



27th September 2023

Memorial of St. Vincent de Paul

TWO IMPORTANT MATTERS FOR OUR PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION

Dear Friends in Christ,

1. SYNOD ON SYNODALITY (4-29 October 2023)

Let us all join Pope Francis in his call for prayerful support of the Synod on Synodality, which begins 4th October 2023 (Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi) in Rome.

Prayerful suggestions for our Liturgies have already been sent to you.

Although separated, our own YEAR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT is not distinct from the Synod in Rome. A practical response is to use our own resources for our YEAR and form evangelisation circles (information/resources already sent: [Year of the Holy Spirit website https://www.yearofholyspirit.org.au/](https://www.yearofholyspirit.org.au/) applying the observations of the Roman Synod to our own discernment of the Holy Spirit in our Archdiocese.

2. THE VOICE REFERENDUM (14 OCTOBER 2023)

The Bishops of Australia have very recently issued a further statement about THE VOICE REFERENDUM

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gVh0M8eJj3M85K6FgYZwBVDgdnQRQEMJ/view> in addition to its earlier statement *Listen, Learn, Love*

<https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2023/08/22/social-justice-statement-2023-24/>

The main point of the Bishops' Statement is for all Catholics to consider prayerfully the ethical/moral issues surrounding this crucial vote and not simply the political considerations. The call is for us all to use these weeks to educate and form our consciences on this matter and vote accordingly.

Perhaps we could start by applying afresh Pope St John Paul II's famous speech to Aboriginal Australia at Alice Springs (Nov., 1986) to this Referendum. A most memorable statement this was:

"What has been done cannot be undone but what can be done to remedy the deeds of yesterday must not be put off till tomorrow."

What ethical implications does this have for the upcoming Referendum?

Another ethical/moral consideration might be the chilling fact that simply being born an Aboriginal person today places this person in a highly disadvantaged position as an Australian. Surely, there have been some wonderful advances to diminish such disadvantage (especially in education).

The Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn



However, on so many other basic social indicators, the statistics still indicate an appalling human situation persists.

Here our communal responsibility to respond to this social/structural diseased inter-generational situation requires careful consideration before voting in the Referendum.

“What ought we do?” is dependent on responding to the deeper question of “What ought we be?” as Australians in this seemingly automatic marginalisation of so many of our First Australians. This requires the deep, prayerful informing of our individual and communal conscience.

Naturally, the direct advocacy on partisan political “Yes” or “No” campaigns in our parishes, schools and communities is inappropriate. However, assisting our people to form their consciences on all aspects of the debate is encouraged.

Again, let us pray for this intention in our prayers and liturgies, leading up to the Referendum.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse
Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn.