



SANDPIPER

News from the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

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PARISH OFFICE ADMINISTRATION STAFF GATHER AT CHANCERY



Parish Administration Staff from across the Diocese gathered at the Chancery for two days of training and professional development this week. This was the first face-to-face Parish Administration Staff Conference since 2019 and it was well received by attendees who enjoyed sharing experiences and learning from each other.

Conference attendees had the opportunity to meet the Chancery staff who support them in their daily parish roles, to pray together and hear about the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Council and Sandhurst's Synodal Journey, with a first-hand update on Bishop Shane at the Synod in Rome.

The Conference enabled attendees representing 25 parishes to make sure they were up to speed with the latest diocesan finance and governance processes, including financial software systems; electronic donation platforms on offer; document retention; privacy and cyber security; safeguarding and marriage dispensations and church patrimony.

The conference also provided the opportunity to find out more about services which can assist their parish and parishioners:

- Kalma Rathouski, from CatholicCare Victoria spoke about the variety of services offered in Sandhurst to people in need, which ranged from online pre-marriage education courses to, counselling; family services; emergency relief; family and property dispute resolution; wellbeing support services and social housing.

- Stephen Cooper from Procurement Australia, with an alignment with an aggregator at the forefront of ethical and sustainable procurement, shared ways their services can save time and money through aggregated buying power for parish purchases of goods and services. It includes everything from whitegoods to hardware and paint, to travel and utilities, including telephones and electricity.

- Donna Bailey, the Diocesan Archivist with the diocesan archive, holds a central role in the management of historical material, records and information management. She spoke of the policies informed by Canon Law, governing records held in parishes and the Chancery.

- Cameron Fraser, Diocesan Business Manager and newly appointed Diocesan General Counsel, Greg Westbrook spoke about litigation support and the next steps in Church insurances. Greg also explained how he can assist parishes with legal questions.

The first day of the conference was completed with Mass at St Kilian's Church, celebrated by Fr Andrew Fewings and a band of three eager altar servers.

This year, there were representatives from 25 parishes in attendance at the conference who, through the sharing of parish reports, amongst other things, had the opportunity to share good ideas.

Although scattered across a large geographical area of Victoria, it was clear that attendees value the camaraderie they share with fellow parish administration staff. There was a buzz of excitement as attendees caught up with old friends and welcomed new ones – a total of ten new parish staff members.

For many, networking and catching up with colleagues working in similar roles in different parishes was an invaluable experience, as one attendee explained, "For me, the best part of the conference is the networking, meeting others and knowing that I can call them any time I need to sound something out or need help thinking things through."

"Coming together in prayer is always wonderful and I return to my parish with more energy and more confidence in my job," said another.



Parish Administration Staff outside the Chancery on Wednesday 18 October 2023.

St Liborius' Festival A Day of Joy

by Leslie Cooper



The Saint Liborius' Parish celebrated the Feast of Saint Liborius on Sunday 23 July 2023 with a joyful well attended Festival thanks to the tireless efforts of all involved.

Hosted by Father Stephen Bolling and the St Liborius' Community group, the Festival commenced with Mass at 10:30 a.m., followed by a procession with a stature of St Liborius through the church and school grounds.

The procession featured the hymn, We Greet You St Liborius, which had been written by past parish priest, Fr Ronan Kilgannon OFM. The children of the Parish had made peacock feathers, and these were carried in the procession.

The procession concluded at the Mary MacKillop Centre as the St Liborius' statue was placed in the lobby area for all to see as they entered.

As well as being shown as a bishop carrying small stones on a book, Saint Liborius is also shown with the attribute

of a peacock, because of a legend that, when his body was brought to Paderborn, a peacock guided the bearers.

Within the tearoom of the Centre, parishioners provided a barbecue, as well as finger food and refreshments to all who attended.

The stadium was transformed into several areas for attendees where there were stalls selling piety items and fun activities could be found, including face-painting for kids. Items were raffled throughout the day; the Eaglehawk community had donated over a dozen items for the Parish to raffle and these items were appreciated by the Community group members and the parishioners.

The St Liborius' school launched its 'Frozen' video which promoted their upcoming musical production. There was a soccer game and other children's games throughout the day.

It was a joyful and lovely day. Over one hundred people from the Parish and Eaglehawk community visited the Mary MacKillop Centre where the majority of the festivities took place.

The planners and volunteers from the Parish made this possible with their enthusiasm, generosity and tireless work on the day.

The Eaglehawk community embraced the Festival by attending, but also by donating a variety of items for the raffle. The Festival flyer was advertised within many local businesses and the Facebook Eaglehawk community page was also used to promote the event.

The festival was such a success that Fr Stephen Bolling and the Parish Community Group will work to make this an annual event.



The congregation processed the around parish and school grounds.



Federal Member, Lisa Chesters, visits Holy Rosary Primary School in White Hills

It's not every day that you get to tell your local Federal Member what you would do if you were in their shoes, but that's exactly what Grade 6 students at Holy Rosary Primary School in White Hills were able to do on 5 October.

The Federal Member for Bendigo, Lisa Chesters, paid a visit to Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School in White Hills to inspect the school's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) learning area, which had been refurbished using much-needed Federal funding.

Lisa was amazed at the transformed space which has created a hub for hands-on learning to inspire students across various STEM disciplines. The addition of wicking garden beds and an impressive chicken coop, complete with resident chickens hatched right at the school, has added an element of real-world application to science and biology lessons.

During her tour of the 'grant' funded areas, Lisa Chesters had the opportunity to engage with Year 6 students, who impressed her with their informed and insightful questions. She encouraged the young minds to share their thoughts and ideas on how they would contribute to their community if they were the Federal Member. The students did not disappoint, offering a range of thoughtful suggestions, showcasing their civic awareness and enthusiasm for positive change.

One notable commitment that Lisa Chesters made during her visit was her pledge to return to Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School next year to speak with students. This return visit will coincide with the school's unit on politics, providing students with a unique opportunity to learn firsthand from their Federal Member about the workings of government.

Additionally, her visit provided Principal Paul Wilkinson with an opportunity to engage in candid discussions about the broader educational landscape, as well as sharing insights into the challenges and pressing issues facing schools at this time.

World Youth Day Pilgrims reunite in Shepparton

By Fr Jackson Saunders

Pilgrims to World Youth Day (WYD) from across the Sandhurst Diocese gathered for a reunion on Sunday, 8 October, in Shepparton.

Most of the 35 pilgrims, who had attended the recent WYD in Lisbon, Portugal, were in attendance. This included pilgrims from across the Sandhurst Diocese including Bendigo, Kerang, Echuca, Shepparton, Numurkah, Nathalia, Kyabram, Tatura, Mooropna and Wodonga.

Pilgrimage co-ordinator, Ruth Lawlor, was also in attendance, along with Dr Chris Cotter, Director of Mission and Pastoral Life for the Diocese.

The reunion began with Mass celebrated in the Chapel at Notre Dame College. Miggy Podosky and Marty Dillon led us in music during the Mass, with assistance from Zoe Hamilton and Maddi Madeira.

A BBQ lunch co-ordinated by Elliott and Sarah Small from St Brendan's Parish followed.



The afternoon program included 30 minutes of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Marian Chapel in St Brendan's Church. This included praise and worship music, silent reflection and Scripture.

That was followed by small group discussions and a group discussion on future opportunities for the pilgrims to engage in parish, and Diocesan life.

Many of the pilgrims remarked that a key goal for them post WYD was to actively

attend Sunday Masses in their local parish, to keep their faith alive.

As Chaplain of the Sandhurst Diocese pilgrimage to WYD, I express my thanks to all of you on behalf of the pilgrims. We are grateful for your prayerful and practical support throughout our recent pilgrimage.

Fr Jackson Saunders
Priest for the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

Hugo Hess recipient of Eileen Denton Organ Scholarship

By Liesbeth Van Emmerik

Hugo Hess, a Year 9 Victory Christian College student, has been awarded the Aspire Cultural and Charitable Foundation's Eileen Denton Scholarship for 2023.

The scholarship includes weekly organ lessons at Sacred Heart Cathedral with internationally renowned Australian organ virtuoso, Mr Thomas Heywood. Hugo started piano lessons in 2017 and soon discovered that he loved learning the piano and classical music. In July 2022, Hugo's family moved to Bendigo to be closer to family, a move which presented Hugo with fresh musical opportunities. He competed in his first Eisteddfod in Bendigo this year and his piano teacher, Mrs Katie Kim, recommended him for the Eileen Denton Organ Scholarship.

Hugo started taking lessons with Mr Thomas Heywood earlier this year. Hugo says he thoroughly enjoys his organ lessons with Mr Heywood and embraces the

challenge of learning technically difficult pieces. He also has the rare opportunity to play Sacred Heart Cathedral's majestic organ, built by Bishop & Son of London in 1904.

Hugo is thankful for the opportunity

offered to him through the Eileen Denton Scholarship. He was officially recognised as recipient of the Scholarship after the 11.00 a.m. Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Sunday 8 October, where he was joined by members of his family.



ST MALACHY'S NAGAMBIE PREPARES FOR 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



Past and present parishioners of Nagambie Parish will come together on 19 November 2023 to celebrate 150 years of St Malachy's Church in Nagambie. In preparation for the anniversary, parishioner Rhonda Robinson shares a brief history of St Malachy's Church.

By Rhonda Robinson

Father Michael Farrelly, the Parish Priest of Kilmore at the time, was instrumental and responsible for building a Catholic Church in Nagambie. Along with the Right Rev. Dr Goold, Bishop of Melbourne, Fr Farrelly, laid the foundation stone of the church on Sunday 1 December, 1872.

The Church was designed by Dublin-born architect Thomas Anthony Kelly, and was

built by Messrs Bell Brothers of Melbourne under the watchful eyes of Mr John Lester, Clerk of Works, and Fr Farrelly who regularly travelled by horseback from Kilmore to the building site to monitor building progress.

The church building is of Gothic style architecture, composed of double brick, roofed in slate, with Geelong freestone quoins on foundations of Avenel granite. The stained-glass windows above the altar and at the opposite end of the church are the work of the esteemed Ferguson and Erie Company, who were the leading manufacturer of stained glass in the colony.

St Malachy's church was opened on Sunday 15 March, 1874 by the Rev. Dr Fitzpatrick, Vicar General.

The 150th anniversary of St Malachy's will be celebrated on Sunday 19 November 2023. Bishop Shane Mackinlay will celebrate Mass at 10.00 a.m. and will bless a plaque placed on the front of the Church to commemorate the occasion.

This will be followed by a small ceremony where the Bishop will rename and dedicate the former presbytery to be now known as the Kearns Centre. The Parish of Nagambie, by which it was then known, was erected in 1875 and Fr Patrick Kearns was appointed the first Parish Priest in 1876. He was instrumental in building many churches and schools throughout the vast parish, including an elegant presbytery, completed 1881, which will be named in his honour in November this year (2023).

Keeping Guard over a (Foundation) Stone

Blast from the Past [8 January 1873]:

"The Geelong Advertiser reports that an amusing incident is related in connection with the laying of the foundation stone of a church at Nagambie, a township between twenty and thirty miles beyond Seymour."

The Geelong Advertiser reports that an amusing incident is related in connection with the laying of the foundation stone of a church at Nagambie, a township between twenty and thirty miles beyond Seymour.

There being no stone available within the immediate neighbourhood, it was found advisable to send to Melbourne for one, and arrangements were made for its conveyance by rail to Seymour. The stone was to be laid on a certain day, and it was imperative that not the slightest delay should occur in its transmission, or else

the Right Rev. Dr Goold, R. C. Bishop of Victoria, would be kept waiting, and this was what Mr Kelly (the architect of the church) and the contractors wished to avoid.

Arrangements were therefore made with an Irish carter that upon the stone arriving at Seymour he was to have it removed to his wagon and start at once for Nagambie. Well, five o'clock came, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, and eleven o'clock struck, the ceremony was to be performed on the following morning, and there was no appearance of the carter at Nagambie.

At midnight Mr Kelly and the contractor went to look after (for) him, and early in the morning they found him sitting on the large block of stone in his wagon, about four miles from Seymour and his horses gone.

Why! What on earth are you doing here? asked Mr Kelly.

Sure now, Mr Kelly, don't you see it is stuck I am?

Yes, said Mr Kelly, but where are your horses?

Sure, replied the carter, when I got bogged last night I turned them out into the paddock.

But why not mount one of them and ride for assistance?

Now your Honour, now Mr Kelly, is it you that would 'ave me leave this blessed stone so that some spalpeen might come and stale (steal) it.

The poor fellow had actually sat on or near a cold stone, weighing nearly half a ton, all night, in case some thief might come in the darkness and put it in his pocket. It is satisfactory to know that the stone reached Nagambie in time, and the Right Rev. Prelate was not kept waiting.

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER 2023

“Hearts on fire, feet on the move” [Luke 24:13-15]

World Mission Sunday serves as a poignant reminder of the life-giving work carried out by missionaries in Australia and across the globe. Celebrated worldwide in Catholic Parishes it's a day to reflect, pray and contribute to a collection for those most in need.

In his message for World Mission Sunday 2023, Pope Francis, takes us back to the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). Two disciples were walking to Emmaus when a man came to join them. It was only later, after Jesus has broken bread with them, that the disciples realised the man who had joined them was the risen Christ. “They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

And so, Pope Francis' theme for World Mission Day 2023 is “Hearts on fire, feet on the move.”

CAMPAIGN AMPLIFIES VOICES OF MISSIONARIES FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE

Catholic Mission's awareness and fundraising campaign '#wearestillhere' highlights the burning passion that drives missionaries to 'take action for a more just world'.

The campaign, launched by Catholic Mission in Australia and the Pontifical Mission Societies, is a global initiative which unites Catholic lay and religious missionaries from all corners of the world. Inspired by Pope Francis' message for World Mission Day 2023, in which he states that we all have a missionary spirit in our hearts and that mission is at the heart of the Church, the campaign is an invitation to answer the burning passion of our hearts and set ourselves in motion.

With this Sunday marking the pinnacle of a year-long campaign which has spanned 2023, Catholic Mission extends an open invitation to all to embark on a physical and spiritual journey—a journey of love, hope and action through words, prayers and deeds.

In the campaign video features real-life missionaries, including Sr Carolina Correia, a Salesian Sister and nurse, who provides much needed medical assistance, pastoral care and support to people in Venilale, Timor-Leste.

If you listen closely when watching the video, you will hear these missionaries in

saying – in their own language,

“We are ordinary people, yet our hearts are ablaze with an extraordinary passion, a flame for God, for humanity, for our collective future.”

You can listen to the voices of these missionaries by watching the #wearestillhere campaign video.

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About Catholic Mission

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church's global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ's mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation, and agricultural programs. In Australia, Catholic Mission forms people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and act for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.



Fr Junjun Amaya, Parish Priest of Wodonga has returned safely to Australia.

He was on sabbatical in Jerusalem when Hamas attacked Israel. He was repatriated on an Australian government flight from Tel Aviv to Dubai, and returned to Melbourne via Hong Kong.

Fr Junjun asks us to pray for peace in the Holy Land and reminds us that the majority of Palestinians are not responsible for the terrorist acts of Hamas.

In this picture, Fr Junjun celebrates Mass at St Peter's Chapel, Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee.

THE VOICE

Referendum Result should usher in New Era says Bishop Gauci



Bishop Charles Gauci, chair of the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, has issued a statement following the release of the referendum results.

Despite the referendum to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in the Constitution not succeeding, Australia needs to find a way to address the inequalities many First Nations people face, Bishop Charles Gauci has said.

Bishop Gauci, chair of the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, has issued a statement following the release of the referendum results. He said although the idea of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament was not supported by a majority of Australians, “that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t do something”.

The Bishop of Darwin said: “As I travel through the Northern Territory and beyond, I meet people from all walks of life who recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – the traditional custodians of our lands and waters for tens of thousands of years – struggle with poor outcomes in health, education, employment and a range of other areas.

“Australians know those poor outcomes are not good enough in the nation of the alleged ‘Fair go.’”

Bishop Gauci said while the debate leading up to the referendum was “intense and, at times, challenging”, there was an “overwhelming consensus [...] that more should be done to address the injustice experienced by so many First Nations people”.

He said that the Church, while not always living up to its own ideals, has been a driver of positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through its parishes, schools, social services, and health and aged care services.

“At this moment in our history, it is time for the Church and its ministries to redouble our efforts to close the gap – not as a slogan, but as a commitment,” Bishop Gauci said.

“That can only be done by, in the words of our recent Social Justice Statement, listening to, learning from and loving our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters.”

As the country processes the referendum outcome, Bishop Gauci said, “may we recognise and take up the challenge to create opportunities but also seek outcomes that will see inequalities in our country narrowed, a path to reconciliation pursued and a more prosperous nation emerge”.

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NATSICC: We must champion Indigenous-led ideas and initiatives)

The referendum result does not signal the end of the journey, says NATSICC as they call for all Australians to work towards reconciliation and closing the gap.

When we started this journey, we knew it would not be easy. We knew that there were many hurdles to overcome. This has been the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for over 200 years. Our strong culture and spirituality have helped us to survive through challenges, and an unsuccessful outcome to the Voice to Parliament referendum is just another challenge that we will face with dignity, respect and without losing hope.

Throughout this journey we, the members of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) have placed an emphasis on fostering respectful dialogue and providing Catholics with information to help them make their decision. We are proud to have maintained the stance that all people are created equal in the image of God and thus deserve to be respectfully treated, regardless of their stance on the referendum question.

Guided by the Catholic social teaching principle of Subsidiarity, we (along with most First Australians) saw the value in a mechanism for our voice, and the voices of our children and grandchildren to be heard in Parliament, and the potential for tangible outcomes to improve the day-to-day lives of our people. We also acknowledged that this was not the only way forward, but a step on the journey of Reconciliation.

We accept that, for a variety of reasons, the Australian people have decided that an enshrined Voice is not the way to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Constitution, or see it as useful to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples gain an equal footing on metrics such as life expectancy, health and socio economics. What we must not accept is that this signals the end of the journey. Statistics from the Closing the Gap strategy show that we cannot maintain the status quo. We now call on

those who espoused alternatives to champion Indigenous-led ideas and initiatives that will address these practical issues, and for all people in this country to work for reconciliation.

Fear, confusion and misinformation have impacted relationships between communities, families and friendships. The biggest tragedy we face as a nation is to hold on to resentment and disagreements, allowing them to fester and divide us further. As Colossians 3:13 says, "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Embracing this spirit of forgiveness can pave the way for shared healing and unity.

As we look towards the future, we are heartened by the impact and response to the One Journey, Together website. Thirty Catholic organisations, including the peak bodies for Catholic Health, Education and Social Services, congregations and groups articulated their support of the Voice and will be valuable allies as we move forward in our shared work of reconciliation.

The path of reconciliation and unity is a long one, but it is one that we

must tread with unwavering faith and determination. The challenges we face are not insurmountable so, with the collective strength of our communities and the guidance of our faith, we can envision a brighter future for all.

"May the God of hope fill you all with joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" [Romans 15:13].

With this hope in our hearts, we, the members of NATSICC, will continue to advocate for the rights and dignity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We are certain that our family, the Catholic Church continues to walk alongside us. As Chaplain to NATSICC, Bishop Charles Gauci joins with us in these thoughts and prayers, and hopes that "we be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance so that we can grow together in the way Jesus teaches us."

We believe that together, with love, understanding and the grace of God, we can build a future where every individual is recognised, respected, and cherished.



John Lochowiak, Chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, is currently in Rome participating as a delegate at the Synod on Synodality.

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

We can guess participating at the Synod is an intense experience for all of the participants. Nevertheless, Bishop Shane has found a few extra things to do. He's been elected by peers to be part of a 13-member Commission for the Synthesis Report of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops; he shared a reflection on the Australian Plenary Council with the general congregation; and has taken time to be interviewed for an independent Catholic podcast in which he expressed an openness to the ordination of female deacons.

Bishop Shane shares reflection on Australian Plenary Council at Synod



During the presentation of the Twelfth General Congregation of the Synod, Bishop Shane Mackinlay of Sandhurst, Australia, offers a reflection on 'The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia.'

General Congregation
12 - 18 October 2023

Testimony of Australian Bishop Shane Mackinlay

The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia was held over four years, from 2018 to 2022. In many respects, it was more like a synod than a council: it used a very synodal process, and only a few elements of the final decrees were strictly legislative.

Our process began with a very broad consultation involving 220,000 people, responding to the question: What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time? This led to thematic papers, further discussion and feedback across the country, an *Instrumentum Laboris*, and then two one-week assemblies, with consultation during the year between them on initial draft documents, leading eventually to a set of eight papers being presented to the second assembly. Each of these papers sought to identify ways in which the Church in Australia could become more

Christ-centred and missionary. With various amendments made during the Assembly, they became the eight decrees of the Council, addressing: reconciliation with indigenous people, healing the wounds caused by sexual abuse, missionary discipleship, witnessing to the equal dignity of women and men, spirituality and liturgy, formation for ministry, synodal models of governance, and integral ecology.

At all stages of the process, we ensured that drafting, discussion and decision was guided by discernment and conversations in the spirit. At least half of each day during the two assemblies was devoted to conversations in the spirit, beginning with extended prayer on a scriptural text, in table groups of about 10 people, including a mix of bishops, priests, religious, and lay people. There were 280 members, with about 60% specified by canon law and the remaining members being proposed from parishes, dioceses and other groups in the Church.

During our second assembly, we had a moment of crisis, which has been widely reported. This was in voting on the initial version of the decree relating to the equal dignity of women and men, which failed to achieve the required two-thirds majority amongst the bishops on either of the resolutions that it included. This reflected a range of concerns and reservations across the assembly, rather than a simple division between any two camps for and against, whether that be bishops and lay people, or women and men, or whatever. In the assembly's consultative vote on the previous day, the first resolution had only just achieved a two-thirds majority, and the second resolution had failed to achieve it. In both the consultative and the deliberative votes, the

vast majority of those not supporting the resolutions had voted *placet juxta modum* (signalling that they had reservations or would like to see amendments), rather than non *placet*.

There was widespread distress when the vote was announced, as we faced the prospect of the Council saying nothing about the place of women in the Church. We decided to suspend the planned agenda, to give space for concerns from all perspectives and all members to be articulated, initially through conversation in the spirit in our table groups, but then also in the whole assembly. Eventually we established a special drafting group, and returned to the topic two days later, where a revised text was passed overwhelmingly. The positive resolution was only possible because of the shared appreciation by all members that it was critically important to address this issue, and because of their clear commitment to ensure that we worked together towards a document that was more finely articulated and carefully balanced. The members showed great generosity in persisting in dialogue despite the grief and hurt that many had felt after the failed vote. In the interim, the quality and depth of our conversation and reflection had changed, and I think the remaining documents that we considered were significantly improved because of it. This may also be one of the reasons for the broadly positive reception of the decrees by people across the Church in Australia, who have recognised them as being faithful to the long process of consultation, preparation and discernment.

I have reflected often since then about what happened in us on those days. Those present had already spoken freely and openly, and had been listened to respectfully. But, in retrospect, I think we had mostly spoken from our heads, setting out ideas that we had considered frequently and that were already well established in our minds. After the crisis, people spoke much more from the heart, with a vulnerability that exposed them personally, putting themselves on the line to describe their lived experience of how they were personally affected.

And this courageous speaking was received with a different quality of listening.

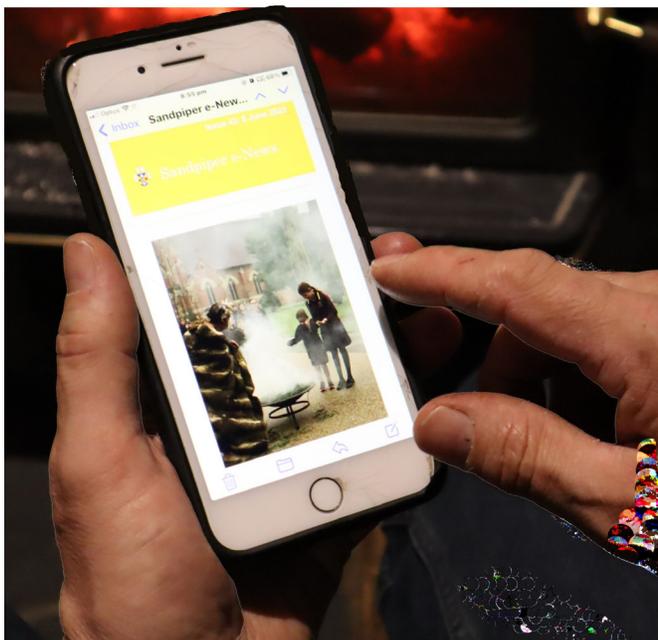
Instead of recognising familiar arguments and rehearsing objections, we listened better to what was said as being deeply personal, and we had greater openness to appreciating it, learning from it and being changed by it. This asked of us a humility to recognise that we might not have the final answer ourselves.

Many have since described the disruption and new possibilities that it opened as an experience of the Holy Spirit. It certainly was an experience of parrhesia – both courageous speaking and humble listening; and there is no question that it was critical in enriching our communion.

The task for us now in Australia is to begin implementing the decrees, both nationally and locally, in parishes, dioceses and other Catholic entities. Beyond the content of the decrees, I think the most significant impact of the Plenary Council on the Church in Australia will be the positive and transformative experience of discernment and synodality, which is now clearly established as the normal way for approaching discussions and shared decision-making in all our activities,



While in Rome ... Bishop Shane visited the Rogationists and caught up with Fr Rene Ramirez (left) who will establish a Rogationists community in Shepparton South in November. Fr Bruno Rampazzo, Superior General of the Congregation of Rogationists is to the right of this photo.



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Bishop Shane's Calendar

- Wednesday 4 October – Sunday 28 October –
Synod for a Synodal Church, Rome
- Monday 30 October – Friday 3 November –
Methodist–Roman Catholic International Commission, Jerusalem
- 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

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