



Archbishop's Address
on the occasion of Synod Promulgation

27 July 2003

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**The following address was delivered by His Grace,
Archbishop John Bathersby at the Synod Promulgation
on 27th July, 2003.**

The Scripture today is delightfully direct. Facing the challenge of a largely secular society and a Church of 600,000 people, a significant majority of whom do not worship regularly, the scripture advises us to launch out into the deep as Pope John Paul II has already advised us, let down our nets, and then be prepared to be surprised as the apostles were. All of scripture is filled with similar dramatic images of hope – The nomadic Abraham asked to be the father of a great people, the chosen people in slavery told that they would inherit a land flowing with milk and honey; the youthful David confronting the terrifying Goliath; the young Jewish girl Mary saying yes to God; against overwhelming odds Paul setting out to convert the gentiles; but above all the lonely figure of Christ dying as a criminal on Calvary to redeem the world. The scriptures prove beyond doubt that with God's help nothing is impossible.

Full of hope drawn from the Synod, in the years ahead we will metaphorically let down our nets to seek that same superabundant catch that the apostles sought. In Romans, Paul gives us good advice about strategies, no strategy more powerful than his advice to be "*aglow with the Spirit*". So, filled with that same Holy Spirit and overflowing with optimism let me suggest a possible way forward for the future of our Archdiocese.

First of all thank you for your presence at this promulgation, our final Synod gathering which in a sense is really only its beginning. In today's promulgation I will launch broad directions and priorities for the Archdiocese in the light of the Synod, and announce some elements of implementation. A full and final Synod implementation report in the form of an Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan will be completed early in 2004 when more detailed implementation matters and resource issues have been fully addressed.

Let me try to put our Synod in perspective. The Synod was a calling together of the Archdiocese to hear what the Holy Spirit is trying to say to us at this moment in our history. The total process was a privileged listening place for the Spirit, where the Spirit spoke to us loudly and clearly in the final session, one might be tempted to say through the mouths of babes, regarding what I am today promulgating as nine priorities for this Archdiocese at the beginning of a new millennium.

The three major choices were clear: Embracing the person and vision of Jesus Christ; Improving the Christian Communion of the local Church at the Parish level by making it a more welcoming and inclusive Church; Improving the life-giving quality of our liturgy at all levels but especially at the local Parish level.

The other six priorities will also be gathered under our overarching theological concepts of Jesus, Communion, and Mission. All the earlier work that went into the Broad Action proposals will be appropriately added to expand the nine

priorities. Before presenting these priorities however, let me try once again to paint a broader picture within the overarching theological vision, lest we become lost in detail.

When we are young the world revolves around ourselves and our expectations and that is as it should be. It is the privilege of younger generations to dream dreams and to realise them, and thank God for that. It is the privilege of older generations to continue to dream dreams but usually within a more realistic time frame. As older people we are just as certain that our dreams will be realised, but not necessarily within our lifetime. Wisdom enables us to expand our world and our community to include other worlds, and other people who have died or are yet to be born, as the boundaries between heaven and earth mingle. Responding to Christ's invitation to open our eyes to the presence of the Kingdom we do so and, depending upon our faith, we see a completely new world, God's world.

Yet even as we struggle with this Godly vision, upon which our hold is tenuous, we can be so easily drawn back into an older world that seeks results and seeks them now. Moreover as we strive with passion to transform the world we realise ever so slowly that we co-operate with a God for whom 1000 years is as a day. Moreover the defining and controlling story of all existence is not that of some mythical figure waving a magic wand to create instant results. Christ's way is much more interesting and challenging. His life, ending in apparent failure but transformed into ultimate triumph in and through the power of God, becomes the touchstone of all reality. Indeed, God's story requires time, in contrast with the world's that seeks results, and seeks them yesterday if possible.

As we well know, the ultimate overarching presence of all reality is God, and the ultimate way forward is not by following our will but God's will. It is within Christ's defining story that we must try to locate the priorities of this our Synod, and to select strategies to serve them. The Gospels shows us how the greatest source of Christ's frustration was not so much with people's neglect of people, but rather with people's neglect of God and of God's will, expressed in covenant. Its most dramatic expression was his cleansing of the temple not merely because inappropriate commercial activity was taking place there, but rather because commercial activity in God's holy place was merely another indication, even if a significant one, of peoples' lack of concern for God and for God's spiritual covenant.

It is within that Gospel emphasis that we must now locate the Synod and the Synod's priorities. How often in the Gospel does the scripture talk about Christ's concern that people had lost their way and seemed like sheep without a shepherd? How dramatic Christ's declaration from the cross, "Father forgive them they don't know what they do," where Christ's concern was directed not so much at his physical suffering but at people's rejection of his good news, or at least their neglect of that good news and indifference towards it. That is why the ultimate challenge

for ourselves today is to understand Christ's good news ourselves if we wish to take it out to others. It is not that the five hundred and twenty thousand Catholics in our Archdiocese who don't worship regularly are bad people. They are not. They just haven't really heard the good news of Christ, and they don't understand the joy of faith. Ultimately they don't really understand the existence and love of God present in our world, otherwise they would walk over hot coals to accept it. That is why our ultimate challenge towards which the Holy Spirit is trying to lead us always is to help people meet God, and within that framework the Synod is the space we have provided both for the spirit to talk to us passionately, and for ourselves to listen just as passionately.

Having laid that broad foundation I will now indicate some key steps for the overall implementation of Synod priorities. I will then address those priorities individually and, building upon the action strategies recommended by the Synod Assembly, suggest some further actions that might help in their implementation.

Overall Implementation Steps

I have asked the Archbishop's Pastoral Council, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, to take primary responsibility for assisting me in collaboration with the Council of Priests to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Synod's priorities. The Archbishop's Pastoral Council is to be renamed as the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and membership will be reviewed in the light of new responsibilities for Council members. This body will have responsibility for overseeing the formation of an Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan that will carry Synod initiatives forward.

If we are to ignite the hearts and minds of Catholics for the great challenge that lies before us then the grace of the Synod must be experienced at parish level. For parish communities, so many of whom are struggling simply to provide basic services, meeting this challenge needs special support at least for a period of time. I therefore propose a review of the use of parish assessment contributions paid by parishes from second collections to support the work of the Archbishop and the Archdiocese. I wish to establish the viability of directing a substantial portion of these funds towards personnel 'on the ground' in deaneries supporting Deans, Parish Priests and Pastoral Councils as they work to implement Synod priorities. I will ask the Moderator to co-ordinate this review and, if the proposal is found to be viable, I am prepared to redirect funds for up to five years as seeding for a new phase of Synod-inspired life and mission in our parishes. I will then review the success of the strategy and see in what ways we have been able to effectively fulfil the Synod challenge.

The Auxiliary Bishops and the Deans will play a vital role in leading the parishes of the Deanery to work together to implement Synod priorities. In the next few months, in my own meetings with key people and councils, discussions will take place about the basic guidelines within which Synod initiatives will operate, as well ideas for effective implementation.

Those basic guidelines include the need for each parish community to plan how, over the next five years, it will address the nine priorities in a way that is relevant and effective for the local people and circumstances. Out of necessity, this may require active collaboration with the other parishes of the Deanery or a smaller cluster of parishes through which support can be found and offered for the achievement of pastoral goals that cannot be accomplished by a parish in isolation. Thus, the Deanery may also choose to have an action support plan that focuses energy on collaborative projects in which local parishes work together on the implementation of particular Synod priorities, judged to be most critical in the local circumstances.

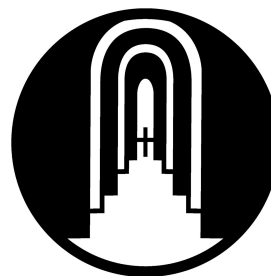
In preparation for Synod implementation I approved the establishment of a Budget Prioritisation Advisory Committee under the direction of the Moderator to assist in refocusing the structures and energies of Vicariates to address Synod priorities. I will now formally advise Archdiocesan bodies and agencies to commit resources to the implementation of Synod priorities and particularly to the support of parish efforts.

The Synod Assembly Recommendations refer to specific groups or persons as having a particular role in relation to the leadership of possible strategies outlined in the Broad Action Proposals. I wish to add that the priorities promulgated today are for everyone and every group who must ask: how can I, how can we act on these priorities in our circumstances, using the strategies in the Broad Action Proposals as a starting point?

Finally, in 2008 there will be a representative gathering of key people from around the Archdiocese to review progress on implementation of Synod outcomes.

Promulgation of the Nine Priorities

I now turn to the priorities that I wish to promulgate for the Archdiocese. These priorities, recommended by the Synod, assembly are nine in number and I will discuss them in groupings of three. Please remember that in presenting these matters I cannot for obvious reasons be as comprehensive as I would like.



The first three priorities deal with:

1. *Embracing the person and vision of Jesus Christ;*
2. *That Parishes be welcoming, inclusive communities; and*
3. *That Parish Liturgy is the vital experience it should be.*

1. Embracing the person and vision of Jesus Christ.

This is the key to the entire Christian mission. We won't embrace Jesus unless we are open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. All of us here today have faith otherwise we wouldn't be here, but that faith differs largely from person to person. Despite the fact that we say we believe in Jesus, if Jesus were to appear in our midst today it is quite possible, through an undeveloped understanding of Jesus, that some of us might walk away. This happens when we close our minds on the identity of Jesus, believing that we already know who Jesus is, and have no need to explore further. In reality, faith and understanding should grow together when our hearts and minds are nurtured through a lifetime of reflection usually with others, in scripture sharing, liturgy especially Eucharist, and prayer. If we are not people of prayer we will never grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus. Perhaps our ultimate test as Christians is the amount of time that we give to prayer. The experience of conversion differs from person to person. Some people experience instant conversion, most do not. Instead we experience conversion as a long slow process. Sadly some people will never be converted even if Jesus were to preach to them Himself. Faith is God's great mysterious gift offered to each one of us for our acceptance. When we do so, we fall in love with God. We can't make faith happen or deepen but we can open ourselves to that possibility.

I offer the following practical suggestions, and distinguish ordinary or usual means, from special, one-off opportunities available in the Archdiocese over the next couple of years.

The Ordinary Way at Parish Level

- (a) The greatest growth in faith usually happens in Eucharist. It is there that we meet Jesus in the worshipping community, in the scripture, in the body and blood of Christ, in the action of the Liturgy and in the ministerial priest. Christ is present in Eucharist where his vision is spelt out symbolically in such a manner that, as St Paul says, we literally '*put on Christ*' so that together we can then become a sign of the Kingdom as Christ himself was. Because there is such a rich mix of people in the normal parish, Eucharists should cater (if possible) for the different age, gender and cultural differences that should not divide community but rather strengthen it.

Again

- (b) Although the Eucharist is the central parish meeting place with Christ, parishes should also provide prayer groups where people can meet Christ in the living word of God and in other people. We can't afford to neglect the presence of the Holy Spirit speaking through other people, nor should we neglect the presence of Christ in devotional groups especially Eucharistic and Marian groups.

Some Special Opportunities

- The Adult Faith Education Office for the 2004 Lenten programme will provide a study focusing on Jesus Christ. I encourage as many people as possible to participate.

- In 2005 I will seek the services of Bishop Thomas Wright, the Anglican Bishop of Durham, ranked among the world's top Christological theologians and scripture scholars, to come to this Archdiocese and provide a series of lectures about Jesus Christ and his Mission.
- St Paul's Theological College in 2004 will provide courses on Jesus, Communion, and Mission for the benefit of our Archdiocesan people.
- The Adult Faith Education Office also in 2004 will provide an Ecumenical study between Easter and Pentecost on the Church as Communion, directed largely at Catholics and Anglicans.
- I will encourage the different movements of the Archdiocese and Vicariates to focus their formation in 2004 on the purpose and meaning of Jesus Christ and I ask theologians, both lay and clerical, to be generous with their time and wisdom in supporting such groups.
- I will also ask Brisbane Catholic Education and other Education sectors of this Archdiocese to do everything possible to introduce people to the person and vision of Jesus Christ, especially young people. Teachers have a privileged role in leading young people to Christ.
- Finally I will encourage the Youth Groups of the Archdiocese to focus in 2004 on the person and vision of Jesus Christ, with an emphasis on the sheer excitement and vitality of Christ's vision. Some people have likened Christ's vision to a dance into which all people, young and old, are invited so that the world might experience the dynamic harmony and rhythm of Christ.

2. Vibrant, Meaningful and Inclusive Liturgy

Liturgy means in the first place Eucharist. Increasingly in the future, Communion Services may be necessary to bind the Community lest it disperse through lack of Eucharist. At the same time we must be under no illusions about the essential difference between a Communion service and a Eucharist. The latter is the total representation of the life of Christ made available for our purposes. It is also the local Church's ultimate expression of Communion, as a sign to the world of God's Kingdom. The Eucharist is also a sign of that final great eschatological meal when we will be joined together, past, present, and future as the communion of saints in the fullness of God's life. Ignorance about the meaning of Eucharist is perhaps the principal reason why people are reluctant to join in this incredible act of worship.

Because it is the totality of Christ's life and love, Eucharist should be presented with the very best liturgical music, the very best proclamation of the word, the very best preaching, and in the very best liturgical setting. As far as possible Eucharist should reflect the excitement of Christ himself. A Eucharist that is dull and boring is a contradiction in terms and does a grave disservice to Christ. Most people, but especially young people, will not come to a Eucharist that is dull and boring and this is understandable.

I ask parishes to take seriously and resource adequately the work of liturgy committees and I will ask the Liturgical Commission to provide additional courses throughout the

next three years to assist pastors and their communities in the preparation and celebration of Liturgy. Because music is such an important and essential aspect of good liturgy I also hope that it may be possible over the next five years to find ways and means of enhancing the musical quality of Liturgical celebration in this Archdiocese. As a special initiative I will also invite the English Sacramental Theologian, Father Paul McPartlan to come to this Archdiocese in 2004 to present a series of lectures on the relationship of the Eucharist to the Church and the Kingdom of God.

3. The welcoming inclusive aspect of Parishes.

If the parish is really the sign of the Kingdom that it is meant to be, then it will attract back to a practice of their faith those people who have no faith or who have lapsed from their faith. They will certainly respond to the visible friendship of people at worship, as well as by the life, vitality, care and concern of the Parish. An absolutely essential structure of any post Vatican Parish is the Parish Council. Because the Holy Spirit shapes its activity it contributes to the life and vitality of the Parish in a manner that a single pastor cannot do alone. It is unthinkable that in this day and age, despite the encouragement of the official Church, some parishes still limp along without a Parish Council. It is almost a denial of the baptismal vocation to which each and every Christian is called. A focal point for the parish pastoral council and the parish community must be the development of a parish pastoral plan that embraces and brings to life the spirit, vision and priorities of Synod 2003 at a local level.

There are other essential features of parishes that need to be noted:

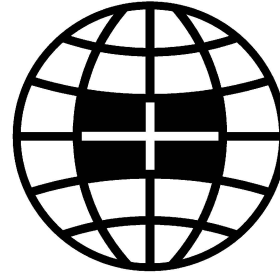
(a) Inclusivity is a most significant and attractive feature of any parish. At this level the Parish must be seen in its life and liturgy to be welcoming across categories of race, age, culture, gender and differing abilities so as to present the inclusive face of Christ to the world. All categories of people, without exception, are invited into the life of the Church and the Kingdom. I will ask the relevant agencies within the Vicariates to assist Parishes with strategies that welcome all people into its life and membership.

(b) The willingness and capacity of parish communities to welcome back Catholics who have been away from Church for a long time is becoming increasingly important. It is vital that Parishes develop practical and effective ways to do this and, among the different programmes available, I mention *Catholics Returning Home* that has been successfully trialled by Petrie Parish and which has already trained people from a number of other parishes to run this particular programme.

(c) Last year I received an implementation plan, *One Spirit, Many Voices*, from the Womens' Resource Advisory Committee that included a recommendation for the establishment of an Office for the Participation of Women. I have decided to launch this initiative as a three year implementation project and I will appoint a project officer for three years to resource the implementation of the plan and provide advice and assistance to parishes and the

Archdiocese in making women present at the different levels of Archdiocesan Life and Mission.

The next three priorities are:



- 4 *That Catholics recognise and value the impact of their everyday Christian Living on building a better world;*
- 5 *That Young People are helped by Faith Development Opportunities to integrate their faith with everyday experience; and*
- 6 *That Parish Pastoral Leadership is promoted, supported and resourced at all levels.*

4. That Catholics recognise and value the impact of their everyday Christian Living on building a better world.

The great value of the Second Vatican Council was that it turned the Church towards the world as Christ himself had already turned to the world in his Ministry, a lesson that was easily forgotten down through the corridors of history. Pope Paul VI in his groundbreaking encyclical "Evangelii Nuntiandi" in 1976 explains that Christ seeks nothing less than the renewal of all creation. Christ's vision was not just narrowly human, but cosmic as well. It is upon this deep conviction that the Church's vision is formed and a comprehensive plan for salvation fashioned. It is no wonder that Pope John Paul II in the last 10 years has called repeatedly for "Ecological Conversion" for all Catholics lest we destroy the very world that, in justice, we need to pass on intact to future generations. As a result, Christians need to recognise that everything we do, especially in our normal work, is able to promote or hinder Christ's vision of the world. Such Christian living however must always be linked to Christ, lest it too easily degenerate into mere humanism, valuable in itself, but lacking the spiritual and transcendent dimensions fulfilled in Christ.

Each and every Christian must realise that his or her every action either promotes or delays the fullness of God's reign. Such a realisation fills all life with meaning, so that the separation between the secular and the sacred vanishes and the Christian proclaims in the words of the great poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, "*The world is charged with the grandeur of God*".

To promote such everyday Christian living, education in faith is needed above all. When Christ asked us to open our eyes it was to recognise the presence of the Kingdom in our midst. Such education should take place from our

earliest years, as parents and teachers explain to young people, how every action from the simplest to the most complicated fits into God's plan. In this sense all of life is religious. Such a concept is easily understood by young people. They already recognise God's presence in the environment and they should, with a little encouragement, be able to extend this further. It is an understanding filled with the excitement for which young people yearn, and that invites active participation. This understanding of evangelisation is not only restricted to the ordinary business of life but is true also of the weightier matters of justice and peace. The Jocist movements, especially the YCW and YCS, are ideally structured to lead young people to an understanding of the integration of life and religion because they expose all of life to Gospel values. Both movements have the capacity to convince young people of the dynamic reality of Christ's vision.

5. Young People are helped by Faith Development Opportunities to integrate their faith with everyday experiences.

Reaching out to young people must be a priority of this Archdiocese. The greatest gift we can give to young people is a correct understanding of the person of Christ and his vision, filled with the excitement that accompanies it.

There are many organised youth movements that can help young people grow in faith. When such movements seek to address social needs they must always be linked to Christ and the Church. If they are separated from prayer and worship they will fail. Sometimes in the Gospel, as in Luke Chapter 5, Christ left sick and suffering people to go off to the mountains to pray, so important was the relationship with His Father. If a person is not linked closely to Christ, the vision of the Kingdom may be lost, and a person may find that he or she is working without an awareness of doing the will of the Father. Young people must be given every opportunity to come to know Christ especially through small group reflection. I will ask the Youth office to provide programmes for such purposes and to continue supporting those Archdiocesan youth movements that seek to lead people to Christ by reaching out to others less fortunate.

I make a special appeal to older people who were shaped by the youth movements of their time to come forward with their undoubted faith, energy and experience to help youth movements integrate faith and life. Older people have so much to offer youth, even in an era radically different from their own, and I encourage them to be generous in sharing their experience and faith. I encourage youth movements to avail themselves of the experience, energy and expertise of such people.

From personal experience I know the potential of the World Youth Day Pilgrimage for changing the hearts and minds of young people. It is a mixture of the Pope, of catechetics, of travel, of pain, of the incredible experience of the international youth community, all of which leads young people to a deeper understanding and appreciation of their faith. I encourage parishes to use every means at their disposal to assist and encourage young people to

participate in the next World Youth Pilgrimage in 2005. It is a most effective use of Parish and Archdiocesan finance. On such pilgrimages many young people experience a real sense of conversion while others lay a foundation for future growth in faith with an openness of heart for the work of God's Holy Spirit.

Having shared such an experience myself twice already I am only too happy to recommend it to Parishes and pastors. I am sure that the former Pilgrims of 2000 and 2002 would be only too happy to educate potential pilgrims about its effectiveness. I challenge those pilgrims to encourage other young people to take up the challenge of a World Youth pilgrimage in 2005.

As well as encouraging young people to live up to their baptismal vocation, I will also do everything possible to promote vocations to the Priesthood and religious life. Young people are capable of responding generously even at a very early age, and I commend these extremely important vocations to them. Today the Church desperately needs priests and religious. Such ministry is a most effective way of promoting God's Kingdom and the sacrifice associated with it must be placed within the understanding and love of Jesus Christ and his mission.

6. Parish Pastoral Leadership is promoted, supported and resourced at all levels.

The Archdiocese will promote, support and resource parish pastoral leadership in every way possible. I am immensely grateful to the priests of the Archdiocese and to parish pastoral ministers for their work in parish pastoral leadership. I am aware of the great pressures in parish ministry and leadership today. I am committed to supporting priests as key pastoral leaders and I will further explore with the Council of Priests opportunities for effectively developing and supporting priests in their leadership roles, including their roles in calling forth and supporting the leadership and ministry gifts of others.

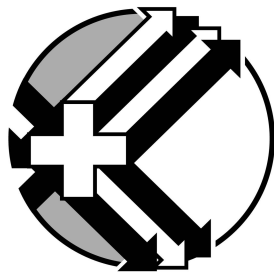
Despite the absolute need for regular Eucharistic celebration, if our communities are to retain their Catholic character, in an age when this is not always possible as in the past, we must search for other solutions. If our Catholic communities, formed over many years, are not to disintegrate in the future the Archdiocese needs pastoral leaders who, even if they are not able to lead Eucharistic celebrations, nevertheless can provide the creativity, vitality and deep faith that is a normal part of effective leadership.

Therefore, I will continue to support the work of preparing candidates for the position of permanent Deacon and, where needed, introduce the position of lay Parish Pastoral Director in the next phase of pastoral planning (in accordance with Church Law). There is also a need to have strategies in place for leadership of parish communities in emergency or temporary situations when the pastor is unable to carry out the role due to sudden illness or other circumstances. I therefore propose to introduce measures to prepare and assist lay people to act

as interim co-ordinators of parishes in such situations. However, it is not only the leadership of parishes that needs to be addressed, but also leadership of a variety of ministries within the parish community for which people need support, formation and training. To meet this need the Archdiocese is currently developing an accredited program to be used as a pilot program in 2004. Dependent on financial resources and needs, I am prepared to support parishes in their sponsoring of people to undertake such courses by offering bursaries to help defray costs.

It is vital that parishes examine their future leadership requirements and plan to put energy and resources into preparing people who can offer leadership in the times ahead. With the assistance of the Commission for Evangelisation and Pastoral Planning and the relevant Archdiocesan offices I will encourage and provide resources to assist parishes and Deaneries to plan for their future leadership needs in the next phase of pastoral planning.

At the same time, as I have mentioned already, every avenue will be explored to promote vocations to the ordained ministry so that the Archdiocese will not be deprived of Eucharistic celebration essential for the spiritual welfare of its people. I ask priests and people to be proactive in every way possible to encourage vocations to the priesthood. It is amazing how easily, with a simple word of encouragement, the seeds of a vocation to priesthood, diaconate or religious life can be planted in the hearts of people, especially young people.



The final three priorities are:

- 7 *That the person and message of Jesus and the works of the Church are effectively communicated in the wider society;*
 - 8 *That Parishes accept, value and use the initiative of small groups to nurture and support people in their faith journey; and*
 - 9 *That a deep awareness of, and commitment, to social justice and social welfare are characteristic of Catholics throughout the Archdiocese.*
7. **The person and message of Jesus and the works of the Church are effectively communicated in the wider society.**

Of its very essence the good news of Jesus Christ demands to be communicated effectively to all people. Because it is countercultural such communication is rarely newsworthy and sometimes not welcomed. Nevertheless the message of Jesus Christ presented adequately could be very

attractive today, not only because of the way it challenges the present break-down in public morality, but also because there is a desperate need to communicate effectively to people the Christian message in its totality and not some pale imitation.

The message of Christ excited people in His own time and there is no reason why it will not do the same today if presented in its fullness. Sadly its exciting challenge to transform the world is rarely communicated effectively either within the Church or outside it. Today it is difficult for any institution to claim relevance if it does not appear in the media and does not appear regularly. As a Church, both Archdiocesan and parish, we must learn to become media wise by being prepared to effectively engage the world with our message. Unless the Church is seen to be open to the world, it will never reflect the "all things to all people" attitude that St Paul recognised as necessary for evangelisation. After all, as the Second Vatican Council recognised, the Holy Spirit is already active in the world and its presence awaits discernment. Until this happens the Church will continue rightly to be neglected by the media. I endorse the significant role the Communications Commission takes in bridging the gap between the Church and the media and I will support this body in every way possible. A first valuable step will be the appointment of a Director of Communication to the Catholic Communications Office which will boost its ability to service the Archdiocese's broader communication needs and add to the excellent work currently being done by the office. Additionally, as a means of building bridges between the Church and the media, I intend to introduce a number of bursaries to support young people preparing for a career in the media.

8. **Parishes accept, value and use the initiative of small groups to nurture and support people in their faith journey.**

Perhaps in a world whose incredibly attractive culture has inadvertently damaged that sense of community necessary for the common good, the Church must be more than ever concerned about promoting community. Therefore it is important for the Church not merely to try to stimulate and support the community of the family and that of the Church, but also to encourage small, usually adhoc communities, that provide both a sense of belonging and a place where God can be found, often in discussion with other people.

After all Christ has assured us that when two or three are gathered in his name he is present in the midst of them. Encouraged by that promise many people have already taken the opportunity to participate in small learning groups, whether linked to the Liturgical seasons or established on a more permanent basis, while many others would be open to the possibility of such participation if it were available to them.

Many Church renewal programmes both in the Catholic Church and in other Churches, often functioning on an ecumenical basis, are already using small groups for this

purpose. I strongly commend such groups, congratulate them on what they are doing and encourage them to expand even further in the future. Some of the groups operating in this Archdiocese are only too ready to assist parishes that want to implement a small groups programme. The Archdiocese through the relevant offices will also develop resources to assist parishes manage small groups.

9. A deep awareness of and commitment to social justice and social welfare, are characteristic of Catholics throughout the Archdiocese.

We cannot be truly called “followers of Christ” unless we are concerned about poor and suffering people and prepared to identify the causes of poverty and suffering. In other words we cannot really be called Christian unless we are involved in matters of social welfare and social justice. Many participate by belonging to St Vincent de Paul or other groups concerned about welfare or justice. Others participate vicariously by contributing funds to assist this important work.

Two major collections are taken up annually in this Archdiocese for assisting needy people and for supporting agencies engaged in such work. A major Project Compassion collection is also taken up in Lent directed largely to overseas development aid. As well as providing assistance to needy people the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission also seeks to lift the awareness of people about important justice issues at a local, state, national, and international level. I commend it to you for your full support. The dream that I have cherished, but not been able to realise, is that every parish would have groups devoted to social welfare and social justice.

Sadly membership of social justice or social welfare groups is still limited to only a few people, and yet as Pope John Paul II has stated on so many occasions, concern about such matters belongs to the integrity of Christian faith. Although the Pope constantly speaks out about such matters, many people who follow him easily in matters of sexual morality, are reluctant to do so when he speaks about matters of social justice. I long for the day when the Catholic membership of our society is so well informed about such matters that it significantly influences their political choices. If Christ thought social justice important then it should be important for us too.

In the coming year the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission will provide introductory courses on the social justice teaching of the Church and will assist those parishes that want to establish social justice groups. There are still so many matters in our society and world that cry out for Christian attention - the continuing plight of indigenous people; the increasing gap between rich and poor; the horrible injustice of the abortion industry; the selfish closure of Australian boundaries to refugees; the reluctance to fully include women, indigenous people, children, disabled people and the elderly in our society; and the continuing neglect of the environment. All of these areas and many others are reason for concern if we wish to transform the world according to the vision of Christ. I believe that there is a real need to educate people, especially young people,

about this broader vision of Christianity which cannot be separated from our relationship to Christ and the mystical body of Christ, the Church. Young people are usually attracted to issues of justice, peace and environment, and the realisation that such issues are integral to the vision of Christ may help them develop a deeper respect for religion and the role of the Church in society.

Conclusion

I thank you all for your presence here today and for your attention. Once again I want to reiterate the fact that we are indeed a privileged group because with seven hundred other people we have experienced an exciting Church in this Synod. It is up to us now, because of this privilege, to try and share our experience of faith and the spirit of the Synod with the almost six hundred thousand other Catholics of this Archdiocese who have not shared this excitement and also with all those people beyond our Catholic boundaries who seek good news. Our attempts to apply the priorities of the Synod to our parishes are merely a starting point. The Synod will not suddenly change this Archdiocese for the better, nor will it suddenly bring back to the mainstream of the Church all those Catholics who presently exist on its edges. Nevertheless it would be marvellous if the Synod could be seen in the future as a significant moment of resurrection for our Archdiocese. Only God will know how effective we have been in trying to implement the Synod recommendations. Christ has invited us in the Gospel today to put out into the deep and that is precisely what we will try to do in the years ahead.

In trying to respond in the light of this present moment in our history, I believe that over the past three years we have achieved much. Whether we can now harness the wisdom of the Spirit for the renewal of this Archdiocese remains our biggest challenge. For that to happen the same Holy Spirit who has given us wisdom must now give us the faith, the courage, the determination, the creativity and the commitment to move ahead as an Archdiocese for God's greater glory and the promotion of God's Reign.

I thank in a special way Bishop Putney, Bishop Gerry, Bishop Finnigan and the members of the Synod Preparatory Commission and all working behind the scenes in groups or as volunteer helpers who have assisted us in this journey. Most importantly could I thank all of you — Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Associates, Religious and Laity who have co-operated magnificently with the work of the Synod, always prepared to walk the extra mile in the process. I thank you all sincerely for your generosity and sacrifice.

Finally I thank God for what has happened and pray that St Stephen the patron of the Archdiocese, Blessed Mary MacKillop our greatest Australian beatified and Mary the Mother of God now intercede for us as we seek to promote God's reign according to the priorities chosen by us in the Synod through the power of the Holy Spirit.

May God Bless you all.