, married people, priests, religious – are Christifideles, that is believers in Christ, “and are therefore required to take part in the mission He entrusted to the Church, also through the assumption of specific ministries”.

The ministry of the laity in particular, the Pope continued, also “stems from the charism that the Holy Spirit distributes within the People of God for its edification”. This, the Pope said, explains even more clearly why the ministeriality of the Church cannot “be reduced merely to instituted ministries, but rather embraces a far vaster field”.

### ***Participating in the prophetic and regal function of Christ***

Even today, "as in the first Christian communities, faced with particular pastoral needs, without resorting to the institution of ministries, pastors can entrust certain supplementary functions to laypeople, that is, temporary services, as in the case of the proclamation of the Word of the distribution of the Eucharist."

Moreover, Pope Francis continued, "besides the instituted ministries, supplementary services, and other regularly entrusted offices, the laity can carry out a range of tasks, which express their participation in the prophetic and regal function of Christ: not only within the Church, but also in the environments where they live", for example in reaching out to those affected by old and new forms of poverty, including migrants.

### ***Mission and service***

All these ministries, services, assignments and offices, the Pope emphasized, "must never become self-referential" and have two fundamental things in common: "Mission and service", because they "are an expression of the one mission of the Church and all are forms of service to others".

"I like to emphasise that at the root of the term ministry there is the word minus, which means "minor". And Jesus said so: those who command should make themselves the smallest, otherwise they do not know how to command. It is a small detail, but of great importance. Those who follow Jesus are not afraid to make themselves "inferior", "minor", to place themselves at the service of others. Indeed, Jesus himself taught us: "whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (Mk 10: 43–44)."

Only by serving the brethren "and in them, Christ", Pope Francis concluded, will "all the baptised be able to discover the meaning of their own life, joyfully experiencing being 'a mission on this earth' that is, being called, in different ways and forms, to 'bring light, bless, enliven, raise up, heal and free'.