

WHĀNAU MERCY MINISTRIES

HUI WHĀNAU 2025

DAY 1 – 13 October 2025

Atura Hotel

Thorndon, Wellington



HUI WHĀNAU 2025

He Wā Whakamaumahara

a space to experience, encounter,
and engage in Mercy.





Adj Prof Susan Pascoe AM

Pre-dinner speaker

Introducing Synodality

Susan is Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Australia. She Chairs the Australian Council for International Development and the Community Director's Council.

She was a member of the Vatican's Methodology Commission for the Synod on Synodality and a facilitator at Synod Assemblies in Rome in 2023 & 2024. She is a Trustee of St John of God Health, a Board member of Mercy Health.



Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

Whanau Mercy Ministries

Introducing Synodality

WMM Hui Whānau 2025, Wellington
13th October 2025,

Presenter: Adj Prof Susan Pascoe AM

Member of Synod on Synodality Methodology
Commission, 2021 - 2024

Overview

Section 1

- Theological antecedents to XVI Ordinary General Synod, *For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission*
- Unique features of Synod on Synodality 2021 – 2024

Section 2

- Meaning of Synodality
- Ecclesial discernment and decision-taking

Section 3

- Key issues in Final Report, incl parishes, women and study groups
- Implications for Ministerial Public Juridic Persons

Table 39, October 2024 Assembly



Pope Leo XIV on Synodality (Interview Elise Ann Allen, Crux, 30 July 2025)

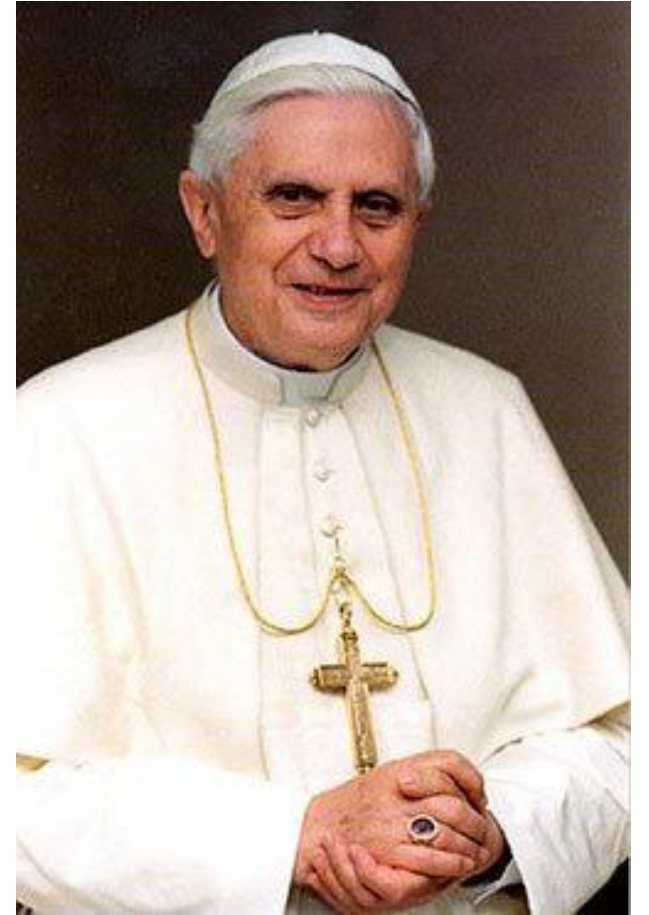
- *I think that synodality is an attitude, an openness, a willingness to understand. Speaking of the Church now, this means each and every member of the church has a voice and a role to play through prayer, reflection...through a process...of dialogue and respect of one another. To bring people together and to understand that relationship, that interaction, that creating opportunities of encounter, is an important dimension of how we live our life as church....*
- *Some people have felt threatened by that. Sometimes bishops or priests might feel, “synodality is going to take away my authority.” That’s not what synodality is about, and maybe your idea of what your authority is, is somewhat out of focus, mistaken. I think that synodality is a way of describing how we can come together and be a community and seek communion as a church, so that it’s a church whose primary focus is not on an institutional hierarchy, but rather on a sense of we together, our church; each person with his or her own vocation, priests, or laity, or bishops, missionaries, families.*

Vatican II (October 11, 1962, to December 8, 1965)

- Concept of Pilgrim People of God
- In union with Christ, the members of this people share in His anointing and thus in His mission. Baptism confers the dignity of being prophet, priest, and king in Christ.
- “The supreme and eternal Priest, Christ Jesus, since he wills to continue his witness and service also through the laity, vivifies them in this Spirit and increasingly urges them on to every good and perfect work” (Lumen Gentium 34)

Benedict XVI on Co-Responsibility

‘In the first place we must **renew our efforts for a formation...**both on the part of priests as well as of religious and lay people to understand ever better what this Church is, this People of God in the Body of Christ...At the same time, it is **necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People of God in their entirety is gradually promoted,** with respect for vocations and for the respective roles of the consecrated and of lay people.’ (2009 Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome)



Pope Francis on Synodality (17 October 2015)



Synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church... If we understand, as Saint John Chrysostom says, that “Church and Synod are synonymous”, inasmuch as **the Church is nothing other than the “journeying together” of God’s flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord...**

[I]n the Church, it is necessary that each person “lower” himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way. (50th Anniversary of Institution of Synod of Bishops)

Pope Leo XIV (8 May 2025 addressing St Peter's Square after election in Conclave)

We have to look together how to be a missionary Church, building bridges, dialogue, always open to receiving with open arms for everyone, like this square, open to all, to all who need our charity, our presence, dialogue, love...we want to be a synodal church, walking and always seeking peace, charity, closeness, especially to those who are suffering.



Pope Leo's Homily: 18 May 2025 Inauguration



Leone PP. XIV

8 maggio 2025

..the bishop of Rome, a shepherd capable of preserving the rich heritage of the Christian faith and, at the same time, looking to the future, in order to confront the questions, concerns, and challenges of today's world.

Love and unity: These are the two dimensions of the mission entrusted to Peter by Jesus...Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world.

With the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us build a Church founded on God's love, a sign of unity, a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the word, allows itself to be made "restless" by history, and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity.



Synod on Synodality: 2021 – 2024

For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission

- XVI General Synod, organised by the Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops but with a range of innovations:-
 1. Unprecedented global consultation and discernment in local Churches from 9 October 2021 – 15 August 2022
 2. Consultation at continental level from October 2022 – April 2023
 3. Adoption of *Conversation in the Spirit* methodology at all levels
 4. Non-bishops invited to Bishops' Assemblies October 2023 and 2024

For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission 2021 - 2024

- Laypeople/Religious/priests invited as full voting members members of Bishops' Assembly.
- Assembly = mix of small group and plenary sessions in 4 language groups (English, Italian, Spanish and French) in 39 round tables.
- First time there were two Assemblies with fruits sent back for further discernment in local Churches in between



Former model for Synod Assemblies



Oceania Group with +Francis, October, 2024



For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission

Communion

The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. Together we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living tradition of the Church, and grounded in the *sensus fidei* that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people. (www.synod.va/en [Synod 2021 – 2024](#))



For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission



Participation

Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit in baptism. In a synodal Church, the whole community is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will.

(www.synd.va/en)

For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission

Mission

Our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. The synodal process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical and existential peripheries of our world.

(www.synod/va/en)



Final Report: Synod on Synodality 2021 – 24 ⁽¹⁾



- The terms ‘synodality’ and ‘synodal’ derive from the ancient and constant ecclesial practice of meeting in synods. According to the traditions of the Eastern and Western Churches, the word ‘synod’ refers to institutions and events that assumed different forms over time, involving a plurality of agents and participants. This variety notwithstanding, what unites them is gathering together to dialogue, discern and decide. (28)

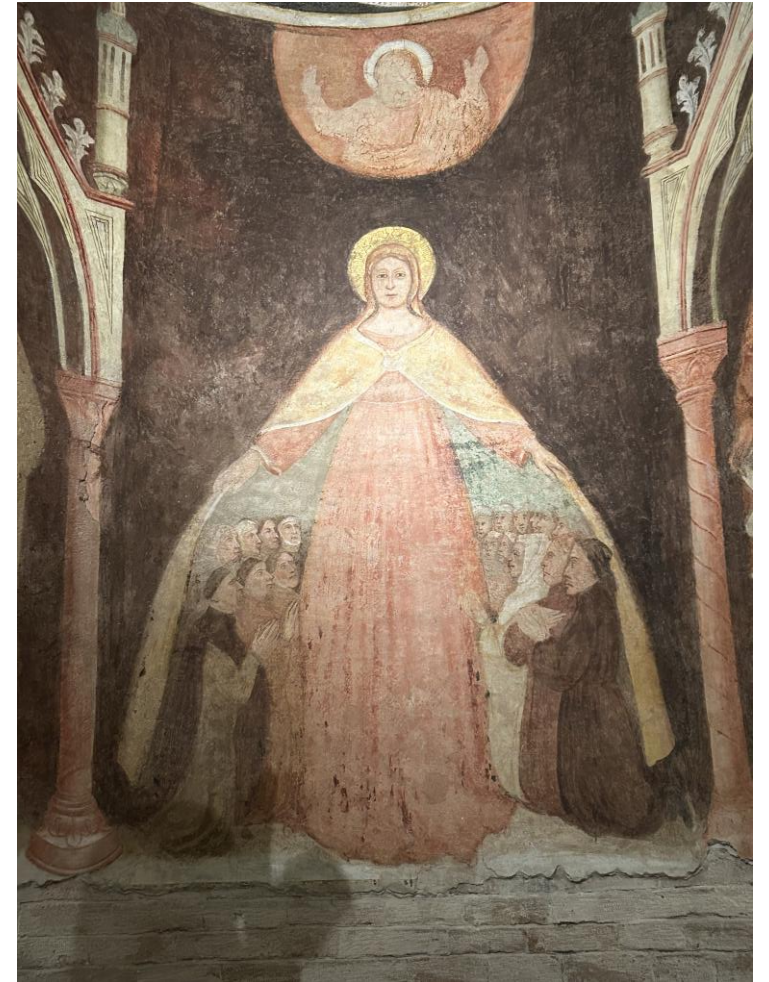
Ecclesial Discernment: 1



- It is essential to offer formation opportunities that spread and nourish a culture of ecclesial discernment focused on mission in local Churches, starting from small ecclesial communities and parishes. This is particularly necessary amongst those who hold leadership roles. It is equally important to encourage the formation of facilitators, whose contribution is often crucial to the process of discernment. (86)

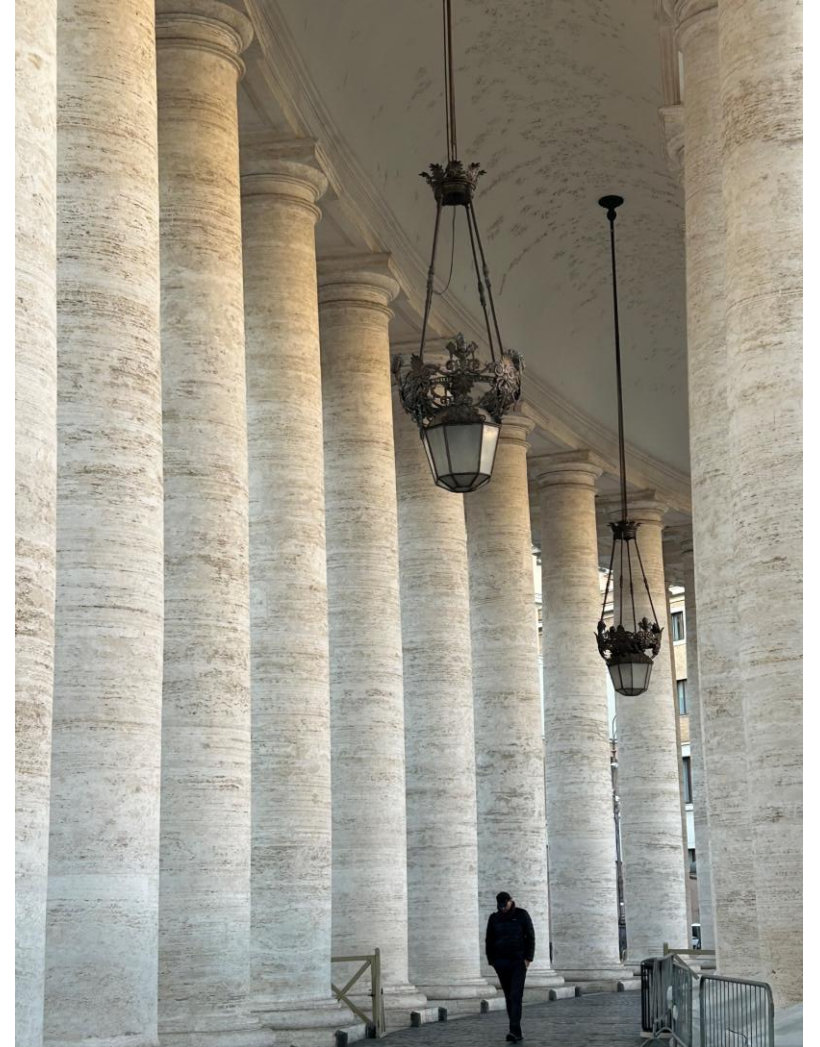
Ecclesial Decision-making 2

- The way to promote a synodal Church is to foster as great a participation of all the People of God as possible in decision-making processes. If it is indeed true that the Church's very way of living and operating is synodal, then this practice is essential to the Church's mission, requiring discernment, the reaching of consensus, and decision-making through the use of the various structures and institutions of synodality. (87) (NB: MPJPs)

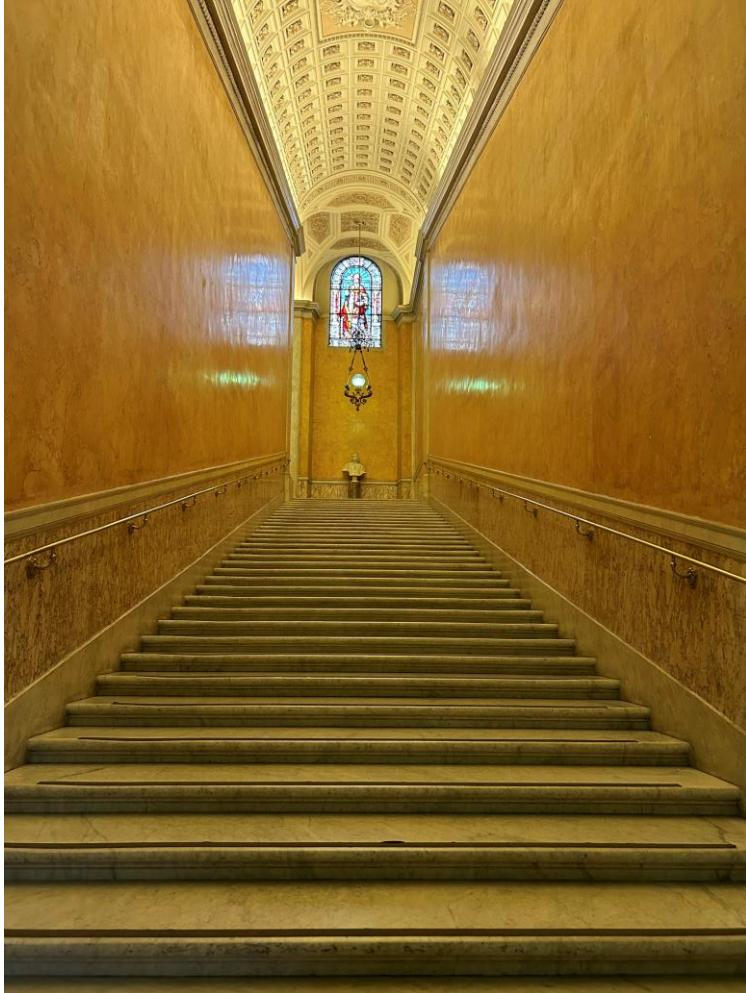


Ecclesial Decision-making 3

- The synodal process does not conclude with the end of the current Assembly of the Synod of Bishops but also includes the [implementation phase](#). As members of the Assembly and as synodal missionaries within the communities from which we come, we feel it is our responsibility to promote this process. [The local Churches are asked to continue their daily journey with a synodal methodology of consultation and discernment](#), identifying concrete ways and formation pathways to bring about a tangible synodal conversion in the various ecclesial contexts (parishes, Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life, movements of the faithful, dioceses, Episcopal Conferences, groupings of Churches, etc.).
- Deadline for Study Groups extended to Dec 2025
- Implementation advice issued: see [Resources](#) on Vatican website



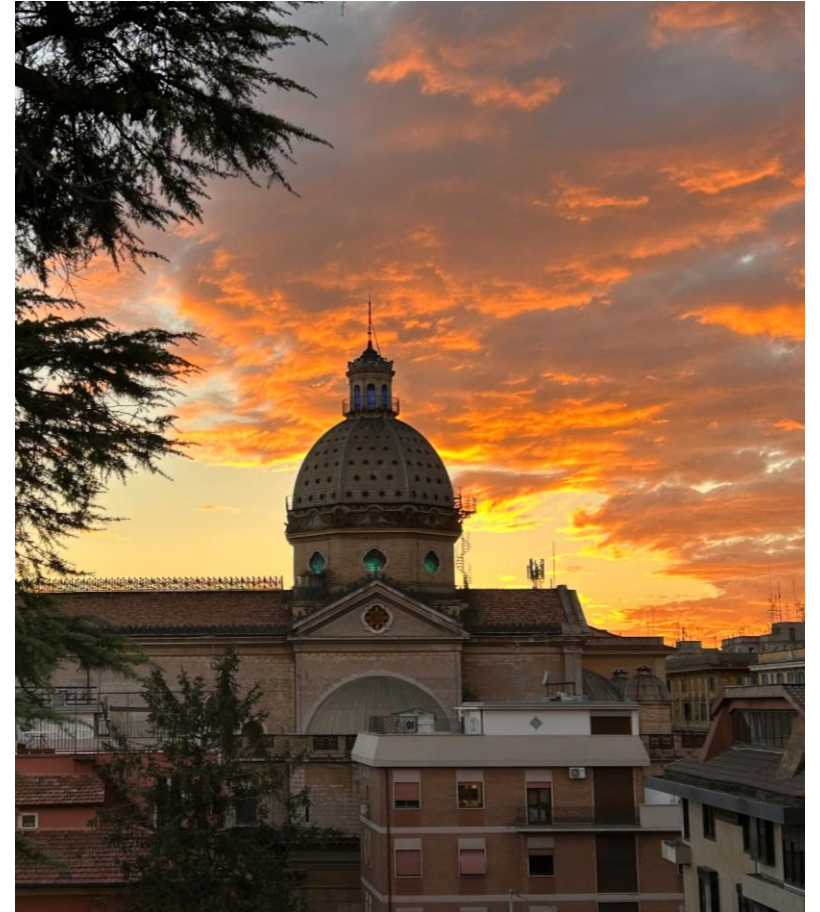
Ecclesial Decision-making 4



- 77. The lay faithful, both men and women, should be given greater opportunities for participation, also exploring new forms of service and ministry in response to the pastoral needs of our time in a spirit of collaboration and differentiated co-responsibility. In particular, some concrete needs have emerged from the synodal process. These ought to be responded to according to the various contexts:
- Increased participation of laymen and laywomen in Church discernment processes and all phases of decision-making processes (drafting, making and confirming decisions);
- greater access of laymen and laywomen to positions of responsibility in dioceses and ecclesiastical institutions, including seminaries, theological institutes and faculties, more fully enacting existing provisions;

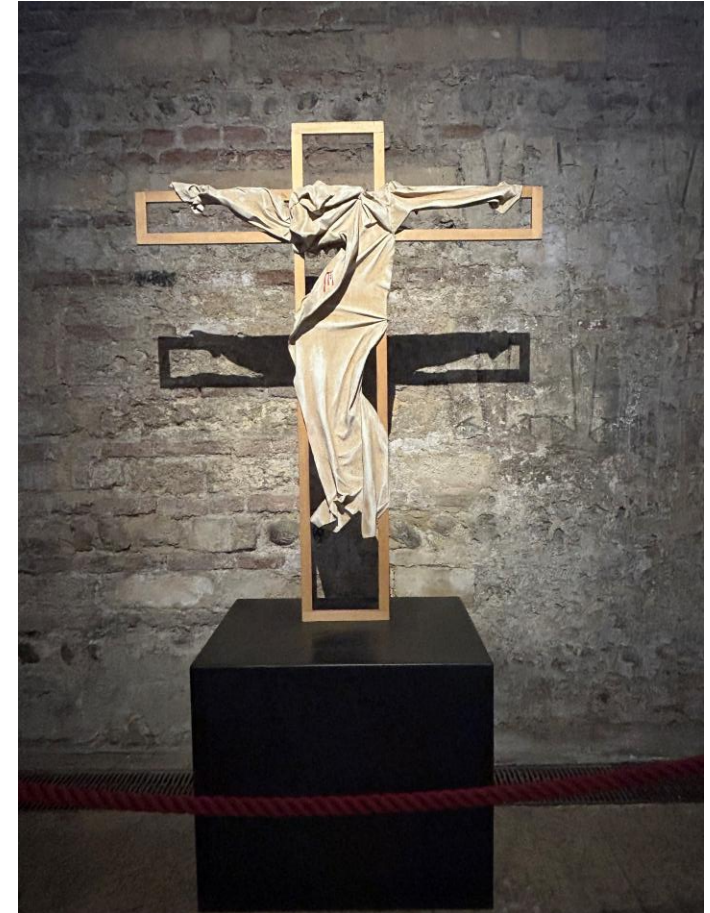
Ecclesial Decision-making: 5

- 82. Ecclesial discernment is not an organisational technique but rather a spiritual practice grounded in a living faith. It calls for interior freedom, humility, prayer, mutual trust, an openness to the new and a surrender to the will of God. It is never just a setting out of one's own personal or group point of view or a summing up of differing individual opinions. Each person, speaking according to their conscience, is called to open themselves to the others who share according to their conscience. In this sharing, they seek to recognise together "what the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (Rev 2:7).



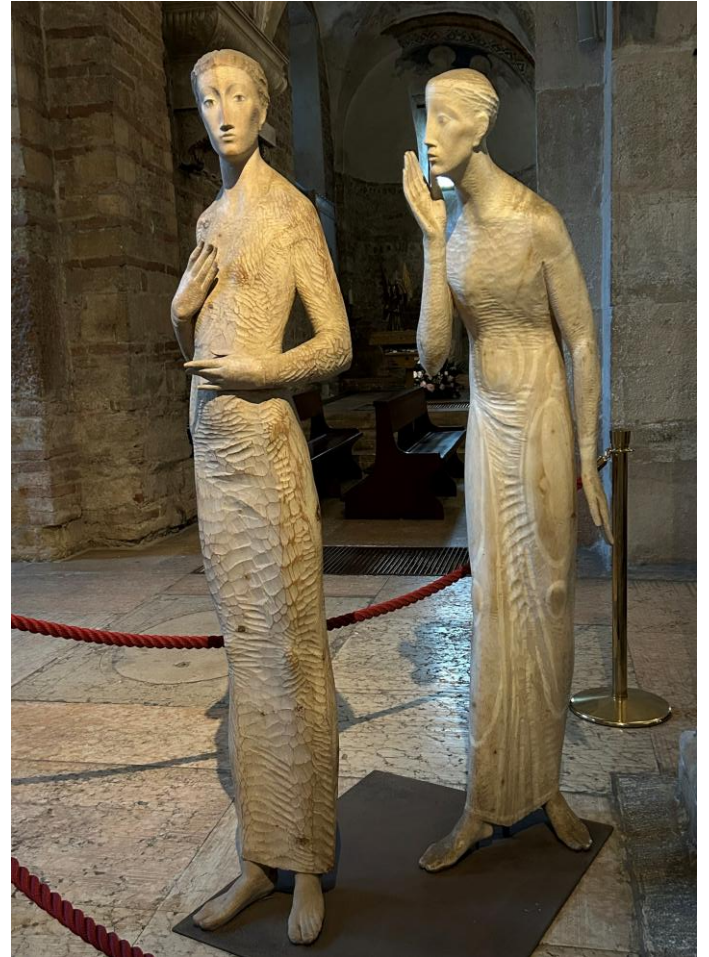
Contemporary Parishes

- Traditional territorial bonds are being redefined, blurring the borders of dioceses and parishes. Living in such contexts, the Church is called to rebuild community life, to put a face to faceless entities and to strengthen relationships in this milieu. To this end, we must not only continue to value still useful structures; we also need “missionary creativity” to explore new forms of pastoral action and identify concrete processes of care. It remains the case that rural contexts, some of which constitute genuine existential peripheries, must not be neglected and require specific pastoral attention, as do places of marginalisation and exclusion. (111)



Women

- Women make up the majority of churchgoers and are often the first witnesses to the faith in families. They are active in the life of small Christian communities and parishes. They run schools, hospitals and shelters... This Assembly asks for full implementation of all the opportunities already provided for in Canon Law with regard to the role of women, particularly in those places where they remain underutilised. There is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the Church: what comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped. (60)



Synod Study Groups: May 2024 – June 2025 ¹



1. Some aspects of relations between Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church (summary report 6)
2. Listening to the cry of the poor (summary report 4 and 16)
3. Mission in the digital environment (summary report 17)
4. The revision of the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*. In a missionary synodal perspective (summary report 11)
5. Some theological and canonical issues around specific ministerial forms (summary report 8 and 9)

Synod Study Groups: May 2024 – June 2025 2



6. The revision, from a synodal and missionary perspective, of documents governing relations between bishops, consecrated life, Church aggregations (summary report 10)

7. Some aspects of the figure and ministry of the bishop (particularly: criteria for the selection of candidates for the episcopate, judicial function of the bishop, nature and conduct of ad limina Apostolorum visits)

8. The role of the papal representative from a missionary synodal perspective

9. Theological criteria and synodal methodologies for shared discernment of controversial doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues (summary report 15)

10. The reception of the fruits of the ecumenical journey in Church practices (summary report 7)

Additional Working Groups associated with Synod

- Canonical Commission probing matters such as making DPCs and PPCs mandatory with a majority of laypeople; modifications that make consultation in decision-making the norm; and enhancing a ‘culture of transparency and accountability’. [2024 10-02 CONGREGAZIONE-1 COMMISSIONE-CANONISTI-ENG.pdf](#)
- Permanent forum on synodality within Synod Secretariat – advice on implementation
- Commission on Polygamy



Implications for MPJPs

- Synodality consonant with collegial discernment adopted by MPJPs, mindful of centrality of prayer and celebration of Eucharist.
- Consultation, subsidiarity, concern for common good, and care for our common home, generally dimensions of MPJP focus and practice.
- Importance of MPJPs contributing to diocesan initiatives related to synodality, and maintaining open communication and harmonious relationships with local bishops.
- MPJPs remembering they are an expression of God's mission; they continue and adapt a particular charism; they are part of Church, and implement Church teaching on ethical, bioethical and social issues.

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**WHĀNAU
MERCY
MINISTRIES**

Te Ngākau Atawhai – Heart of Mercy: In Aotearoa, the Mercy Cross, central to Catherine McAuley’s spirituality, is supported by a pair of koru. The koru represent the unfolding of new life and link our Mercy story to the spirituality of Māori and the ancient lore of this land

Whānau Mercy Ministries, a Ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP) under Canon Law.

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