



## CONCERNED CATHOLICS CANBERRA GOULBURN BLOG

### **Vatican working paper shows unique openness, less church-speak**

**27 July 2023**

With the working paper released for the Vatican October Synod on Synodality it is clear that change is coming. The language and content of the paper signal a seismic shift in tone and an openness not previously the case with Vatican controlled documents.

The working paper contains far less 'Church-speak' and uses more inclusive and expansive language to describe the feedback from the synodal consultations held across the world.

Just as Pope Francis has often used language to build bridges, the working document uses plain and straight forward prose to capture both the aspirations and the critiques that have arisen from diocesan, national and international forums.

In practical terms this means that issues of inclusion are stated explicitly, that is, how people who identify as LGBTIQ+ can be welcomed and be able to fully participate in the Church needs to be explored.

And it doesn't shirk from calling for examination of women and the diaconate. Accountability, transparency and representative models of governance are also on the agenda. Models of lay/clergy co-responsibility will likewise be considered.

The openness in which these issues have been placed on the table speaks volumes for the tone and tenure of the currency papacy. Pope Francis wants Catholics to stand up and take responsibility for their Church. He wants us to claim our baptismal rights and the equality that comes from them. In other words, this is no longer a clerical controlled gig. The Synod's working paper reveals as much.

So, the ground is shifting and with it a momentum for change has begun. While it is important to keep engaged with the global conversation within the Church, we need to see that same momentum ignited at our local levels.

Recently Archbishop Prowse has indicated that he wants the Canberra Goulburn Archdiocese to move towards an Assembly in the second half of next year. For some of us

that seems too much like a 'slow train coming'! We have wanted a Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) to be in place already. Most of the preparatory work has been well and truly done. Undoubtedly Archbishop Prowse is getting resistance from various quarters. If so, then mounting an interim DPC to demonstrate its utility and effectiveness would be a reasonable compromise. It would have the added benefit of providing a mechanism to plan and oversee the forthcoming Assembly.

So far, the Archbishop has chosen to delay the establishment of a DPC until the diocesan Assembly runs its course. I assume this is to garner more buy-in for the synodal styled model of co-responsibility and discernment that is outlined in the current working papers for this year's Vatican synod meeting.

I still see merit in 'road testing' this methodology with the 'interim DPC' option now. Then all interested parties can see the extent to which the spirit of inclusivity and accountability that underpins the Synodal process is reflected in both the lead up to and the conduct of our own diocesan Assembly.

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