



9 WEEK NOVENA

towards the Diocesan Synod



INTRODUCTION

As we approach the Synod, a sacred time of discernment and renewal for our diocesan community, we recognise the significance of seeking God's guidance and grace. For this reason, over the next nine weeks, all Catholics in the Diocese of Parramatta are invited to pray a Novena for the Diocesan Synod.

Through this novena, we humbly ask for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to lead us, enlighten us, and inspire us to be active participants in shaping the future of our Diocese. May this novena be a powerful catalyst for change and spiritual growth as we prepare to embark on this transformative Synodal journey.

The novena will begin the week of Sunday 13 August and conclude in the week beginning Sunday 8 October. The Synod Assembly will be held Friday 13th to Sunday 15th of October.

You are invited to pray the novena once a week as a parish community, within your ministry groups, with your families, or during personal prayer.

WEEK 1

SETTING OUT ON THE JOURNEY

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

A certain rich man came up to Jesus “as he was setting out on his journey” (Mk 10:17). The Gospels frequently show us Jesus “on a journey”; he walks alongside people and listens to the questions and concerns lurking in their hearts. He shows us that God is not found in neat and orderly places, distant from reality, but walks ever at our side. He meets us where we are, on the often rocky roads of life.... as we begin this synodal process, let us begin by asking ourselves – all of us, Pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity – whether we, the Christian community, embody this “style” of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity. Are we prepared for the adventure of this journey? Or are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: “It’s useless” or “We’ve always done it this way”?

Celebrating a Synod means walking on the same road, walking together. Let us look at Jesus. First, he encounters the rich man on the road; he then listens to his questions, and finally he helps him discern what he must do to inherit eternal life. Encounter, listen and discern.

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS St Peter's Basilica Sunday, 10 October 2021

(pause for a moment of silent reflection)

PRAYER

O God, who always walks with us on the journey of life, we call upon you to lead us forth united. Bless and guide our Diocesan Synod. Keep us anchored in your love. Open our hearts as we listen and discern. Reveal to us the way we are called to go out into the deep. Give us the courage to pursue the mission with bold humility. May we experience renewal in our local Church today, and for generations to come. We ask this prayer through Jesus Christ, who in the power of the Holy Spirit continues to guide your Church, to the fullness of your Kingdom now, and forever.

Amen.

Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.



WEEK 2

LISTENING

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

The prophet Elijah came to realise that God is always a God of surprises, even in the way he passes by and makes himself felt: “A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks... but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake – but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was fire – but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak” (1 Kg 19:11-13).

That is how God speaks to us. We need to open our ears to hear that tiny whispering sound, the gentle breeze of God, which scholars also translate as “a quiet whisper” or “a small, still voice”.

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF ROME Paul VI Audience Hall

Saturday, 18 September 2021

(pause for a moment of silent reflection)

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WEEK 3

THE BLESSED TRINITY

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

The Synod has three key words: communion, participation and mission. Communion and mission are theological terms describing the mystery of the Church, which we do well to keep in mind. The Second Vatican Council clearly taught that communion expresses the very nature of the Church, while pointing out that the Church has received “the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and is, on earth, the seed and beginning of that kingdom” (Lumen Gentium, 5). With those two words, the Church contemplates and imitates the life of the Blessed Trinity, a mystery of communion ad intra and the source of mission ad extra.

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD New Synod Hall Saturday, 9 October 2021

(pause for a moment of silent reflection)

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WEEK 4

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

We must continue along this path. The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.

What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word “synod”. Journeying together — laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome — is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice.

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS Paul VI Audience Hall Saturday, 17 October 2015

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WEEK 5

ART OF ENCOUNTER

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

We too are called to become experts in the art of encounter. Not so much by organising events or theorising about problems, as in taking time to encounter the Lord and one another. Time to devote to prayer and to adoration – that form of prayer that we so often neglect – devoting time to adoration, and to hearing what the Spirit wants to say to the Church. Time to look others in the eye and listen to what they have to say, to build rapport, to be sensitive to the questions of our sisters and brothers, to let ourselves be enriched by the variety of charisms, vocations and ministries. Every encounter – as we know – calls for openness, courage and a willingness to let ourselves be challenged by the presence and the stories of others. He invites us to leave our old habits behind. Everything changes once we are capable of genuine encounters with him and with one another, without formalism or pretense, but simply as we are.

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS St Peter's Basilica Sunday, 10 October 2021

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WEEK 6

DISCERNING

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

The Synod is a process of spiritual discernment, of ecclesial discernment, that unfolds in adoration, in prayer and in dialogue with the word of God. “God’s word is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). That word summons us to discernment and it brings light to that process. It guides the Synod, preventing it from becoming a Church convention, a study group or a political gathering, a parliament, but rather a grace-filled event, a process of healing guided by the Spirit. In these days, Jesus calls us, as he did the rich man in the Gospel, to empty ourselves, to free ourselves from all that is worldly, including our inward-looking and outworn pastoral models; and to ask ourselves what it is that God wants to say to us in this time. And the direction in which he wants to lead us.

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE ROMAN CURIA Benediction Hall Thursday, 23 December 2021

(pause for a moment of silent reflection)

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WEEK 7

HUMILITY

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

Humility is the ability to know how to “inhabit” our humanity, this humanity beloved and blessed by the Lord, and to do so without despair but with realism, joy and hope. Humility means recognising that we should not be ashamed of our frailty. Jesus teaches us to look upon our poverty with the same love and tenderness with which we look upon a little child, vulnerable and in need of everything. Lacking humility, we will look for things that can reassure us, and perhaps find them, but we will surely not find what saves us, what can heal us. Seeking those kinds of reassurance is the most perverse fruit of spiritual worldliness, for it reveals a lack of faith, hope and love; it leads to an inability to discern the truth of things..... All of us are called to humility, because all of us are called to remember and to give life. We are called to find a right relationship with our roots and our branches. Without those two things, we become sick, destined to disappear. Jesus, who came into the world by the path of humility, has opened a way for us; he indicates a way and shows us a goal.

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WEEK 8

COMMUNION

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

Communion.... This does not have to do with majorities or minorities; essentially, it is based on our relationship with Christ. We will never have an evangelical style in our respective settings unless we put Christ back in the centre, not this or that party opinion: Christ at the centre. Many of us work together, but what builds communion is also the ability to pray together, to listen together to God's word and to construct relationships that go beyond work and strengthen beneficial relations between us by helping one another. Otherwise, we risk being nothing more than strangers working in the same place, competitors looking to advance or, worse yet, forging relationships based on personal interests, forgetting the common cause that holds us together. This creates divisions, factions and enemies, whereas cooperation demands the magnanimity to accept our own partiality and to be open to working in a group, even with those who do not think as we do. In cooperation, people work together, not for some extraneous purpose, but because they have at heart the good of others and, consequently, of the entire People of God whom we are called to serve. Let us not forget the real faces of people. Let us not forget our roots and the concrete faces of those who were our first teachers in the faith.

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WEEK 9

MISSION

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION

Mission....We need to avoid [becoming closed persons] by making the Church constantly go out from herself, keeping her mission focused on Jesus Christ, and her commitment to the poor” (Evangelii Gaudium, 97). Only a heart open to mission can ensure that everything we do, ad intra and ad extra, is marked by the regenerating power of the Lord’s call. Mission always involves passion for the poor, for those who are “in need”, not only of things material, but also spiritual, emotional and moral. Those who hunger for bread and those who hunger for meaning are equally poor. The Church is summoned to reach out to every form of poverty. The Church is called to preach the Gospel to everyone, since all of us are poor; all of us are, in one way or another, needy. But the Church also reaches out to the poor because we need them: we need their voice, their presence, their questions and criticisms. A person with a missionary heart feels the absence of his brother or sister, and, like a beggar, accosts him or her. Mission makes us vulnerable. This is beautiful, that mission makes us vulnerable. It helps remind us that we are disciples and it makes us rediscover ever anew the joy of the Gospel.

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DIOCESE *of*
PARRAMATTA