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DIOCESE OF
BROKEN BAY**

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We acknowledge the Darug, Gurringai and Darkinjung Nations, the traditional custodians of the land across our Diocese. We recognise the Aboriginal people as holding the memories, the traditions and the culture of the lands we live and work upon. We honour their wisdom and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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BISHOP'S MESSAGE

What does a Synodal Church look like?

By Bishop Anthony Randazzo



As we journey together in faith within our Diocese of Broken Bay, it is important to reflect on the vision and characteristics of a Synodal Church – a Church that walks together, listens, and discerns in communion. The concept of synodality is not new; it is deeply rooted in the Tradition of the Church, reflecting the very nature of the Body of Christ as a community that lives, prays, and acts together. But what does a Synodal Church truly look like? Allow me to share some thoughts on this essential question.

Listening and Dialogue

At the heart of a Synodal Church is the practice of listening – a profound and intentional listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who speaks through the experiences, struggles, hopes, and joys of Christ's baptised faithful. This listening is not passive; it requires us to engage in open and respectful dialogue with one another. Whether we are clergy, religious, or laypeople, each of us has a voice that matters, and every voice contributes to the discernment of God's will for our Church.

Listening in a synodal context means creating spaces where every member of the Church feels welcomed and valued, where their experiences and insights are not only heard but also taken seriously. In this way, dialogue becomes a path to deeper communion and understanding, helping us to walk together in faith and mission.

It also allows every member of the Body of Christ to listen freely and intentionally to the truth of the Scriptures, which moves hearts and minds to the saving love and mercy of Jesus Christ. Respectful listening and dialogue also opens pathways for knowledge of the Tradition and teachings of the Church for a life of faith, communion, and mission.

Participation

A Synodal Church is one where every member is encouraged to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church. This participation goes beyond mere involvement in activities; it is about taking on a shared responsibility for the Church's pastoral decisions, ministries, and outreach. When we engage fully in the mission of the Church, we contribute to building a vibrant and living community of faith.

This participatory nature of the Church calls us to be co-responsible for the Church's mission. It invites us to move away from a model where a few lead and the many follow, toward a model where all the baptised share in the leadership and service of the Church, each according to their gifts and vocation.

One of the fears associated with the vision of a Synodal Church is that the laity will take the place of the ordained, as a type of corporate takeover. We must be quite certain that in the Divine plan, there is no competition between baptism and ordination. In a Synodal Church, the relationship between the baptised and the ordained is one of mutual support and collaboration. In the passage from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Saint Paul illustrates that, diverse gifts, activated by the same Spirit, work together for the common good,

with no room for competition between the roles of the laity and the clergy.

Discernment

In a Synodal Church, decision-making is a process of communal discernment, seeking together to understand and follow the will of God. This discernment is not about reaching a consensus or majority decision; it is about prayerfully listening to the Spirit, who guides us in truth and love. Consensus does not lead to truth. Truth leads to consensus.

True discernment requires humility and a willingness to let go of our own preferences or agendas. It challenges us to be open to the surprising and sometimes uncomfortable ways in which God may be calling us more deeply into communion and sending us forward into mission. It is in this spirit of discernment that we find the path to unity and fidelity to Christ.

Inclusivity

The Synodal Church is one that embraces inclusivity, recognising and valuing the contributions of all its members. Every person, regardless of their background, status, or role, is a vital part of the Church's journey. This inclusivity reflects the catholicity of the Church – her universality and openness to all who seek the truth of the Gospel and the salvation of their soul.

Inclusivity in the Church is not simply about making space for everyone; it is about actively seeking and honouring the diverse gifts and charisms that each member brings. It means recognising that the Spirit is at work in every human person, and that our journey together is enriched by the variety of perspectives and experiences within our community.

It means valuing human life from conception to natural death and recognising that each person is made in the image and likeness of God. Jesus always met people where they were, however, he loved them too much not to leave them there. His message of Good News always took them to a place of greater life and love. True inclusivity in the Synodal Church will do the same, for all who seek to know and follow Jesus Christ.

Mission-oriented

A Synodal Church is deeply mission-oriented, committed to evangelisation and to the service and transformation of the world. A mission-orientated Church is not afraid to speak the name of Jesus and to announce that God reigns over this world in the Kingdom of Heaven. The mission of the Church is to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people, to promote justice, peace, and the common good in our society. This mission is not the responsibility of a few but of the entire Church, the whole Body of Christ.

As we engage in our mission, we are called to be witnesses of God's love and mercy, reaching out to the marginalized, the poor, the excluded, the oppressed, and those in need. Our mission is not confined to our parishes and communities of faith but extends to every aspect of our lives – our families, schools, workplaces, and local communities.

Transparency

In a Synodal Church, transparency is essential. It builds trust and accountability within the Church community. Transparency means being open about how decisions are made, how resources are used, and how the Church dialogues with the

world. It requires honesty, integrity, and a commitment to the truth.

Transparency fosters a culture of trust, where the faithful can be confident that the Church is being guided by the Gospel values of justice, mercy, equity, and love. It ensures that our actions are in alignment with our words, and that we are truly living out the mission we proclaim.

Unity in Diversity

Finally, a Synodal Church is one that embraces unity in diversity. Our Church is made up of people from many different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences, yet we are all one in Christ. This diversity is a gift, enriching our community and helping us to see the breadth and depth of God's work in the world.

Unity in diversity means that we are united in our faith and mission, even as we respect, honour, and celebrate the differences among us. It is a unity that is not about uniformity, but about being one in Christ while appreciating the unique contributions that each person brings to the Church. It is most powerfully stated in our Creed where we profess our belief in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

In conclusion, a Synodal Church is a community that is faithful to Scripture and Tradition and that listens, participates, discerns, includes, and serves together. It is a Church that is transparent, mission-oriented, and united in its diversity. As we continue our journey together in the Diocese of Broken Bay, the invitation is to embrace these characteristics, allowing them to shape our life and mission as the Body of Christ. May the Holy Spirit guide us in our efforts to be a truly Synodal Church, walking together in faith, hope, and charity.