



SANDPIPER

News from the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

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PILGRIMS GATHER AT CATHEDRAL FOR APOSTOLATE OF FATIMA'S MARIAN FESTIVAL

By Wilma McCormack
President, Bendigo Apostolate of Fatima

A large assembly of pilgrims from across the Diocese of Sandhurst, including groups from as far as Shepparton, Albury and Myrtleford, as well as from Melbourne and Ballarat, gathered for the 49th annual Marian Festival celebrated at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo on 15 October.

Beautiful flowers and the amber light from the stained-glass windows highlighted the special shrine to Our Lady of Fatima. Ringing of the Cathedral bells welcomed visitors as they were handed a very attractive festival booklet for the day's proceedings.

Bishop Leslie Tomlinson, seminarians from Corpus Christi College Melbourne together with altar servers from Bendigo and Shepparton, entered the Cathedral processing with the choir, statue of Our Lady of Fatima, banners, the Cathedral Cross and incense bearers.

Bishop Leslie Tomlinson was the Presider and guest speaker for the Mass and Festival. A sung Mass conducted by organist and director of music, Dr Paul



A Procession around Sacred Heart Cathedral Bendigo in the afternoon.

Taylor; the Sacred Heart Cathedral Choir sang the Missa de Angelis Mass by Don Marini, Panis Angelicus by Cesar Frank, Ave Verum by Mozart and Salve Regina. Joanne Bonazza was the Cantor for both Mass and Festival, singing two Ave Marias by Saint Seans and Schubert.

After the garden luncheon and scapular enrolment at 1.00 p.m., the bells rang again to assemble for the outside procession. Led by the Apostolate of Fatima's Spiritual Director Fr Stephen Bolling, pilgrims processed around the Cathedral while reciting the Rosary.

Bishop Leslie Tomlinson crowned Our Lady's statue, and the Mysteries of the Rosary were led by representatives from the Melbourne Apostolate of Fatima, Altona parish, Indian Community, Shepparton parish and the Melbourne Legion of Mary. Bishop Leslie Tomlinson then gave his well-researched address on the history of Our Lady's Apparitions throughout the centuries. Extracts from his address:

"This October Marian Festival 2023 is dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

"It was not until the Apparitions in Paris at Rue du Bac, concerning the 'Miraculous Medal' made to Catherine Labouré in 1830, and the establishment of a society dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at the Church of Victories in Paris in 1836, that this particular devotion became really well known.

Since then, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, has gradually grown more widespread in the church, particularly since the apparitions at Fatima.

In fact, the Immaculate Heart of Mary is the mystery most central to the Message of Fatima. Our Lady specifically came in 1917 because the Blessed Trinity wanted to establish devotion to her Immaculate Heart throughout the world."

"We know well the story of Fatima but let us refresh our memories: Appearing six times to the three shepherd children: Lucia, Francesco, and Jacinta near the town of Fatima, Portugal, between 13 May and 13 October, 1917, the Blessed Virgin told them, that she had been sent by God with a message for every man,



Bishop Leslie Tomlinson blesses the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima

woman and child. Coming at a time when civilisation was torn asunder by war and violence, she promised that God would grant peace to the entire world, if her requests for prayer, reparation and consecration were heard and obeyed.”

“And so, we pray: Mother of God and our Mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves to you. We trust that through your heart, peace will dawn once more. To you we pray for the future of the whole human family, the needs and expectations of every people, the anxieties and hopes of the world. You once trod the streets of peace. Amen. “

Adoration and Benediction concluded a day of peace and joy for all those who attended.

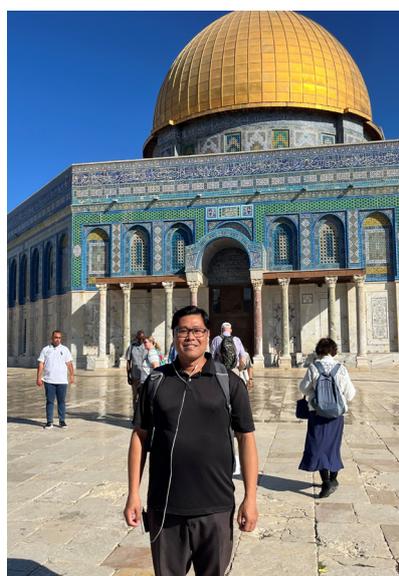
Grateful thanks to all those Apostolate members and special friends who made possible such a wonderful day of devotion, prayer, and hospitality in Bendigo.



ENCOUNTER IN THE HOLY LAND

Fr Junjun Amaya, Parish Priest of Wodonga, had just completed a six-week Sabbatical Program at Tantur Ecumenical Institute in East Jerusalem when Palestinian-based militant group Hamas launched attacks on civilians in southern Israel, starting the current war in Gaza.

Fr Junjun chose to join the Sabbatical Programme at Tantur Ecumenical Institute because it provided experience and encounter with ‘the rich sacredness of others’. His time there included studies in Christianity, Judaism and Islam, followed by excursions to places which are spiritually and historically significant to these faiths, and the opportunity to meet people with different religious backgrounds. Fr Junjun recounts his experience in the Holy Land at this time.



By Fr Junjun Amaya

There were fourteen people in my Sabbatical Programme at Tantur Ecumenical Institute, nine Catholic priests, one Anglican Archdeacon, two Franciscan nuns and two lay women. We had just completed the six-week sabbatical programme. At 5:45 a.m. on 7 October, four of us left the Institute to celebrate the 7.00 a.m. Mass in Calvary (the Crucifixion Chapel) that day.

Fr Bob (USA) presided at the Mass solemnly, praying especially for peace in the Holy Land. I served as Lector in that Mass. It was an amazing experience to celebrate Mass there where Christ was crucified for our salvation.

Unbeknown to us, while we were in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre offering Mass and saying prayers for peace in the Holy Land, Hamas had launched their attack to Israel.

After the Mass had been offered, we went up to the Mount of Olives to be at the place where Jesus taught the “Our Father” to his disciples (Pater Noster Church). We could hear sirens blaring, but we just ignored them. We did not know what it was about. Nobody there told us what was going on.

People went on with things they needed to do – locals dropped their kids at school,

pilgrims arrived in tourist buses at Shrines and Sacred Sites.

We then walked down to the Old City of Jerusalem, retracing the steps of Jesus Christ on the first Palm “Sunday”. I then left my companions in the Old City and went home to the Institute.

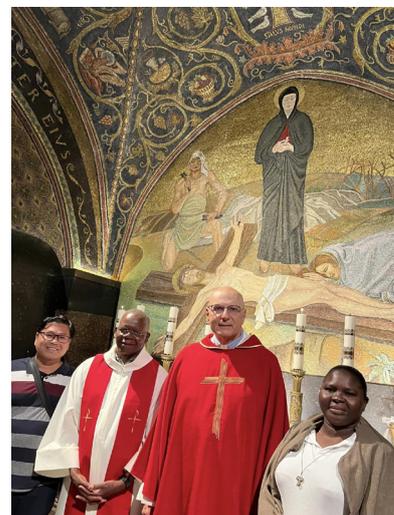
When I arrived back at the Institute, sirens were blaring and I found that all of the people in the Institute were in the air raid shelter. It was only then that I learned ‘there’s a war waging.’ It was an extraordinary experience for me.

Thank you, my friends, for all your assurances of prayers, messages of care and concern, encouragement and support. I am now back safe in the parish.

Let us continue praying that the state of war in the Holy Land will end now, for the sake of many who have been affected.

Let us pray that:

motives of dialogue,
peaceful resolutions and
proposals that are just and right
may prevail over exchanges of
guns and bullets,
rockets and missiles and
hate-filled words and language.
Amen.



Liturgical Formation to renew our Sense of Wonder

SANDHURST SCHOLARSHIPS 2024 THEOLOGY AND CPE

The Diocese of Sandhurst is offering scholarships for studies in Theology and spiritual leadership in Semester 1 2024. The initiative aims to support the mission formation of Sandhurst parishioners who are undertaking pastoral leadership roles or are seeking to do so.

Scholarship recipients may choose to study a particular unit of theology and/or study for credit towards a post-graduate qualification. There is a professional attainment pathway for those who have not studied at a tertiary level before. Details of the courses and programs being supported will be released very soon.

Bishop Shane says the initiative will ultimately help parish communities. “The Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst has a strong record in adult faith formation, and this initiative builds on those foundations,” he said. “I am especially interested in providing support to parishioners who hold pastoral leadership roles in our parishes.” Bishop Shane hopes that scholarship recipients will study together in small local groups.

The scholarships will be administered through the office of Dr Chris Cotter, Director of Mission and Pastoral Life.

Applications will open in early November.

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Letter of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to the People of God

Dear sisters, dear brothers,

As the proceedings of the first session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops draw to a close, we want to thank God with all of you for the beautiful and enriching experience we have lived. We lived this blessed time in profound communion with all of you. We were supported by your prayers, bearing with you your expectations, your questions, as well as your fears. As Pope Francis requested two years ago, a long process of listening and discernment was initiated, open to all the People of God, no one being excluded, to “journey together” under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, missionary disciples engaged in the following of Jesus Christ.

The session in which we have been gathered in Rome since 30 September is an important phase of this process. In many ways it has been an unprecedented experience. For the first time, at Pope Francis’ invitation, men and women have been invited, in virtue of their baptism, to sit at the same table to take part, not only in the discussions, but also in the voting process of this Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Together, in the complementarity of our vocations, our charisms and our ministries, we have listened intensely to the Word of God and the experience of others. Using the conversation in the Spirit method, we have humbly shared the wealth and poverty of our communities from every continent, seeking to discern what the Holy Spirit wants to say to the Church today. We have thus also experienced the importance of fostering mutual exchanges between the Latin tradition and the traditions of Eastern Christianity. The participation of fraternal delegates from other Churches and Ecclesial Communities deeply enriched our discussions.

Our assembly took place in the context of a world in crisis, whose wounds and scandalous inequalities resonated painfully in our hearts, infusing our work with a particular gravity, especially since some of us come from countries where war rages. We prayed for the victims of deadly violence, without forgetting all those who have been forced by misery and corruption to take the dangerous road of migration. We as-

sured our solidarity and commitment alongside the women and men all over the world who are working to build justice and peace.

At the invitation of the Holy Father, we made significant room for silence to foster mutual listening and a desire for communion in the Spirit among us. During the opening ecumenical vigil, we experienced how the thirst for unity increases in the silent contemplation of the crucified Christ. In fact, the cross is the only cathedra of the One who, having given himself for the salvation of the world, entrusted His disciples to His Father, so that “they may all be one” (John 17:21). Firmly united in the hope brought by His Resurrection, we entrusted to Him our common home where the cries of the earth and the poor are becoming increasingly urgent: “Laudate Deum!” (“Praise God!”), as Pope Francis reminded us at the beginning of our work.

Day by day, we felt the pressing call to pastoral and missionary conversion. For the Church’s vocation is to proclaim the Gospel not by focusing on itself, but by placing itself at the service of the infinite love with which God loved the world (cf. John 3:16). When homeless people near St. Peter’s Square were asked about their expectations regarding the Church on the occasion of this synod, they replied: “Love!”. This love must always remain the ardent heart of the Church, a Trinitarian and Eucharistic love, as the Pope recalled on October 15, midway through our assembly, invoking the message of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus. It is “trust” that gives us the audacity and inner freedom that we experienced, not hesitating to freely and humbly express our convergences, differences, desires and questions.

And now? We hope that the months leading to the second session in October 2024 will allow everyone to concretely participate in the dynamism of missionary communion indicated by the word “synod”. This is not about ideology, but about an experience rooted in the apostolic tradition. As the Pope reminded us at the beginning of this process, “communion and mission can risk remaining somewhat abstract, unless we cultivate an ecclesial praxis that expresses the concreteness of synodality (...) encouraging real involvement on the part of each and all” (October 9, 2021). There are multiple challenges and numerous questions: the synthesis report of the first session will specify the points of agreement we have reached, highlight the open questions, and indicate how our work will proceed.

To progress in its discernment, the Church absolutely needs to listen to everyone, starting with the poorest. This requires a path of conversion on its part, which is also a path of praise: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children” (Luke 10:21)! It means listening to those who have been denied the right to speak in society or who feel excluded, even by the Church; listening to people who are victims of racism in all its forms – in particular in some regions to indigenous peoples whose cultures have been scorned. Above all, the Church of our time has the duty to listen, in a spirit of conversion, to those who have been victims of abuse committed by members of the ecclesial body, and to commit herself concretely and structurally to ensuring that this does not happen again.

The Church also needs to listen to the laity, women and men, all called to holiness by virtue of their baptismal vocation: to the testimony of catechists, who in many situations are the first proclaimers of the Gospel; to the simplicity and vivacity of children, the enthusiasm of youth, to their questions, and their pleas; to the dreams, the wisdom and the memory of elderly people. The Church needs to listen to families, to their educational concerns, to the Christian witness they offer in today’s world. She needs to welcome the voice of those who want to be involved in lay ministries and to participate in discernment and decision-making structures.

To progress further in synodal discernment, the Church particularly needs to gather even more the words and experience of the ordained ministers: priests, the primary collaborators of the bishops, whose sacramental ministry is indispensable for the life of the whole body; deacons, who, through their ministry, signify the care of the entire Church for the most vulnerable. She also needs to let herself be questioned by the prophetic voice of consecrated life, the watchful sentinel of the Spirit’s call. She also needs to be attentive to all those who do not share her faith but are seeking the truth, and in whom the Spirit, who “offers everyone the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery” (Gaudium et Spes 22, 5), is also present and operative.

“The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium”

(Pope Francis, October 17, 2015).

We do not need to be afraid to respond to this call. Mary, the first on the journey, accompanies our pilgrimage. In joy and in sorrow, she shows us her Son and invites us to trust. And He, Jesus, is our only hope!

Vatican City, October 25, 2023

SYNOD SYNTHESIS REPORT NOW AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH

The Synthesis Report aims to be “a tool at the service of ongoing discernment.” It is divided into three main sections on the elements of a synodal Church, participation in mission, and processes that enable dialogue with the world.

More than 1,000 amendments were submitted by Synod delegates submitted over 1000 amendments to the original draft. Every paragraph of the Report required approval from at least two-thirds of the Synod members.

A full copy of the report can be downloaded from the internet. Please ask your parish for assistance.

For a summary, read the Vatican News Story below:



Synod Report: A Church that involves everyone and is close to world's wounds

By Salvatore Cernuzio

Women and the laity, diaconate, ministry and magisterium, peace and the climate, the poor and migrants, ecumenism and identity, new languages and renewed structures, old and new missions (including the “digital” mission), listening to all and probing everything more deeply, even the most ‘controversial’ issues. In the Synthesis Report approved and published today by the 16th General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality, there is a renewed look at the world and the Church and their demands. After four weeks of work, which began on 4 October in the Paul VI Hall, the General Assembly concluded its first session today in the Vatican.

The document of some forty pages is the result of the work of the assembly that took place “while wars both old and new have raged in the world, with dramatic consequences that are impacting upon countless victims.” The report continues, “The cry of the poor resounded among us, of those forced to migrate and of those suffering violence and the devastating consequences of climate change. We heard their cry not only through the media, but also through the voices of many present, who were personally involved in these tragic events whether through their families or their people” (Foreword).

To this challenge and many others, the universal Church has tried to offer a response in the Small Circles and in the interventions. Everything came together in the Synthesis Report, which is divided into a preface and three parts, and which traces the path for the work to be done in the second session in 2024.

Listening to all, beginning with victims of abuse

As in the Letter to the People of God, the synod assembly reaffirms an “openness to listening and accompanying all, including those who have suffered abuse and hurt in the Church”, which “addressing the structural conditions that abetted such abuse, remains before us, and requires concrete gestures of penitence”.

The face of a synodal Church

Synodality is a first step. It is a term that the participants in the Synod themselves admit is “a term unfamiliar to many members of the People of God, causing some people confusion and concern” (1 f), including fears of a departure from tradition, a debasement of the hierarchical nature of the Church (1 g), a loss of power or, on the contrary, immobility and a lack of courage for change. “Synodal” and “synodality” are instead terms that “speak of a mode of being Church that integrates communion, mission, and participation”. So they indicate a way of living the Church, valuing differences and developing the active involvement of all. This begins with deacons, priests, and bishops: “A synodal Church cannot do without their voices” (1 n), we read. “We need an understanding of the reasons for resistance to synodality by some of them”.

Mission

The document continues explaining that synodality goes hand in hand with mission. Hence, it is necessary that “Christian communities are to enter into solidarity with those of other religions, convictions and cultures, thus avoiding, on the one hand, the risk of self-referentiality and self-preservation, and on the other hand the risk of loss of identity” (2 e). In this new “pastoral style”, it would seem important to many to make “liturgical language more accessible to the faithful and more embodied in the diversity of cultures” (3 l).

The poor at the centre

Ample space in the Report is devoted to the poor, who ask the Church for “love”, understood as “respect, acceptance, and recognition” (4 a). “For the Church, the option for the poor and those at the margins is a theological category before being a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical category” (4 b), the document reiterates, identifying the poor not only as those who are materially impoverished, but

also migrants; indigenous peoples; victims of violence and abuse (especially women), or racism and trafficking; people with addictions; minorities; abandoned elderly people; and exploited workers (4 c). Among “the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, on whose behalf constant advocacy is needed, [are] the unborn and their mothers”, the document continues. “The Assembly hears the cry of the ‘new poor’, produced by wars and terrorism that plague many countries on several continents, and the assembly condemns the corrupt political and economic systems that cause such strife”.

The most vulnerable of the vulnerable, for whom constant advocacy is needed, are the children in the womb and their mothers,” reads the text of the Assembly, which says it is “aware of the cry of the ‘new poor’ produced by wars and terrorism also caused by ‘corrupt political and economic systems’.

Commitment of believers in the field of politics and for the common good

In this sense, the Church is urged to be committed both to the “public denunciation of the injustices” perpetrated by individuals, governments, and companies; and to active engagement in politics, associations, trade unions, popular movements (4f and 4g). At the same time, the consolidated action of the Church in the fields of education, health, and social assistance, “without any discrimination or the exclusion of anyone”, must not be neglected (4 k).

Migrants

There is also a focus on migrants and refugees, “many of whom bear the wounds of uprooting, war and violence”. They “often become a source of renewal and enrichment for the communities that welcome them and an opportunity to establish direct links with geographically distant churches” (5 d). Faced with increasingly hostile attitudes towards them, the General Assembly says, “We are called to practice an open welcome, to accompany them in the construction of a new life and to build a true intercultural communion among peoples”. Fundamental in this sense is “respect for the liturgical traditions and religious practices of migrants” as well as respect for their own language. For example, a word like “mission”, in contexts where “the proclamation of the Gospel was associated with colonization, even genocide”, is laden with “painful historical memories” and “hinders communion today” (5 e). “Evangelising in these contexts requires acknowledging mistakes made, learning a new sensitivity to these issues”, the document states.

Combating racism and xenophobia
Equal commitment and care is required of the Church “to engage decisively in education, in the culture of dialogue and encounter, combating racism and xenophobia, especially through pastoral formation” (5 p).

It is also urgent to identify “systems within the Church that create or maintain racial injustice” (5 q).

Eastern Churches

Remaining on the subject of migration, the Report looks to Eastern Europe and the recent conflicts that have caused the flow of numerous faithful from the Catholic East into territories with a Latin majority. It is necessary, the Assembly says, “for the local Latin-rite Churches, in the name of synodality, to help the Eastern faithful who have emigrated to preserve their identity and cultivate their specific heritage, without undergoing processes of assimilation is the request of the Fathers” (6c).

On the road to Christian unity

With regard to ecumenism, the Report speaks of a “spiritual renewal” that requires “processes of repentance and healing of the memory” (7c). It goes on to quote Pope Francis’ expression about an “ecumenism of the blood”; that is “Christians of different affiliations who give their lives for faith in Jesus Christ” (7d), and it mentions the proposal for an ecumenical martyrology (7o). The Report also reiterates that “collaboration among all Christians” is a resource “for healing the culture of hatred, division and war that pits groups, peoples and nations against each other”. It does not forget the issue of so-called mixed marriages, which are realities in which “it is possible to evangelize each other” (7 f).

Laity and families (Part II)

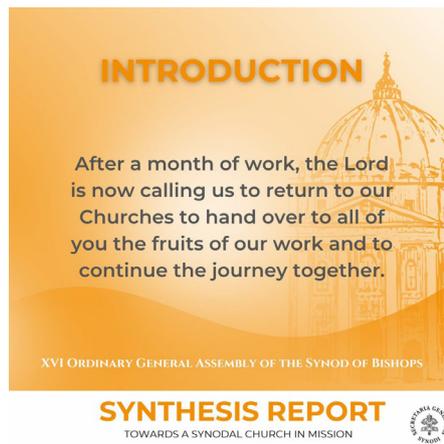
“Laymen and laywomen, those in consecrated life, and ordained ministers have equal dignity” (8b): this conviction is forcefully reiterated in the Synthesis Report, which recalls how the lay faithful are “increasingly present and active in service within Christian communities” (8e). Educators in the faith, theologians, formators, spiritual animators, and catechists, active in safeguarding and administration: their contributions are “indispensable to the mission of the Church” (8 e). The different charisms must therefore be “called forth, recognized and fully appreciated” (8 f), and not be ignored, underutilized, or “clericalised” (8 f).

Women in the life and mission of the Church

There is, then, a call for a strong commitment on the part of the Church to accompany and understand women in all aspects of their lives, including pastoral and sacramental ones. Women, it says, “cry out for justice in societies still marked by sexual violence, economic inequality and the tendency to treat them as objects” (9 c), adding “Pastoral accompaniment and vigorous advocacy for women should go hand in hand.”

Clericalism

Many women present at the Synod “expressed deep gratitude for the work of priests and bishops”, but “also spoke of a Church that wounds” (9 f). “Clericalism, a chauvinist mentality, and inappropriate expressions of authority continue to scar the face of the Church and damage its communion”. A “profound spiritual conversion is needed as the foundation for any effective structural change”; and the General Assembly noted that “we desire to promote a Church in which men and women dialogue together... without subordination, exclusion, and competition” (9h). Opening the diaconate to women?



Various opinions on opening the diaconate to women were acknowledged (9 j): for some, it is “unacceptable because they consider it a discontinuity with Tradition”; for others, it would restore a practice of the early Church; still others see it as “an appropriate and necessary response to the signs of the times ... that would find an echo in the hearts of many who seek new energy and vitality in the Church”. Then there are those who are concerned that opening the diaconate to women would involve “a worrying anthropological confusion, which, if granted, would marry the Church to the spirit of the age”. Fathers and mothers of the Synod ask to continue “Theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the diaconate”, making use of the results of the commissions specially set up by the Pope, as well as the theological, historical and exegetical research already carried out: “If possible”, they say, “the results of this research should be presented at the next Session of the Assembly” (9 n).

Discrimination and abuse

In the meantime, the urgency of ensuring “that women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry” is reiterated, noting that canon law should be adapted accordingly (9m). Cases of employment discrimination and unfair remuneration must also be addressed, including those in the Church where consecrated women are often considered “cheap

labour” (9 o). Similarly, women’s access to theological education and training programmes must be expanded (9 p), including promoting the use of inclusive language in liturgical texts and Church documents (9 q).

Consecrated Life

Looking at the richness and variety of the different forms of consecrated life, the Report warns against the “persistence of an authoritarian style, which makes no room for dialogue”. The Report notes, too, that “cases of abuse of various kinds experienced by those in religious life and members of lay associations, especially of women, signal a problem in the exercise of authority and demand decisive and appropriate interventions” (10 d).

Deacons and formation

The Assembly then expresses gratitude to ordained ministers, who are “called to live their service to the People of God in a disposition of proximity to people, welcoming and listening to all, while cultivating a deep personal spirituality and a life of prayer” (11b). The Report warns against clericalism, a “distortion of the priestly vocation” that “needs to be challenged from the earliest stages of formation” by ensuring “close contact” with the people and those in need (11 c). The request is also expressed, along these lines, that seminaries or other courses of formation of candidates for the ministry be linked to the daily life of communities (11 e), in order “to avoid the risks of formalism and ideology that lead to authoritarian attitudes, and impede genuine vocational growth”.

Celibacy

Mention was made of the theme of celibacy, which received different evaluations during the assembly. Its value is appreciated by all as richly prophetic and a profound witness to Christ”; the Report says, while noting that some ask “whether its appropriateness, theologically, for priestly ministry should necessarily translate into a disciplinary obligation in the Latin Church, above all in ecclesial and cultural contexts that make it more difficult. This discussion is not new but requires further consideration”.

Bishops

There is ample reflection on the figure and role of the bishop, who is called to be “an example of synodality” (12 c) by exercising “co-responsibility”, understood as the involvement of other actors within the diocese and the clergy, so as to lighten the burden of “administrative and legal commitments” which can hinder his mission (12 e). Coupled with this, the bishop does not always find the human and spiritual support he needs, while “a certain sense of loneliness is not uncommon” (12 e).

Abuses

On the question of abuse, which “places many bishops in the difficult situation of having to reconcile the role of father with that of judge” (12 i), the Report supports the exploration of the “appropriateness of assigning the judicial task to another body, to be specified canonical-

ly" (12 i).

Formation (Part III)

A "synodal approach" is then requested for formation, with the recommendation that work be undertaken "on relationship and sexual education, to accompany young people as they mature in their personal and sexual identities and to support the maturation of those called to celibacy and consecrated chastity" (14 g). The Report emphasizes the importance of deepening "the dialogue between the human sciences" (14 h) so as to enable "careful consideration of matters that are controversial within the Church" (15 b) – that is, among other issues, matters "such as those relating to matters of identity and sexuality, the end of life, complicated marital situations, and ethical issues related to artificial intelligence". Issues such as these are controversial precisely "because they pose new questions" in society and in the Church (15 g). "It is important to take the time required for this reflection and to invest our best energies in it, without giving in to simplistic judgments that hurt individuals and the Body of the Church", the Report says, while recalling that "Church teaching already provides a sense of direction on many of these matters, but this teaching evidently still requires translation into pastoral practice".

Listening

With the same concern, the Report renews the invitation to hear and accompany "people who feel marginalized or excluded from the Church because of their marriage status, identity or sexuality". "There was a deep sense of love, mercy and compassion felt in the Assembly for those who are or feel hurt or neglected by the Church, who want a place to call 'home' where they can feel safe, be heard and respected, without fear of feeling judged", the document says, while insisting that "Christians must always show respect for the dignity of every person" (16 h).

Polygamy

In light of the experiences reported in the Synod hall by some members of the Synod from Africa, SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) is encouraged to promote "a theological and pastoral discernment" on the topic of polygamy and the accompaniment of people in polygamous unions who are coming to faith" (16 q)

Digital culture

Finally, the Synthesis Report speaks of the digital environment: "It is up to us to reach today's culture in all spaces where people seek meaning and love, including the spaces they enter through their cell phones and tablets" (17 c), bearing in mind that the internet "can also cause harm and injury, such as through intimidation, disinformation, sexual exploitation, and addiction". The Report adds, "There is an urgent need to consider how the Christian community can support families in ensuring that the online space is not only safe but also spiritually life-giving" (17 f).

SYNOD PARTICIPANTS PRAY FOR PEACE



On the night of 25 October, Synod participants carried candles into an empty St Peter's Basilica and prayed the Rosary for peace. The Bible passages, meditations and decades of the Rosary were led by Synod members.

"We have experienced that it is indeed possible to look for ways forward together starting from different cultures and histories. We have been given the gift of living unity in diversity in Christ."

"We are here this evening from many different countries, some of which have taken up arms against each other and, through this Marian prayer together, we want to show that it is possible to respect each other, to meet and dialogue."

Giuseppina De Simone,
Professor of Theology, Pontifical Lateran University
in Rome

PARTICIPANTS FROM OCEANIA VISIT AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY TOT HE HOLY SEA



Synod participants from across the Oceania region (including Bishop Shane) gathered with the Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, Chiara Porro, to reflect on the Synod experience so far and share some familiar hospitality, despite being so far from home. (Photograph courtesy of Kelly Paget).

DIALOUGE CONTINUES IN ROME

METHODISTS AND ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION



Bishop Shane is staying on in Rome for meetings of the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission (MERCIC). MERCIC aims to deepen mutual understanding and appreciation between Methodists and Catholics and foster their common witness to Christ in the World. In 2023 the meetings were organised for Jerusalem, but the location was changed to Rome due to the Israel-Gaza conflict. A previous meeting, also scheduled for Jerusalem was held online due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION SANDHURST

A PAWESOME DAY AT ST FRANCIS OF THE FIELDS: PETS FLOCK FOR BLESSING

By Lisa Hitchcock

On Friday 13 October, St Francis of the Fields' school community gathered to celebrate St Francis of Assisi's Feast Day (October 4) with the Blessing of the Animals. This is always a great occasion in our school year and is a wonderful way to honour our patron saint, St Francis of Assisi on his Feast Day.

Our school community was invited to bring along their much-loved animals to be blessed by our Parish Priest, Fr Andrew Fewings. This is done in memory of St Francis and his love of creation that was expressed in his Canticle of Creatures, an ode to all of God's living things.

We had very well-behaved dogs, lizards, horses, rabbits, cats, chickens, stick insects, fish and the school's farm animals that were blessed by Fr Andrew. Students were able to bring along photos, drawings and toy animals for those pets that were unable to come along, or have died.

For many of our students, staff and parents, this is their favourite day on the school calendar. It's an amazing experience to see our 620 students, their families and teachers having their beloved animals at school for the Blessing of the Animals.

Lisa Hitchcock
Grade 5 Additional Support Teacher
St Francis of the Fields, Strathfieldsaye



ST KILIAN'S FIRE CARRIERS KEEP FLAME OF RECONCILIATION ALIGHT



On Friday 20 October, Year 5 students at St Kilian's Primary School, Bendigo participated in a FIRE Carriers Day. The day included workshops on Aboriginal culture, dialogue with guest speaker Leila Gurruwiwi and the ceremonial commissioning of FIRE Carriers.

Michael Chisholm, Aboriginal Education Officer from Catholic Education Sandhurst, led Aboriginal Culture workshops which included playing traditional games.

Students were delighted to welcome former St Kilian's student and guest-speaker Leila Gurruwiwi, a proud Yolngu woman who is originally from Arnhem Land. Leila, now a television sports journalist and cultural awareness speaker, spoke about her life's journey and her time at St Kilian's.

FIRE is an acronym for 'Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education'. The

FIRE Carrier Project aims to educate children in schools and their affiliated communities about Aboriginal Culture, and keep the flame of reconciliation alight by focusing on our shared history and values. The Project is a joint project of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria and the Opening the Doors Foundation with Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd.

Student FIRE Carriers are elected by their peers. They accept the responsibilities of carrying the flame of reconciliation, such as helping to plan and implement reconciliation activities, acknowledging traditional custodians, writing prayers for Aboriginal people, and raising the Aboriginal flag.

FIRE Carriers are elected each year and are commissioned around a fire where they make a formal commitment to the FIRE Carriers covenant. The FIRE of the out-going (usually Year 6) FIRE Carriers is passed on to the newly elected FIRE Carriers.

Student FIRE Carriers are supported by Teacher FIRE Carriers who assist student FIRE Carriers to plan initiatives and events in their school. These teachers are usually a member of the Sandhurst Aboriginal Network.

ST ANNE'S KIALLA: ZOOPER DOOPERS FOR VINNIES CHRISTMAS TREE APPEAL



St Anne's College Kialla's Community Action Team has been selling Zooper Doopers at lunchtime on Tuesdays and Fridays to raise money for the Vinnie's Giving Tree Christmas Appeal.



Bishop Shane's Calendar

Monday 6 November

- Permanent Committee, Australian Bishops Conference, Sydney

Tuesday 7 November - Thursday 9 November

- Australian Bishops Conference, Sydney

Friday 10 November

- Interim Synodal Roundtable, Sydney

Tuesday 14 November 1.30 p.m.

- Blessing and Opening of new building, St Francis of Assisi Primary School, Wodonga

Wednesday 15 November

- Newman College Council

Thursday 16 November

- Priests Retirement Foundation Annual Conference, Tatura

Thursday 16 November 5.00 p.m.

- Catherine McAuley College Graduation Mass, Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Friday 17 November - Saturday 18 November

- Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council, Shepparton

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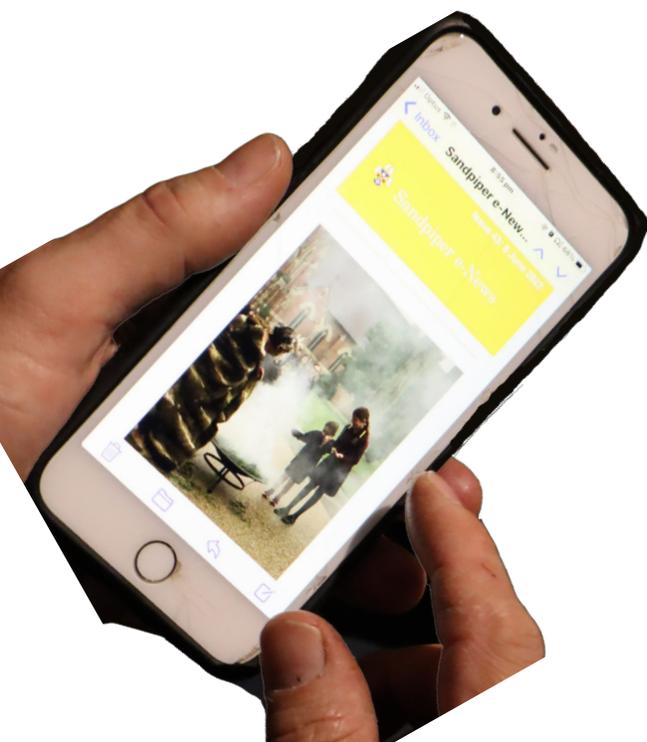


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