



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Synodality top of agenda for Pope, Archbishop Costelloe

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia and the global Synod on Synodality were key discussion points for Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB and Pope Francis when they meet this week.

Archbishop Costelloe, whom Pope Francis appointed president of the Plenary Council in 2018, was in Rome to take part in the drafting of the working document for the next phase of the journey towards the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

The document will form the basis for the discernment to be undertaken at the continental level in the coming months.

This discernment, in turn, will help shape the drafting of the *instrumentum laboris* – the preparatory document that will contribute to the discussions during the formal sessions of the Synod next October.

In a private audience with Pope Francis, Archbishop Costelloe explained that the formal “acts” of the Plenary Council, the outcome of four years of nationwide prayer, listening, dialogue, discernment and eventually decision-making, will be received by the Bishops Conference at its November plenary meeting.

They will then be forwarded to the Holy See for consideration.

“The Holy Father expressed great interest in the work of the Plenary Council,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

“I was able to explain to him that the Council had moments of challenge and tension, which we navigated with prayer and dialogue, but it now holds great hope for the renewal of the Church in Australia.

“I told Pope Francis that the Church in Australia, notwithstanding the many challenges it faces, is alive and vibrant. Pope Francis was particularly pleased to hear of this vitality.”

Reflecting on his time in Rome, which included meetings with key officials from Vatican offices, Archbishop Costelloe expressed his gratitude that the experience of synodality, “which emerged as such a strong feature of the Plenary Council in Australia”, had been recognised and received as a valuable contribution to the journey that the Church throughout the world is undertaking.

“It is clear to me,” Archbishop Costelloe said, “that Pope Francis is absolutely committed to this path towards the more truly synodal Church to which the Lord is calling us, which is the Lord’s particular gift to the Church at this time.

“It was an honour to be able to share our experience with him.”

Archbishop Costelloe also met with Australia’s Ambassador to the Holy See, Chiara Porro, during his time in Rome.