



Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

VALE FR PETER EUSTACE QUINN (20 September 1930 ~ 14 January 2023)



Fr Peter passed away peacefully in Yarrawonga aged 92.

His Funeral Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Shane Mackinlay, Fr Des Welladsen and Fr Mick Morley at Yarrawonga on 20 January.

On 12 February a Memorial Mass dedicated to Fr Peter will be held at St Mary's Mooroopna, where he served as Parish Priest from 1986 to 2005. All are welcome.

SANDHURST ASSEMBLY HOPES TO IGNITE SPARK

Over 330 people from every parish and school of the Diocese will gather on Yorta Yorta Country for the Diocesan Assembly in Shepparton next week.

The Diocesan Assembly is part of a larger movement of synodality in Sandhurst, being a Church on the journey together. This will be the first time in living memory that representatives from parishes, schools, religious communities and Catholic entities of the Diocese will gather in one place at one time, to celebrate, to pray, and to enter into the collective experience of listening and dialogue.

The morning session of the Assembly will include, Welcome to Country, Prayer and Music facilitated by Gen Bryant and the GB Team and A Keynote Address on Synodality by Dr Elissa Roper.

This will be followed by Preparation and Consultation for the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. CHris Cotter will report on the consultation undertaken across the Diocese in 2022.

After which there will be a Listening and Dialogue Session in which participants will be asked to develop concrete proposals for the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council to consider.

The final session will continue with SMPC preparation and Consultation and call for Expressions of interest. Bishop Shane will close the Assembly before final prayer.

LIVESTREAM
9.00 - 11.00 a.m.
15 February 2023

The morning session of the Diocesan Assembly will be livestreamed to Facebook and our website homepage; so you can join us for prayer, be inspired by Bishop Shane's opening address, learn more about synodality from Dr Elissa Roper and be uplifted by music from Gen Bryant and the GB Team.



*"Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations ...
And know that I am with you always"*

Matthew 28:19, 20

'LIVING SYNODALITY' KEY TO MATURITY



Dr Elissa Roper, a theologian with a strong focus on synodality, will be the keynote speaker at the Diocesan Assembly on 15 February. Dr Roper says it is time for us to move on to being a 'mature, responsible and loving' Church and synodality will help us get there. "Transformation is not about obedience, it's not about reading a book and knowing what to do; it's about developing our community together. it's fundamentally about asking questions, seeking, and being intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving," she says.

When talking about reform, Dr Roper emphasises that the Church is not a building, or a third party, but us, the people of God — "If the Church is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic, that's us," she says. Dr Roper sees a reformed Church as one where people have agency, feel they can question, have their voice respected and can act on their baptismal calling in a way which is meaningful to them. A synodal Church is open and supportive to this, whilst being aware that clericalism is a barrier that needs to be removed.

In discussing reform, Dr Elissa points to the experience of Vatican II and two concepts which were often used to define the nature and extent of renewal:

Aggiornamento: an Italian word which means to 'bring up to date', essentially, a broader contextualisation to find new ways to effectively communicate the Gospel in a way that is effective today.

Ressourcement: a French word meaning to return to our roots, to the authoritative sources of Christian faith, so that we rediscover their truth and meaning in order to face our challenges today.

"These two movements, *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*, really do reform us as people and therefore reform us as Church," says Dr Roper.

"Synodality is retaining that which in our history is authentic; it's retaining what is true to Christ and to us, being the body of Christ. It's also removing that which is inauthentic. So, there is a continuity, and there is a break with what we name as clericalism. People are very aware that the time is right. It's a *Kairos*. It's God's time.

Dr Roper says synodality gives us a new perspective, "It's not about learning new stuff. It's actually about using a new vision, a new pair of goggles for our eyes so that we don't see ourselves as gatekeepers or holding all the rules and all the information."

Indeed, Dr Roper offers us a fresh perspective on our faith, and a large depth of field. Partly because she has experienced firsthand the difficult predicament of young people who have a strong desire for God in their lives but have no access to a faith community; partly because she had never met a Catholic until she was an adult (and he just happened to be the man she married); and partly because of her searching nature, which has led her to complete a doctoral thesis, "Synodality and Authenticity: Towards a Contemporary Ecclesiology for the Catholic Church."

"I value my pre-Catholic experience," says Dr Roper, "because it's made me aware of where people are when they're looking from the outside." Dr Roper grew up in a non-religious family, and from a young age she felt a constant desire for God in her life and was fascinated with Jesus when she learned about him at the Uniting Church of Australia school she attended. Dr Roper says that searching for God can be a difficult place for people to be in, especially if the opportunity to access a faith community doesn't present itself.

"When I first met my husband, I didn't know anything about Catholics. I'd been taught that they were gullible people!" laughs Dr Roper, but says her thinking changed after attending her first Catholic Mass with her (now) husband. "It opened my eyes – not just to a new community, but to a whole new world," she says.

"What struck me about the Mass, was that this perse mix of people all got down on their knees in worship; I'd never seen that in my life." What Dr Roper said she experienced was not a group of gullible people, but a group of warm,

genuine, and reasonable people. Naturally she started asking her husband “all the hard questions.”

Dr Roper says her experience of her first Mass clarifies that as Catholics, we need to live as communities of hope, faith and warmth, so that this comes across in all that we do.

“Jesus made it simple when he said in John’s Gospel, *“By this shall all people know that you are my disciples, the love you have for each other”* [John 13:34-35].

I mean, it boils down to that. If you genuinely love each other, and I’m going to use a different wording from the Reading, I’m going to use the word friendship, and Pope Francis uses the word ‘fraternity’. If we unpack that a bit, it’s that desire to know each other, to be friendly, to look out for each other and to ease each other’s sufferings. When we’re good at that as a parish, we will be a light to the world. People sense that far more than doctrinal perfection. “

After continuing to attend Mass, Dr Roper said she felt drawn to her husband as a person, then to the parish as a community, and then reached a point where she felt a personal call from God and felt compelled to join the Catholic Church.

The eight-month long Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) Programme fuelled Dr Roper’s curiosity. “In the early days I felt that there was this whole new language; there was a whole culture that I initially wasn’t aware of, and I wanted to learn more about it. I’m an academic at heart, so I signed up for theology classes and just loved it,” says Dr Roper.

“It took a long time before I felt like theology connected with the whole of my life, not just the Catholic portion but the whole of my life and then everything just really started to make sense,” she says. Dr Roper then made a commitment to complete a doctorate in theology – focusing on synodality as a path towards a Church that is “intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving.”

Dr Roper has drawn inspiration from Bernard Lonergan SJ, a Canadian Jesuit Priest, philosopher, theologian and ecclesiological, who called for us to “be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, and be responsible.” For Dr Roper, this seems like a natural way to be Catholic, but she acknowledges that for many Catholics, and particularly older Catholics, who have to some extent been trained not to question, this could be a radical concept. She believes that as a community, we need to support and nourish each other in our response to God’s vocation.

“As Church, we need to help those who have felt, to some extent, infantilised by the Church to move out of a childhood of faith. It’s time to move on. As Lonergan would say, transformation is not about obedience, it’s not about reading a book and knowing what to do, it’s about developing our community together in the Spirit. It’s fundamentally about asking questions, seeking, and being intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving.

People naturally detect when we’re not being reasonable anymore. And there are some big issues in society, where society has moved ahead, and the Church has been left behind. You know, we really need to do some more talking about that.”

Dr Roper believes it is time to start laying foundations for a Church that is more dialogical, mature, merciful and authentic. She explains,

“This is the sense of the day; it’s the people saying, there is something broken and we need to remove that from our culture, from our institution, from the way we do things. If we aim for transformation within a clerical culture, we are going to struggle. So, the spirit is actually starting to, in the words of Pope Francis, ‘kick the table over’ and start to shake things up.”

Dr Roper sees two obstacles to synodality, clericalism and closely related to that, is that Catholics, in general, have been trained to be without agency. “We’ve diminished ourselves to the point of not being able to give our gifts. And that makes us really ineffective,” she explains.

Dr Roper says that Clergy will always have a place in the synodal Church. It’s important to understand that clericalism is not a product of the Clergy – we all must take responsibility for clericalism. We all need to co-author the transformation of our Church. Dr Roper says, “We need to use the imagination of synodality to reimagine our relationships in a much more healthy way, in a way that is true to the early church and to the heart of being a healthy body of Christ.”

If synodality is the key to reform, what does ‘living synodality’ look like? Dr Roper explains,

“I think at the heart of it, Jesus would say, it is being loving, Pope Francis would say, we must be evangelising. So, there’s our internal life as Church – we are friends with each other, which will help repair our broken relations of clericalism. And then, that which propels us outwards. Living synodally means being friends with God, friends with each other and then being propelled outwards in

friendships. Catholics tend to turn away from the word evangelise, or be intimidated by it, so I think we need to reframe it in terms of friendship.”

Dr Roper believes that if Catholics come to understand that our acts of friendship are acts of missionary discipleship, it could be transforming for parishes. “It can be life-giving to know that all of the hard work that you’re doing, which has never had any light shone on it, is God’s work.”

For Dr Roper, it is now time that, as Catholics and as Church, we work out how to engage people. Diocesan Assemblies are part of the way forward, part of the journey towards living synodally.

“It’s my heart’s desire that the assembly will light a spark for the average Catholic in an average parish, who perhaps is now feeling burdened and unhappy because we’ve lost so many brothers and sisters in our gatherings, in our worship, yet Pope Francis asks us ‘to be joyful’. I hope this Diocesan Assembly will help us to reignite our response to our baptismal call — we’ve got our relationship with Christ, we’ve got our faith, but sometimes we need a spark.”

MUSICIAN AND COMPOSER GEN BRYANT NOT WAITING ANYMORE



Late last year, musician and composer Gen Bryant wrote a song which still resonates strongly with her today. “I think I almost wrote it as a challenge to myself; it’s called ‘What am I waiting for?’ It’s a call to speak up, and rise up, and not just talk about things, but to do something about whatever it is that we are passionate about.”

Like many of us, Gen spent a lot of time during recent COVID-19 lockdowns ‘waiting’ and says now that we have this ‘newfound freedom’ we need to make the most of it.

Gen plans to debut ‘What am I waiting for?’ at the Diocesan Assembly on 15 February, where Gen, Sarah, Nicole, Monty and Ashen (four of the 18 GB Team Members), will join Sandhurst parishioners to worship, celebrate our faith and connect with each other. Gen says the GB Team is excited, “The idea of gathering the whole Diocese together is very special and we are all looking forward to the day.”

“We really hope the Assembly is a very positive experience. It’s another step forward in bringing people and different communities together, whether it be parish and school, people from different areas of the Diocese, or young and old,” says Gen.

It’s hard to imagine Gen ‘waiting’ during lockdown. She has been using her unique gifts purposefully in Youth Ministry for 18 years. It all started when she was invited to be the Cantor at her local parish when she was sixteen.

“That was a turning point for me; it gave me a deeper involvement in my local church and also really built my self-confidence,” reflects Gen. “It was such a beautiful and gentle way to explore my love of music and also to understand how music connects us to the Mass and how my presence there was making a difference.”

As cantor at her parish Mass, Gen felt a connection with God and with people in her parish. “I felt a strong sense of connection and belonging, and I wanted to share that with others, that sense of community and faith. I could see that music is an integral part of connecting us together, no matter our age, or our culture, or background,” says Gen.

Gen could also see that there was a disconnect between young people’s participation at school Masses and at parish Masses. When she was in Year 12, Gen formed a Liturgical Ensemble at her school which she enjoyed so much that she volunteered to continue with it after finishing school. Eventually she was employed by the school for five years where, together with others, she built up a strong Liturgical Music culture.

Gen says her journey with Sacred Music was enriched by studying for a Bachelor of Music at Australian Catholic University (ACU). “It was a beautiful programme. I was part of the St Patrick’s Cathedral Choir, so every week I would walk through the Cathedral in red robes with a stack of books and sing Gregorian Chants with five- or six-part harmonies, all sight-read on the spot. Then, in the same weekend I would play contemporary music in a band at Mass, then sing as a cantor accompanied by an organ at my parish Mass, as well as sing with a Youth Choir. So, I had a huge range of first-hand experience

with a range of Sacred Music. I think there is a place for it all, and I love connecting with the different forms it takes.”

Gen now describes her music as ‘Contemporary Christian’ music. Initially she aimed to create ‘positive message music’. She explains, “I didn’t want it to have an agenda; I just wanted to be putting positive messages out to the world to encourage and inspire people.” Gen says she hopes to reach people from all walks of life, irrespective of their beliefs. “I’m trying to connect with young people regardless of their faith; I’m from a Catholic background, so that definitely comes across in my music, but I hope my music is the type of music which speaks to everyone.”

When she is composing music, some songs just come very naturally to Gen. “I remember writing ‘Send Us Out’. I had been thinking about a psalm – ‘The Lord is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts ... [Psalm 28:7]. It kept rolling around in my head. It was speaking to me at the time. I was sitting with different verses and kept picking my guitar up.”

Gen says that she often finds writing a song might only take thirty or forty minutes. “Sometimes I leave it for a while, even for months, and then, when I pick it up, or listen to the voice memo, it will just shock me – I’m hearing it in a completely different way and it feels like it isn’t even my own words, but they are words that I needed to hear at that time. Sometimes I can’t even remember writing a song; it is surreal.”

Gen says connection is key to her music. “A lot of the time when I write, it is part of my prayer and my connection with God. Often, I’ll pray either side of writing and ask God for the words and then something happens – it’s incredible,” she says.

Gen says song writing is very different from sharing her music with others, but both require connection. “Writing is more of a personal connection with myself and with God. When I’m performing, I’m connecting with God, but my awareness of connecting with others is heightened. It’s not like you play music just as it was recorded. You’re there to connect in that moment and everything that you do might be a bit different each time because of who is in front of you and what the occasion is.”

When asked about the Australian cultural reluctance to sing and dance, Gen laughs and replies, “I believe in us! – My goal in front of a crowd is to make sure that everyone feels they are in a safe place, where they don’t feel judged, or self-conscious. Part of creating that safe place is how

you present, and how you invite people to participate. It comes back to my earlier experiences as a Cantor in my parish.”

During the COVID-19 lockdowns Gen had a lot more time to reassess her ministry. “I had time to really think about where I had come from, where I want to go, and where God wants to take this,” says Gen. “Acknowledging the incredible opportunities I have, and wanting to share that, I put a call-out for other young musicians and more hands on deck.”

Gen has been mentoring her now 18-member GB Team. “We’re not just a band, we are all-rounders. We are young people who are passionate about sharing our faith, love young people, and have a gift with music or creativity.” Gen says she is trying to provide an opportunity where GB Team members can turn ministry into something they could potentially earn a living from, and she feels very blessed.

Describing the GB Team, Gen says, “We’re from all walks of life, with a range of life experience and a range of talents, yet we all have something in common that brings us together, our faith and a mission to serve humbly and connect with young people.”

Gen recounts Pope Francis’ challenge for young people to not be photocopies. “We all need to aim to become the unique person that God created us to be,” says Gen. “I’m just one person who has found my gift and is sharing it with others. Today young people feel a lot of pressure because we see things online and compare ourselves to others. Many young people look for obvious gifts – art, music, sport – and many feel that they aren’t good at things, but it’s important to look for other gifts, the ability to be a wonderful friend, a caring person who sees someone else’s struggle, the gift of being a good listener.” Through the GB Team Gen hopes that young people have a chance to understand that we are all unique with our own story and our own gifts.

Gen says sometimes she wonders if she is getting too old for youth ministry, but she thinks there is a place where older adults and younger adults can accompany young people. Having said that, Gen says, “Young people need to have role models who are closer to their age, who have a closer experience of life,” she says. “Peer-to-peer relationships in youth ministry have a place.”

In case you wanted to know:

Gen says her inspiration as a young singer songwriter was Missy Higgins and later, Audrey Assad. At a push

she admits that her 'guilty pleasure song' is Hanson's MMMBop. "It's very under-rated," she laughs.

Perhaps Gen's greatest inspiration is her faith. "I see God in all things, as creator of me and everyone that we meet, and everything that we see, so I connect to that gratitude. I see Jesus as our role model, our way to walk amongst all that God has created. I see the Holy Spirit as the source of strength to help me live the best way I can, just as Jesus did in the world that we live in. It doesn't work one without the other."

SANDHURST MISSION AND PASTORAL COUNCIL (SMPC)

After the Diocesan Assembly Bishop Shane will seek Expressions of Interest from those who feel called to become Members of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. Further information will be made available on our website on the evening of 15 February 2023.

The Preparation and Consultation Meetings for the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) were facilitated by members of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Life Team between 24 July 2022 and 13 December 2022.

Fifty-two meetings were held in local parish churches, parish and school halls and other venues across the Diocese, including two meetings that were conducted online. The Meetings were designed to be a prayerful experience for participants, providing information about the proposed SMPC; time for personal reflection and listening and dialogue in small groups; and the opportunity to give written feedback.

A total of 905 participants provided almost 1000 small group responses, the fruit of their prayerful listening and dialogue.

Overall, the proposed SMPC was well received by the people of God, as was the commitment by the bishop to broad consultation on the initiative through the Preparation and Consultation Meetings held across the Diocese. Many of the faithful also raised concerns.

You can read about these concerns and the five key themes which emerged from the consultations in the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council Preparation and Consultation Meetings Final Report, which is available on the Diocesan website.

LISTENING AND DIALOGUE NEEDS TO BE ONGOING

Ruth Lawlor says meeting with people from all over our Diocese for preparation and consultation meetings has been a wonderful privilege which has impacted her professionally and personally. She believes the consultations were an important step in 'going forth' but that they should not be the last step.

"The new SMPC will need to be committed to continuing the Listening and Dialogue cycle ... (and) will need to work actively with the people of Sandhurst to continue walking in synodality."

By Ruth Lawlor

On the evening of 13 December, Dr Chris Cotter and I sat back after the final Preparation and Consultation Meeting for the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Council and relaxed. For almost six months, we had both been visiting as many groups of people in Sandhurst as we could manage. We wanted to provide as many people as possible with the opportunity to be involved in the process. It was an exhausting endeavour, but one that we both considered incredibly important for the future of the Diocese. From our first parish and school visits in Wodonga, to the final meetings held online, we have met passionate and committed people who care deeply and shared their stories, hopes and fears with openness and courage.

One of the questions from a school group has stuck with me. The group asked a simple question, "Why did you come here?" This could be interpreted in different ways, and if I hadn't been in the room and heard the question in person, it may have come across as a negative statement. But the wonderful thing about these responses is that we have met the people who wrote them, and therefore had more context to understand what was really being asked.

These students asked if what they said mattered to the process. They wanted to know if it would have any impact; and there was an element of surprise that we had travelled to hear their thoughts in particular. This is one of the most important reminders for all of those involved in the future of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. People across the Diocese want to be involved but, so that we can make their involvement really count, we need to meet people where they are and not expect them to make the journey to us.

Many people spoke positively of their memories of past Diocesan Pastoral Councils. In sharing this, there was always a hint of fear and cynicism about what this new Mission and Pastoral Council will be able to achieve and what its long-term impact will be.

The reality is that none of us knows what is coming in the future. We have learned that over the last few years with bushfires, COVID-19 and, more recently, floods. To focus on what negative things might happen is natural and is something I regularly faced during the consultations. But on the other side, the simple fact that people still showed up to be consulted fills me with great hope.

Even in fear, anxiety and distrust, people still care enough to be involved in the process for the future. It is true we do not know what is to come, but the response from the people in the Diocese clearly reminds us that it doesn't mean we don't try. We keep moving forward. We keep reaching out to those with whom we haven't been able to consult. We work together to move forward in hope.

At times it was challenging to be faced with cynicism, disagreement and the voices of people who are unhappy with the way the process has been run. It is very clear that the Church in Sandhurst is not perfect and there is still a lot of work to be done as we journey towards synodality. It is my hope that this report may open the doors to what can come next through the Diocesan Assembly and the future Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council.

Opening those doors and keeping them open will be one of the challenges the future Council will need to address. The responses gathered from across the Diocese very clearly demonstrate the great desire to reach outwards, beyond the regular attendees. We may not have been able to consult with as wide a group of people as we desired, but that does not mean their contribution was not made. In every consultation I was able to attend, it became very clear that there is a great longing for the church to do more to reach out and to understand the lives of those who are not present in the pews.

After listening to and reading through the many responses we received, if I was to take away one thing, it is that people desire those that were not present in the meetings to have a voice in the future of the Church. The process may not have allowed for this at this time, but I have great faith that the Diocese is full of people who are looking beyond the Church door and are willing to listen and learn from those not present. The responses suggest this will be a part of the future Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Council's agenda.

Travelling around the Diocese has been, for me, a wonderful privilege. This short reflection does not do justice to how much it has impacted me, both professionally and on a personal level; to be able to meet with people and learn from them. From the beginning it was clear that the journey was an important step in "going forth" for the Diocese of Sandhurst. It is definitely not the last step.

The new SMPC will need to be committed to continuing the Listening and Dialogue cycle which has already begun. Council members will need to actively work together with the people of Sandhurst to continue walking together in synodality.



25 July 2022: Dr Chris Cotter, Director of Mission and Pastoral Life and Ms Ruth Lawlor, Coordinator of Sandhurst Youth Ministry set out to facilitate the first SMPC Preparation and Consultation meeting in Wodonga.

BISHOPS OF OCEANIA ASSEMBLE IN SUVA

Sunday 5 to Friday 10 February 2023

Over the course of the Assembly the Bishops will focus on three themes which were expressed by Catholics across the region during the Consultation Phase of the Synod on Synodality. The themes are "Care for the Oceans, Synodality, and Formation for Mission."

Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania Assembly (FCBCO) president and Assembly host, Archbishop Peter Loy Chong of Suva, said,

"It's the whole people that were consulted in the four conferences (of Oceania) and their voices are now being brought to the assembly of the bishops to endorse the document that will then be passed on to the Synod on Synodality."



CALL TO LIVE AS SIBLINGS OF CHRIS



Cardinal Michael Czerny SJ, the Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, celebrated the Opening Mass.

In his Homily he urged us to rediscover the strength of being siblings in Christ.

Reflecting on the Gospel for the day, Cardinal Czerny said that "to be salt of the earth and light of the world, we must rediscover the beautiful strength of being siblings in Christ".

"As Pope Francis reminds us in Fratelli tutti, his most recent encyclical, we are called not only to do good but to be good, to want the good of others," he said.

"If, as baptised people, we do not learn to love as children of God and live as siblings in Christ, our existence falls into insignificance, and our witness as Church becomes insipid and dull."

Cardinal Czerny concluding his homily by praying that God may "abundantly enlighten and season this General Assembly of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conference of Oceania".

Speaking after the Mass, FCBCO president and assembly host Archbishop Peter Loy Chong of Suva said he hoped that a pastoral plan for the Oceania region will emerge by the end of the week.

He said that will happen as a result of the bishops' deliberations, but also through their engagement with the document prepared on behalf of the People of God in Oceania for the Synod of Bishops for a Synodal Church – often called the Synod on Synodality.

"It's not only the bishops that's deciding or whose voices are being heard," Archbishop Chong said.

"It's the whole people that were consulted in the four conferences (of Oceania) and their voices are now being brought to the assembly of the bishops to endorse the document that will then be passed on to the Synod on Synodality."

He said he also hopes that the Federation becomes better organised as it moves into the future.

"Today is important to the Federation of Bishops Conferences of Oceania, because it begins what I'm calling a new page in how we organise ourselves for God's mission in the region," he said.

"We want to end the assembly with a very clear mission that the next bishops' executive council will take forward."

A CHALLENGE TO EMBRACE SYNODALITY



Sr Nathalie Becquart XMCJ, an undersecretary of the Holy See's Synod of Bishops General Secretariat, addressed the Assembly on Tuesday, challenging the Bishops to walk synodally.

"The Church is the same as the beginning, but has taken shape in different ways according to the context, history, what we are living. It is a dynamic vision really rooted in the Trinitarian God," she said.

In helping set the scene for synodality, not solely in the context of the current process preparing for the Synod of Bishops for a Synodal Church, Sr Nathalie explained that "we don't learn synodality in a book, or with a beautiful academic presentation".

"It's learning by doing," she said. "It's about living the Church in the world of today, in our concrete situation, with all the challenges.

"It's about really growing in the sense of synodality in the journey of the Church."

In light of some concerns that synodality is a novel concept, Sr Nathalie explained that it is rather a "dynamic vision of the Church in history, the realisation of the Church in history as communion in mission".

"And we know, and if we look back to the history of the Church, you have seen that,"

Sr Nathalie conceded that the path of synodality – of walking together as the People of God – is not always wide and straight.

"We are a community all together as a body, and we are relearning that, and it's really not easy. It's full of challenge," she said.

"But we know that Jesus Christ is with us and is calling us to do this journey."

NEW ERA OF CHRISTIAN MISSION TO BE GROUNDED ON RETURN TO GOSPEL

Columban missionary priest, Fr Frank Hoare spoke on formation for mission – a key issue that emerged from the churches of Oceania for the Synod on Synodality's consultation phases and also one of the three central tenets of the Synod.

He saw, through the publication of the Synod's working document for the continental stage, Enlarge the Space of Your Tent, that the focus is on mission.

"It emphasises listening, welcome, inclusion. No one is to be excluded," Fr Hoare said.

"The tent is the space of communion, the place of participation and the foundation for a mission."

Fr Hoare said an emerging challenge to mission in Oceania is the shortage of priests, or at least the shortage of local priests, calling it a "silent earthquake".

He said some people look to blame globalisation, consumerism, secularisation, radical individualism, moral relativity, the media or other things for that predicament, but "the Church's own sins and weaknesses also contribute to this silent earthquake".

Fr Hoare proposed that "a new era of Christian mission will be grounded on a return to the Gospel message" and a simplification of some of the Church's structures.

"The Holy Spirit is the instigator of the mission and helps us to recognise the signs of the times," Fr Hoare said.

Tuesday's (7 February 2023) program concluded with an inculturated Fijian Itaukei Mass at a local parish, followed by a cultural performance of song and dance.



CLOSER TO HOME ...

SANDHURST YOUTH TO ATTEND WORLD YOUTH DAY IN PORTUGAL

Sandhurst Youth Ministry is going to World Youth Day (WYD) and we couldn't be more excited. Expressions of interest are invited from young adults aged 18-35 to join the pilgrimage from 29 July to 11 August 2023.

The pilgrimage group will experience the World Youth Day celebrations, including festival events, gatherings with young Catholics from around the world and the Final Mass with Pope Francis.

After World Youth Day, we will enter a retreat in Avila, Spain, where pilgrims will have a chance to reflect on their experience.

The Diocese of Sandhurst and Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd are both offering significant sponsorships to pilgrims who attend WYD.

For parish-based pilgrims, the Diocese is offering half of the pilgrimage cost. Catholic Education Sandhurst will operate under their usual funding model where CES Ltd pays a third, the employing school pays a third and the pilgrim pays the remaining third. These sponsorships do not cover additional costs such as travel insurance or other personal expenses. More information is available on the Sandhurst WYD website.

Expressions of Interest close on Friday 10 March, 2023.

For further information and the Expression of Interest form, please go to Sandhurst WYD website or contact the pilgrimage coordinator, Ruth Lawlor, with any questions.

PROJECT COMPASSION LAUNCH

SHROVE TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY
11.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

Join us in Hargreaves Street Mall, Bendigo at the official Diocesan Launch of Project Compassion.

Join us for free pancakes as you enjoy entertainment by local students, followed by the commissioning of Project Compassion School and Parish Representatives by Bishop Shane Mackinlay.

PROJECT COMPASSION - FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS

For each of the six weeks of Lent, thousands of Australians come together in solidarity to help end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

Caritas Australia helps over 1 million people in Australia and overseas every year - walking alongside those in crisis.

This year, Project Compassion is built around the theme of 'For All Future Generations'. This theme asks us to reflect on the great "yes" that Mary said when the angel told her that she was to become the mother of Jesus. She freely accepted a unique place in the history of the human family. The great prayer she shared with her cousin Elizabeth says 'all generations will call me blessed.' Her yes is 'for all future generations.'

During Lent, we are invited to take up the call to fast, pray and give alms. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the many crises that have struck the world over the past 12 months mean that many communities are in great need of your support.

PALM SUNDAY GATHERING BENDIGO 2 APRIL

Palm Sunday provides an opportunity for people of faith and good will to gather To promote Bendigo and Australia as a welcoming and just community; calling on our parliament to replace cruel practices of exclusion and detention with a compassionate and supportive welcome to those who flee to us for sanctuary.

There has been some significant improvement in the prospects for asylum seekers and refugees since we gathered last year, but there are still thousands of refugees trapped in a limbo of temporary protection with no clear indication of a fair, just and compassionate pathway to permanent residence and citizenship.

There is also no indication that the Federal Government has a clear plan to increase the refugee and humanitarian intake to make a fair contribution to addressing the world wide pain that refugees of war and famine are suffering.

If you would like to help plan an impactful and enjoyable Palm Sunday Gathering call 0419 015 696.

CARITAS AGENCIES RESPONDING TO EARTHQUAKE IN TURKEY AND SYRIA

Caritas Turkey and other Caritas agencies are responding to a series of powerful earthquakes in southeast Turkey (officially known as Türkiye) and Syria, where thousands of lives have been lost and the death toll increases by the hour. It is expected that the death toll will increase up to eightfold in the coming days and weeks as more victims are found in the rubble.

Entire buildings have collapsed on both sides of the border, leaving thousands more injured, trapped or homeless in the bitter winter cold and freezing rain.

“This earthquake will have a long-term impact on people’s lives. People have lost their lives, their homes, and their livelihoods. The impact will last not for days or even months, but for years,” said Homeline Duliere, CAFOD’s Syria Crisis Response Manager.

In Turkey’s south, poor internet connectivity and damaged roads have hindered efforts to assess the damage and respond in the worst-hit areas. The epicentre of the quake, Gaziantep, is also home to half a million Syrian refugees.

Syria is nearly at breaking point after 12 years of war, extreme poverty and a recent cholera outbreak. Vital infrastructure like hospitals, schools, utilities and water and sanitation systems have been damaged or reduced to rubble. The economy is in tatters, with more than 90 per cent of the population living in poverty.

“We haven’t seen an earthquake of this magnitude for a long time, and it’s already having a catastrophic impact on vulnerable families. People already had limited access to water and food. Millions of people have been displaced inside Syria.

So far, all Caritas Turkey staff have been reported as safe, however, Caritas Turkey offices in Anatolia have collapsed and are now inaccessible. Our partner Caritas Turkey and other Caritas agencies on the ground are coordinating with local authorities and other organisations to see how they can best assist. Your generous support can help provide emergency relief to help families recover and rebuild from disaster.

To donate and provide much needed support:-
Visit: caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/turkey-and-syria-earthquake

Or telephone: 1800 024 413

CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP

Our Lady of Good Counsel Charismatic Prayer Group invites you to participate in the Lenten program ‘Triumph’. Join them on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 1:30 p.m. at St Joseph’s Church, Quarry Hill. Personal prayer support is available for those in need.

KEEP UP TO DATE

If you would like to keep up to date with the latest news from the Diocese of Sandhurst, check out on:

our website:

www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/news

Or

Facebook Page -

<https://www.facebook.com/CatholicDioceseOfSandhurst/>

Or

Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/catholic_diocese_of_sandhurst/

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