

OUR DEANERY IN THE LIGHT OF THE PLENARY & SYNOD
21st SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME – 21 AUGUST 2022

Strive to enter through
the narrow door;
for many, I tell you,
will try to enter and will not be able...
Luke 13:22-30

Our Deanery in the light of the Plenary & Synod

SYNOD

One of our current local church documents is the *Synod Synthesis: Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia* for the upcoming world Synod next year.

[<http://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch> scroll down to Brisbane report]

Let us read from it.

Introduction

“Today the Archdiocese covers an area of 77,000 square kilometres with a little under 100 parishes spread across the southeast corner of Queensland. Before the COVID-19 pandemic there were a little less than 60,000 regular parishioners although over 700,000 people continued to identify as Catholic in the national census.

Since the pandemic, the Archdiocese has seen a decline in Mass attendance of around 34%.

It is difficult to know whether this will be temporary or permanent.”

“Whilst the Archdiocese of Brisbane had the highest number of submissions compared with all other dioceses in Australia, it is important to note that this invitation comes on the back of a nationwide listening phase which was in preparation for the Plenary Council. The process was very similar and meant that some degree of ‘fatigue’ resulted in a significantly lower number of responses than we would have anticipated otherwise.

Nonetheless, the process of listening and discernment took place engaging a total of 370 people in the process leading to 145 unique submissions (compared with 17,373 people involved in 2269 submissions for the Plenary Council).”

Let us read the Recommendations for the THREE themes.

There were 107 submissions responding to the theme of *Communion*.

SUBTHEMES that individuals and groups were asked to reflect on under the theme of Communion included: [Companions on the Journey](#), [Our Listening](#), [Our speaking out](#), and [Our celebration](#).

THEME 1: Communion

SUBTHEME: [Companions on the Journey](#)

Recommendation:

That the Church develop clear pathways of inclusion that make clear that all are welcome and that those in irregular situations are loved, welcomed, and accompanied on a journey that leads them into a deeper encounter with the Risen Lord.

SUBTHEME: [Our Listening](#)

Recommendation:

That the Synod's final document identify the key themes that emerged in the listening phase, and why some suggestions were enacted and why others were set aside. This also benefits from being catechetical as it helps explain why some suggestions are not possible within our faith tradition.

SUBTHEME: [Speaking Out](#)

Recommendation:

That adult formation become a priority in the Church, focusing on what the Church believes, why, and how these beliefs interface with an unbelieving society. Formation also needs to outline the distinctions between what is essential and unchangeable, compared with those aspects of our tradition which may develop further.

SUBTHEME: [Our Celebration](#)

Recommendation:

That the Church actively promote a renewal of liturgical music and liturgical engagement, which involves the active encouragement of musicians to write and produce new liturgical music that resonates with their respective cultures. Laity are encouraged, empowered, and formed in all areas of lay liturgical engagement.

THEME 2: Participation

SUBTHEME: [Authority and participation](#)

Recommendations:

That the Church prioritise the question of the diaconate for women to settle the issue. Given that the ordination to the order of deacon configures the ordained to the person of Christ as servant, not priest, it seems unclear why women would not be admitted as candidates for the diaconate.

That the Church examine the possibility of married men for the presbyterate in line with what the Church already has developed for ordained married men coming to Catholicism from other Christian traditions.

SUBTHEME: Discerning and Deciding

Recommendation:

That processes of decision making in the Church be made transparent and open. This includes procedures for appointing bishops and priests, as well as making changes at an Archdiocesan level and the parish level.

SUBTHEME: Forming ourselves in synodality

Recommendation:

That both the lay and ordained do professional development on the concept of synodality and how it applies in the Church, recognising that synodality is not necessarily democratic.

THEME 3: Mission

SUBTHEME: Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission

Recommendation:

That the Church prioritise formation, particularly in relation to the mission of the Church and what it means for all the baptised. Formation must include active participation in missional initiatives related to making disciples and living as disciples, which means actively engaging in social and climate injustices.

SUBTHEME: Dialogue in Church and Society

Recommendation:

*That formation on mission focus on the art of dialogue and debate with an eye to what the Church teaches and how these teachings interface with the world.
Ecumenism Recommendation: That a focus of ecumenical dialogue be on those Christian traditions that are growing.*

What might we learn from what they are doing, and how might some of their strategies be integrated into a Catholic context?

The Recommendations are to be considered with the national Plenary Decrees.

DEANERY FORUM

Next Saturday, parish and parish and diocesan school representatives in our Deanery will gather with the whole Episcopal Council, which consists of Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Lisa Forbes, Sr Kari Hatherell, Bishop Ken Howell, Bishop Tim Norton SYD, Deacon Peter Pellicaan, Fr Dan Ryan, and Deacon Andrew O'Brien along with Evangelisation Brisbane's Associate Director-Parish Leadership, Teresa McGrath.

We are told that,

"The Forum is an opportunity for the Episcopal Council to provide feedback from the consultations for further discussion on how best to carry forward to mission of the Church – to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20) - in the Brisbane North East Deanery. It will give a picture of the whole region."

How will the Plenary and Synod influence Saturday's forum?

How are we listening to the direction of the Holy Spirit today?

How do the above Synod recommendations assist us in our parish journey?

THE NARROW DOOR

We imagine ourselves trying to carry a heavy load through a narrow space.
We refuse to let go of the load, and hence we get stuck at the narrow door.
We can ponder many aspects of our own lives that cause us to be – stuck, trapped, isolated.

In today's Gospel passage from Luke,
Jesus says,

***“Strive to enter through the narrow door;
For many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able....”***

As we endeavour to grow in our love of God and our love of neighbour it can become easier to enter through the narrow door.
We become more loving, more inclusive.
We move with a greater freedom in the Spirit.
We remove the enormous chip on our shoulder.
We remove the baggage that weighs us down.
As we continue the Archdiocesan consultation process, we ponder what we need to let go.
We can be so determined to do everything our own way that we struggle needlessly.
We ponder what new directions and priorities we pursue as we follow the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel passage gives us further insight:

“Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”
(NRSV translation)

Going through the narrow door involves an openness and commitment to accountability.
Not trying to carry a heavy load of cover-ups and denials through the narrow door.
Of being accountable to God and to each other.
Of being more inclusive.
Let us turn to God and pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance for Saturday's forum.

Father Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/082122.cfm>