



Diocesan Assembly 2024

Speech

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

**Newman College, Churchlands
Saturday 13 July, 2024**

Today the first Assembly of the 21st century meets.

The first ever Assembly for the Archdiocese of Perth occurred in 1990 and it brought to completion the Year of Mission initiated by Archbishop William Foley. I was asked to join the YoM Team in February of that year. In some ways, that Assembly was like a synod as it produced three outcomes that were to be implemented across the archdiocese. These were the development of an integrated communications network; parish renewal and the future of parishes; and ongoing participation of the people of the archdiocese in decision making.

The practice of Pastoral Planning was considered the key to creating a contemporary vision for the Archdiocesan administration, parishes and agencies. The plan had been to review the roles and responsibilities of the Diocesan and Parish Councils, especially underlining their contribution to the pastoral mission of every entity within the local church, by advising and supporting the archbishop in his ministry as shepherd-pastor.

We learnt about the Pastoral Circle of Discernment and Pastoral Planning. This was based on the Ignatian method of discernment, which was familiar to so many at that time in the parishes who had been formed through the YCS/YCW method of the Review of Life: See, Judge and Act.

The additional element we added to this method of Review was Evaluation and further discernment, if required.

The sudden death of Archbishop Foley brought much of the vision and energy of the Year of Mission experience to an end. The hopes of a renewal for the Diocesan Pastoral Council dimmed and the Council eventually was abandoned.

The first Diocesan Pastoral Council was established by Archbishop Launcelot Goody. He had attended all the sessions of the Second Vatican Council. He understood well the significance of the call of Pope John XXIII for a Council in the early months of his pontificate, to complete the work of the First Vatican Council, and the work of preparation for the council that followed, and the experience of all the sessions. The Archbishop was already implementing ideas of the Council



while still Bishop of Bunbury and brought a new vision to Perth when he became the Archbishop here in 1968.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council's meeting procedures and operation were largely parliamentary in style. There was a smaller support structure, so much of the implementation rested with the archbishop and his immediate office staff. Things took longer to progress and not everything could be achieved, which gave rise to frustration from time to time.

Our work today, I hope, will bring about a renewal of the consultation and participation processes in our Archdiocese, as we seek to walk together as the Church of Perth.

The session we participated in last year introduced us to a method of discernment that promises us the ability to look much deeper at the pastoral life and needs of the people of the Archdiocese, and the wider society, through attentive listening to the Holy Spirit speaking to us in the Word of God and the Tradition of the Church, and in the experience of one another.

I pray for the blessings of God on our listening, reflections and recommendations.