

The Synod So Far

The first phase of the Synod has concluded, whereby the feedback received from over 6000 consultations with parishes, schools, clergy and Curia staff has been synthesised into three Synod Statements. These statements were developed at our Synod gathering in June and finalised in August by a working party. The Synod Statements represent the vision of the people of the Diocese of Broken Bay for their future.

Presented in this brochure, along with the Synod Statements, are some reflections which may provide insight as to some of the terms used in the statements, and some questions that may be used for discussion so that the statements can be applied in a variety of contexts.

Now that we have the statements we enter the next phase of synod consultation. We recognise that some of these statements or even parts of them are already being realised by people, groups and communities in the Diocese. There are places where this vision is already a reality.

Tell us how you're realising the Synod Statements...

If you think that your school, parish, organisation or group is already living the vision of one of the Synod Statements we want to know.

Over the months of October and November 2011 we invite submissions from parishes where they believe the Synod Statements (or parts thereof) are already being realised in their communities. Whether it is a St Vincent de Paul group, adult formation classes, a school with a great social justice program or anything at all! Submissions can be made in writing or on line.

Following these submissions (dependant on numbers) a selection of these groups will be identified for more "in depth" consultation. This consultation will take place in February/March 2012. All submissions will be acknowledged and will form part of the product of the Synod.

Go to www.dbb.org.au/synod to find out more and fill in the online submission form (forms can also be collected from parish offices).

Submissions should be with the Synod Office by 30 November 2011.



DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY



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SYNOD

For more information about the Synod visit www.dbb.org.au/ourdiocese/synod
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DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY
SYNOD

The people of Broken Bay's vision for the future

integrate
faith & life

engage and
participate

reach out



integrate faith & life

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.



engage and participate

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.



reach 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.



Reflection on the key terms in the statement...

Though community is a relationship between people that we build and cultivate on our own initiative, communion is a graced-reality that we receive in the Holy Spirit, the bond of love between Father, Son and Spirit in whose image we are made. As disciples of the Risen Christ, open to the life of God growing ever more deeply within us, we strive, not simply to become a social community but rather those who enter into a much larger mystery of relationship that is both a divine gift and a human challenge. Communion is something we receive in the Spirit yet it calls forth from us attitudes of heart and mind, choices and actions that go beyond our own limited vision in order that something larger than ourselves might become realised. This spiritual bond between us, to which we are committed, underscores our identity and orients all our activity. It places all that we do in our life together at the service of manifesting God's life in our world. It transcends our differences and our limitations; it unites us even in the presence of misunderstanding and conflict.

Our Spirit-given communion with one another, by virtue of our baptism, becomes the means by which we touch the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst, for as Jesus himself has said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Therefore, it is in the deepening experience of communion with one another that our faith in Jesus Christ develops (cf. 1 John 1:3). It grows as we find in him the fulfilment of our desire for a fully human life (cf. Mark 8:29). We follow him, allowing his Word to find ever more deeply a home within us (cf. John 14:24), and so grow more and more in his likeness by a life fashioned by love (cf. Ephesians 3: 14-21).

The life of Jesus, present now in the communion we share with another, in his Word which shapes our life, and in sacramental celebration, is the source of our joy and our confidence. It is the source of our hope (1 Pet 1:3) as those who bear good news to those with whom we live and work: that in Jesus the world has been made anew, full of possibility and promise, graced. With him, we are those who celebrate what has already occurred in him and we are those who both work for now and long for the realization in the future all that has been given us through him for the life of the world in all its giftedness and fragility.

Something to think about...

1. How have we experienced in our common activity the signs that something larger than ourselves is coming into being, drawing others to experience the life we ourselves enjoy as we celebrate Christ's presence in our midst?
2. In our own context what assists or hinders the experience of communion with one another?
3. What pastoral possibilities emerge as we deepen our appreciation of the sense of communion for understanding the mission of the Church in our own particular context?
4. What are those initiatives we have engaged or might further develop that assist others to deepen their encounter with Jesus and to grow in their discipleship of him through the communion we seek more and more to become?
5. Given our specific situation, how do we become a more transparent sign in our world of the hope that we celebrate because of what has been given us in Christ?
6. How can we 'read the signs of the times' more carefully so that we can be adaptive and responsive to the challenges provided us in the current time?

Reflection on the key terms in the statement...

The Eucharist is at the heart of our identity as a Catholic communion. It is the source and summit of Christian life. This is because of the belief that Eucharist makes present the defining event in Christian faith. As one ancient dictum notes, "The Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church." Therefore for all involved in church, in all its various aspects (parish life, outreach, education, social welfare) all that they do flows out from their call to mission given to them in the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist that we both bring to mind and make present the central mystery of our discipleship of Christ – his own self-emptying-become-a self giving so that life in abundance might be shared for the world. It is into this mystery of sacrificial love, redemptive of the world's brokenness, that our discipleship of the Risen Christ impels us. Even if circumstances might inform how and when the Eucharist is celebrated in our own particular ecclesial context, the Eucharistic mystery cannot but shape our identity and the way in which we form our life together.

Built on the foundation of the Eucharist, our life together becomes a celebration of the implications of the mystery of which the Eucharist a sign and symbol. We seek to be places of welcome and places of care and reverence for one another, in which community structures and processes cultivate the experience of communion. Thus, we seek to build communities known for their common commitment and collaboration. Every member is to be respected in such a way that their contribution to the common life might be truly encouraged. Discernment of the gift they bring to the community is an essential means for facilitating their experience of inclusion. This presents as an essential expression of leadership so that as many as possible in the community may enjoy both the experience of belonging and the sense of contributing to the building up of the life of the community whether this be liturgically, administratively, or pastorally. In this regard the pastor, especially, is to be "a man of communion" facilitating dialogue, co-operation and communication. In particular, each community bears the responsibility of building up the experience of communion with all other Christians in sound and creative ways. As the late pope John Paul II wrote, Jesus' invocation that they may be one (John 17:21) "is, at one and the same time, a binding imperative, the

strength that sustains us, and a salutary rebuke for our slowness and closed-heartedness. It is on Jesus' prayer and not on our own strength that we base the hope that even within history we shall be able to reach full and visible communion with all Christians."

Something to think about...

1. Where do we see signs of Eucharistic love animating the life of our community?
2. How do we reverence and celebrate such indications?
3. How does our celebration of the Eucharist, itself, become a means of making our communion with one another transparent and how does it nurture the bond between us?
4. What processes do we engage to discern the gifts present in the community and how do we encourage their exercise.
5. What forms of leadership assist the engagement of such diversity of charisms in the community? Which forms inhibit this? What are the different ways such leadership is exercised in the life of the community?
6. How do we nurture our ecumenical outreach to other Christians so that we might enjoy the communion with them that is possible even in the midst of our differences?

Reflection on the key terms in the statement...

The saving mission of the Risen Lord, the Christ, is one of reconciliation: to overcome the divide between God and humanity and the divide within humanity itself. It is to restore the world from its tendency toward fragmentation and alienation to the unity and communion which is its destiny (cf. Colossians 1:20). This mission breathes forth the Spirit, making us brothers and sisters to one another, such that, as the Communion we have become, we continue the same Mission. Thus, we are committed to reach out beyond the circle of Communion we enjoy to overcome the forces of exclusion and estrangement that have rendered people to the margins of society itself.

Throughout the Old Testament we see evidence of God's concern for those who by their circumstances live on the 'edge' of social life. Jesus' own words and deeds reveal the compassionate heart of God. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God as already breaking into history through his ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19.) This proclamation of the "Kingdom of God" is central to Jesus' preaching (cf. Luke 17:20-21). Jesus expressed his understanding of this new order in the parables and in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11). To follow Jesus is to enter such a Kingdom and to work for its realisation in our midst. "Go and tell John what you see and hear ..." (Matthew 11:5-6). His words pierce to the depths of our hearts and challenge our ingrained attitudes of selfishness and exclusion of others, reversing the assumptions of a world ruled by power, exploitation and greed.

Pope Benedict XVI draws our attention particularly to this unity of faith and life, in which "the usual contraposition between worship and ethics falls apart." As he expresses, "Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the love of love which they crave. Here we see the necessary interplay between love of God and love of neighbour which the First Letter of St. John speaks of with

such insistence." By working for life, not for death and violence, by upholding human dignity of all, and caring for the gift of creation, we are followers of Christ and citizens of the Kingdom. In that way we come to knowledge of the true God: "I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; Naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, In prison and you came to see me; I tell you solemnly in so far as you did this to any of my brothers and sisters you did it to me." (Matthew 25:34-37, 40)

Something to think about...

1. Who are those that live in need beyond the communion of the Christian community in our own area?
2. How do we grow as a Christian community in the appreciation of our call to reach out beyond our own circle to address those places around us where people experience isolation and estrangement?
3. What assists in the cultivation of this appreciation? What hinders it?
4. What are the implications of the sense of the Kingdom of God for current social imperatives such as ecological stewardship?
5. Beyond the initiatives that might be undertaken by individuals, how might we form a communal response to the demand to bring about social change in accord with the intent of the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus?