

## PRELIMINARY STATEMENT TO THE DIOCESE SYNOD 2021/2023

On 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Pope Francis announced a synod to take place on the topic of “*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*”. In May 2021, a substantial change to the Synod process was announced stating that a three-year journey would begin in local dioceses across the whole world, culminating with the assembly in Rome in 2023. It is Francis’ intention that this process not be limited to any one group of voices but rather, all the baptized, especially those whose voices are seldom heard.

Our diocese has not experienced a Synod before and so this is new territory for most of us. With the blessing of Cardinal John Dew, the Archdiocese of Wellington have generously offered to share their experience with us so that we can begin this process with some insight. To this end, I have asked Issy McCafferty to meet with the Archdiocesan team who are responsible for organizing their synod. Issy was involved in the 2017 Archdiocesan Synod in Wellington, the Synod of Young People initiated by Pope Francis in Rome, in 2017, and so is well able to help guide us through this process. Next week, we are going to appoint a team of people who will be responsible for implementing this process in our diocese. This team will be responsible for listening to what Wellington have to offer and then planning, in detail, how we can implement this synod here in Palmerston North, resourcing parish communities, promotion, encouraging participation and finally synthesizing the submissions.



This synodal process is both a global experience and a local one. Pope Francis is addressing the whole world and we, as a diocese, want to do our very best to respond and involve as many people as possible. Given the expansiveness and importance of this project, I think we need to give of our best, including making use of our best people. In my experience, good consultation demands everyone’s input, right from the outset. So, please give some prayerful thought about how we can best approach this project to give us the best results. In this case the widest and most comprehensive feedback to share with our bishops and lay people who will meet with Pope Francis in 2023.

### Where to from here?

**Today**, you are invited to look at the official website <https://www.synod.va/en.html> When you look at some of the documents you will note a lot of *church language*. Our diocesan Synod team will address this issue when it comes to presenting the questions later this year to ordinary people like me.

**In October** the Synod process itself will begin with an Opening Mass on Sunday 17 October at 6.00pm Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Palmerston North, to which everyone is welcome to attend. At the same time, all our parishes will celebrate a Mass on the same day, to mark this occasion and pray for the success of the Synod.

**In November** the process of consultation will take place in local parishes and faith communities. The exact form of this process is being worked on, as explained above.

**In late January next year** we will host a pre-synodal meeting with representatives from across the diocese. Again, the details are still being worked on.

Lastly, and most importantly, this work of creating a synodal church will only bear fruit if we make it a prayerful experience and invite the Holy Spirit to guide us. One of the documents we have received so far encourages the use of an adaptation of a prayer (*Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*) that was used at each of the Vatican II sessions and various Synods since then.

Local Administrator

## **SYNOD 2021 - 2023 PRAYER**

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