



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Church leaders in Australia welcome Synod working document

MEDIA RELEASE

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As the Church approaches the first session of the forthcoming Synod of Bishops, Australian Catholics are being encouraged to continue their engagement with the global synodal journey through prayer, ongoing discernment and local conversations.

On Tuesday evening, the Secretariat of the Synod published the *Instrumentum Laboris*, or working document, for the first session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops – commonly referred to as the Synod on Synodality.

The first session will take place this October; the second and final session is scheduled for October 2024.

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and a member of the Synod's preparatory commission, said it had been an extraordinary process to get to this point, with Catholics across the world helping shape the working document.

"Countless people have invested their hopes, their prayer, their time and their energy in helping the entire people of God consider how we can share in the mission entrusted by God to the Church," he said.

"This is the latest, and an enormously significant, milestone in a journey which has spanned several years. It represents both an invitation and an opportunity to remain engaged in prayer, reflection and ongoing discernment with all that has emerged so far in what has been an unprecedented worldwide consultation."

Archbishop Costelloe stressed that it will be important, as the Church in Australia is currently doing with the fruits of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, to consider deeply how the wisdom gathered through this synodal process can be applied in a local setting.

"The unfolding of the synodal journey will offer our dioceses, parishes, schools and other ministries a precious opportunity to consider how they might better carry out in contemporary Australia the mission entrusted to them by the Lord," he said.

"The three central themes for this Synod of Bishops – communion, mission and participation – remain at the heart of this document. We are being invited to adopt them as a fundamental lens through which we can evaluate all we are doing."

National Synod of Bishops coordinator Trudy Dantis said additional resources will be produced in the coming weeks to help the faithful support the ongoing journey.

"In Australia, we have had the benefit of the Plenary Council in coming to better understand these paths of prayer, discernment and, eventually, decision-making," said Dr Dantis, who is director of the National Centre for Pastoral Research.

"We will be encouraging people to take part in a prayer pilgrimage in the weeks leading up to the first general assembly in October, at which we will have several Australian bishops, as well as lay people, present.

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“Our national Synod committee will provide material to help groups that have already been formed around the country continue their efforts to see how a synodal Church can be lived out in their context.”

The 15 worksheets that are part of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, and which will guide the work of the Synod assembly in October, will also be useful for local Catholic conversations, Dr Dantis said.

Archbishop Patrick O’Regan and Bishop Shane Mackinlay will attend the Synod of Bishops as the two delegates of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP will also participate as a member of the Ordinary Council of the Secretariat of the Synod.

Ten other representatives from the Oceania region will also attend the Synod, with those participants expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

Visit the Bishops Conference’s Synod of Bishops website for more information:

<https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>