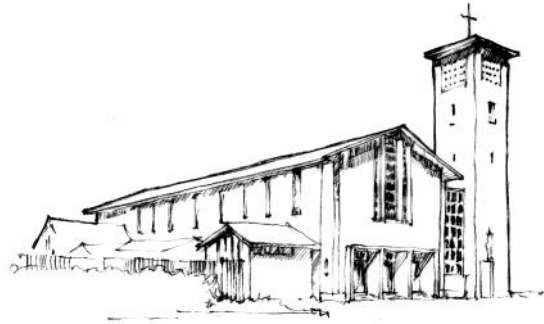


Welcome to

# St Joan of Arc Parish Haberfield



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

YEAR B 3 December 2023

## Parish Office:

97 Dalhousie St Haberfield NSW 2045

**P:** 02 9798 6657

**E:** [admin@stjoanofarc.org.au](mailto:admin@stjoanofarc.org.au)

**W:** [www.stjoanofarc.org.au](http://www.stjoanofarc.org.au)

## Office hours:

Tues, Wed, Thurs 9am - 3pm

**Parish Priest:** Fr Phillip Zadro

## Parish Team:

### Secretary:

Antonella Pesci

### Pastoral Associate:

Maria Condello

[Pastoral.Associate@stjoanofarc.org.au](mailto:Pastoral.Associate@stjoanofarc.org.au)

### Parish Safeguarding Support Officer (PSSO):

Tony Mediati

0413 481 039

[PSSO@stjoanofarc.org.au](mailto:PSSO@stjoanofarc.org.au)

## Eucharist:

### Weekend:

**Saturday evening:** 5.00pm

**Sunday:** 9.00am & 6.00pm

*(Check for changes on special Feast Days)*

### Weekdays:

**Wednesday & Thursday:** 9.00am

**Friday:** 9.15am

**Tuesday evening may be available for memorial Masses.**

## Reconciliation:

**Saturday:** 4:30pm - 4.50pm

## Schools:

### SJOA Primary:

**Principal:** Amanda Gahan

**P:** 9798 9780

### Domremy College:

**Principal:** Antoinette McGahan

**P:** 9712 2133

## Messages from Archbishop Anthony Fisher.

Recently our Archbishop has issued two documents—a Pastoral Letter “**Walking Together in Communion, Participation and Mission**”, with his reflections on the Synod in Rome in October and the goals set for the year ahead leading up to the final session of the Synod in October 2024.

The second message from Archbishop Fisher “**Assisted suicide means death to justice and dignity**” is a reflection on the sadness for the Australian community that legislation in NSW supporting Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide came into force on Tuesday last.

Both messages have been posted to our website as part of this Bulletin.

## SJA Christmas celebrations

**Our Christmas celebration is on Saturday 9th December commencing at 5pm with a bilingual Mass then dinner and later Carols in the church.**

Due to needing to provide catering details by 1st December all ticketing options closed. Please remember to bring your ticket issued either via piety store or Eventbrite for entry.



*Raffle tickets will be available on the evening of the Christmas celebration for some wonderful prizes.*

## Musicians and Singers Needed

Our SJA Christmas celebration will be held on Saturday 9th December commencing with a bilingual Mass and then Christmas Carols later in the evening. We would like additional musicians and singers for a choir. If you are a musician, singer or parent of a musician and singer and would like to be involved

**please contact Ellen O'Connor ASAP on [ellen.koconnor@gmail.com](mailto:ellen.koconnor@gmail.com)**

## Our Vision as presented in our Strategic Plan

*“...a welcoming and modern Catholic community grounded in faith and spirituality, we want to engage with and build a broader community, particularly among the young and with the families of our local Catholic school as well as providing pastoral outreach to those in need within our Haberfield community and also reach out to deliver broader social justice in our community, our nation and beyond.”*

## A Fresh Mass Setting This Advent!

To better reflect the tone and spirit of the season, our parish will be singing a **different setting** of the parts of the Mass this Advent. The 'parts of the Mass', are the musical portions of our weekly service (The 'Glory To God', 'Holy, Holy' and so on). Changing the Mass setting simply means we're giving them a fresh melody, while keeping the words intact. Traditionally, different Mass settings are used throughout the year to better resonate with different liturgical seasons and feasts.

In the season of Advent, the *Gloria* is not sung. But the other parts of the Mass will be sung using Mass Setting XVIII, a very simple mass setting which you can listen to here to prepare yourself: the *Holy, Holy, Holy* ([Sanctus](#)), the *Mystery of Faith* ([listen here](#)), and the *Lamb of God* ([Agnus Dei](#)).

So let's stir up our voices and hearts as we journey together through this special season! A melodious Advent awaits us all.



## Safeguarding Audit

St Joan of Arc has been chosen as one of 33 parishes and 7 church agencies to be audited. The required documentation has been completed. Thank you to Tony Mediati for the enormous work in preparing these documents. Some parishes are reporting needing in excess of 60 hours for two people to complete the assessment documents, so thanks Tony!!

## Nativity set

There will be a silent auction (closing 17th December) for a Nativity set. Please see sheet next to the Nativity set in the foyer to make your bid.



## COLUMBAN CALENDARS 2024

Now for sale in the Piety Store at \$10 each.

As usual, each month has a wonderful piece of artwork related to an event or feast day of that month.



## Baptisms

We welcome into the Church through Baptism this weekend

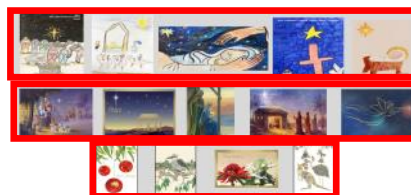
**Theodore Vincent Coote**  
**Jonathan George Coote**

## St Vincent de Paul Christmas Cards.

Packs of 10 cards are in the Piety Store now. There are 3 different design options to choose from. If you wish you can click on any card from each pack to show as an example.

**Pack A Cards \$8 per pack of 10; Pack B cards**

**\$8 per pack of 10 cards and Pack C cards \$6 per pack of 10.**



# CHRISTMAS at the Cathedral

*a festival evening at St Mary's*

**14-25 DECEMBER**

We invite the community of Sydney to come together at St Mary's Cathedral during Advent to prepare for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Festivities begin at 5.30pm with:**  
Christmas market stalls, food, fun activities for the kids and live entertainment

Use the hashtag **#ChristmasAtTheCathedral** on your social posts.

For more information, visit our website [christmasatthecathedral.org.au](http://christmasatthecathedral.org.au)



## Donations and Tax Deductibility.

Occasionally someone will ask about tax deductibility of certain types of donations. Tax receipts cannot be given except for donations to registered causes e.g. CWF, Priests Retirement Fund or Caritas. If you donate directly to CWF Appeals held in the Parish you will receive a tax receipt and will be benefiting the Parish indirectly as the Parish is required to contribute a fixed amount for each Appeal and what is given is far less than the fixed amount.

## REFLECTION

**“Stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming.”**

The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh’s poem “Advent” speaks powerfully to these weeks. The opening lines are very evocative: “We have tested and tasted too much, lover – / Through a chink too wide there comes in no wonder.” In an age that is often focused on the next experience, seeking one “high” after another, the poet invites us to recognise the desire for pleasure and to begin a more reflective time. We are invited into the “Advent-darkened room” with the penances of “dry black bread” and “sugarless tea” which will “charm back the luxury/ Of a child’s soul”. It is an opportunity to rediscover wonder and surprise in a tired and overstimulated life.

Children can teach us many lessons during these weeks. They are busy preparing their Nativity plays, carol singing and end-of-term activities. They are full of natural excitement and exuberance as they look towards Christmas. Being naturally curious and wanting to explore their world, children teach us to be more spontaneous. Parents will know how one question follows another as they discover knowledge and are fascinated by what they see around them. The poem invites us to see again, like children, “the newness that was in every stale thing” and evoke wonder and praise at the mystery of the gift around us. Already small bursts of colour begin to break into the dark world of winter as some winter flowers appear. They are hopeful signs pointing us towards new life and Christ. The poem ends, “Christ comes with a January flower.”

### Gospel Teaching

Both St Paul and St Matthew present an urgent message to us today: “stay awake”. Jesus warns us that if we are complacent, then the life of a Christian can become lukewarm. We live in a half-hearted way and are only half-alive. We may be ashamed of aspects of our lives that we wish to hide in the darkness and do not want to expose these deeds to the harsh reality of light where others may see them. Rather Advent invites us to be ready to move out of darkness into the light and live with integrity and honesty. There is no room for hidden bad practices. The early Church expected Christ to return in glory very soon after the resurrection. The Gospels communicate an urgency and a warning about living expectantly for the coming of the last days. Now, well into the third millennium, we have lost our expectation for the coming of Christ at the end of time. His promise remains that he will come to judge the living and the dead at the second coming. We can trust in the promise of eternal life and the resurrection from the dead.

While we are not as aware of the second coming, the

time of our death remains uncertain. We can hope for a long life but cannot guarantee it. We know so vividly and painfully that this is often not the case: sickness strikes, an accident happens, a tragedy occurs and life is turned upside down. It is like a burglar coming in the middle of the night and breaking into the house. The Advent readings remind us of our mortality. This season provides an opportunity to reassess our priorities and live with eyes open to wonder and the gifts we see around us. It is a good time to appreciate and thank those we love for their presence and place in our lives. Advent is a time of waiting in hope. The old will pass away. We can hope that Christ will break again into our lives to bring his gift of peace, for which so many people long today.

*The Living Word*

### Saints Days/Coming Events

Thursday	7th December	St Ambrose, bishop, doctor
Friday	8th December	the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION of the BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
Saturday	9th December	SJA Christmas Celebration 5pm Bilingual Mass followed by dinner and carols

### -SACRAMENTS-

For information on BAPTISM, FIRST RECONCILIATION, FIRST HOLY COMMUNION, CONFIRMATION, MARRIAGE, ANOINTING OF THE SICK - EUCHARIST TO THE HOUSEBOUND please visit the parish website for details.

**Recently Deceased:** Giuseppe Annetta, Ken McTaggart Colin A. Kerr, Giustino Tauriello, Fatima Taukitoku, Jose Antonio Probaos, Placido Veneziano, Fr Michael Mullins SM, Sr Joan McBride SM.

**Please note:** Names of recently deceased will remain for a 3 month period before being removed.

**Rest in Peace:** Giustino Tauriello, Antonio Nesci, Beniamino Di Pasquantonio, Antonino Di Girolamo, Giuseppe Colantuono, Michael & Mary Kayrooz and Families, Marco Monaco, Nunzia Ferrara, Angelo Testa, Salvatore Giarratano, Joe Di Marti, Mary Attard, Luciano Frisone, Elisa Procopio, Salvatore Procopio, Monika Fisi'ihoi, Domenico Nicita, Kalliammah Subramaniam, Grazia Scuderi, Saverio Mafodda, Valentina Mannino, Antonio Cardillo, Helen Bedirian, Luigino De Domeneghi, Rofayla Daoud, Michael & Mary Kayrooz & families, Rocco Delfino, Rosa Delfino, Domenico Nicita, Iolanda Caruso, Domenico Catalano, Ilario Furlan, Carmela Catania, Salvatore Catania Concetta Cardillo, Maria Oppedisano, Anna Rosa Angilletta, Cosimo Angilletta, Joe Angilletta, Frank & Immacolata Angilletta, Giuseppe Aversa, Domenico & Olimpia Spadaro, Lawrence Wong, Pietro Banno, Jack McEnally, Domenico Banno, Lucy The, Jim Tuite, Sarina Torrisi, Lattari & Aversa families, John & Moya Phillips, Mons Dino Fragiacomio, Fr Frank Furfaro & All Souls in Purgatory.

**In your love and concern please pray for the following ill members of our community:** John Kcoury, Mary Finios, Rose Uthappa, Asela Savieta, Glen Dixon, Venu Uthappa, Roberto Tramarin, Vittoria Lavecchia, Anna Attard, Rosa Santos, Elisha Lau, Aitken Family, Liz Smith, Pat Rankine, Jerry Andre, Donna Neeley, Adeline Ashing, Annelise Buda, Giovanni Luci, Stephan Ferenc, Giancarlo Buda, Mario Bianco, Jozo Tadic

In keeping with the Privacy Act names cannot be published in our Parish Bulletin without the permission of the persons themselves or their next of kin. Please specify on your Mass Envelope your intention to include the person’s name in this Bulletin or contact the Parish Office on 9798 6657



### A message from the Archdiocese of Sydney

Child sexual abuse is a crime. The appropriate people to deal with crimes are the police. If you, or anyone you know have been abused, please contact the police. Alternatively, you can contact the Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office at (02) 9390 5810 or [safeguardingenquiries@sydneycatholic.org](mailto:safeguardingenquiries@sydneycatholic.org). You may also want to speak to your Parish Priest who will be able to provide support and guidance. The Archdiocese has a legal obligation to report crimes to the police.



By helping the St Vincent de Paul Society Christmas Appeal, you will assist in two ways. At a local level, our members and volunteers

will be able to offer assistance directly to families and individuals. At a broader level, you will be contributing to the large and varied network of short and longer-term support services for people in NSW who require specialised care.

St Vincent de Paul told his followers there are no people so rich that they have nothing to receive, and none so poor that they have nothing to give. Support for this Appeal will benefit recipients, and address poverty and disadvantage in our communities.

Please use the envelopes that will be in the Church on the first weekends in December, or use this QR Code:



### Caritas Australia's Gaza Crisis Appeal

Please donate to Caritas Australia's Gaza Crisis Appeal.

You can donate online [www.caritas.org.au/gaza](http://www.caritas.org.au/gaza), via QR code below or phone 1800 024 413



Oh God,  
grant peace to your Holy Land and to  
the whole world.  
Root it deeply in the hearts of all humanity.  
For your divine peace is the peace the world cannot  
give.  
Your peace sets free all those caught in the nets of  
physical or psychological violence  
whether perpetrator or victim.  
We feel powerless as we witness the many forms of  
violence and injustice in war,  
in politics, in society, and even in individual lives.  
Oh God, fill the mighty with your Spirit of love and  
justice.  
Help us also to contribute to the establishment of  
your kingdom of peace by acknowledging and living  
according to your divine law,  
given to us for the peace and wellbeing of all  
humanity and the whole of creation.  
For that we pray, Oh God of love and faithfulness.  
We praise you and thank you for ever and ever.  
Amen.



Source: The Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion, Ecce Homo, Jerusalem

### Parish Projects update

Those present at the parish meeting on Sunday 12 November heard about the status of the proposed Site Development here at St Joan of Arc Parish. A scale model and sketches of the design at its current stage were presented and will be in the Church for a few more days. Please have a look and become get to know something of the ideas.

**Refurbishment of the Confessionals:** has commenced as you can see.



### MESSA DI RINGRAZIAMENTO (St Joan of Arc Haberfield)

Il gruppo locale del Movimento  
Cattolico del

**RINNOVAMENTO NELLO SPIRITO SANTO,**  
invita la comunita' italiana a partecipare alla  
celebrazione della Santa Messa di Ringraziamento  
celebrata da Padre Filippo Zadro.

**Giovedì 14 Dicembre 2023 alle ore 13:00 pm.**

Nella Chiesa di St Joan of Arc - 97 Dalhousie St  
Haberfield

**Tutti sono benvenuti.**

**Per ulteriori informazioni contattare:  
Albina 02 9713 8961 - Anna 02 9712 2970**

### Giving Tree

MacKillop Outreach from Rogers Avenue have again placed a Giving Tree in the Church foyer hoping for support for their work.

If you can help it would be appreciated.

*(This is a work of the St Vincent de Paul Society)*

### Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

On Sunday 10th and 17th December, there will be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament after 6.00pm Mass until 8.00pm.

This will include the opportunity for Sacrament of Reconciliation.

There will be time for personal prayer and quiet which is in short supply leading up to Christmas.

### Sacraments 2024

Details in relation to the reception of the Sacraments (Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist) are available on the parish website under Sacraments 2024. If you have a child/ren eligible for any of the Sacraments next year please complete the google form by Wednesday 20th December.



***Walking Together in Communion, Participation and Mission***  
***Reflections on the Synod on Synodality, October 2023***  
**Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

I recently returned from the month-long first assembly of the 16<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held in the Vatican from 4<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October at the behest of Pope Francis. The Synod is a representative episcopal body established by St Paul VI following the Second Vatican Council to assist the pope in better governing the universal Church.

One of the things I most valued about this Synod was the way it expressed the richness and universality of the Catholic Church. There were Catholic leaders from every region of the world, including both Latin Rite and Eastern Catholics. There were also fraternal delegates of other Christian churches.

I participated as an elected member of the Synod's Governing Council, along with four other Australian bishops, five other Australian members (three women, a priest and a layman), and four Australian facilitators and *periti* (experts). This meant Australians "punched well above their weight": there were in fact ten times as many of us at the Synod than our Catholic numbers would suggest!



***What is 'Synodality'?***

Historically, synods in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions have been meetings of bishops exercising *episcopal* collegiality and magisterium. Sometimes there were non-bishops in attendance, representing the pope or patriarchs, emperor or civil authorities, religious orders or theologians; though they did not vote, these "observers" could exercise considerable influence. For the recent assembly, however, the Holy Father invited around 450 participants, 363 of whom were voting members, and just over a quarter of these were non-bishops—clergy, religious, and lay men and women.

Since the Second Vatican Council, international synods have normally focused on aspects of the Church's

mission, on word and sacrament, or on various vocations. But this time around it was about the style and internal life of the Church. As the Holy Father acknowledged, the topic of synodality was unlikely to excite much interest in itself and might sound too self-referential—like a Hollywood movie about making Hollywood movies. Yet if synodality informs our communion, participation and mission, then it will speak to many other issues.

The language of 'synodality' is unfamiliar to most people. Its Greek roots mean *journeying together*. Pope Francis has described synodality as "an expression of the Church's nature, form, style and mission" and a place where "all can feel at home and participate." Rather than a new Church doctrine or polity, it is an ecclesial sensibility: a willingness to listen, dialogue, share, so all the faithful might assume their co-responsibility for the mission. It requires a prayerful and humble openness to the Holy Spirit being the principal protagonist.

This makes it very different to a political process in which the popular vote wins. Pope Francis insists a synod is "not a parliament or an opinion poll", nor "a convention or parlour", "nor a senate where people make deals and reach a consensus". Nor is it just about going through the bureaucratic motions of consultation and reporting. Rather it is a "spiritual event," a process of hearing the Holy Spirit speaking to the churches, through humble listening and prayerful discernment. Used as a weapon for forcing change of Church teaching or order, synodality would cease to be a true *journeying with* each other and with God.



***Synodality in Practice***

The October 2023 gathering was part of a multi-staged process with local, national, continental and universal phases. In each phase there was listening, synthesis and discernment. In 2021 individuals, parishes, convents and agencies from around our Archdiocese generously contributed submissions or participated in hearings. The

fruits of these, as from the consultations for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, were collated into an *Archdiocesan Report*. Such contributions from around the country and the world then informed the national and continental documents and assemblies, and ultimately an *Instrumentum Laboris* or working document.

That *Instrumentum Laboris* was the driving text for last month's Synod. Most of the time was divided between the three themes of *communion* (what it means to be bound as *one* in our relationship with Christ and each another as Catholics), *participation* (what it means for all Catholics to fulfil their respective roles), and *mission* (what Christ commissioned the whole Church to do). We spent roughly a week discussing some aspect of each in table groups or *circoli minori* of twelve persons.

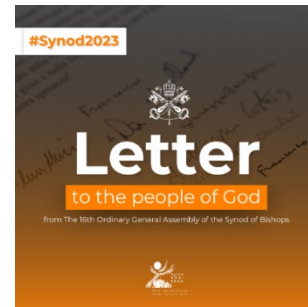
The members of each table group spoke the same language—more or less—and were assisted by an external facilitator. A secretary was appointed from among their number and a rapporteur elected. We gathered at round tables rather than the tiered seating of previous synods. Instead of facing those performing on stage or listening to people seated where we couldn't see them, we faced, heard and, by the end of the month, knew each other. I now count several bishops and lay leaders from around the world as new friends, and that is another thing I will treasure from this synod.

Matters were discussed in the table groups through a process first developed several decades ago by Jesuits in Canada and known as 'Conversations in the Spirit'. This method of communal discernment begins with Scripture and prayer, inviting the participants to sit for a while in silence and then share their interior movements, especially their feelings, with no-one contesting what they are saying. In the second round the members reflect back what they have heard in the group and what resonated with them. Only in the third round, when (time permitting) the group considers convergences and actions, divergences and questions, will there be some contest of ideas.

Thus, the emphasis of the method is on listening to and understanding each other before solving any 'issues'. That can be hard in a noisy world or one where people are divided into ideological camps. But it can be therapeutic. It can pour oil on troubled waters, getting people to stop, listen and understand before judging or arguing. Fr Anthony Lusvardi SJ of the Gregorian University recently explained that while the method helps turn down the temperature on controversial questions—at the Synod, 'hot button' issues like women's ordination, "gay rights", communion for the divorced and remarried, and celibacy—it doesn't deliver theological clarity. "It's not well-suited for careful or complex theological or practical reasoning," he explained. "Doing that requires thinking that is critical, that weighs the pros and

cons of what people say. It also requires a degree of objectivity that this method is not well-suited to provide. Sound theology needs always to ask the question, 'That may sound good, but is it true?'"

Indeed St Ignatius of Loyola was "very clear that not everything is the proper object of discernment. If something is a sin, you do not discern whether to do it or not. If you have made a commitment, you do not discern whether to be faithful to it or not. You only discern between things that are good. If whatever occurs to you in prayer contradicts what has been revealed by Jesus Christ, then it is not the work of the Holy Spirit."



### ***Weighing the opinions***

The *Adsumus* prayer from the Second Vatican Council, that we prayed each day at the Synod, invokes the guidance, teaching and unity afforded by the Holy Spirit (*Jn* 14:26). I found the following lines of the prayer particularly instructive: "Let us find in You our unity, so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right." Deep listening to each other, expressing feelings, resonating in table groups, will not always help us find what is true and right. As one eminent theologian said to me: of the many synods he had attended, this one was the humanly best but theologically thinnest.

Another challenging aspect of "Conversations in the Spirit" is deciding what weight to give the various opinions aired by those at the table. Some opinions may have some passionate supporters but not be the common view in the group; others might have overwhelming support: there was really no way of knowing from the two page reports from the 35 table groups. Some views may be half-baked, in need of nuance, or plain contrary to the apostolic tradition and the Church's magisterium. Others might be genuinely prophetic, creative adaptations of the tradition, or helpful re-formulations and actions. But the method used in this first assembly didn't really help to clarify which are which. A different method will surely be required next time around.

By the end of a month of meeting day after day from 8:45a.m. to 7:30p.m., as well as various evening events, and with only Sundays off, we were all exhausted. The Synod had already published a short *Letter to the People of God*; now it had to settle its long *Synthesis Report*. (Both can be found online.) A small team of writers synthesised hundreds of pages of table reports in a draft.

The Synod members then proposed more than a thousand *modi* (corrections). These were assessed and incorporated (or not) overnight. A new draft came only a few hours before the final vote and only in Italian. In a marathon session, it was read out and simultaneously translated. No explanation was given for why some amendments had been accepted and others not. No further amendment was possible. Electronic voting followed and all paragraphs of the document were passed overwhelmingly. But sorting through all the opinions in the *Synthesis Report* and determining which should be taken forward (and how) will be a task for the organisers of and participants in next year's second session, and ultimately for the Holy Father.



### **Hot-button Issues**

The Synod's *Synthesis Report* will not satisfy everyone. Media attention was predictably focused on 'hot-button' issues around sex and power. To be sure, Synod members expressed a range of views about some of these matters, even if there was no room for serious debate. Only about two thirds of the synod members got to make *interventions* (or short speeches) on the floor and some of these were very personal and emotional. Some expressed strong convictions on how the Church should navigate these sensitive topics. There was tension in the air at the Synod, as at our Plenary Council in Australia, if less overtly so. But while we did not always agree, the synod process did help us to 'journey together' respectfully.

There were helpful reminders that more was at stake in our Church and world than the issues of the moment or our longer-term obsessions. There was a short retreat before the Synod, pauses for reflection throughout the sessions, prayers with the Pope and Masses celebrated together—all pointing us to our higher purpose. We were all too aware of wars in the Holy Land, Ukraine, Myanmar and elsewhere. In St Peter's Basilica we prayed for peace. In the Square we prayed for refugees and migrants. In the catacombs we prayed for the persecuted Church. Near Peter's tomb we recited the creed together. The hot-button issues seemed minor by comparison.

One of the greater concerns, the Pope reminded us, is the environment. During the first week of the Synod, the Holy Father issued *Laudate Deum*, his addendum to *Laudato Si'*. In both documents he challenges attitudes and behaviours that reduce our common home the earth

to our plaything, to exploit and damage at will, in service of our interests and ideologies. He recalls that the world is given into our hands as a sacred trust, to be revered and shared, developed and handed on intact to future generations. So, too, I would suggest, we must challenge attitudes to our common home the Church—refusing to treat it as our plaything, subservient to our interests and ideologies, to be remade at will. The Church, with her Gospel and mission, is the new creation, a spiritual ecosystem, given into our hands by the Lord Jesus as a sacred trust, to be revered and shared, developed and handed on intact to future generations. So the Pope and the Synod organisers repeatedly reminded us that it is not the Synod's job to change Church teaching or order.



### **Truth versus Love?**

One topic of discussion throughout the Synod was the relationship between love and truth. The question holds a special place in my own ministry, as my episcopal motto is taken from St Paul, '*Speaking the truth in love*' (Eph 4:15). Love and truth, we know, find their perfection not in abstract philosophies or empirical studies, but in the concrete person of Jesus Christ. In Him love and truth meet. We know what it is to love when we know the One who is Truth.

Some people think love and truth inevitably conflict or that one must give way to the other depending on the circumstances. Rather than wagging a finger, the correct response to such perceived tension is the 'synodal' one of patient listening and showing people the face of Christ. That does not mean abandoning what has been revealed by God or refitting our faith and morality for the current fashions. The Synod demonstrated that we can listen to the experiences of others with genuine Christian charity and without compromising truth, accompanying those struggling to accept the Church's teaching or live it.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus was always open to the other. He encountered every kind of person and invited them into the fullness of life (Jn 10:10). But this ever-more inclusive community of faith is also called to an ever-deeper conversion (Mt 4:17). Christ offers a kingdom not of this world and promises to abide in us if we cling to Him (Jn 15:4-11). Being *included* in His family the Church requires a response from us. Go, He says, you are forgiven. Your dignity is restored. You are loved from all eternity to all eternity. So go—and sin no

more (*Jn 8:11*). No more hypocrisy of paying lip-service only to God's law (*Mt 15:8*). God may invite all sorts into the wedding banquet, but He will notice if one fails to enter into the spirit of the celebration (*Mt 22:11-13*). We must recognise the reality of sin and its devastating effects, conscious of the need to seek God's boundless mercy and forgiveness. We must "take up [our] cross and follow" (*Mt 16:24-28*).



### ***Discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying***

Throughout the Synod, the role of the Holy Spirit was continually emphasised. Some have asked how we can be sure that we actually heard the Holy Spirit amidst all the verbiage. As Pope Francis warned, the Synod must not degenerate into a parliament of opinions or into a lobbying or consensus building exercise to 'reform the Church'. How, then, can we faithfully discern between competing voices?

Important in this regard is what is known as the *sensus fidei* or supernatural appreciation of faith. Some mistakenly believe that the *sensus fidei* is simply an opinion poll of Catholics or even the strong opinion of an individual. But in its Constitution on the Church, the Second Vatican Council taught that by the *sensus fidei* "aroused and sustained by the Spirit of Truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (the magisterium),...receives the faith once delivered to the saints." It is about receiving the faith, not deciding it. And that requires participation in the life of the Church, listening to the word of God, openness to reason, adherence to the magisterium, holiness (evident in humility, freedom and joy), and seeking to build up the Church.

Discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying requires a Christological ear. The Holy Spirit is Christ's Spirit (*Jn 15:26; 19:30; 20:22*), the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit only ever says things consistent with what Christ has said in the apostolic tradition: contrary views cannot be from the Holy Spirit, as this would imply rivalry between Him and Christ. What's more, doctrine develops organically: there cannot be development in contradiction, as though the Holy Spirit said one thing in the first century, another a millennium later, and something altogether different in our time. He is the Spirit of Truth (*Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13*), reminding us of everything that comes from Christ (*Jn 14:26*). And Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (*Heb 13:8*).

Discernment, then, is the task of listening for "the still, small voice of God" amidst all the words. His is the universal call to holiness. Christ and the saints are the magnets, attracting us to the really good life, calling all to continuous conversion. The Church even extends the space of her tent to "those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith", praying for them and hearing their voices in the tradition, and to those yet to come, passing on to them the riches of that tradition.



### ***By their fruits ye shall know them (Mt 7:16)***

Providentially, during last month's Synod the liturgical calendar invited those of us of Latin Rite to celebrate Our Lady of the Rosary, the apostles Simon and Jude, and Luke the evangelist; the bishop Ignatius of Antioch, the layman Edward the Confessor, the religious founders Bruno and Francis, and the missionary martyrs John de Brébeuf and companions; Thérèse, the little flower, and her spiritual mother and fellow Church doctor Teresa of Avila; popes John the Good and John Paul the Great; and the mystics Margaret Mary and Faustina. So, we were accompanied by a great cloud of witnesses at the Synod, reminding us what the Church is for: to call sinners to salvation and all to healing and holiness in Christ, to support each one in living their personal vocations, and to unite us with and as the communion of saints. So one useful criterion for judging every Synod proposal is: *Is it likely, by God's grace, to generate more apostles and pastors, evangelists and missionaries, religious and teachers, martyrs and mystics, holy men and women, such as our Church and world so sorely need?*

The Synod on Synodality will come to its completion in October next year and so as a process, we still have some way to go. More work needs to be done to ensure a genuinely Catholic understanding of synodality, inclusion and discernment. Eschewing bureaucratic and political models, synodality can be a rich expression of the inherent unity of all members of the Church (*communion*), can catalyse the important responsibilities of all the baptised (*participation*), and can renew the divine mandate to make disciples of all nations (*mission*). I thank everyone of you in our Archdiocese for your contributions as clergy, religious, or lay faithful. I ask for your prayers for the Synod going forward, that we may be one in the faith of our ancestors, in the hope the Spirit gives, and in the love of the Father and the Son that creates and redeems us.





28 NOV, 2023

## Assisted suicide means death to justice and dignity

Daily Telegraph, Sydney



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# Assisted suicide means death to justice and dignity

**Anthony Fisher**



**T**oday is a dark day for NSW, as the law allowing euthanasia and assisted suicide comes into effect.

No doubt some will celebrate it and others bemoan it.

For, at a time when social cohesion is needed more than ever, this is a divisive law. It divides us into two classes of people: those whose lives are worth fighting for to the end and those whose lives we consider a burden to themselves and others that we will not carry.

The first group receives quality medical and psychological care, suicide prevention programs and help lines.

The latter's care involves tax-funded suicide "navigators" who'll guide them through the process of prematurely ending their life.

Today's law also divides us along other lines. Some will be able to opt out of performing euthanasia and assisting or hosting suicides. But many will not.

Faith-based nursing homes, in particular, will from today be required by NSW law to host euthanasia on their premises and to enable it in various ways.

The conscience rights of the nuns and others, whose aged-care facilities have cared for thousands of our elders, are being trampled on.

NSW Health also wants to override the professional objections of public hospital doctors by requiring them to admit as their patients people requesting euthanasia.

Those of us troubled by state-sanctioned, medicalised killing must recognise that its supporters are good-willed. They genuinely believe that this is a benevolent thing to do for someone who is suffering or a

respectful thing to allow for someone who chooses it.

But it is a radical departure from Judaeo-Christian ethics and from classical medical ethics to suppose that giving a person a lethal drug is a form of healthcare.

It's just the eliminating discomfort and distress, and ensuring choice and control at the end of life.

Ironically, the state is now providing the social choice of an early death, while restricting palliative care.

If the law can now make space for euthanasia, why can't it support both public and faith-based facilities providing high-quality, medically informed, end-of-life care also?

We know these laws have enormous potential for bracket creep.

Today euthanasia is for those with a terminal illness expected to die in the coming months. But who knows where we'll be by this time next year or next decade?

Everywhere euthanasia has been legalised, the protections have been

gradually removed and those deemed eligible have been gradually broadened. Canada, Belgium, Holland: all have moved from euthanasia or assisted suicide as a last resort for the terminally ill to this being the ordinary way of dying for many people – one every 40 minutes in Canada.

Not just the terminally ill, but now the chronically ill or disabled. Not just those with physical sickness, but now the depressed, lonely or homeless.

Not just adults, but now children and infants.

Laws like these have the effect of numbing our social conscience, making us forget our sacred obligation to care for the weak and doctors' obligation never to harm, even when asked.

In Canada what was sold as "compassionate care for the dying" is increasingly accepted as a solution to poverty. Is this where we want NSW to go?

Euthanasia has barely been

legalised in this state and already the NSW government is ramping down our palliative care services.

Those who lobbied for the law deny

there will be any slippery slope in their "voluntary assisted dying" regimen. They assure us they've put watertight safeguards in place to prevent wrongful deaths.

I challenge them to make good on these assurances and to advocate against the loosening or misuse of these laws as zealously as they advocated for their passage.

For my part, I commit myself and the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney to continue to press for fair laws and policies around the end-of-life, while doing our best to provide truly compassionate care to people of all faiths and none.

I ask our lawmakers and community to give us the legal space to do so.

**Reverend Anthony Fisher is Archbishop for the Archdiocese of Sydney**