

## **Synthesis of Insights – Narrative Consultation**

***The Narrative consultation was conducted with various groups throughout the Diocese including Women and the Australian Church, Australian Reforming Catholics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministry Group, Parent Meetings (Catholic Schools), Clergy and School Principals.***

***The following is a synthesis of comments that were made at these meetings in relation to what the Synod Statements “look like” and “mean” to the people of the Diocese.***

Women are essential to have at mass – women are the carriers of the faith. It is women who set the climate of faith in the home. Women are stimulators of spirituality.

While the institutional church has many challenges, the bond is too strong to break – I just can't give up being Catholic. If I was to leave the church I would be walking out on myself.

### **Synod Statement Reflection Questions**

<b><i>Synod Statement One: Integrating Faith and Life</i></b>
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***We, the people of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, strive to live as a communion whose mission is both to deepen its faith in Jesus Christ, and to live and proclaim God's message of transformation and hope in changing and challenging times.***

#### ***Summary of Responses to questions for reflection***

- Gods love for us send us out to others
- Communion is “being in” a relationship with others: schools and parishes, people in the parish, priests and the people
- Do “we the people” see and respond to the call to go out to others, or do we live an individual and personal faith
- How do we capture the hearts of people to inspire them to deepen their faith and go out and proclaim
- We are catholic – we don't “do” catholic
- Transformation is endless, open to the spirit in our lives, not just a one time event
- We need personal accountability for change- .interiorisation
- Relationship with Christ, not purely a devotional dimension
- We need a better “marketing machine” to help others to understand the good (hospitals, schools, SVP, caritas) we do.
- Proclaiming proudly to youth a message of hope enables the personal transformation of society

- Assisting all to articulate their values so that they have the resilience to live in “changing and challenging” times
- Creating and strengthening our sense of community to create a hope filled community so that we can become Christ’s hands and eyes
- Vibrancy – sense of contributing
- Many people in parishes are looking for what they can get, not give – need more of a mission focus
- Challenge to authentic hospitality
- Inclusion – youth, elderly, multicultural – opportunities for all, provide experiences, language and action
- Communion people centred in the Eucharist but move beyond it real possibility of transformation – hope and change in the world
- Challenging times – busyness of the world, often what deepens our relationship are the crisis/ difficult times that draw us together
- Communion – challenge is how do you reach people who don’t see themselves as part of the communion
- Opportunities to reinforce Christ is at the centre of all we do
- Finding Christ in ourselves and each other in our Catholic community – a lot of illusions in life
- Communion- agencies in the church need to speak one language – support not compete
- The message of joy seem to be lost when articulating communion
- As a statement it has to be personally accepted – is it an ideal to which we strive (church always in crisis/accords with human nature – we need a challenge)
- Look at all in terms of “we” – discussion/reflection, belonging, Jesus people, being bound I Jesus Christ, being in the presence of people who visibly express their faith, providing challenge.
- It is to be like Jesus – living in changing and challenging times. Jesus lived in times that were challenging. We are gifted with our life in these times, the message is still challenging now.
- We need to have a rite of passages for people making an adult commitment to the church. Confirmation at 8 years of age does not satisfy this. We need something like the Jewish Bah mitzvah, a rite of passage.
- Radical inclusivity is the challenge of the times
- Faith is deepened by reading widely
- Communion - is about understanding not tolerating, being in communion as opposed to just being together
- Stopping, listening, waiting are in our aboriginal tradition. Where is that now? We need to reclaim this tradition and develop an awareness of the things around us.
- We are not selling something – we just want people to know that God loves them. We overcomplicate the message
- There is so much brokenness – we are not totally together. We are fragmented, to offer a message of transformation and hope we need to offer that message that we offer real transformation in Christ, you can have a new life, you can have love and forgiveness. There are too many barriers for people to come to God. The church can present itself as “so high up” – we can be unapproachable.

- “Communion” is about already having something in common, common language, common understanding
- “Deepening our faith” – we don’t do it enough – prayer, study, broadening our minds
- Human frailty needs to be part of the communication – admitting our frailty
- In aboriginal spirituality communion is part of life – aboriginal spirituality is an all encompassing communion – all created things are in relationship with each other, there is an interconnectedness with everyone and all creation
- When you are busy in a family its very hard to see beyond your own family and to be an example of Jesus
- We live our family mission in everything we do – the way that we walk our children to school, in the way that we attend sport, in the way that we are with each other. Everything we do is an example of our faith; we are a witness in all our everyday activities. We live in a covenant community we have a strong faith life as a family and as a community– in our prayers and the way that we approach life events, there is a strong faith dimension of our lives which helps us put everything we do in the context of mission
- There are simple things that we do everyday which reflect our faith – for example helping a stranger, these are the things that Jesus calls us to do
- There was a comment from one of the parents (a regular church goer) that she had never thought of her life like that, she does good things and wants her children to be good people but never thought of that as “being catholic” or that having a relationship with her faith life
- Going to mass is important –, because that’s a part of being catholic, it’s what we do. It’s what we have always done. It always gives us– a sense of peace.
- Mass is not about what you get out of it but what you put into it – it’s about being there for the community.
- Having religious icons/symbols around the house is a good way to remind us of our faith, they may prompt prayer and a reminder that God is with us
- How do we tap into and honour the spiritual side of everyone
- It’s vital for the church to engage with youth. Jesus is the attraction, and his messages are relevant.
- Young people connect by doing. At St Leo’s they have a “street retreat” – this involves taking kids on an experience into the city to see areas of disadvantage and the great working being done by organisations like the Matthew Talbot hostel.
- The board members expresses that they are not sure if the young people connect this sort of work with their faith, they are not clear on why we may do this as Catholics
- It’s a powerful witness for young people to do what we talk about
- Transformation and Hope – when they participate in social justice activities, they are doing great work which does have an impact on the kids – they are transformed when their eyes are opened to this

experience (eg soup kitchen). They are doing great work but they don't connect with faith, Jesus.

- Transformation requires a "doing"
- Reflection on the gospel and things happening in life – we need it, it does make me reflect. We need to make practical links to bring the gospel into the world

### **Synod Statement Two: Engaging and Participating**

***We, the people of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, strive to live as a communion of vibrant Eucharistic communities, seeking to welcome the giftedness and value of each person as we journey and grow in our Christian discipleship, and as we contribute to building the unity of the Body of Christ***

#### ***Summary of responses to questions for reflection:***

- We have to understand what we mean by Eucharist – is it just communion or is it more
- Two parents reported the impact of attending a high school mass where all the students are expected to participate and sing – that made it very meaningful
- When school students attend mass often they have no idea what to do or how to behave – could the parishioners attending mass support and teach them in some way, to sit with the kids, to make a connection
- Vibrant Eucharist is when I feel connected – I don't think people feel connected when they come to mass
- Its important for the priest at mass to be connected to the people, to feel like he is engaged and wants to be there
- There was concern that our priests work so hard that sometimes they are tired when it comes to saying mass
- The presider of the mass is critical even though we are all engaged in the liturgy
- When we change things we are not very good at preparing people for change
- Sometimes we feel that the parish is priest centred with activities based around their availability – this is not a reflection on the priest but on how much they have to do
- It is wonderful to have the priests in school and for them to spend time with the children. This could help vocations if children have contact and get to know their priests and other religious.
- We are proud that our school (which is a Eucharistic community) has so many types of students, some with behavioural problems that have not been accepted at other schools
- There is inclusivity and diversity and acceptance
- There is transparency about school results, issues at the school. Things are not swept under the carpet; they are not into blame or excuses

- Street retreat – starts with mass, that mass is linked to the street
- Having young people there and seeing them contribute as part of the celebration
- Children singing and the connection of older and younger people
- People empowered to participate
- Making it accessible and being realistic
- Being emotionally engaged
- Vibrant Eucharist is when the priest makes a connection – he makes you feel that you are important, that the church is connected
- Story telling is vital to good Eucharist
- We need to “offer” the mass
- It needs to be accessible – why are we singing responses in Latin?
- Tuesday morning mass is vibrant (about 12 people) – the people that are there know the responses and they “belt” them out. Excellent homily (Fr David Ranson) it is multilayered and accessible, gets you thinking. It makes me change.
- Homilies don’t need to be complex, just heartfelt and genuine
- To “live eucharistically” is more than liturgy. It is deeply influenced and missioned by community as an organism, not an organization
- Need to define the word “Eucharist” as thanksgiving
- A global church- hospitality to priests from other countries – respect and appreciation
- Its sometimes noisy and uncomfortable being open to new families/members
- Social justice aspects of living Eucharist – accept these challenges
- Vibrant - People caught up in the “spiritual moment”
- Sense of identification with church – not necessarily with the Eucharist specifically
- “hospitality” is the key
- Open rather than closed shop is the key to engagement
- Communion – what does this look like at the school door, at enrollment time, in the school/parish relationship
- The family meal – symptomatic for the issue
- Accepting people where they are at – and bringing them home
- Schools help to build vibrant Eucharistic celebrations
- Families buy into the belief that Jesus gave the Eucharist at the last supper to be remembered. They don’t buy into how it is generally remembered in some parishes each weekend
- Important to name and discover the gifts of the community
- Have structures in place to develop leaders in schools through to parish in ministries and to discover the gifts of students, staff and parish members
- Acts 2 – early Christian community
- Jn 10:10 giftedness – good model of any (but especially catholic) education
- Eucharistic communities – we have grown in our understanding in our Diocese about Discipleship
- Images : active engagement in various parish ministries, making a link between the Eucharist and the lives of the community, evident when

- catechists meet and share experiences- co-operation, sharing, understanding
- God's hospitality – supporting families, all welcome without discrimination
  - Definition of vibrant – colour, movement, maybe wrong impression
  - Maybe engaging would be a better term – meditating, praying, quietness, intimacy
  - On the release of Vatican II religious orders had “community discussion.” This is when things really started to change. The vision of what Jesus was about unfolded. These discussions created a wonder that wasn't there before
  - Young people really enjoyed the question and answer session. They had the chance to ask their questions.
  - We need to have forums where various groups can express their concerns – by that we mean all groups. These help us to grow in faith and confidence
  - More social justice talks
  - Feel that in the modern church the fundamentalists are more vocal than the progressives
  - We can't take the message of transformation and hope lightly. Forgiveness is complex
  - If you don't support communities that are communities, we can't be vibrant
  - There are many issues which are still “big” issues for the church – they are non issues for society and the church seems out of step, for example the equality of women and the acceptance of homosexuals. These are non issues in society and the church does not seem relevant to young people when it has not moved with these issues
  - To be relevant we need quality interpretation of scripture –We don't need to come to church on Sunday to be told what the gospel was about
  - Our Eucharist is not community building
    - we don't have all the prayers on the screen
    - we don't hand out booklets for people to follow the mass
    - We don't meet and greet each other
  - Would you like to bring a new person into most of our churches to celebrate mass?
  - We are not building community around our Eucharist.
  - It's important that people are appreciated for their contribution(ARC)
  - It's a Eucharist where everyone is welcomed, where people are involved, where the readings are read with meaning, when the prayers of intercession come from the community. Where people are actually encouraged to come forward and receive the Eucharist, not when it's about making distinctions.
  - It's important for us to keep in mind that small things can be off putting to people
  - Sacraments are really important – they are an important part of people wanting to be Catholic – the challenge is for our sacraments to be

- inclusive, to recognise the desire of people who want to participate, and to acknowledge their unconscious desire for Christ
- The church should be responding to peoples hunger to be part of the Body of Christ – to be part of the church
  - How do we include how we celebrate God in our aboriginal culture in our liturgy?
  - Communion – new things come and go, what is the symbolism/ welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Where are the Australian symbols in our churches – they are very European. What is there to welcome an indigenous person?
  - Where are the symbols in our churches for young people, what speaks to them?
  - Relationships – Jesus was a relational, inclusive person. Incredibly attractive to people. *How am I living my life? How do I do the things I do?*
  - If I am in relationship with Jesus I feel the need to connect to my family, community.

### **Statement Three**

Making it Ok to be a catholic – can you tell people why you are helping them?

Showing by example

The challenge to be “Christ like”

We have to ask “are we Catholics apart from mass on Sunday”

Expressing gospel values in our day to day life

Not enough time for reflection

We need to not be so hard on ourselves. We don’t need time to live our faith – we already do it. We don’t need to take on more; we already live as Christ now.

Living the example, putting it out there, when you feel comfortable

Jesus lived very simply; people get caught up in the brand – is it really about Jesus or about religion

Example at WYD people noticed what “Catholics” are like – they were friendly, happy, respectful and people noticed.

Reach out – an example of this is year 12 mass.

## **Synod Statement Three: Reaching Out**

***We, the people of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, sharing in the Mission of Christ, strive to reach out to all. We are called to give generously: serving those in need; seeking peace and justice; caring for creation and boldly proclaiming Christ present in the world.***

### ***Responses to questions for reflection***

- Year 13 retreat – youth experiences
- “boldly” not necessarily out there evangelical, but something different, the “x” factor
- Using the story of the founding charism of the school, parish to live the mission of Christ through the lens
- That is the mission – self giving, not just donating money and time
- A movement of the heart – its in the small things that we boldly proclaim Christ present in the world
- Caring for creation challenge can draw other gifts forward from the Body of Christ
- Continual creation – God creates all the time in our relationship with each other
- Ecological conversion- caring for creation brings about – peace, justice, food for the hungry, clothing the poor, shelter etc
- Taking the call seriously “it is hard not to accept second best”
- Reaching out begins with the individual, not tokenism
- All of the values – giving, serving etc are all about relationships
- Listening to silent families and individuals – the “out crowd”
- “they will know we are Christian by our love”
- Boldly proclaim – bravely question, counter cultural
- Boldly means “come out” as Catholics
- What is visible about the churches response to creation?
- People see relevance in giving and sharing
- Outreach is a positive message (particularly for youth)
- Outward demonstration is something that people see and like to be involved with.
- Our parishes don’t promote caring for the ecology.
- Public voice – we are not making it known. We have to be more outgoing
- We are not taking on challenges like homelessness
- Because of what has happened in the church we need to be taking these on at a local level – the parishes need to take it on. We can’t just leave it up to the Bishop
- Young people see church as irrelevant, we need to get them to do something, participation is the key
- Young people need to feel like they are making a difference
- There is a place for home church – small group gatherings. We need to train people to lead meaningful prayer, to lead services

- Maybe an after school mass in someone's home – forming small communities