

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## CRA National Council elected amidst Assembly's call to synodality

A new National Council has been elected by Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) as over 120 leaders of Religious Congregations gathered this week in Brisbane Archdiocese for the 2024 CRA National Assembly (26-28 August).

The Assembly theme, 'Widening the Circle of the Heart', embraced the invitation of Isaiah to "enlarge the space of your tent" (Is 54:2). With this biblical imperative in mind, the Assembly engaged Johannine scholar Prof. Mary Coloe PBVM, theologian Rev Assoc. Prof. Ormond Rush and, from Boston College, psychologist Dr Maryanne Loughry RSM, to lead participants in two days of reflection on the implications of Synodality for religious life, charisms and ministries.

As Religious leaders attended from all over the country, a spirit of joy prevailed, along with an eagerness to 'fill the tank' with the fuel of shared wisdom for what it means to guide their communities in life and ministry. In gathering, they were joined by the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Charles Balvo. The Assembly Mass at St Stephen's Cathedral, with principal celebrant the Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane, brought the event to a prayerful highpoint and was followed by a concluding formal Dinner, which nourished attendees' hearts.

Annual elections at the Assembly saw a change in the CRA Presidency, as Peter Jones OSA finished his term and passed the torch to Gerard Brady CFC, Province Leader of the Christian Brothers (Oceania Province). In addition, four new Religious Institute Leaders were elected to the CRA Council: Kari Hatherell OSU, Chitra Justin OSM, Karon Donnellon RSM and Margaret Jones RSM.

They join the eight continuing Council members: Philip Watkins SSS, Provincial, Blessed Sacrament Fathers; Philippa Murphy FDNCS, Provincial Leader, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart; Mary Ryan OP, Prioress, Dominican Sisters of Western Australia; Barbara Brown-Graham FCJ, Area Leader, Australia, Faithful Companions of Jesus; Alan Gibson CM, Provincial, Vincentians; Christian Fini OMI, Provincial, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate; George Kolodziej SDS, Superior, Society of the Divine Saviour.

Members retiring from Council were warmly thanked for their generous and wise service: Asaeli Rass SVD, Provincial, Divine Word Missionaries; Monica Cavanagh RSJ, Congregational Leader, Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart; Mary-Clare Holland OP, Prioress, Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands; Melissa Dwyer FdCC, Delegation Leader, Canossian Daughters of Charity.

Retiring CRA President, Peter Jones OSA, warmly expressed gratitude to all his CRA colleagues and offered his good wishes to the incoming President, saying, "I am confident that Br Gerard Brady's gifts of enthusiasm and wisdom will bring renewed energy to the work of CRA in his role as President."

Newly elected CRA President, Gerard Brady CFC, commented, "I am buoyed by the expansive influence Religious have across our nation. No matter our age profile, our key focus has to be prophetic in all the places we are called to minister. May CRA faithfully represent that prophetic influence in society and the Church."

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