



Come, Holy Spirit

**Synthesis Report
Archdiocesan Assembly 2024
19 October 2024**



Come,

**take your place on this pilgrim journey
as an Archdiocese.**



**Catholic Archdiocese of
Canberra & Goulburn**





Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

Synthesis Report Archdiocesan Assembly





A synthesis of the Spirit at work in our Archdiocese.

The Archdiocesan Assembly - 'Come, Holy Spirit' - was a celebration of the fruits of the Year of the Holy Spirit and an exploration of new opportunities for evangelisation and synodality in the life and mission of our Church.

In many ways, the Archdiocese has been walking along a similar path as the first Apostles. It took time for the early Church to discern and declare: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28) May we continue down this path following the Assembly.

All are welcome on this pilgrim journey of discernment.





“Come, Holy Spirit”

On the 19th of October 2024, over 550 people across the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn gathered to discern ‘what seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us’ (Acts 15:28) through a dynamic prayer process: the *Conversation in the Spirit*.

The Archdiocesan Assembly was situated within an ‘Assembly Festival’. This began with a *Day of Prayer* which included the blessing of the Assembly Candles. The ordination of Fr Mark Ha and the *Ecumenical Prayer Vigil* were celebrated in the days leading into the Assembly. Following the Assembly, Archbishop Christopher shared a Pastoral Letter on the next steps for our Archdiocese which was read, combined with a video message, in each Parish Sunday Mass. Finally, the Archdiocese committed the fruit of the Assembly to Jesus through the intercession of Mary at the *Marian Procession* in Goulburn. Throughout this Festival, *Conversations in the Spirit* took many forms - not only in the roundtable experience, but through the deep welcome and presence extended by people of faith supporting each other and the genuine desire to discern the will of the Spirit for all.

The Assembly centred around the most ancient prayer of our Church: “*Come, Holy Spirit*” and was a chance to explore evangelisation, the ‘deepest identity of the Church and the reason why she exists’ (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14) through three invitations: encounter, discipleship, mission.

This exploration took place across six hubs with a further 500 people joining through the online live stream. The fruit of this discernment was captured and distilled through an online platform that garnered over 5,243 responses. In addition, the participants gathered in over 100 small groups, with convergences and divergences of each group also submitted.

In the lead into the Archdiocesan Assembly, over 20 schools also submitted responses in preparation for the Assembly, reflecting on the question: “How can the Church help young people know Jesus?”. In addition, ten Archdiocesan Roundtables, and countless experiences of the Conversation in the Spirit conducted throughout the ‘*Year of the Holy Spirit*’ provided a foundation to the themes that were discerned at the Assembly.

The Archdiocesan Assembly is not an isolated event. Firstly, it builds on the decision of the Australian Bishops to convene a *Plenary Council* (2017). Whilst the Archdiocese currently awaits the Decrees of the Council receiving recognition from the Holy See, the Church continues to realise the aspirations of the Council and discern a local, contextualised expression of what was discerned.

Secondly, it occurs in the midst of Pope Francis’ theological, juridical and pastoral considerations on the nature of the Church itself through the *Synod on Synodality* (2021-2024). This reached a particular point of culmination in the *Final Document*, published in the midst of the Archdiocesan Festival (26 October).





For us as an Archdiocese, the Assembly has a longer history and more extensive grounding: it builds on the Synods celebrated in 1989 and 2004 under Archbishop Carroll's leadership and the previous Assemblies held by Archbishops Coleridge and Carroll.

It is in this context that the faithful of the Archdiocese gathered to reflect on the themes of encounter, discipleship and mission. For some the very themes posed were challenging. In *encounter*, there was the tension between who we are as both individuals and members of a community; of who we are today and who we are called to become. In *discipleship*, there is recognition that this group of people - a '*community of communities*' (Evangelii Gaudium, 28) - is bound together by faith in Jesus the Christ. This faith is given expression through a common baptism that enriches and enlivens our humanity to give us a common vocation.

We are called to be the People of God proclaiming the person of Jesus who, when encountered, alters every horizon of our being. In *mission*, we sought to engage with the reality that our common baptismal vocation really does alter our horizons and means that we need to proclaim Jesus in essentially practical ways.

This summary report discusses some of the themes that emerged through the three Conversations in the Spirit: encounter, discipleship, and mission. Importantly, these themes are only initial reflections gathered through the thousands of responses received. A further discursive report will be released in time, in combination with the responses received from parishes and communities. We invite you to continue the spirit of the Assembly by responding to the questions at the end of this report, as we continue to discern what the Holy Spirit is asking of us in the Archdiocese.

Encounter

We discerned the theme of *Encounter* as a deep and profound personal experience of God through, and with, Jesus Christ. The primary convergence across participant responses was that encounter is experienced through relationships, community and welcome and that the Holy Spirit is guiding the Archdiocese to become a community





of encounter by proactively reaching out, supporting others and by nurturing opportunities for prayer and formation. A summary of the convergences across the Conversation in the Spirit around encounter are outlined below, in no particular order.

Encounter as a Personal Relationship

A focus on the personal experience, emphasising it is relationships that are built on authenticity, vulnerability, and deep spiritual intimacy. Through prayer, sacraments (especially the Eucharist), and meaningful connections, people are invited to draw closer to Jesus and to each other and experience genuine encounter.

Key words: personal, vulnerable, intimacy, transformation, prayer.

“People are looking for a place where they belong - the Catholic Church should be that place. Praying together (not just at mass) and developing relationships. Love has to look like something.”

“At the heart of my work in Catholic Education there has been an intentional focus on providing opportunities for students and teachers for an encounter with Jesus, opportunities for discipleship through various formation programs and an intentional student formation pathway.”

“Encounter requires welcome, trust, generosity”

Prayer, Worship, and Formation

Encounter is deeply rooted in prayer, worship, and faith formation. Through the sacraments (especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation), worship, and opportunities for spiritual growth like retreats and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Spirit is leading the Archdiocese to deepen the faith of its members and build a culture of ongoing intentional formation.

Key words: prayer, worship, formation, sacraments, spiritual growth, Eucharist.

“I have experienced encounter in the many ways that my parish and community have offered opportunities to spend time with Jesus in the sacraments, in Eucharistic Adoration and through prayer.”

“I sense encounter through regular community gatherings, prayer groups, where I can connect with others and build relationships, participation in small groups or Bible studies often provide a more intimate setting for encounter, where individuals can share their experiences and faith journeys.”

“Through seminars and retreats, formation on discipleship and mission through Alpha and outreach to young people, the poor, those in prison and aged care.”





Community and Belonging

Community is an essential element of encounter, where belonging, welcome, and mutual support are central. The Holy Spirit is guiding the Archdiocese to foster communities where everyone is included, and to bridge connections between schools, parishes, and various groups to ensure no one is left out.

Key words: Community, belonging, welcome, support, connection

“In my parish I experience a sense of belonging, a sense of caring, a sense of awareness of the needs of the wider world, a sense of offering a variety of ways for people to experience their faith.”

“I sense a call to embrace greater collaboration and dialogue, both within the Archdiocese and with the broader society. This involves fostering a stronger sense of belonging among all members of the Church, ensuring that everyone—regardless of background, age, or life experience—feels welcomed and valued.”

“The challenge is to make all feel welcome to the Church and not exclude anyone but to allow opportunities to bring everyone spiritually closer to God so they feel they belong in the Church and can contribute in whatever way they can.”

Engaging Young People and Families

Participant responses suggested that the Spirit is encouraging a focus on youth and family engagement, emphasising the importance of multigenerational programs, connections between schools and parishes, and creating spaces where young people feel valued. Encounter is seen in the development of supportive programs that cater to families and young adults.

Key words: youth, family, engagement, multigenerational, connection.

“I would say I see the Holy Spirit raising up multiple generations and calling them all differently according to their charisms. We may be on the cusp of a deeper comprehension of gifts, that hinge on a deep encounter with Jesus, in relationship with him. I have seen young people rise up, according to the way they love Jesus.”

“I sense the Holy Spirit wanting us to create ways to bring young people to the Church and build their faith by giving them opportunities to serve in the work of the church - so that they feel that they are part of the church and get opportunities to experience God's love.”

“To look at new, engaging and relevant ways to be the touchstone for engaging our families and staff in our Catholic schools. Whenever and wherever we have opportunities to show the face of God and be his head, hands and heart, we should be doing this well.”





Authentic and Service Driven Encounter

Participants reflected that the Archdiocese is called to create an authentic and service driven community that lives out the Gospel in action. This includes being open to new approaches, collaboration, and challenging existing norms to foster relationships that truly reflect the love of Christ. The Spirit is guiding towards a community that is approachable, active, and responsive to the needs of society to provide the opportunity of encounter for all.

Key words: charity, service, mission, collaboration, outreach

“We are being led much more to focus on the person of Jesus. But not those aspects of Jesus’ ministry and outreach that fit our own goals or validate the safe boundaries we look to. Much more, we are being led to follow the ways in which Jesus welcomed the excluded and rejected by society. To support those in crisis. To welcome those that find no home elsewhere. To evolve in our understanding of what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God.”

“I’ve learned that mission is not just about grand gestures but is often found in the small acts of love and service that reflect God’s heart. Through these experiences, I feel the Holy Spirit leading me to be more intentional in fostering relationships that inspire faith and service in others.”

Discipleship

We prayerfully reflected on the theme of *Discipleship*, on how we become Disciples of Jesus, exploring the ideas drawn from scripture on Jesus’ model of discipleship. Responses reflected Discipleship as a lived commitment; following Jesus in everyday life, giving witness to the faith, and actively and intentionally building disciples through community, service, and formation. The following themes emerged through the Conversation in the Spirit as areas the Archdiocese may be called to nurture and grow disciples.

Formation of Young People

Respondents highlighted youth ministries, school-parish partnerships, youth rallies, and intergenerational initiatives as key methods for forming intentional disciples.





There is a desire to build relationships across generations, helping the emerging generations and their families grow together in their understanding and experience of discipleship.

Key words: youth and young adult ministry, school-parish partnerships, intergenerational.

“Through the prayer life of our school. Christian Meditation has been a strong focus. Our community has been offered opportunities to encounter Christ through silence, stillness and simplicity. The sacramental life of the Parish and school liturgical events also offer families a chance to encounter Jesus. Youth Ministry has also supported many opportunities for encounter in our community.”

“I believe Holy Spirit is leading us to yield to Him more for a renewal in our Archdiocese. I think there is a new wave of the Spirit through better unity between different Catholic ministries, ecumenical groups and the rise of a new generation of youth who thirst for the Lord.”

“Working with students I would consider every day to be an opportunity in this space. Young people see the world in an exceptionally different way to adults and the dialogue that goes with this is an exciting opportunity to talk with them about faith.”

Sacramental Life and Faith Formation

The Sacraments were highlighted as central to discipleship, serving as anchors for spiritual growth and encounters with Jesus. Faith formation, whether through catechesis, retreats, charismatic communities and expressions or the Latin Mass were highlighted as vital for grounding discipleship in a deeper relationship with God. Assembly participants emphasised lifelong learning, ongoing spiritual development, and consistent opportunities for formation appropriate to every life and faith stage.

Key words: sacraments, faith formation, catechesis, ongoing conversion, Eucharist, lifelong learning, spiritual growth, adult formation.

“It seems to me that the Holy Spirit is leading us to a renewed love of the Universal Church, and in particular, Her sacraments, and more particularly, the Mass.”

“The laity has never had more opportunities to be formed in the faith and to be capable of missionary discipleship. So it's up to us at the grassroots level to come up with ideas that respond to the needs of our communities. It does not take much to get a small community going that can be a real source of blessing to people's faith journeys... So lay people need to be encouraged to take responsibility for what we can do and what they can learn how to do, which is a lot.”

Community Building and Relational Discipleship

Participants described how discipleship is experienced and strengthened through relationships and community. Respondents emphasised building supportive communities across parishes, schools, and small groups. Being present, listening, and accompanying others were highlighted as central to





discipleship, helping people feel part of something bigger and encouraging mutual support and shared growth.

Key words: building community, small groups, walking together, connection, accompaniment, journeying, relationships, supporting each other.

“Through this process I hope the Holy Spirit is leading us to listen to the wider voices of the community and to find a way to respond as Christ would to all people in love.”

The genuine relationships formed between staff, students, and families. Whether it's in the classroom, playground, or during events... these moments of connection create a space where Christ's love is palpable. These encounters are often simple but profound, reminding us that we are all part of a larger body of Christ, journeying together.”

“Discipleship, as individuals grow in faith by walking together in community, is living out Gospel values through actions large and small.”

Inclusivity and Welcoming

A desire to create an inclusive and welcoming environment. The Archdiocese is encouraged to be a community that invites and embraces everyone, especially those on the margins, marginalised groups, and those who may feel disconnected from the Church. There is a desire to move away from judgement, foster a culture of invitation, and show that all people are valued and welcomed.

Key words: invitation, inclusivity, welcoming, non-judgmental, reaching the margins, inviting all, embracing diversity, openness.

“I feel the Holy Spirit is fighting to lead the Archdiocese back to inclusion, community and supportive, connected parish & school communities.”

“We must reach out to others, be inclusive, show respect for each other and respect for those who feel marginalised. Our communities should be welcoming, a place where all feel safe and connected, like a family.”

Lay Involvement and Leadership

Empowering lay people to take an active role in leading and building the faith community is a core element of forming disciples and central to responding to our Baptism call. Responses emphasised recognizing and nurturing individual charisms, involving lay leaders in pastoral initiatives, and encouraging lay people to take responsibility for their communities through leadership roles. This includes supporting lay involvement in ministries, school programs, catechesis, and providing opportunities for intentional discipleship.





Key words: lay leadership, empowering laity, charisms, lay involvement, pastoral council, leadership roles, sharing gifts, community contribution, Baptism.

"I sense that the Holy Spirit is leading the Archdiocese into being 'fishermen' without neglecting the call to be 'shepherds' as laity and clergy."

"I feel we need to look back at the way Jesus encountered people. By coming Disciples, need to welcome, be open as we all entered with the first step Baptism. Remember we are all as one with the Holy Spirit."

I sense that the Archdiocese is in a time where the Holy Spirit is guiding us in an unexpected way. Perhaps what I sense is that those who may be less typically expected to take up leadership roles are the ones being called to do so... I know the Holy Spirit is calling those who He knows can serve within the Archdiocese in a way that is needed."

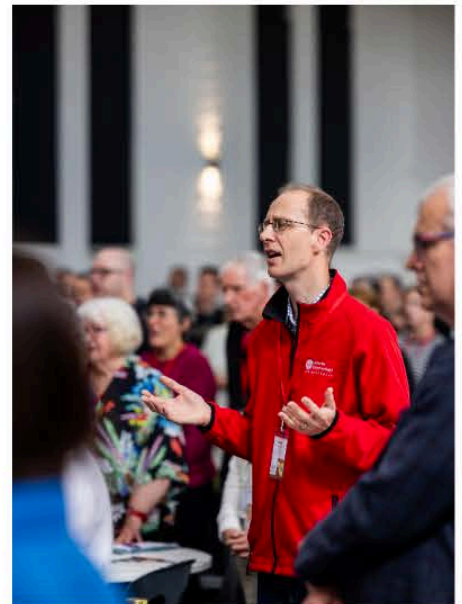
Listening and Accompaniment

There was a sense that discipleship should be marked by attentive listening and accompaniment. The Archdiocese is encouraged to listen to the needs of individuals, especially young people, those in vulnerable situations, and those who may be struggling. By walking alongside people, sharing faith stories, and being open to dialogue, a culture of authentic relationship and discipleship can grow.

Key words include: listening, accompaniment, dialogue, responding to needs, walking alongside, mutual support, being present, intentional listening.

"Being more prayerful and listening to God. Discerning the best and right responses in the context of today. Recognising that loneliness represents a greater need than the material. Trusting in God that our best human efforts will be transformed."

"Encounter, discipleship and mission requires accompaniment from other disciples who have experienced the Lord. God can definitely work in many wonderful ways no doubt but an active outreach and accompaniment is required."





Tradition and Modernity

Balancing the Church's tradition with the context of the modern world is important in forming disciples. Respondents highlighted the need to uphold the core teachings and values of the Church while also being adaptable to contemporary society. This includes using modern tools like digital platforms for outreach, understanding cultural changes, and incorporating new movements within the Church.

Key words: tradition, modern context, evolving practices, digital outreach, cultural relevance, balance, adaptation.

"I perceive that the Holy Spirit is guiding our Archdiocese through a period of dynamic growth and reflection. In this journey, we are invited to explore new expressions of our faith while remaining rooted in our rich Catholic tradition. This dual focus presents an opportunity for dialogue, understanding, and unity within our community."

"Technology offers new ways to connect, educate, and engage parishioners. Online platforms can facilitate virtual encounters, provide resources for discipleship, and extend the reach of the church's mission."

"Making sure we stay faithful to our Catholic Identity in an increasingly secular society. Therefore re-engaging Catholics with their faith tradition and spiritual formation to strengthen their discipleship and mission."

Mission

We considered the call of all of us to be missionary disciples, we listened to each other in sharing a Marian and synodal style of mission, whereby we are called to: proclaim the word, celebrate the sacraments, and extend charity to others. A number of key themes arose from participant responses grounded in our faith tradition giving strength and courage to reach out and be of service to others. A brief summary of some of these themes is provided.

Evangelisation and Outreach

Mission as an expression of evangelisation through outreach—proclaiming the Gospel and spreading Christ's love to others, both within and outside the faith community. There was a sense that this involves taking initiative, reaching out to the marginalised, and creating opportunities for others to encounter the faith. Participants view mission as an active and outward-facing endeavour, aimed at growing God's kingdom and sharing faith authentically.

Key words: evangelism, outreach, proclaiming, reaching out, encounter, margins, invite.

"Mission requires us to move out of 'maintenance' mode."

"I sense a strong call towards renewed evangelisation and outreach, particularly in reaching those on the margins—whether they are the unchurched, the disconnected, or those who feel distant from the Church. The





Holy Spirit is urging us to be bold in our witness, to step out of our comfort zones, and to engage with the broader community in meaningful and transformative ways.

“We are all called to help build God's kingdom to the best of our abilities, with love and compassion.”

Service and Presence

Service means being present, helping those in need, and loving others in practical ways. Participants emphasised the role of charity, kindness, and hospitality as ways to live out the Gospel, especially through small daily actions. Service is not limited to grand acts but extends to being a welcoming and supportive presence in people's lives, reflecting Christ's love and compassion.

Key words: service, presence, helping, charity, hospitality, welcoming, support.

“I sense the Holy Spirit leading the Archdiocese toward a deeper commitment to evangelization and community engagement. There's a growing emphasis on accompanying families in their faith journey, strengthening catechesis, and fostering a culture of service and outreach. I see the Spirit guiding us to embrace diversity, creating spaces for dialogue and inclusion, particularly with youth and marginalized groups. Through renewed focus on formation and spiritual growth, I believe the Holy Spirit is inspiring us to be a more vibrant, mission-driven Church, rooted in love and compassion for all.”

“Overcoming the idea that evangelisation is a huge job, when in fact it is simply being filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit and being prepared to share that with family, friends, church members and any person who is interested in dialogue. Personal testimonies mean far more to the general community than simple church attendance.”

Community and Inclusion

Mission as grounded in a welcoming and inclusive community that embodies the Gospel values. Participants discussed the need to be a community that invites, accepts, and supports everyone, including youth, marginalised groups, and those not traditionally seen in the church. A missionary community is one that listens, includes all voices, and fosters a culture of love and acceptance.

Key words: community, inclusion, welcoming, listening, invite, support, youth, marginalised.

“Although I believe the Spirit is opening our hearts to inclusion, this is also our greatest challenge, we are all at different places on the journey and to include we need to acknowledge that significant difference.”

“I feel that the Holy Spirit is guiding our Archdiocese to a place of inclusion and engagement, with opportunities especially for younger Catholics to engage in the faith through shared experiences with older members of the Church.”





Formation and Growth

Formation was described as being a base for mission, as it enables individuals and communities to grow in faith and be equipped for evangelization. This includes ongoing catechesis, spiritual growth, training in charisms, and adult formation. Based on the responses, formation is necessary for all ages and is a means to empower people to live out the mission effectively, with confidence and depth.

Key words: formation, growth, catechesis, training, spiritual growth, empowerment and charisms.

“Understanding the process of evangelisation includes welcome, proclamation, incorporation, discipleship and mission. Our parishes and schools working together a common vision for evangelisation. Moving from silos to communities of evangelisation that fully understand the process to becoming missionary disciples.”

“Encourage people to know their charisms and God given gifts and then lean into them so that by sharing them they bear fruit.”

“We can create spaces that are welcoming, inclusive, and responsive to the real needs of people, fostering authentic encounters with Christ. By offering relevant, engaging faith formation and opportunities for service, we can nurture discipleship, especially among young people. Embracing digital tools and creative outreach initiatives can also enhance our mission, allowing us to reach beyond traditional settings and connect with those who may not otherwise engage. Ultimately, these opportunities call us to be a Church that listens, adapts, and witnesses to God’s love in fresh and compelling ways.”

Courage

Our Assembly responses described the need for boldness and courage in mission—taking risks, stepping out in faith, and speaking truth with conviction. This involves challenging the status quo, not being afraid to evangelise or stand for Gospel values, and embracing discomfort as part of the call to mission. Courage is highlighted as a vital aspect of being a missionary, whether in public witness, advocacy, or reaching out to those in need.

Key words: boldness, courage, taking risks, speaking truth, challenge, faith, public witness.





“Explicitly develop the courage, knowledge and skills to express our faith to each other and the secular world resulting in a growing sense of humility, support and belonging, allowing us to brave our ever-changing world.”

Be not afraid! Extend the walls of the tent and go to encounter those who are unchurched, and those who think and behave and believe differently to us (within and without of the church!) and enter into dialogue with them. To become more attentive to the work and action of the Holy Spirit and to have the trust and courage to follow where He leads us even when it is challenging and uncomfortable.”

Evangelisation and the Sacraments

The sacraments were described as important for mission, providing the foundation needed for effective outreach and service. Participants highlighted the Eucharist, sacraments of initiation, and other forms of prayer as essential elements that nourish the missionary spirit and provide a deep encounter with Christ. Mission is rooted in spirituality and flows from a sacramental life that is vibrant and centred on Christ.

Key words: sacraments, Eucharist, spirituality, prayer, sacramental life, nourishment, encounter.

“Through making Sunday Mass a welcoming community and renewed focus on music ministry, readers and hospitality, rather than seeing mass as a weekly obligation - an opportunity to proclaim the word of God and be united in worship and fellowship. Seeing Easter and Christmas as a time to evangelise ‘Easter / Christmas Catholics’ whilst encouraging committed Catholics to use their gifts to serve.”

“I believe the Holy Spirit is inviting the Archdiocese to focus on bringing more people into an authentic relationship with God that will enable a greater evangelisation of our broader community.”

Initial Convergences

Drawing on these themes that have emerged from the Conversation in the Spirit, and engaging in the ongoing process of discerning what ‘seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us’ (Acts 15:28), here are five potential convergences for prayerful reflection:

1. Desire for interrelated, intergenerational and interparish renewal.

This can look like the hope of seeing our young people engage in the life and mission of the Church; going beyond Parish boundaries and seeing parishes intentionally collaborate; valuing of ecclesial and ethnic communities; honouring school and parish partnerships; and placing a particular emphasis for our regional contexts across our Archdiocese.

In essence, this is a clear expression that renewal is grounded in encounter through community and relationship - from which the life of a missionary disciple flows: love, connection, belonging, feeling welcome and listened to.





2. **Fostering a culture of belonging and invitation.**

This is moving beyond being a 'welcoming' and towards becoming an 'invitational' community. This is grounded in the sense of our Catholic communities (incl. Catholic schools) not shying away from its faith tradition, but that embraces all with an invitation to belong.

This desire reflects the Church's teaching on our Parishes as a 'community of communities, a sanctuary for those in the midst of the journey and a centre of missionary outreach' (Evangelii Gaudium, 28).

As articulated by the South Tuggeranong Parish, Fr James Anthony summed this up by asking: "to whom we belong – our parish, our diocese, our schools, our communities?" While differently expressed, the Archdiocese discerned that it is the people who are at the centre; the relationships that we treasure, in other words, the person who has opened up new horizons for us all.

3. **Revealing and reaffirming the value of our Faith Tradition.**

A strong sense of the importance, the value, and the love for our shared Faith Tradition. Particularly through the **Sacraments, scripture** and **prayer**. A question to ponder is: are the 'new ways' we are seeking to pursue in the Church, actually a re-presentation of the 'old'? Is it an opportunity to bring the timeless truths and tradition into our time? The emergence of synodality in our Church is just one example of this: a contemporary articulation of an ancient tradition. Yet, its form and context provide new impetus and energy.

There is especially a focus on ensuring relevance, engagement and accessibility of our Faith Tradition for children, young people, and vulnerable members of our community whom we are called to outreach and serve. This need was articulated by our students sharing their desire to know Jesus; one of whom stated: "We will know Jesus more if the Scripture is broken down more into child-friendly language with pictures." (Year 7-9)

4. **Encounter comes from community and relationships.**

The ongoing focus on the importance of genuine, Christ-like relationships where we journey with, and accompany others. This is what it means to witness the faith, especially in the world. Questions to continue to discern include: How can our actions reflect Christ and invite people to encounter him in our workplaces, schools, communities and families? It is important to accompany the lost, the least and the last among us. How can we channel our efforts to accompany those on the peripheries of our community?

The role of the Apostolate with young adults from across the Archdiocese animating many of the Assembly Hubs has been an example of accompaniment in action; actively seeking to disciple those





around them. How can we prayerful discern those that the Holy Spirit could be guiding us, this year, to build relationship that leads to invitation?

Leaders from the Goulburn Parish shared their focus on the school - parish relationship in this regard and intentionally seeking to form young people for mission, saying: “this will not be achieved by a program to be covered but a way of life that takes place in the streets and living rooms; our charisms are vital in the discovery where Jesus is leading us.”

5. Finally, Formation for Mission.

There is clearly a deeper desire for catechesis, with so many practical ideas formed around how the Holy Spirit is calling us to be missionary disciples. In this regard, the Eucharist was clearly placed at the heart of the mission. How can we move from this source and summit of our faith and embrace its promised power to fulfil what we have been commissioned for: to proclaim Christ and the Kingdom to all peoples in all times and places?

But to move from ‘maintenance’ to ‘mission’; the focus of formation is to deepen our understanding of this vision of evangelisation in our Archdiocese. This was reflected in what we heard from Watson Parish. That their story of renewal centred around the table. The table was a place of trust. From this trust comes vulnerability. From the vulnerability flowed unity in mission. In this way we see the circle completed: the centrality of the person and relationships is both the foundation of and the focus of mission - to serve those who Jesus loves, especially the lost, the lonely and the least.

Placing the Eucharist as the centre of our lives, shows us that we are diverse but united. The Eucharist will help us to journey together – by embracing Jesus, he also embraces us - and allow us to invite others to take their seat at the Table of the Lord.





Initial Divergences

The positive nature of the Assembly and the willingness of participants to listen to each other through the Conversations in the Spirit did not give rise to a strong sense of divergence in most topics. However, careful reading of the digital submissions and the written discernment do present distinctions in emphasis that may be instances of divergence. These are presented for completeness and as opportunities for deeper discernment.

1. **Questions of Focus**

Discussions of 'society' and 'the Church' implied a dichotomy rather than the Church being active within society. A number of comments were made about those who do not feel included or welcomed and this was attributed to 'different values' between society and the Church. A second level were comments that younger people viewed the Church as 'out of touch' on similar areas of values - this came through quite strongly in the submissions from schools. It prompts the question: how does the Church better communicate its positive world view and understanding of human flourishing in the age of social media and artificial intelligence?

Personal relationships were overwhelmingly considered essential but a number of comments were made that a personal relationship with Jesus was not possible or meaningful.

There was a sense that 'the Church' focuses too much on rules and correct behaviours and insufficiently on 'being a field hospital'. In some instances there was a strong emphasis on 'Truth' while others focused on 'Witness'.

There were comments regarding people employed in Church ministries/agencies not being sufficiently 'Catholic' yet being called to represent Christ - especially among the vulnerable, the lost, the least and the lonely. This clearly ties in with the strongly expressed views about the need for sustained and systematic formation as indicated above.

2. **The Tension of 'Being' and 'Do-ing'**

Not surprisingly one area in which implicit divergence arises consistently was, between those who presented the Church, how they understood their faith and what evangelisation means as about 'being Christian or Catholic' and 'doing Christian activities'. This divergence became stronger in the sessions on discipleship and mission.

This gives rise to questions that have arisen consistently throughout the history of Christianity: is faith alone sufficient (Romans 3.28) to be a Christian? Or are our actions, together with faith (James 2: 24) necessary to live the Christian life?





3. Impatience for action and listening for the Spirit

A clear area of divergence was among those who expressed a desire for action - here and now. This was expressed by some as “being a field hospital, going to the margins, serving the vulnerable”.

A second contrasting area were those who were less certain and generally more open to discerning the will of the Spirit variously expressed as:

- “What is my purpose?”
- “Who are we communicating with and to what end?”
- “We need to discern the way forward”

A third memorable comment was that ‘there was a preponderance of abstract nouns, but little in the way of concrete verbs.’

4. The locus of activity

There are differences among those who see the place of activity, action and decision-making as being individual parishes, ministries, communities and those who are seeking direction and cohesion at an Archdiocesan level.

The divergence in this area seemed to be stronger where it was perceived that local communities had clarity about directions and initiatives and the resources to achieve them or that these things are lacking and hence require stronger central support. Further it was suggested that those ministries, communities or parishes with solid leadership (lay or clerical) should just ‘get on with it’; while others identified the need to raise up, form or call upon ‘strong’ leaders.

Response

The Archdiocese proposes two levels of response. Firstly, we call upon the Archdiocese to respond by **15th December 2024** to the questions below in light of this synthesis and the experience of the Assembly. The preference is that these are the responses of parishes, schools or other ministries or communities represented at the Archdiocesan Assembly; but given the time constraints and in being open to the whole Archdiocese, responses from individuals and small groups may also be submitted. You can send your responses to this address: **hello@cg.org.au**

Secondly, by **Pentecost 2025**, each parish, school, community, ministry or group engage in their own *Conversations in the Spirit* - utilising the ‘*Engagement Toolkit*’ resources provided. This may even take





form through a Parish Assembly. The fruit of this local community expression will be gathered and discerned through future Archdiocesan gatherings, bodies and initiatives in 2025 and beyond.

Questions

We invite the Archdiocese to now discern the following questions in response to Archdiocesan Assembly:

1. What has been the grace received in the Archdiocese through the Assembly?
2. What faith or pastoral responses are now needed in every parish, school, community, ministry or group following the Assembly?
3. What are the implications for the way we live out of baptismal vocation as a Synodal Church?
4. What is your response - as individuals and as communities - to this report?
5. Moving into the *Year of Hope* and reflecting on the contents of this report, what are you hopeful for?

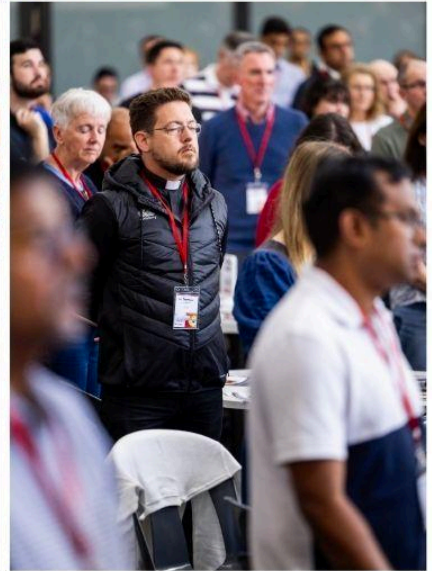
We encourage you to submit your discerned reflections on these questions via the digital platform, accessible at the link: cgevangelisation.org.au/response or by writing to hello@cg.org.au



Reflect and Respond
cgevangelisation.org.au/response

Submit your reflections on the Archdiocesan Assembly, including this Synthesis Report.





**All the Church,
preaching all the Gospel,
to all people,
all the time.**

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

Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created,
and you shall renew the face of the
earth.

O God,
who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
Grant that by the same Holy Spirit we
may be truly wise and ever rejoice in
his consolations.
Through the same Christ Our Lord.

Amen



Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

**Synthesis Report
Archdiocesan Assembly**

cgevangelisation.org.au