

MELBOURNE SYNOD

TAKE THE WAY OF THE GOSPEL

Synod Directory



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Melbourne Synod 2026 is an important moment in the life and mission of the Catholic Church in Melbourne.

Convoked by Archbishop Peter A Comensoli on 8 March 2026, the synod invites the Church in Melbourne to listen attentively to the Holy Spirit, to one another and to the signs of the times, and to discern together how the Gospel may be proclaimed and lived with renewed faithfulness, confidence and missionary purpose.

The synod builds upon a significant period of listening and discernment in the life of the Church, including:

- the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia (2018–2022)
- the universal Synod on Synodality, For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission (2021–2024)
- local listening and consultation processes
- the pastoral priorities of the Archbishop
- the ongoing journey of renewal within the Archdiocese, including Take the Way of the Gospel.

Through these experiences, three themes were discerned by the Archbishop for consultation:

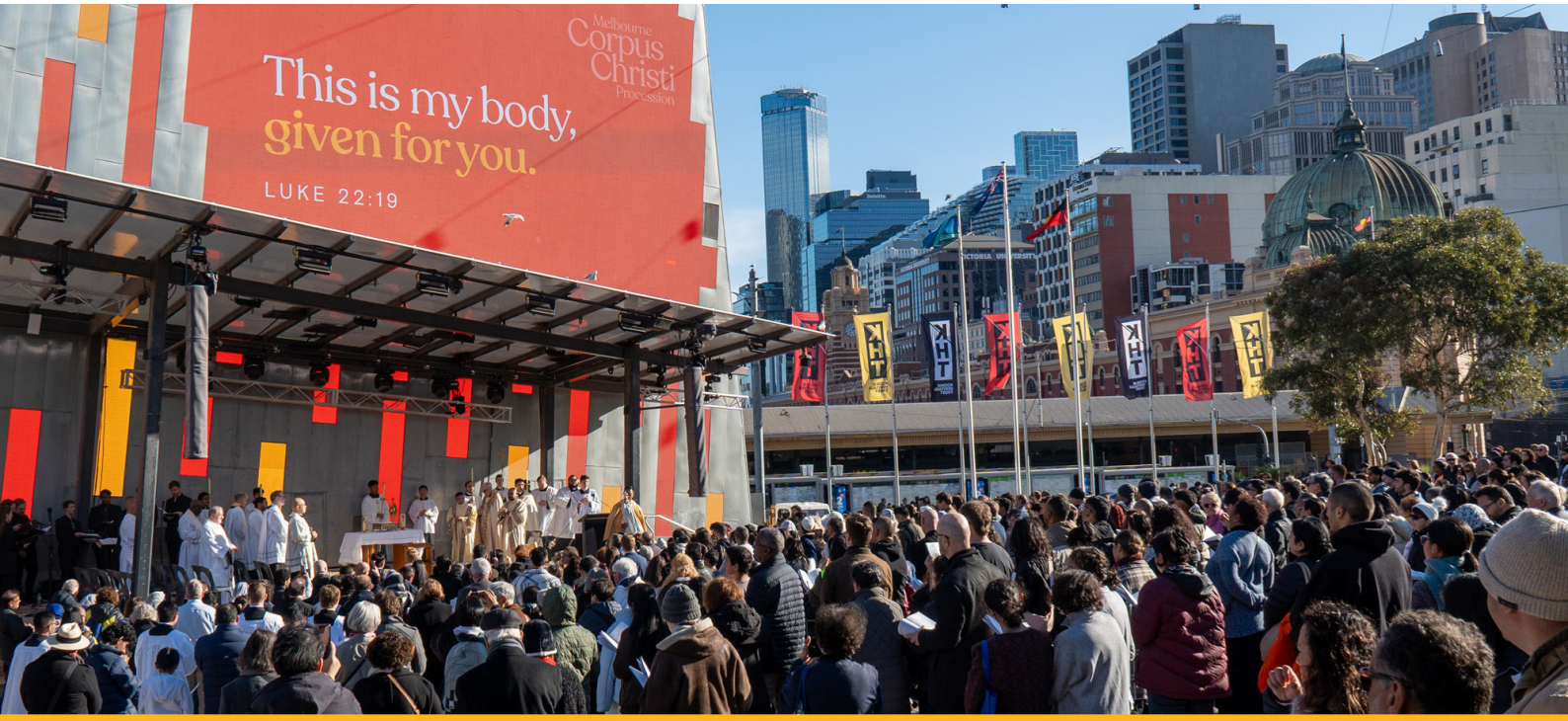
- Young Discipleship
- Missionary Leadership
- Formation and Participation.

These themes will guide the consultation, preparation, discernment and formal synod sessions.

This directory provides the principal public framework for the preparation and celebration of the Melbourne Synod. It explains the nature and purpose of a diocesan synod, its canonical foundations, membership and governance, consultation and formation processes, and the broad arrangements through which the synod will undertake its work.

Detailed procedural norms governing the formal sessions of the synod will be contained in the *Modus procedendi* (Appendix 6) of the Melbourne Synod 2026. That document should be read together with this directory.

The *Code of Canon Law* in relation to diocesan synods can be found at *Code of Canon Law*, Book II, *The People of God*, Part II, cc. 460–572.



2. CANONICAL FOUNDATIONS

A diocesan synod is both a spiritual and a canonical gathering. It provides an opportunity for representatives of the People of God—the lay faithful, clergy and members of institutes of consecrated life—to assist the diocesan bishop through prayer, listening, dialogue, discernment and the offering of their considered judgement concerning the pastoral life and mission of the local Church.

In accordance with canon 466, the diocesan bishop is the sole legislator in a diocesan synod. Synod members assist the archbishop by considering the questions placed before them, participating freely in discussion and offering their consultative vote. Any synodal declarations or decrees are signed by the archbishop alone, who also determines their publication and the manner of promulgation (c. 8, §2.).

The 1997 *Instruction on Diocesan Synods* describes the synod as a privileged means of strengthening ecclesial communion and enabling the bishop to exercise his ministry in closer cooperation with priests, religious and lay faithful. The synod seeks to promote fidelity to the Gospel and the teaching of the Church, foster apostolic zeal, assess the effectiveness of existing pastoral activity, and identify new priorities and actions suited to the needs and circumstances of the local Church.

For the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the purpose of the synod is to assist the Archbishop in discerning the evangelical and missionary priorities of the Archdiocese for the years ahead, with particular attention to Young Discipleship, Missionary Leadership, and Formation and Participation.

Through the synod, the Church in Melbourne seeks not merely to identify new programs or initiatives but to deepen its capacity to live as a missionary and synodal Church: a Church centred on Christ, attentive to the Holy Spirit, grounded in communion and sent into the world to proclaim and embody the Gospel through witness and service (*Instruction on Diocesan Synods*, 1997).

2.1 CONVOCATION OF THE SYNOD

Canon 461 provides that a diocesan synod may be celebrated when circumstances suggest it, in the judgement of the diocesan bishop, after he has heard the presbyteral council. Canon 462 further provides that the diocesan bishop alone convokes the synod and ordinarily presides over it.

In accordance with these provisions, Archbishop Peter A Comensoli formally convoked a synod for the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne on Sunday 8 March 2026 (Appendix 1).

The synod is to be celebrated from Friday 4 December 2026 to Sunday 6 December 2026, with the Opening Mass on Friday 4 December. The venue is the Catholic Leadership Centre, 576 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, Victoria.

3. THE SYNODAL JOURNEY OF THE CHURCH IN MELBOURNE

The Melbourne Synod forms part of a broader journey of prayer, listening, discernment and renewal within the Catholic Church at the local, national and universal levels. In Australia, the Fifth Plenary Council invited the Church into an extended period of listening and discernment concerning its life, mission and future. At the universal level, the Synod on Synodality called the whole Church to reflect more deeply on how communion, participation and mission can shape the ordinary life and practice of the People of God.

Within the Archdiocese of Melbourne, this journey has been expressed through a range of pastoral initiatives, including Take the Way of the Gospel, local processes of renewal, formation and consultation, and the active participation of Melbourne Catholics in national and universal synodal processes. The Melbourne Synod represents a significant further step in this ongoing journey.

A diocesan synod provides a formal ecclesial setting in which the fruits of prayerful listening and consultation can be gathered, tested and discerned in communion with the Archbishop and the wider Church. It offers an opportunity to consider how the Holy Spirit is calling the Church in Melbourne to respond faithfully and creatively

to the challenges and opportunities of the present time.

The synod seeks not only to discern particular priorities and actions, but also to foster a more enduring synodal culture across the Archdiocese. Such a culture is marked by prayer, attentive listening, shared discernment, participation, co-responsibility and a renewed commitment to the Church's missionary vocation.

The Melbourne Synod is therefore both an event and a process: a journey of listening, discernment and renewal. The stages outlined below describe the path from consultation with the People of God, through synodal deliberation and discernment, to the Archbishop's pastoral decisions and their implementation across the Archdiocese.





3.1 VISION AND THEMES OF THE MELBOURNE SYNOD

The Melbourne Synod will focus upon three themes that have emerged through recent listening, discernment and consultation across the Archdiocese:

- **Young Discipleship:**
  How might we accompany young people as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ?

  This theme focuses on children, adolescents and young adults, asking how the Church can help them encounter Jesus Christ personally, grow in faith, and become active participants in the Church's life and mission. The emphasis is not simply on engagement or retention, but on accompanying young people into a deep and lasting discipleship that bears missionary fruit.

- **Missionary Leadership:**
  How might we form and support missionary leaders, lay, religious and ordained, to serve with humility, courage and creativity?

  This theme recognises that a missionary Church requires missionary leaders. It explores the formation, support, relationships, structures and resources needed for leaders to serve effectively and faithfully. It invites reflection on how leadership can be exercised collaboratively and in ways that enable the Church's mission to flourish.

- **Formation and Participation:**
  How might all the baptised be formed and enabled to participate more fully in the life and mission of the Church?

  This theme considers the lifelong journey of Christian formation. It asks how people encounter Christ, deepen their faith, discern their vocation, and develop the gifts and confidence needed to participate actively in the Church's mission. The focus is on enabling every baptised person to contribute according to their vocation and charisms.



Together, these themes address three interconnected dimensions of the Church's missionary calling. Taken as a whole, the themes invite the Archdiocese to consider how people encounter Christ, grow as disciples, exercise leadership and participate fully in God's mission so that the Church may become increasingly missionary, collaborative and responsive to the needs of our time.

3.2 SYNODAL SPIRITUALITY AND DISCERNMENT

The principal method of consultation used throughout the synod process is Conversation in the Spirit (also known as spiritual conversation). The process includes three broad movements that help participants move from personal reflection to communal discernment (Appendix 3).

3.3 CONSULTATION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The *Instruction on Diocesan Synods* provides that the faithful should be given an opportunity to express their needs, desires and opinions concerning matters to be considered by the synod. The consultation should seek, as widely as practicable, to hear the different communities, ministries, vocations and experiences that make up the particular Church.

From mid-July and throughout August 2026, parishes, schools, communities, ministries, apostolates and Catholic organisations were invited to participate in local consultations.

Submissions were made via an online portal or by email to synod2026@cam.org.au.

3.4 FROM CONSULTATION TO THE WORKING DOCUMENT

At the conclusion of the consultation period, online responses received from across the Archdiocese were collated, prayerfully reviewed and synthesised by the National Centre for Pastoral Research.

The synthesis process sought to identify:

- significant and recurring themes
- areas of convergence
- important differences or tensions
- emerging pastoral needs
- hopes and aspirations
- experiences or voices that may otherwise be overlooked
- possible directions for further discernment.

The resulting material contributed to the preparation of a working document, structured around the three synod themes. The working document will be released for a further period of feedback in October. Feedback received during this period will be compiled and made available to synod members as supplementary material.

The Archbishop, assisted by the Synod Commission and appropriate advisers and experts, will determine the questions, proposals or matters that will be placed before the synod.

Approved material will be provided to synod members with sufficient time for prayer, reflection and study before the formal sessions commence.

4. COMPOSITION OF THE MELBOURNE SYNOD

The composition of a diocesan synod is governed principally by canon 463 of the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Instruction on Diocesan Synods*.

The synod brings together members of the People of God from across the life of the Archdiocese to assist the Archbishop in discerning matters concerning mission, the pastoral life and the good of the whole Archdiocesan community. The final composition of the synod will be provided once finalised. Members attending the Melbourne Synod include:

- members by virtue of ecclesiastical office
- nominated members
- representatives of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life
- members freely nominated by the Archbishop.

In determining the overall composition of the Melbourne Synod, consideration will also be given to:

- the four regions of the Archdiocese
- age and stage of life
- cultural and linguistic diversity
- ordained ministry
- consecrated life
- parish communities
- Catholic education
- young people
- ecclesial movements and lay associations
- chaplaincies and specialised ministries
- health, disability and community services
- social and professional experience
- different forms of participation in the mission of the Church.

The intention is not that each member act solely as an advocate for a particular constituency. Rather, the breadth of membership allows the synod collectively to draw upon the lived experience, wisdom and diversity of the whole Archdiocese.

4.1 ELIGIBILITY FOR SYNOD MEMBERSHIP

Eligibility requirements will depend upon the canonical or membership category through which a person participates. Additional eligibility requirements applicable to specific categories of synod membership will be determined in accordance with canon law, this directory and any procedures approved by the Archbishop.

All synod members are expected to:

- be willing to participate in the Synod in a spirit of prayer, listening and discernment
- commit to the required preparation and formation
- attend all the formal sessions of the synod unless legitimately prevented
- engage respectfully with people holding different perspectives
- act for the good of the whole Archdiocesan community
- comply with the norms governing the conduct of the synod.

4.2 DESIGNATION, ACCEPTANCE AND VACANCIES

The Archbishop will communicate the designation of synod members in writing. Members who are not members by virtue of office will be asked to communicate their acceptance in the manner determined by the Synod Secretariat. Once lawfully designated, members have both a right and an obligation to participate in the synod. A member who is legitimately prevented from attending may not send a proxy or substitute in their place and is required to notify the Archbishop of the reason for their absence.

Membership may cease where:

- the office or status by virtue of which the person became a member ceases
- the member resigns and the resignation is accepted

- the member becomes unable to participate
- the member is removed by the Archbishop for a lawful reason, or
- another circumstance recognised by canon law applies.

Detailed provisions concerning vacancies, substitutes (where canonically provided for) and replacement processes will be contained in the *Modus procedendi*.

4.3 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SYNOD MEMBERS

Synod members are called to participate not simply as advocates for a particular parish, organisation, ministry or personal position, but as members of the Church gathered to assist the Archbishop in discerning the good of the whole Archdiocese.

Members are expected to:

- participate fully in required formation
- read and prayerfully consider the working document and supplementary material
- attend the full synod unless legitimately impeded
- participate in prayer and liturgical celebrations
- listen attentively to other members
- contribute honestly and respectfully
- remain open to the movement of the Holy Spirit
- engage with perspectives different from their own
- observe the procedural norms of the synod
- respect any confidentiality requirements
- comply with safeguarding and appropriate conduct requirements
- manage any conflicts of interest appropriately
- participate in voting where eligible
- contribute to an environment of dignity, safety and mutual respect.

Before formal synod discussions commence, the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity will be made in accordance with the requirements applying to those members under canon 833.

4.5 OFFICERS OF THE SYNOD

President

The Most Reverend Peter A Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne, presides over the Melbourne Synod.

In accordance with canon 462, §2, the Archbishop may delegate a vicar general or episcopal vicar to preside over individual sessions.

Archbishop's Delegate

The Most Rev Martin Ashe, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, serves as the Archbishop's delegate in supporting the preparation of the Melbourne Synod.

Moderator

The moderator oversees and coordinates the conduct of the formal synod sessions in accordance with the arrangements approved by the Archbishop (*Instruction on Diocesan Synods*, III. B. 2.3).

Secretary

The synod secretary is responsible for overseeing the official record and administrative processes associated with the synod.

Other officers

The Archbishop may appoint such additional officers as are required, including assistant moderators, recording secretaries, canonical advisers, theological advisers, facilitators, scrutineers or tellers, liturgical coordinators and communications personnel.

5. PREPARATIONS

5.1 SYNOD COMMISSION

The Synod Commission supports the Archbishop and his delegate in the organisation and preparation of the Melbourne Synod. Its work includes:

- supporting the overall preparation and organisation of the synod
- developing and publishing the Synod Directory
- supporting consultation and engagement
- assisting with synod membership processes
- supporting formation and preparation
- assisting with the development of material for discernment
- supporting communications
- contributing to practical planning for the synod sessions (*Instruction on Diocesan Synods*, III. B. 1).

The commission membership reflects experience across mission, formation, parish life, education, consecrated life, evangelisation, facilitation, and canonical and theological expertise. The commission may seek advice from additional canonical, theological, liturgical, pastoral, cultural or professional experts as required.

COMMISSION MEMBER	ROLE
Most Rev Martin Ashe	Chair of the Synod Commission and Archbishop's Delegate; Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne
Bong Bernardo	National Director of Evangelisation and Mission, Couples for Christ
Rev Dr Cameron Forbes	Rector, Corpus Christi College; Theological Adviser
Jacqui Giuliano	Animation Coordinator and Southern Region Animation Consultant, Proclaim: Office for Mission Renewal
Rev Binh Le	Canon Law Adviser
Rev Dean Mathieson	Chair, Archbishop's Council of Priests
Marcelle Mogg	Chief Mission Officer, Villa Maria Catholic Homes
Teresa Rhynehart	Director for Mission, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
Silvana Scarfe	Formation Coordinator, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (leave of absence August 2026)
Katherine Stone MGL	Local Leader, Missionaries of God's Love Sisters
Jasmin Tavita	Manager, Engagement and Growth, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools
Judeline Wadhwani	Northern Region Parish Animation Consultant, Proclaim: Office for Mission Renewal (leave of absence August–October 2026)

5.2 SYNOD SECRETARIAT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Archbishop will make provision for a Synod Secretariat to support the preparation and conduct of the synod.

The secretariat will be responsible for matters including: correspondence with members; management and distribution of Synod documents; administrative coordination; member records; meeting arrangements; documentation and archiving; minutes and formal records; logistical coordination; financial and administrative support; communications; and public information.

Contact

Email: synod2026@cam.org.au
Website: melbournecatholic.org/synod2026

Information concerning the synod will be communicated through appropriate Archdiocesan channels, including:

- the official synod website
- *Melbourne Catholic* (enewsletter and *Digest*)
- parish and community communications
- Archdiocesan newsletters
- social media
- other appropriate channels.

SECRETARIAT MEMBER	ROLE
Cathy Jenkins	Program Lead, Melbourne Synod
Rashel Adams	Administrative Support



5.3 FORMATION

Formation is an integral part of preparation for the synod. Formation for the wider Archdiocese includes the provision of resources to parishes, schools, communities and ministries to deepen understanding of:

- synodality
- prayer and discernment
- the three Synod themes
- the vocation and mission of all the baptised
- the purpose and process of the Melbourne Synod.

5.4 MEMBER FORMATION PROGRAM

- A member retreat will be held on Saturday 31 October.
- A member formation evening will be held on the evening of Tuesday 3 November.

6. AT THE MELBOURNE SYNOD

6.1 PRAYER AND LITURGY

Prayer is central to every stage of the Melbourne Synod. The whole Archdiocese is invited to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout the synod journey. The *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, traditionally associated with councils and synodal gatherings, may be prayed during synod meetings, parish consultations and other gatherings.

Liturgical celebrations associated with the synod will include:

- the Opening Mass, to be celebrated at St John's East Melbourne on Friday 4 December at 8am
- prayer throughout the formal synod sessions
- daily Mass, to be celebrated at 7.30am at St John's East Melbourne
- the closing Mass, to be celebrated at St Patrick's Cathedral East Melbourne, on Sunday 6 December at 3pm.

Additional prayer resources may include:

- the Melbourne Synod prayer
- petitions for the universal prayer
- Scripture reflections
- resources for parishes and schools
- opportunities for eucharistic adoration
- intercessory prayer
- other spiritual resources approved for use throughout the Archdiocese.

6.2 THE CONDUCT OF THE SYNOD

The Melbourne Synod will be conducted in accordance with:

- the *Code of Canon Law*, cc. 460–468
- the 1997 *Instruction on Diocesan Synods*
- this directory
- the approved *Modus procedendi.*

Canon 465 provides that all questions formally proposed to the synod are to be submitted to the free discussion of synod members.

The formal sessions may combine:

- prayer and Scripture
- presentation of the material being discerned
- theological and pastoral input
- expert testimony where appropriate
- silence and personal reflection
- conversation in the Spirit
- small-group discernment
- plenary discussion
- formal interventions
- voting.

The process will seek to create sufficient time for genuine listening and discernment rather than simply the exchange of predetermined positions.

Detailed arrangements concerning the following will be set out in the *Modus procedendi*:

- speaking times
- written interventions
- amendments or modi
- deadlines
- order of discussion
- facilitator responsibilities
- voting
- counting and reporting of votes
- records and minutes
- confidentiality and communications during the synod.

6.3 DISCERNMENT, DISCUSSION AND VOTING

Voting within the synod is consultative. Its purpose is to assist the Archbishop by indicating the judgement and level of convergence among synod members concerning the matters placed before them. Voting does not transfer the Archbishop's governing or legislative authority to the synod. Canon 466 provides that the diocesan bishop remains the sole legislator and that the other synod members possess a consultative vote.

The voting formula for the Melbourne Synod will be:

- *Placet*—affirmative
- *Non placet*—negative
- *Placet iuxta modum*—affirmative, with reservations.

The final voting method, thresholds and process for submitting *modi* will be determined in the *Modus procedendi*. The outcome of consultative voting will be provided to the Archbishop to assist his discernment. No vote of the synod binds the Archbishop to legislate or act in a particular manner.

6.4 SUSPENSION, DISSOLUTION OR INTERRUPTION OF THE SYNOD

The diocesan bishop may suspend or dissolve a diocesan synod according to his prudent judgement: 'If he judges it prudent, the diocesan Bishop can suspend or dissolve the diocesan Synod' (c. 468, §1).

A decision to suspend or dissolve the synod might be made should grave obstacles arise in continuing the synod and make such a decision either convenient or necessary—for example, should the orientation of the synod become irremediably contrary to the teaching of the Church or should social conditions disturb its peaceful procedure (*Instruction on Diocesan Synods*, III. 7).

Where the episcopal see becomes vacant or impeded, the synod is interrupted by law until the succeeding diocesan bishop determines whether it is to continue or be terminated.

Any such circumstances affecting the Melbourne Synod would be communicated through official Archdiocesan channels.

7. SYNODAL OUTCOMES AND THE ARCHBISHOP'S AUTHORITY

The Melbourne Synod is convened to assist the Archbishop in his responsibility for the pastoral governance of the Archdiocese.

Following the synod, the Archbishop will consider:

- the synod's discussions
- written interventions
- the outcomes of discernment
- consultative voting
- pastoral and theological material presented
- canonical and ecclesial considerations.

The Archbishop may subsequently issue:

- declarations
- decrees
- pastoral priorities
- plans
- other directions arising from the synod.

Under canon 466, only the diocesan bishop signs synodal declarations and decrees, and authorises their publication. The conclusion of the formal synod sessions is therefore not the conclusion of the synodal journey. The implementation of directions arising from the synod will require continued prayer, formation, leadership, collaboration and evaluation throughout the Archdiocese.

7.1 COMMUNICATION FOLLOWING THE SYNOD

Following the conclusion of the Synod, official communication will provide information about:

- the celebration of the synod
- the matters considered
- the consultative outcomes
- the next stages of the Archbishop's discernment
- subsequent publication of declarations, decrees, pastoral directions or plans.

The manner of potential promulgation of legislations is in accordance with canon 8, §2.

No document should be represented as a formal decree or declaration of the synod unless it has been signed and authorised for publication by the Archbishop.

7.2. IMPLEMENTATION FOLLOWING THE SYNOD

The synod is intended to contribute to the ongoing renewal and mission of the Archdiocese.

Following the Archbishop's consideration of the synod's work, an implementation framework may include:

- publication of an Archdiocesan synod document
- identification of strategic and pastoral priorities
- Archdiocesan implementation planning
- local parish and community planning
- formation and leadership support
- implementation resources
- accountability arrangements
- reporting
- evaluation and review.



8. KEY STAGES

STAGE	DATE
Announcement of preparations for Melbourne Synod	December 2025
Formal convocation	8 March 2026
Consultation period	July – 21 August 2026
Consultation submissions close	21 August 2026, 5pm
Member applications open	1 August 2026
Member applications close	31 August 2026
Member selection and elections	September 2026
Working document preparation	September 2026
Members finalised	October 2026
Feedback on working document	October 2026
Synod member formation	31 October 2026 and 3 November 2026
Final synod papers issued	[TO BE CONFIRMED]
Opening Mass	Friday 4 December 2026
Opening of Melbourne Synod	Friday 4 December 2026
Synod sessions	4–6 December 2026



9. KEY CHURCH DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

The Melbourne Synod should be understood and celebrated in light of the following principal Church documents.

9.1 *CODE OF CANON LAW*

The Melbourne Synod should adhere to the *Code of Canon Law*, particularly:

- canons 460–468 (diocesan synods)
- canon 212 (the rights and responsibilities of the faithful)
- canon 512 (representation and qualities relevant to the selection of lay faithful)
- canon 833 (profession of faith requirements)
- canons 164–179 (canonical elections where applicable).

9.2 *Instruction on Diocesan Synods*, 1997

Issued by the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Instruction provides guidance concerning:

- the nature and purpose of a diocesan synod
- membership
- preparation
- consultation
- the Synod Directory
- officers and commissions
- formation
- procedural arrangements
- drafting and publication of synodal declarations and decrees.

9.3 SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Particularly relevant documents include:

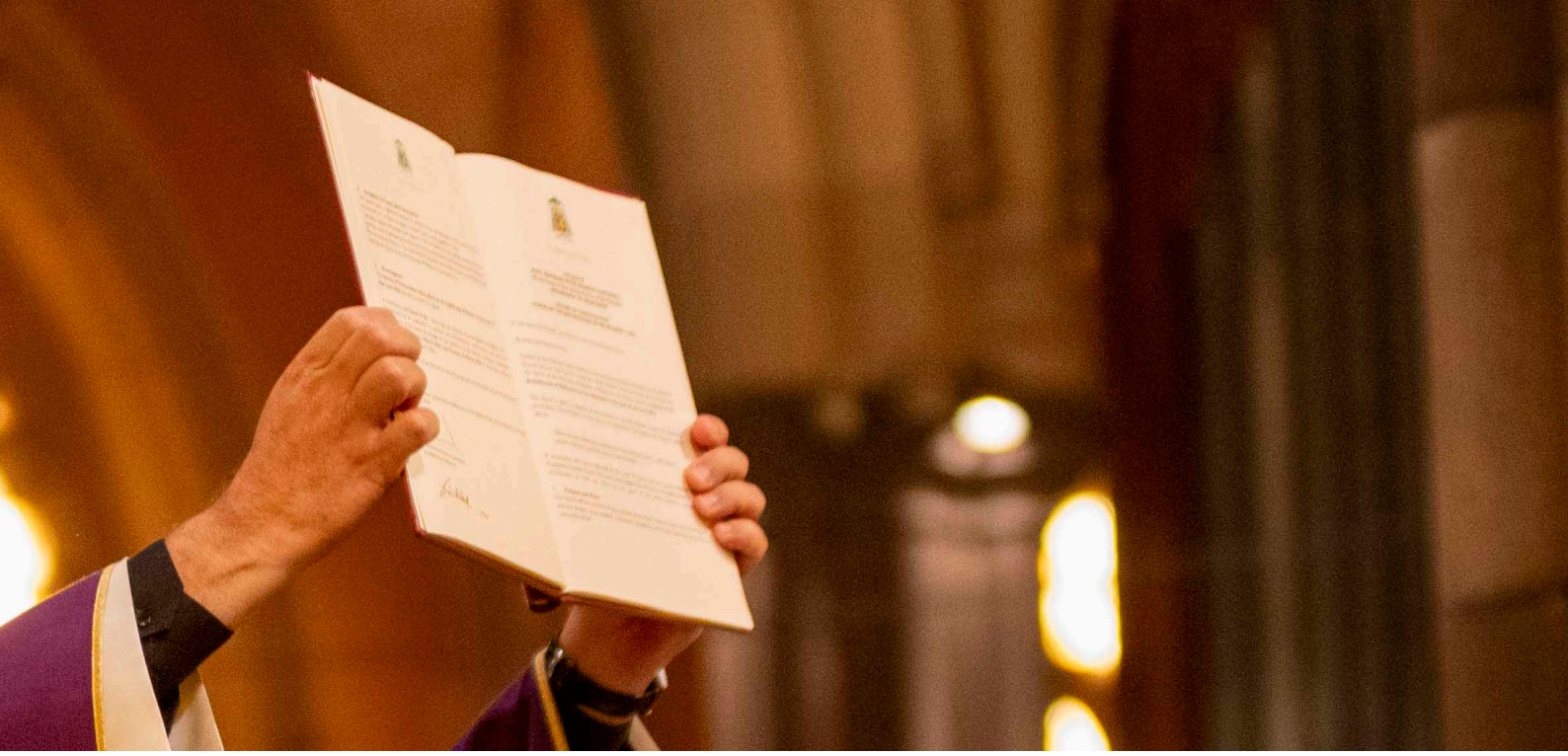
- *Lumen gentium*
- *Christus dominus*
- *Apostolicam actuositatem*
- *Ad gentes*
- *Gaudium et spes*.

9.4 FIFTH PLENARY COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

The Melbourne Synod forms part of the ongoing reception and implementation of the discernment undertaken through the Fifth Plenary Council and the wider movement towards a more synodal Church in Australia.

9.5 XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

The universal Synod on Synodality, centred upon communion, participation and mission, provides an important ecclesial context for the Melbourne Synod and its emphasis upon prayerful listening and communal discernment.



10. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 | CONVOCATION OF THE MELBOURNE SYNOD

As announced in the diocesan online publication and newsletter Melbourne Catholic on Sunday 8 March 2026:

Archbishop Peter A Comensoli has officially convoked a synod for the Archdiocese of Melbourne, signing the decree during Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral on the third Sunday of Lent.

In the lead-up to Sunday, the Archbishop sent a pastoral letter to all parish communities, sharing how a synod will 'help shape our evangelical and missionary priorities for the years ahead'.

'It will be a time for our local Church to listen attentively to the Holy Spirit and to discern how we are called to proclaim the Gospel more faithfully in our time and place,' he wrote. 'In recent years, the Church throughout the world has entered a time of attentive listening, discernment and renewal through what we have come to call a synodal way of being.' The term synodality, the Archbishop said, 'describes the way in which this journeying together takes place: the shared participation of the whole People of God in the life and mission of the Church.

'Such a journey requires patience, humility and trust in the guidance of the Spirit. At its heart is a simple but profound discipline: to listen—to the Gospel, to the lived experience of our communities, and to the Spirit who speaks through God's faithful people.'

Read the full article at: https://melbournecatholic.org/news/archbishop-convokes-a-synod-for-the-archdiocese-of-melbourne

APPENDIX 2 | SYNOD PRAYER: *ADSUMUS SANCTE SPIRITUS*

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.
Amen.

APPENDIX 3 | CONVERSATION IN THE SPIRIT PROCESS

Welcome and opening prayer

- Begin with a few moments of silence to allow participants to enter into the process.
- Welcome participants.
- Invite participants to introduce themselves.
- Pray an opening prayer (e.g. *Adsumus*).

First round of conversation

Reflection

Participants are invited to reflect on the question: 'Having read the theme paper, what has resonated with me?' This reflection may draw on either the first or second reflection prompt provided in the theme paper.

Sharing and listening

Each participant is invited to speak for 2–3 minutes about the theme being discerned—without interruption. Allow one minute of silence after each speaker, before the next person begins.

Optional facilitator note

Encourage participants to:

- Share personal stories, speak from personal experience and insight
- listen deeply and respectfully during others' sharing
- use the pauses as space for prayerful or thoughtful reflection.

Second round of conversation

Reflection

'What has moved or surprised me from our first round of conversation?'

Sharing and listening

Each person speaks (2–3 minutes) without interruption. Allow a one-minute pause between each speaker.

Third round of conversation

Reflection

In this round, participants reflect on what has most resonated with them as a group.

Possible prompts

- 'What idea or ideas have emerged from the group?'
- 'What themes or patterns are emerging?'
- 'Where do you sense the Holy Spirit speaking?'
- 'In light of what we have heard, where is the Spirit calling us to dream boldly?'
- 'Whom are we being called to accompany in faith more intentionally?'
- 'How might we reflect the face of Christ more clearly in our local Church?'

Sharing and listening

This time of sharing is open and less structured. People may share as freely as they please. The purpose of this time is to discern together any common themes, words or ideas that have arisen.

Closing prayer and thanks (5–10 minutes)

Observe a moment of silence.

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for:

- the sharing that has taken place
- the work of the Melbourne Synod.



APPENDIX 4 | MEMBERSHIP

Final composition of the Melbourne Synod

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	NUMBER
Members by virtue of office	19
Priests elected from regions	45
Chaplaincy representatives	2
Permanent deacons	4
Parish lay members	56
Ministries and pastoral communities	17
Young adults	8
Institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life	9
Archbishop's nominated members	12
Observers—*non-voting*	3
Experts and advisers—*non-voting unless separately designated*	4

MEMBERS OF THE MELBOURNE SYNOD

The full list of members, listed alphabetically by surname, follows:

Mr Ajesh Abraham
Miss Angelina Ajang
Ms Patricia Aldag
Miss Anjeline Anslum
Bishop Martin Ashe
Monsignor Joselito Asis JCD
Mr Jeremy Atkinson
Ms Penny Badwal
Mrs Emma Bakker
Fr Charles Balnaves
Ms Natalie Baran
Ms Kerri-Lee Barry
Dr Seregious Be-ere
Mr Llewellyn Berchy
Mrs Natasha Berchy
Mr Benigno Bernardo
Mr Paul Bezzina
Mr Christopher Blake
Sr Rodelia Bordan Pastorelle
Mr Erasmus Boudville
Fr Patrick Bradford
Br Gerard Brady CFC
Mr Jordan Burns
Dr Nimmi Candappa
Fr Dishan Candappa OCDS
Mrs Anne Carrett
Mr Michael Allen Pio Catubay
Monsignor Franco Cavarra
Fr Alex Chow
Sr Joanna Coleiro FSP
Ms Natalie Collard
Hon Jacinta Collins
Archbishop Peter Comensoli
Mr Michael Cooney
Mr Hildegard Correya
Deacon Cristopher Creo
Deacon Jim Curtain
Miss Cecelia Davies
Mrs Sheena Devadass
Ms Sonali Dias
Fr Nicholas Dillon
Fr Hoa Dinh SJ
Mr Clemens Disney
Mr Augustine Doronila
Mrs Mary Dunstan
Fr John Dupuche
Mrs Gabrielle Eva
Deacon Stephen Fernandes
Miss Rhea Fernandes
Miss Bethany Fernandez
Sr Margaret Fields O.P.
Mr Denis Fitzgerald
Fr Peter Fitzsimons
Mr Adrian Foley
Fr Cameron Forbes
Fr David Francis
Ms Angella Francis
Mrs Fi Fraser
Fr Michael Gallacher JCL
Ms Paoline Gallego
Mr Stephen Gilligan
Fr Anthony Girolami
Fr Maria Raju Godavarthi
Fr Marcus Goulding
Mr Philip Green
Abbot Steele Hartmann OCSO
Ms Lisa Heffernan
Miss Anna Hijazeen
Associate Professor Joel Hodge
Sr Veronica Hoey SGS
Mr Paul Hoy
Mr Paul Hughes
Ms Cathy Humphrey
Fr Shabin Kaniampuram I.V.Dei
Fr Gerard Keith
Sr Michele Kennan pbvm
Mrs Christine Kennedy
Fr Tony Kerin VG
Fr Michael Duck Young Kong
Mrs Irna Grace Kostic
Mr Theodore Koustas
Ms Jocelyn Kung
Miss Margaret Kwan
Fr Binh Le
Deacon Joseph Leach
Fr Kevin Lenehan
Fr Vedran Lesic
Mr Perelcid Jan Leyte

Ms Kathleen Lord
Fr Ananda Maddineni MSFS
Fr Andrzej Madry CR
Ms Laetitia Malusu
Fr Jerald Maria Das
Mrs Jenny Marino
Mrs Jancy Martin
Fr Anil Mascarenhas
Fr Philip Mathew
Fr Dean Mathieson
Mrs Geralyn McCarthy
Fr Joshua McDermid
Mr Michael McGirr
Fr Geoffrey Mcilroy
Fr Christopher McPhee MSC
Mrs Margareta Mihardja
Mrs Adele Miller
Mr Leslie Milroy
Ms Marcelle Mogg
Fr Christopher Monaghan CP
Mr Cooper Monger
Fr Daryl Montecillo
Mr Peter Moore
Mr Damian Murphy
Fr Anh Nguyen
Bishop Thinh Nguyen
Mrs Tham Nguyen
Mr Truc Nguyen
Dr Garry Nolan AM
Fr Daniel Declan O'Brien
Ms Ann O'Brien
Mr Tim O'Leary
Dr John Parkes CSC, KCHS
Mr Phillip Perroni
Fr John Petrulis
Fr Linh Pham
Mrs Melanie Pinto
Monsignor Charles Portelli
Mrs Mariangela Prib-Marcialis
Mrs Rachel Prince
Fr Nathan Rawlins JCL
Mr Alister Rebelo
Mrs Teresa Rhynehart
Fr Steven Rigo
Fr Richard Rosse
Ms Lily Rowlands
Mrs Mary Ryan
Miss Divya Sabu
Dr Maureen Saclot
Fr John Salvano JV, JCI
Mr Lindsay Sant
Dr Edward Simons
Ms Aylin Sinsek
Fr Cameron Smith MGL
Fr Denis George Stanley
Sr Katherine Stone MGL
Mr Kai Streicher
Mr Mathi Subramaniyam
Mr Ronan Tassone
Mr Francis Thomas
Fr Luciano Toldo CS
Mr Ernest Towle
Fr Linh Tran
Ms Margaret Quynh Tran
Fr Joe Danh Cong Truong
Br Fons van Rooij FMS
Fr John Peter Vespa
Sr Stancea Vichie MSS
Mr Kemp Vinson
Fr Phuong Vu
Fr Thang Vu
Miss Julia Vu
Mrs Antonia Walters
Fr Fransiskus Xaverius Yangminta CS
Mrs Catherine Young

(Note: Two members have asked that their names not be published.)

SYNOD TABLE FACILITATORS

Synod members will gather in tables of eight, each with a facilitator. Their role is to support the discernment process, foster participation and help create a prayerful environment for conversations in the Spirit.

We are grateful to the following facilitators who have offered their service for the duration of the synod:

Mr Adrian Agpasa
Mrs Carmel Crawford
Mr Walter Dela Cruz
Ms Cyrilla D'Souza
Mrs Jacqui Giuliano
Mrs Dina Hoare
Deacon John Lam
Mr Gregory Lewis
Mrs Bernadette Lucanas
Miss Grace Nichols
Fr Collin Nunis
Mrs Trish Spiteri
Ms Mable Tsang
Mrs Nicole Vine
Mr Mark Walsh
Ms Vicki de Leo
Mr Kevin Donahoe
Mr John-Eric Ighalo
Ms Jasmine Tavita
Ms Judeline Wadhwani.

SYNOD MODERATOR

The moderator's role is to oversee and facilitate the synod program, ensuring that proceedings are conducted effectively and in a spirit of prayerful discernment.

Adjunct Prof Susan Pascoe AM will serve as moderator of the Melbourne Synod.

Ms Pascoe was a member of the Vatican Commission on Methodology, assisting in the planning for the 2023 Synod on Synodality. She holds a number of board positions and has held senior roles in the Church and government, including inaugural commissioner for the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and head of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

SYNOD *PERITI*

We are blessed to be accompanied by four *periti*, whose theological wisdom and expertise will assist the synod's discernment and support fidelity to the mission of the Church:

Fr Brendan Byrne SJ
Prof Clare Johnson
Prof Elizabeth Labone
Prof Richard Rymarz.

PRAYING FOR THE WORK OF THE SYNOD

The members and facilitators of the Melbourne Synod have generously shared their prayers, hopes and intentions for the Church. Their prayers reveal a deep love for Christ and his Church, a desire to listen attentively to the Holy Spirit, and a longing for renewal, communion, mission and hope.

More than 100 prayer intentions have been synthesised into a series of prayers for use before, during and after the synod.

May these prayers unite us as the People of God as we seek together to discern the way of the Gospel for the Church in Melbourne.

PRAYER FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Guide the members of the Melbourne Synod as we listen, discern and walk together.

Open our hearts to your wisdom, our minds to your truth, and our lives to your transforming grace.

Free us from fear, from attachment to our own plans and from anything that prevents us from hearing your voice.

Teach us to listen deeply to one another, to recognise your presence among us and to follow with courage wherever you lead.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR RENEWAL AND MISSION

Lord Jesus,

You call your Church to go out into the world and proclaim the Good News.

Renew the Church in Melbourne through the grace of this synod.

Give us the courage to become missionary disciples, sharing your love with confidence and joy.

Help us to welcome those who have drifted away, those who are searching and those who have never encountered you.

May our parishes, schools, ministries and communities be places where faith is awakened, hope is nurtured and lives are transformed.

We ask this in your holy name.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Lord of Life,

We entrust to you the young people of our Archdiocese.

Awaken within them a desire to seek your truth, to know your love and to follow your call.

Help our Church to accompany them with wisdom, patience and joy.

May they find welcome in our communities, confidence in their faith, and opportunities to share their gifts.

Bless the generations to come and help us build a Church in which young people flourish as disciples and leaders.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR THOSE AT THE MARGINS

Merciful Father,

You draw close to the forgotten, the wounded and the poor.

Open our eyes to those whose voices are often unheard.

We pray for people experiencing poverty, disability, loneliness and mental illness; for those who are incarcerated; for those who have been hurt by the Church; for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and for all who seek dignity, belonging and hope.

Teach us to recognise Christ in every person and to become a Church where all are welcomed, heard and loved.

May justice and compassion guide all that we do.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS, FAMILIES AND PARISH COMMUNITIES

Good Shepherd,

Bless our priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders.

Strengthen them in their vocation and fill them with zeal for your Gospel.

Bless our families, especially those facing illness, loss, uncertainty or hardship.

Renew our parishes as communities of faith, hospitality and service.

May every parish become a place where people encounter Christ, grow in discipleship and discover their mission.

Through your grace ,may our communities flourish for generations to come.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR UNITY AND COMMUNION

God of all peoples,

You have made us one Body in Christ, though we come from many backgrounds, cultures and experiences.

Bless our Archdiocese with unity in diversity.

Help us to value one another's gifts, to speak with charity, to listen with humility and to seek always the good of your Church.

May we grow as a synodal people, walking together in faith, hope and love.

Strengthen the bonds of communion among us so that the world may see the face of Christ reflected in his Church.

Amen.

SYNOD COMMISSION



Bishop Martin Ashe
Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne

Bishop Ashe brings more than four decades of pastoral experience in parish leadership, priestly formation and accompaniment, having served in a range of parish, formation and leadership roles across the Archdiocese. His ministry has included service as Vocations Director, Pastoral Director of Corpus Christi College Seminary, Director of Ministry to Priests, Parish Priest of Sunbury, and inaugural Parish Priest of Christ the Light Parish. In 2021, Pope Francis appointed him Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne.



Bong Bernardo
Couples for Christ, National Director of Evangelisation and Mission

Couples for Christ (CFC) is a Catholic lay movement present in over 140 countries, dedicated to renewing families and strengthening Christian life. Bong Bernardo has served CFC as National Director-CFC Australia, Regional Coordinator- CFC Polynesia, President-Answering the Cry of the Poor (ANCOP), Cluster Head-CFC Victoria. He was also a previous member of the Family, Life and Marriage Office of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Bong has given various Christian talks, teachings and training to different communities in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania countries.



Fr Cameron Forbes
Rector, Corpus Christi College Regional Seminary

Fr Cameron studied arts and law and worked for three years in governmental and legal fields before his seminary training. After priestly ordination, he served in the parish of Werribee, before completing a licentiate and doctorate in moral theology at the Alphonsianum Academy in Rome. He also holds a Masters in Liturgical Music from the Athenaeum of Saint Anselm in Rome. In 2016, Fr Cameron was appointed a formator and then Vice-Rector of Corpus Christi College. From 2020–2022, he was the parish priest of Mentone-Parkdale before being appointed Rector of Corpus Christi College in 2023. Fr Cameron lectures in moral theology at Catholic Theological College.



Fr Binh Le
Parish Priest

Fr Binh Le is the Parish Priest of Holy Trinity Catholic Parish, which incorporates the churches of Laverton, Altona Meadows and Point Cook. He lectures in Canon Law at the Catholic Theological College (University of Divinity) and serves on the Archbishop's Council of Priests.



Jacqui Giuliano
Animation Coordinator & Southern Region Animation Consultant; Proclaim: Office for Mission Renewal; Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Jacqui is a passionate faith educator who leads a team supporting clergy and parish leaders to grow vibrant, mission-focused communities. She brings a wealth of experience in parish and archdiocesan ministry, formation, and facilitation.



Fr Dean Mathieson
Parish Priest

Fr Dean is Parish Priest at the Parish of St John Paul II (St Peter's, Toorak and Our Lady of Lourdes, Armadale). He is currently the Chair of the Archbishop's Council of Priests. He is also a member of the Vocations Office team for the Archdiocese. Fr Dean is involved in hosting many ministries for young adults, families, as well as formation events.



Marcelle Mogg
Chief Mission Officer, VMCH

Marcelle Mogg serves as Chief Mission Officer at Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH), responsible for ensuring that VMCH's Catholic identity, mission and values are lived, visible and influential throughout the organisation. Marcelle is also a director of the Victorian Catholic Education Authority Limited, Sacred Heart Mission Incorporated, and Mercy

Community Services Australia Limited. Her previous roles include CEO of Mental Health Victoria, CEO of Catholic Social Services Australia, Group Director Mission Integration at St John of God Health Care, and Acting Group Director Mission for St Vincent's Health Australia. Marcelle has a Diploma Applied Science (Nursing) and a Bachelor of Social Science in Psychology from Australian Catholic University, an MBA from Melbourne Business School and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Teresa Rhynehart
Director for Mission, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Teresa Rhynehart is a senior leader in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, working across parish missionary renewal and strategic mission initiatives. She has extensive experience in mission leadership, youth ministry, and large-scale Church initiatives, including as Festival Director of the Australian Catholic Youth Festival 2025. Teresa is committed to fostering vibrant communities of faith that enable people to encounter Christ, engage in a life of faith, and embark on mission.



Katherine Stone MGL
Local Leader, MGL Sisters

Katherine is a sister with the Missionaries of God's Love (MGL) and is currently working as their vocations director. Discipleship, formation and missionary leadership are a good description of the rest of her ministry load!



Silvana Scarfe
Formation Coordinator & Formation Specialist, Proclaim: Office for Mission Renewal, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Silvana works as Formation Coordinator & Formation Specialist within Proclaim: Office for Mission Renewal in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. She assisted in the development of The Bethany Way Formation Offering, a renewed vision of formation within the Archdiocese where lay people are formed intellectually, pastorally, spiritually and humanly for the mission of personally living and sharing the Gospel in their context. She has experience in young adult ministry specifically forming, mentoring and coaching leaders; research and public policy advocacy; and event management. Silvana is passionate about forming others to discover their God-given identity and personal mission.



Jasmin Tavita
Manager Engagement and Growth, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS)

Jasmin Tavita is a leader in Catholic education at Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools, working across provision, enrolment growth, and community partnerships. Her work focuses on supporting schools to foster strong relationships with families and communities, and to build vibrant, accessible Catholic education environments. Jasmin is passionate about strengthening participation and ensuring every family can encounter faith and the impact of a Catholic education.



Judeline Wadhwani
Northern Region Parish Animation Consultant, Proclaim : Office for Mission Renewal, Archdiocese of Melbourne

Judeline works in Parish Animation serving approximately 25 parishes. With an extensive background in Catholic Educational Leadership over 3 decades in Melbourne, the United Kingdom and Papua New Guinea as well as at Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools, she brings experience of strategic vision visible in excellent stakeholder management, people engagement that is understanding of diversity and interculturality and a high level of dedication to service in the Church's mission to be a beacon of evangelisation in our world.

APPENDIX 5 | FINAL FORM AND TIMING

The final membership of the Melbourne Synod is determined by the Archbishop. The Archbishop may make such appointments, elections or adjustments as are necessary to achieve the purposes of the Synod and an appropriate representation of the People of God. The final list of members will be published by the Synod Secretariat following completion of all nomination, election and appointment processes.

APPENDIX 6 | *MODUS PROCEDENDI* MELBOURNE SYNOD

Preamble

The Melbourne Synod is a diocesan synod convened in accordance with canons 460–468 of the *Code of Canon Law*, as an assembly of selected clergy and other members of Christ's faithful of the Archdiocese of Melbourne who assist the Archbishop for the good of the whole Archdiocesan community. It is an assembly of prayer, listening, discernment, consultation and the formulation of proposals and recommendations in service of the mission of the Church in Melbourne.

In accordance with canon 466, the Archbishop of Melbourne is the sole legislator in the synod. The synod's votes are consultative, and only the Archbishop signs the synodal declarations and decrees, which may be published only by his authority.

This *Modus procedendi* establishes the procedures by which the synod shall conduct its business, exercise its responsibilities and seek the mind of Christ in all deliberations.

1. Principles

The Synod shall be governed by the following principles:

- *Prayerful discernment*
  All proceedings shall be grounded in worship, prayer, reflection upon Scripture, and openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- *Mutual listening*
  Members shall listen attentively and respectfully to one another, recognising the diverse experiences and perspectives represented within the Church.
- *Participation and inclusion*
  Every member shall have an equitable opportunity to contribute to discussions and discernment processes.
- *Transparency and integrity*
  Proceedings shall be conducted with honesty, accountability and clarity regarding decisions and recommendations.
- *Mission focus*
  Deliberations shall be directed toward the flourishing of the Church's mission and ministry.

2. Membership and participation

2.1 Synod members

Membership of the Synod shall be constituted in accordance with canon 463 and the *Synodal Directory* approved by the Archbishop. Members shall comprise those who are members by law, those duly elected according to the norms established by the Archbishop, and those freely appointed by the Archbishop in accordance with canon 463, §2.

A member legitimately impeded from attending may not appoint or send a proxy but shall notify the Archbishop of the impediment.

2.2 Rights of Members

Members may:

- attend all sessions unless otherwise determined
- speak to matters under consideration
- participate fully in consultation, discernment and the formulation of proposals and recommendations
- exercise a consultative vote on matters submitted to the synod in accordance with canon 466 and the procedures established in this Modus procedendi.

2.3 Observers and guests

The Archbishop may invite observers in accordance with canon 463, §3 and may invite experts, advisers, presenters and other guests to assist the work of the synod. Such persons are not members of the synod and do not possess a consultative vote.

2.4 Safeguarding

All Synod activities will be conducted in accordance with the safeguarding policies and standards of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

3. Conduct of sessions

3.1 Opening of sessions

Each session shall commence with prayer and may include Scripture, prayer, reflection or other acts of spiritual preparation.

3.2 Profession of faith

Before commencing the synodal deliberations, the members of the synod shall make the profession of faith in accordance with canon 833, §1.

3.3 Presiding officer

The Archbishop presides over the diocesan synod. In accordance with canon 462, §2, he may delegate a vicar general or episcopal vicar to preside at an individual session.

A moderator or facilitator appointed by the Archbishop may assist the president in conducting the proceedings, facilitating discussion, managing interventions and observing the approved timetable.

3.4 Agenda

The questions and agenda to be considered by the synod shall be determined or approved by the Archbishop. Members may propose modifications or additional matters for the Archbishop's consideration.

3.5 Quorum

A quorum shall consist of an absolute majority of members entitled to participate (c. 119, §2). A recommendation is approved when more than half of those present vote in favour. However, under canon 466, the diocesan bishop remains the sole legislator.

4. Discernment and deliberation

4.1 Spiritual conversation

The synod shall employ a process of spiritual conversation involving:

- prayer and silent reflection
- initial sharing by participants
- listening without interruption
- communal reflection on areas of convergence and divergence
- discernment of emerging insights and recommendations.

4.2 Small-group processes

The synod may conduct deliberations in facilitated small groups. Each group shall:

- encourage participation by all members
- prepare summaries of discussions
- identify key themes, questions and recommendations.

4.3 Plenary discussion

All questions proposed for consideration shall be subject to the free discussion of the members of the synod, in accordance with canon 465 and the procedural requirements established in this *Modus procedendi.*

5. Motions and proposals

5.1 Submission

Motions, recommendations, reports and proposals shall be submitted in writing within timelines determined by the Synod Secretariat.

5.2 Consideration

Before debate, the moderator shall determine that a motion:

- is within the competence of the synod
- is clearly expressed
- has been appropriately moved and seconded where required.

5.3 Amendment

Members may propose amendments in accordance with established procedures. Proposals or amendments requiring consideration by the synod shall be submitted in the form and within the timeframe established by the secretariat.

Before being admitted for consideration, a proposal shall be reviewed to ensure that it falls within the competence of the diocesan synod and is not contrary to divine law, the doctrine or discipline of the Church, universal or particular law, or a matter reserved to the Apostolic See or another competent ecclesiastical authority.

The purpose of amendments shall be to clarify, improve or refine a proposal.

6. Decision-making, discernment and voting

6.1 Discernment

The synod shall seek, through prayer, spiritual conversation, free discussion and communal discernment, the greatest possible convergence concerning the matters placed before it.

6.2 Consultative vote

Where the opinion of the synod is to be formally ascertained, members shall exercise a consultative vote. Such voting does not constitute a binding majority decision but indicates the degree of concurrence among the members concerning a proposal (c. 466).

6.3 Forms of vote

Voting may be conducted by electronic means, show of hands or secret ballot, as determined for the matter under consideration. A secret ballot shall be used whenever required by law or determined by the Archbishop.

Voting categories are:

- *Placet*—affirmative
- *Non placet*—negative
- *Placet iuxta modum*—affirmative, with reservations.

6.4 Effect of voting

The result of a consultative vote shall be recorded and presented to the Archbishop. In accordance with canon 466, the Archbishop remains free to determine the weight to be attributed to the result and to accept, modify or decline a proposal.

6.5 Recording outcomes

The results of votes, recommendations, proposals and other synodal outcomes shall be accurately recorded in the official acts of the synod.

7. Standards of conduct

Members shall:

- treat one another with respect and Christian charity
- speak truthfully and constructively
- refrain from personal attacks, harassment or disruptive conduct
- maintain confidentiality where matters have been designated confidential
- support the integrity of the synod process.

The moderator may intervene when conduct is inconsistent with these standards.

8. Records and communications

8.1 Minutes

Accurate records shall be maintained of:

- attendance
- proceedings
- resolutions
- recommendations
- decisions.

8.2 Publication

The publication of official synodal acts, reports, declarations and decrees shall take place with the authority of the Archbishop. The secretariat may publish other approved communications concerning the proceedings in accordance with the communications protocol established for the synod.

8.3 Confidential matters

Sensitive, pastoral, legal, personnel, or confidential matters shall be managed in accordance with applicable policies and privacy requirements.

9. Committees and working groups

The synod may establish committees, commissions, task groups or working parties to undertake specific work. Committees and working groups are consultative and preparatory in character and shall not exercise functions reserved by law to the Archbishop or to the synod assembled in session.

Each body shall:

- operate within its terms of reference
- report to the synod
- conclude its work within approved timelines.

10. Amendment of the *Modus procedendi*

Members may propose amendments to this *Modus procedendi*. Any amendment shall require the approval of the Archbishop before taking effect and shall be consistent with universal and particular law and the other governing instruments of the synod.

11. Suspension and dissolution

The Archbishop may suspend or dissolve the synod according to his prudent judgment.

If the episcopal see becomes vacant or impeded, the synod is suspended by the law itself until the succeeding diocesan bishop decrees that it be continued or declares it terminated.

12. Synodal declarations and decrees

In accordance with canon 466, the Archbishop alone signs the declarations and decrees of the synod. Only by his authority may they be published. A proposal approved by consultative vote does not thereby become a synodal declaration, decree or particular law.

13. Communication after the synod

In accordance with canon 467, the Archbishop shall communicate the text of any synodal declarations and decrees to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and provide such notification as required by law.

CLOSING STATEMENT

The synod commits itself to a process marked by prayer, wisdom, humility and hope, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit and seeking faithfully to discern God's call for the life and mission of the Church in Melbourne.



SYNOD GLOSSARY

consultative vote	The formal expression of a synod member's judgement offered to assist the Archbishop in his discernment. It does not itself constitute legislation or bind the Archbishop.
conversation in the Spirit	A structured and prayerful method of listening, sharing and communal discernment.
diocesan synod	A canonical gathering of selected members of the faithful who assist the diocesan bishop for the good of the whole diocesan community.
discernment	A prayerful process of seeking to recognise and respond faithfully to the movement and invitation of the Holy Spirit.
expert or peritus	A person invited to provide specialist theological, canonical, pastoral or professional expertise.
Modus procedendi	The formal procedural norms governing the conduct of the synod sessions.
non placet	A negative consultative vote.
observer	A person invited to attend the synod without being a voting synod member.
placet	An affirmative consultative vote.
placet iuxta modum	An affirmative consultative vote subject to a proposed modification.
synod member	A person lawfully designated to participate as a member of the diocesan synod.
synodality	The way in which the Church seeks to walk together in communion, participation and mission, listening to the Holy Spirit and to one another.
working document	The principal preparatory document developed from consultation and other sources to support synod members in discernment.



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE

PO Box 146 East Melbourne VIC
synod@cam.org.au
melbournecatholic.org/synod26