

Where the Spirit Speaks: A Transformative Gathering for a Listening Church

Discernment is essential in our journey towards building a synodal Church, as it gives us the space to process deep listening and understand the depth of each person's voice.

The Mission: one heart many voices conference offered us the opportunity to truly listen to one another and provided a platform for deep listening, an element essential to moving forward, as highlighted in the Synod on Synodality documents:

“The second chapter of the Synod document is about the conversion of relationships. It is encounter-based and is very central to what it means to be Church, all the relationships being converted towards becoming a more merciful Church, a more listening Church, and one more in solidarity,” shared Estela Padilla, the main keynote speaker of the conference.

As the conference has now come to a close and we return to our homes, we have had time to discern the experiences we lived. It is through these encounters that we can truly undergo a conversion of heart.

“Looking at the Synod final document, the most important thing is the conversion of the heart. The whole document, even the chapter titles, speaks about conversion, and that is an experience of the heart that cannot be dictated by documents or structures. It can only be an experience you personally engage in,” added Estela, reflecting on the conference.

She experienced something similar following her participation in the Synod as one of the lay participants, one of the valuable lessons she continues to carry with her:

“The first thing that struck me and has stayed with me, even after the Synod, was how different we are, and yet how we can open up to one another, even in our differences, and how we can discern together. There's another level to it: the listening, the opening up, and the ability to make decisions together. This whole process of communal discernment and decision-making was, I would say, the most important experience for me at the Synod, and one that I hope to carry forward at the local level,” she shared.

This conference enabled people from different walks of life and from various horizons to come together, share their wisdom, and listen to one another.

“I think gatherings like this are really important just for us to reimagine ourselves again, to renew our relationships, then to be able to go out on mission in this world,” shared Bishop Tim Norton SVD.

ENDS

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About Catholic Mission

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church’s global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ’s mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation, and agricultural programs. Here in Australia, we form people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and act for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.