

# Catholics For Renewal Inc.

[www.catholicsforrenewal.org.au](http://www.catholicsforrenewal.org.au)



Archbishop Peter Comensoli  
Archbishop of Melbourne

22 January 2025

Dear Archbishop Peter,

On 25 January 2018 I wrote to Archbishop Denis Hart as President of Catholics for Renewal, urging him to take the advice of Pope Francis and “put in place the means of communication and pastoral dialogue and listen to everyone with ‘mission’ as the principal aim” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 31). To be more specific I suggested 15 steps to make the pastoral dialogue most effective ([CFR - FINAL - LETTER TO AB HART re 2020 Plenary and Diocesan Working Group.pdf](#) )

I do not know if Archbishop Denis was able to accept my suggestions as, shortly after, you were appointed to replace him on 29 June 2018 and installed on 1 August 2018.

More recently, in June 2023, Catholics for Renewal published an Editorial on ***Diocesan Synods: Getting the Preparations Underway*** ([Catholics for Renewal](#) )

In the Editorial we emphasised that:

A diocesan synod is a gathering of all the faithful of a local church working together on its mission and sharing in its life. This is why it is a *liturgical* event: opening and closing with the Eucharist and beginning each day with prayer.

The [Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops](#) calls the diocesan Synod ‘the instrument *par excellence* for assisting the bishop – the sole legislator - in establishing the canonical ordering of the diocesan Church’.

It is the ‘[highest of all diocesan structures of participation](#)’ for it provides a grace-filled opportunity for the People of God in the local church to walk together in ‘synodality’ - ‘the very essence of the Church and her constitutive reality’, the ‘ecclesial way of being’, and ‘the path which God expects of the Church in the third millennium’.

Under the bishop’s leadership the synod discerns the pastoral challenges in the diocese, seeks ways to go in mission, renews and deepens awareness of co-responsibility and, listening to the Spirit, [co-operates actively in making appropriate decisions](#).

In preparing a diocesan synod the bishop must set up an effective preparatory process to ensure that ‘all the voices’ are heard and listened to. While the bishop will inform the

diocesan faithful of what he wants placed on the agenda, he must give his priests and lay men and women the opportunity to freely express their own needs, desires, and opinions and cooperate with him for the good of the whole ecclesial community. The permanent diocesan structures are also to be involved in this process.

The 1997 [\*Instruction on Diocesan Synods\*](#) calls for the bishop to establish a preparatory commission composed of competent clergy and laity, a secretariat, and a press office, and insists that the faithful of the diocese be fully informed of the nature and purpose of the synod.

With the bishop, the preparatory commission prepares the synod Directory, containing membership composition. and rules for electing members, synodal structures, personnel, and procedures.

Those who participate in the synod, whether *ex officio*, elected, or appointed, must provide a meaningful and balanced image of the entire local church, reflecting its diverse ministries, charisms, competencies, vocations, and demographic and social character, across its entire territory. Synod members will receive all working documents prior to the synod opening.

Catholics for Renewal believes that a diocesan synod is long overdue for the Archdiocese of Melbourne – the last one being in 1916 – and would benefit enormously if one was convened by you in the very near future. It would be a great graced and sacred event for the faithful of our diocese.

The *Final Document* of the Synod on Synodality, approved by Pope Francis, ( [https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26\\_final-document/ENG---Documento-finale.pdf](https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26_final-document/ENG---Documento-finale.pdf) ) calls on you to ‘convene a diocesan synod as your more highly valued participatory body for regular consultation between you and the portion of the People of God entrusted to you. Make it the place for listening, prayer and discernment, particularly when it comes to choices pertaining to the life and mission of a local Church. And ensure you convene the diocesan synod regularly to demonstrate your accountability and evaluate your implementation of your diocesan pastoral plan’.

In September 2023 Catholics for Renewal also wrote an Editorial on Diocesan Pastoral Councils ([Editorial-September 2023 – Catholics For Renewal](#) ).

In the *Final Document* of the Synod on Synodality Pope Francis has mandated these Councils and calls on you to ‘establish a diocesan pastoral council and ensure that its members can propose agenda items similar to that allowed for the presbyteral council and ensure that the membership of the pastoral councils (diocesan and parish) include greater involvement of women, young people, and those living in poverty or on the margins’.

The *Final Document* also lists several other requirements to ensure transparency, accountability and evaluation in the Melbourne Archdiocese and calls on you to:

- make the Church in Melbourne welcoming with the culture and praxis of accountability and the involvement of lay men and women competent in pastoral and financial planning,

- publish an externally audited annual diocesan financial report, showing how the temporal goods and financial resources of the diocese are being managed,
- publish an annual report on the mission of the diocese, including its safeguarding initiatives, progress on lay access to positions of authority and decision-making, and specify the proportion of lay men and women,
- conduct periodic evaluations of all the ministries and roles within the local diocese.

Catholics for Renewal looks forward to the day when you have put in place all these synodal structures and initiatives.

Sincerely in Christ,

(Dr) Peter J Wilkinson  
President  
Catholics for Renewal

22 January 2025

PS I wish to advise you that Catholics for Renewal will be winding up in February 2025 and cancelling its incorporation. This will be my last correspondence with you as President of Catholics for Renewal.