



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

MEDIA RELEASE

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City and outback voices to be heard at international meeting

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has announced the names of two parish priests who have been selected to attend a global gathering of 300 priests at the Vatican.

The Very Reverend Dr David Ranson PP VG and the Reverend Paul Crotty PP will attend the “Parish Priests for the Synod: An International Meeting” between 28 April and 2 May.

The gathering has been described as a “worldwide meeting of listening, prayer and discernment”.

Fr David was the secretary of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia and as parish priest of Chatswood, in the Diocese of Broken Bay, he has pioneered a synodal pathway – Parish-in-Council – for discernment of the parish’s mission to “Bring the light of Christ to the city”.

“I am profoundly grateful for this opportunity and look forward to sharing both a national and local perspective on the important consideration of what it might mean to be a genuinely synodal church,” he said.

“I am looking forward to learning from the experience across the Church.”

Fr Paul is the parish priest in Coober Pedy, in the Diocese of Port Pirie, South Australia.

“For nearly five years I have been in the Parish of Coober Pedy Inland Mission, which is the size of France and comprises families in small towns, on cattle stations and on the Aboriginal APY lands,” he said.

“Effective ministry out here in the outback is being present to the people.

“Pope Francis would say ‘to have the smell of the sheep’.”

He said within the synodal process each person is called to be present to the other, which forms a relationship in Christ.

Fr Paul will also share with other priests from around the world the experience of the Port Pirie diocesan assembly, which he said had for over 25 years “practiced the rudiments of synodality – reflecting, praying and listening as Church”.

“The meeting is a great opportunity to meet clergy from around the world including the Holy Father, Pope Francis, and being enriched by different perspective and experiences. I look forward to being part of it.”

Each bishops conference was asked by the Vatican to provide parish priests with “significant experience in the perspective of a synodal Church”, while also ensuring the attendees are from “a variety of pastoral contexts”.

During the five-day meeting, the priests will participate in roundtable discussions, liturgical celebrations, workshops on pastoral proposals, and dialogue with experts.

The meeting’s goal is to listen to and value the experience of parish priests, giving them a chance to experience the “dynamism of synodal work at a universal level”.

It is being held in the lead-up to the second session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be convened in Rome in October.

The first session of the “Synod on Synodality” wrapped up in late October 2023 with a 42-page document known as the Synthesis Report.

That report recommended ways for a “more active involvement of deacons, priests and bishops in the synodal process”, which inspired the priests’ gathering.

The priests will have an audience with Pope Francis on 2 May and the meeting will contribute to the drafting of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, the working document for the second session of the synod assembly.

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