



Welcome

Speech

**Very Rev Fr Vincent Glynn
Vicar General and Episcopal Vicar for Education**

**Saturday 13 July 2024
Newman College Auditorium**

Good morning, everybody.

I echo the words of Bishop Don in saying that it's so lovely to see you all here this morning. I also want to thank you and to say how lovely it was to know that so many of you over the last 10 months, have attended the formation sessions offered through the Centre for Faith Enrichment to help us to understand listening and discernment.

And the fact that so many of you attended not just one session, but two or three, indicates your keenness and I'm sure it will help us today in our listening and discernment sessions, because last September when we met, it was probably all very foreign to many of us.

So, thank you very much for that and thank you also for being here this morning. Bishop Don and I were talking during the week, and it was good for him to give us some background. It's good to have someone who has been in the diocese a long time and who has memories of that first Diocesan Pastoral Council and to give us some insights to how things operated many years ago.

But today, it's a new day. It's a new period in the life of the church and once again, we are trying to be faithful to the mission that comes from the Second Vatican Council, but also particularly to what Pope Francis is calling us to be, to be a synodal missionary church.

I just wanted to kind of give a bit of a theological background to remind us of why you've been chosen to be a delegate and what it means. But also, to give us all a sense of confidence, that what we're doing here today, we're not doing alone, we're doing it together. We are doing it because we all share a common baptism. And so, you'll see my first quote on the screen quoting *Lumen Gentium*, and also the International Theological Commission on Synodality and the Life and Mission in the Church.

It begins by saying, “In Baptism,” which we've all shared, we've all received the Holy Spirit, “the Holy Spirit gives believers,” so gives to you and I, “and therefore the whole church, a special gift” - so through our baptism, the Holy Spirit gives to you and I, all of us here, and the whole church, a special gift – “so that together” – which is you and I, and the Church – “can faithfully interpret and live the Christian gospel in the diverse circumstances of history and culture, the *Sensus Fidei*.”¹

Now, *Lumen Gentium* was written in the 1960s and here we are now in 2024. And we can say that we live in different circumstances, in a different place in history and we're influenced by our culture. Looking around the room here – there is a diverse number of cultures. But it says in this document, and this phrase, that together, this special gift of the Holy Spirit, given to each of us, allows us as a group, in the church, in communion with each other, in communion with the gospel, and the tradition of the church, to faithfully interpret and to live the Christian Gospel today, in 2024. It calls this the *Sensus Fidei* in that we, through our prayer, our reflection on the scriptures, through our understanding of the tradition of the church, that this gift of the Spirit works through each of us and through the church, so that we can faithfully live and express the Christian Gospel to the world today.

It's very empowering. We're not just baptised, the baptism empowers us, empowers us through this gift of the spirit to do what the church is asking. My second part of that quote, quotes, *Lumen Gentium* (nn. 31, 35) again, and it continues, "The Spirit," so this Holy Spirit that we received in baptism and strengthened and renewed in confirmation "enables ongoing discernment of the signs of the time in the light of the Gospel." Bishop Don mentioned it – it's a document coming from the Second Vatican Council, talking the language we think might be new today. This language of discernment. The Spirit enables this ongoing discernment of the signs of the times in the light of the gospel, (*Gaudium et Spes* (nn.4, 11)).

What are the signs of the times? *Lumen Gentium* says that you and I and the church, we must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings and the dramatic features of the world in which we live. And so, we come here today, in 2024, with our own history, our own lives, our own faith, our own cultural background. We come from families, we come from communities. And I'm sure if we would go around to ask those of you who are parents, you'd be very familiar with your own yearnings, your own aspirations, but particularly also those of your children, or the young people that you may encounter.

So it says in *Lumen Gentium*, that the People of God - you and I - we believe that, if we're led by the Spirit of God, who fills the whole world, and if we're moved by faith, we've tried to discern in the events, the needs and the longings, which it shares with all humanity of our time, what may be genuine signs of the presence or the purpose of God.

So today, as we gather, we will be discerning through our prayer, through our experience, through our listening, some of the signs of the times that we live in today, that we might need

¹ *Lumen Gentium* n. 12; cf. *International Theological Commission, Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 2 March 2018, nn. 24, 56, 113.

to bring to our discernment about what a Diocesan Pastoral Council might look like. But particularly how it might be synodal, as Pope Francis keeps reminding us.

I mentioned this, because I remember at our first gathering last year, one of the members at the table wondered why he should be here. He was sitting at my table. So, he said, "You're a theologian, you're a priest, and I'm just a parishioner". And I said to him, we need to be confident. So, I'm saying to you this morning through this reflection, that comes from the documents, we need to be confident, that each of us, from the Archbishop to the priests - the Spirit works through each of us. Have confidence that the Spirit will work through you.

I want you to have confidence that the people at your table you're sharing with – remember the Spirit also speaks through them. And that they will bring their experience of the world and the signs of the times with them. I want us to see that the church has great confidence in you and I and I think we need to be very mindful that Pope Francis, particularly with the Synod on Synodality, has asked for wide consultation around the whole world. From small parishes, in country towns, to big cathedrals and big Archdiocese. Why? Because Pope Francis understands that the spirit speaks not just through him but speaks from the least to the greatest. And that should give us confidence this morning.

I'm really trying to say to us have confidence, and I understand some of you might be apprehensive, perhaps a bit nervous. But you should know, we are really fulfilling today our vocation that comes from the common priesthood that we receive in the sacrament of baptism. We are fulfilling in a way the promises we made at baptism or were made for us. And the Spirit enables each of us to discern and have confidence that the Spirit will speak through you and others today.

On your tables there you have the pre-reading material that we sent out a few weeks ago and I thank you for the positive feedback that we have received. I think that is a great help. You'll see on that first page, it talks about the gifts of the Spirit in the baptised. It says the gifts of the Holy Spirit is one and the same in all who have been baptised. And this spirit has manifested in a number in many forms. But it says some of them here - the equal dignity of the baptised. We come here today as brothers and sisters in Christ through baptism. That's our common dignity. There might be an Archbishop, there might be a bishop, there might be a few senior priests, but through baptism, we come with this equal dignity. And each of our voices are important. We come to discern this gift of the spirit, and how it's calling us to be responsible for the life and the mission of our local church. And particularly for us here in the Archdiocese of Perth.

I want us to be reassured that when we were brought for baptism, when we were anointed with the Oil of Chrism in baptism and strengthened in Confirmation that the spirit has been strengthened in us and will work through us.

Just to put it in the context that what are we discerning when we're talking about as Gemma mentioned at the very beginning, we're responding to the Plenary Council, which says that all

dioceses and eparchies are to establish a Diocesan Pastoral Council and that should be done to provide resources for the establishing and flourishing of Diocesan Pastoral Councils. Archbishop could have said, yes, we'll have a Diocesan Pastoral Council, this is how it will go. Canon Law says this or that.

But for it to flourish, it needs the input and the reflection and discernment of the whole Archdiocese and all parts of the Archdiocese. It's more than just setting up a Diocesan Pastoral Council. We need to look at it in the light of the signs of the times. In the light of our own experience here in Western Australia, and particularly in our Archdiocese, we need to discern, so that this Diocesan Pastoral Council will have an appropriate synodal structure, but will also flourish so, as Bishop Don mentioned, that it won't fizzle out in a few years' time. It's a great opportunity for us. And we do it for those in the church in Perth here today. But I think above all, we're doing it for those who will be part of the church in the future. So, it is a big responsibility, but have confidence, that we do it together through this gift of the Holy Spirit.

When you got the pre-reading, you would have seen the objective is that the purpose of the Diocesan Assembly is to recommend to the Archbishop, how a Diocesan Pastoral Council can embody synodality in its structures and processes. And once again, in your pre-reading material, you will see at the very beginning, it gives us a rather concise understanding of what synodality is all about. It says in bold print, in this broader sense, synodality can be understood as Christians walking in communion with Christ toward the kingdom along with the whole of humanity. What we're doing today should not be seen in isolation from all those in our Archdiocese or our state, or indeed all those in the church. It involves this reciprocal listening, dialogue and community discernment and the creation of a consensus as an expression that renders Christ present in the Holy Spirit.

What we're doing here today is holy work. It's sacred work. Just being with each other, it is indeed, like a sacrament, a sign to each other of the presence of Christ. And so today should be seen as a day of communion, communion with the church, with each other and with our bishops. It should be seen as a day of participation. Where we open our hearts and minds to the power of the Spirit, and the words of our brothers and sisters. And it should be a day of mission. Because above all, we need to remind ourselves that the church is not something static.

The church is on a journey and that journey is to proclaim God's love and to proclaim Christ to a world in 2024, - a world different from five years ago, 10 years ago, 60 years ago. And that's the challenge that awaits us today. Be assured that as I mentioned in my letter, I sent out to you all there have been many parishes, praying for us today. So be mindful of that. Their prayers will lift us up and support us, as we gather to discern this gift of baptism that we received, as we gather to discern through the power of the Holy Spirit what's best for our Archdiocese, what's best for our Diocesan Pastoral Council and how it can reflect a diocese walking together in synodality.

Thank you all and all the best for the day.