

Marist Schools Australia Assistant Principals' Conference: Leadership in a Synodal Church

This week Assistant Principals from Marist Schools throughout Australia gathered at *The Hermitage* in Mittagong in New South Wales for the Seventh Annual National Marist Assistant Principals Conference.

Gathered from Catholic schools in 19 Australian Dioceses, reflections on ***Leadership in a Synodal Church*** was facilitated by Dr Frank Malloy, National Director, Marist Schools Australia, Professor Charles Burford, Honorary Professor, Australian Catholic University, Ms Elizabeth Denny, MSA Board Member, former Director and Principal, Sydney Catholic Schools, Most Rev Brian Mascord DD, Bishop of Wollongong, Professor John Warhurst AO, Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Australian National University, Canberra, and Dr John Kyle-Robinson, Regional Director Marist Schools Australia.

Speaking of the hallmarks of leadership for Synodality, Professor Charles Burford encouraged the conference participants to prioritise their Mission-oriented spirit of service characterised by shared decision-making and a culture of inclusion, dialogue and mutual listening that is always open to conversion.

These themes were echoed in Bishop Brian's encouragement for Catholic school leaders to "accompany and stand alongside young people" as an expression of Church.

The rich and thought-provoking input provided the opportunity for conference participants to reflect on the influence and nature of their leadership in Catholic education, in the context of what Pope Francis describes as a Synodal Church.

Listening, dialogue, and prayerful discernment, were consistent themes throughout the days together as this group of committed, talented, and creative Catholic leaders inspired one another in their shared passion for God's Mission and Church.