



WALKING TOGETHER

ARCHBISHOP TIM'S WEEKLY THOUGHTS
FOR REFLECTION FROM THE SYNOD

Friday 13 October, 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As I write this third “Letter from Rome” on a warm Thursday afternoon, here in the Vatican we are approaching the end of our first full week of work in the Synod.

Last week, following the Opening Mass in Saint Peter’s Square, the Synod members began to explore the deeper understanding of synodality, that “walking together” which Pope Francis believes the Lord is calling his Church to develop at this time. This exploration has continued into this first full week.

As we in Australia already know because of our experience of the Plenary Council, an understanding of synodality really only develops as people begin to practice it. Walking together, paradoxically, often happens by sitting down! It is by deep, respectful listening to each other, not in order to have my own view confirmed but in order to be open to the new which may come through that listening to the other, that a deeper understanding of what the Lord is asking of us at this time can grow.

Precisely for this reason the Synod process moves between “General Congregations” in which all participants take part, and “Circoli Minori” (working groups) which provide the opportunity for deeper reflection and discernment in groups of ten to 12 people. Pope Francis is often present, especially during the general congregations, for it is during these that the results of the small group discussions are shared. Pope Francis listens carefully, and only rarely speaks himself. He is a model of respectful listening, and his presence is much appreciated.

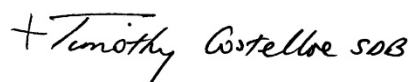
Those of you who have followed the preparations for the Synod will know that our discussions and discernment revolve around three themes: **communion**, **participation** and **mission**. In this first week, we are focusing on “communion” and our guiding question is this: ***How can we be more fully a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all humanity?*** It is a question which each local community, be it a parish, a school, a religious community or a Church agency or organisation, might well ask itself. Indeed, this would be a good way for our own local Church to participate in, and feel connected to, the work of the Synod.

While those gathered in Rome are engaged in important matters, so too are the people of Australia. As you read this letter, we are on the verge of voting in the referendum. I know you will all take this responsibility very seriously. Inevitably, whatever the result, there will be some who are rejoicing and some who are lamenting. Because of this, I want to remind us all that as Catholics we are called to be creators of communion, not of dissension and disharmony. I hope that we can all work together to ensure that our indigenous sisters and brothers are supported, welcomed and valued in our communities. How can we be “a sign of the unity of all humanity” if we fail in this challenge?

On Wednesday 11 October, the Church celebrated the feast of Pope St John XXIII. Here at the Synod, we began the day with a prayer that included a reading of the address given by Pope John at the opening of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, Wednesday 11 October was the actual anniversary of the opening of the Council in 1962. For this reason, the prayer was very moving, and was made more so by the fact that it seemed, as many people commented, that Pope John’s address is as relevant for us in the Church today as it was all those decades ago. We are still learning what it means to live faithfully the teachings of that Council. Indeed, many people have suggested that the task of the present Synod is to deepen our commitment to this task. For those who are willing and able, it would be worthwhile to read this speech which is available in English by [Clicking Here](#). Doing so is another way of uniting ourselves with those present in the Synod hall in Rome.

I hope that these few reflections enable you all to have some sense of what is unfolding here in Rome. Please continue to pray for all the synod participants. If we remain deeply open to the Holy Spirit, then the synod will lead to a greater fidelity to the Lord for all of us. For my part, I am remembering you all each day in my prayers.

Yours sincerely in the Lord Jesus,



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