



**Dr Patrick McArdle,
CHAIR, Archbishop's Task Force
Diocesan Pastoral Council,
Solemnity of St Joseph,
20th March 2023**

Dear Patrick,

In this Year of Walking Together, I was very pleased to receive from your Working Party a Report regarding A Diocesan Pastoral Council. I established this Working Party on 12 April 2022.

Could you please thank the Working Party for their hard work that has produced a thorough update on progress towards the establishment in this Archdiocese of a Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC).

The Report has comprehensively surveyed the literature on past attempts to begin a DPC here and two past Diocesan Synods.

In summary, the Report recommends to me the re-establishment of a DPC. However, you have indicated that this would need to be constituted differently. You indicate that past attempts have produced mixed fruits. Clear goals and work plans need to be articulated. The number and representative nature of the members was a topic of special consideration. Various recommendations were then proposed.

It certainly is my intention to re-establish a DPC and to announce a Synod of the Archdiocese at the appropriate time. The institutional framework proposed in the Report is a significant stepping-stone to assist me along this long held desire.

Yet, there are still important tasks for the Working party to pursue.

Over my years as priest and Archbishop, I have noted that good pastoral strategies are based always on good pastoral theology expressed explicitly.

There are some attempts towards this goal in the literature you surveyed. Some penetrating insights, for example, by Archbishop Francis Carroll are evident. Yet, more expansive theological foundations are needed.

Clearly, a refreshed sound pastoral strategy for a DPC has yet to be articulated in a manner that includes the more recent theological vocabulary of synodality and evangelisation. This would also need to include directions from the decrees of the recently concluded Plenary Council of Australia. In addition, there are the reports both present and future from the universal Synods on Synodality to consider.



From these sources, solidly based on the Vatican II Documents, what pastoral theological foundations are emerging in our times? How can they truly assist us in re-establishing our DPC and offer orientation for a soundly based Synod in the Archdiocese?

May I suggest the on-going task of the Working party is to move into this essential area as well?

It would need to begin with the Sacrament of Baptism and the image of the Church as the Community of the Holy Spirit. Here, discerning the presence of the Holy Spirit amongst us with all the charisms needed to build up the Body of Christ is a starting point. This needs to begin with profound listening and a fresh encounter with Jesus at the very center of everything.

This would then assist us in ensuring that we are all WALKING TOGETHER and not in parallel lines, as Pope Francis cautions us. This stage of integral discipleship stresses our differences yet our unity as the Community of the Holy Spirit. We all have gifts to offer the building up of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" Church.

Of course, our vision is evangelising – we are "sent out" as missionary disciples of the Resurrection into the world. Evangelisation is to be centred on the area of marginalisations in our world. This is both synodal and Marian in mode.

If the Working Party could report to me on this vital area and begin to wed it into all that is already given, I would be most grateful.

Perhaps a mode of seeing all this "modelled" in a parish or two in the Archdiocese "ad experimentum" would be a pastoral strategy that could benefit the entire Archdiocese in time.

Again, many thanks for all you are doing for the Archdiocese.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

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Archbishop Christopher Prowse
Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn

