



Missionary Leadership

INTRODUCTION

The Melbourne Synod is an invitation to our local Church to listen attentively to the Holy Spirit and to discern how we are called to proclaim the Gospel more faithfully in our time and place. The purpose of this synod is to help shape our evangelical and missionary priorities for the years ahead. This synodal journey will focus on three themes: Young Discipleship, Missionary Leadership, and Formation and Participation.

This paper has been prepared to assist with reflection on the theme of *Missionary Leadership*. As we reflect on this theme, we are encouraged to ponder: Where is the Holy Spirit leading our Archdiocese at this time? Whom are we being called to accompany in faith more intentionally? How might we reflect the face of Christ more clearly in our local Church?

This paper aims to foster a spirit of hope and imagination—trusting that, as we walk together, God is calling us into a future marked by faithfulness, renewal and deeper communion.

MISSION BELONGS TO THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

The mission of the Church belongs to the whole People of God. By virtue of baptism, every Christian is called to participate in the mission of Christ and his Church. Mission is not the responsibility of a few, nor is leadership reserved only for those who hold formal positions of authority. The call to missionary leadership belongs to all the baptised.

By baptism, each person is part of the Body of Christ and shares in his priestly, prophetic and kingly mission. Every baptised person is entrusted with gifts and charisms for the building up of the Church and the transformation of the world. Missionary leadership therefore begins with baptismal identity.

Leadership is exercised whenever people:

- live the Gospel authentically
- accompany others in faith
- witness to Christ in everyday life.

This understanding fosters a culture of co-responsibility, where clergy, religious and lay faithful work together in service of the Gospel. It reflects the heart of a synodal Church: walking, listening, discerning and participating together in Christ's mission.

Please add:

Question for reflection:

What has been your experience of Missionary Leadership in your parish or community?

LEADERSHIP AS PARTICIPATION AND WITNESS

While some members of the Body of Christ are called to formal leadership roles within the Church, all the baptised are called to lead through the witness of their lives. Missionary leadership is defined not by position but by participation in Christ's mission.

It is lived in

- homes and families
- workplaces and schools
- parishes and communities.

Missionary leadership invites all people to recognise that they have a role to play in the life and mission of the Church.

FORMING LEADERS

Missionary leaders do not seek to do everything themselves. Instead they:

- discern and recognise the gifts of others
- form and accompany new leaders
- equip the faithful for ministry.

A central task of leadership is to identify, develop and release the gifts already present within the community. Healthy Christian communities are marked by active participation, where people move from being consumers of a service to contributors, building up the community, from observers of community life to participants, and from recipients of ministry to missionary disciples.



MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP IN DAILY LIFE

Missionary leadership is expressed differently according to vocation and context. For some, it is exercised through formal roles in parishes, schools or Catholic ministries. For many others, it is lived in the ordinary circumstances of daily life:

- Parents lead as the first educators in faith accompanying their children and witnessing to the Gospel through family life.
- Families become primary places of evangelisation and discipleship.
- Educators, mentors and community members lead through example, encouragement, and witness.

Missionary leadership begins wherever people live their baptismal call with intentionality and courage.

The essential question is not simply 'Who leads?' but 'How are all the baptised equipped and encouraged to participate in Christ's mission?'

MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

For many years, much of parish life has understandably focused on sustaining ministries, maintaining buildings and preserving established ways of operating. While these responsibilities remain important, missionary leadership calls the Church to move decisively from maintenance to mission. As Fr James Mallon observes in *Divine Renovation*, 'The Church does not have a mission; the mission has a Church.'

Missionary leadership recognises that our structures, resources, ministries and governance exist to serve the mission of evangelisation.¹ This requires more than incremental change. It calls for a shift in culture: from preservation to renewal, from serving those who are already present to actively seeking those who are absent, and from waiting for people to come to us to intentionally going out into the world.

¹ *Evangelii gaudium*, §27.

FROM WELCOMING TO INVITATIONAL COMMUNITIES

A welcoming community receives those who come. A missionary community goes further: it is intentionally invitational and:

- reaches out proactively
- builds relationships
- creates pathways for encounter with Jesus Christ.

Missionary leaders continually discern:

- How are we inviting people into relationship with Jesus?
- How are we helping people encounter Christ through the life of our communities?
- How are we forming disciples who can confidently share their faith?
- How are we equipping people to live the Gospel in their families, workplaces and local communities?
- How are our structures supporting mission, or hindering it?

PROCLAMATION, SACRAMENT AND ENCOUNTER

At the heart of missionary leadership is the kerygma: the joyful proclamation of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This joyful proclamation provides an opportunity to engage people in their own encounter with the Lord Jesus.

In the Catholic tradition, this proclamation is inseparable from the Church's sacramental life. The Gospel is proclaimed not only through words but also through:

- liturgy and sacrament
- signs, symbols, rituals
- encounters that reveal God's presence.

Missionary communities ensure that their liturgies, ministries and parish life are places of encounter that lead people into deeper relationship with Christ and participation in the life of the Church. As Jesus reminds his disciples, 'You are the light of the world' (Matthew 5:14).

Missionary leaders help all the baptised recognise and live this calling.



TOWARD A MISSIONARY FUTURE

The future of missionary leadership depends not simply on recruiting more leaders, but on awakening, forming and sending the missionary leaders we already have.

This requires:

- intentional formation
- a culture of co-responsibility
- communities that call forth, support and sustain missionary disciples.

Missionary leadership is formed in baptism and expressed through participation, witness and shared responsibility. It calls every member of the Church to take an active role in Christ's mission.

By fostering missionary leadership at every level, the Church becomes more fully a synodal and missionary community—sent into the world to proclaim the Gospel and witness to Christ in word and action.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do people in my community demonstrate missionary leadership?
2. What prevents people from becoming engaged in missionary leadership?
3. What three priorities to support missionary leadership could the Archdiocese pursue over the next five years?

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or via email to: Synod26@cam.org.au

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