



MEMO TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE

Following the success of the pilot program of formation in Leadership for Synodality that enrolled twenty people from across the Diocese, the Diocese is again excited to be joining with Catholic Theological College to provide further formation in the Diocese of Ballarat through a bursary funded by the Therese D'Orsa Mission Fund.

As you would remember, this formation initiative emerged from the Ballarat Diocesan Assembly at the end of 2024 where formation for a synodal church was one of the key themes.

I strongly encourage you to be part of this project in 2027. This next phase of formation in synodality will focus on **"Identity and Mission in the Synodal Church"**. This will introduce participants to the theological, ecclesiological and cultural frameworks that support mission and leadership within Catholic communities. The module will explore how synodality is expressed through the identity and mission of the Church in contemporary contexts.

The formation journey consists of three interconnected sessions that build towards the development of a synodal praxis project within participants' parish, school, ministry, or diocesan context. Together, these sessions will support members in engaging with the vision of synodality, deepening their synodal identity and developing the skills needed to read and respond to the signs of the times through a theological lens.

Formation Program Overview

The formation program comprises:

- 1. Introduction Session - December 5, 2026** - This session will establish the shared purpose of the cohort, welcome new participants, reconnect the group with the theological and diocesan foundations of the process, and commence project discernment.
- 2. Synodal Dispositions Session - Semester 1, 2027** - This formation will deepen participants' understanding of synodality as a way of being Church, exploring listening, relationality, discernment, and the practical challenges and opportunities of fostering synodal practice in parish and ministry settings.
- 3. Reading the Signs of the Times Session - Semester 1, 2027** - This session will provide theological and pastoral tools for interpreting contemporary Australian society and ecclesial life in the light of the Gospel, supporting participants in discerning appropriate pastoral responses within their contexts.

Commitment to Synodal Leadership

Participation in this formation is more than attendance at a series of workshops. It is an invitation to embrace a synodal way of being Church through attentive listening, shared discernment, collaboration and missionary engagement. I encourage you to take part in this formation with openness, curiosity and a willingness to both learn from and contribute to the experiences of others. To foster your participation, the key presentations on each of the Saturday gatherings will be livestreamed, enabling you to participate remotely, bridging the distances that can sometimes be a barrier to participation. You are also welcome to attend in person. Attendance at this formation program will be an expectation of prospective Diocesan Pastoral Council members and will form an important part of their preparation for representing the people of the Diocese.

I plan on taking part as much as my calendar will allow.

Best wishes,

Bishop Mark Freeman.