



**Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen** OFM Conv DD STL  
Bishop of Parramatta

Bethany Centre, 470 Church St, Parramatta NSW 2150, Australia

PO Box 3066, North Parramatta, NSW 1750

02 8838 3400 02 9630 4813

bishop@parracatholic.org

parracatholic.org

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The Second Sunday of Lent and the Transfiguration of the Lord.

Dear friends in Christ,

Not long after my Installation as your pastor, I desired to hold a Diocesan Synod in order to develop a pastoral plan which would follow my predecessor's "Faith in Our Future" and chart a new pathway for the Diocese. However, we had to wait for the long-delayed national Plenary Council to conclude.

Today, after much prayer and consultation, I formally announce the convocation of the Synod in the Diocese of Parramatta. This will be the first Synod in the history of our young Diocese. Like the national and universal synods, ours will be also held in two phases. The first assembly will be held from Thursday 12 to Sunday 15 October 2023 and the final assembly will be held near the middle of next year 2024.

Recognising the fruits of the Plenary Council and in the spirit of synodality, to which you have already contributed so deeply, I invite you to walk with me as we discern further a framework by which we can revitalise our Church in the Diocese and discover together a path of renewal for all of us.

I have appointed a Preparatory Commission to lead this process, chaired by Sr Ailsa Mackinnon RSM, Chancellor of Ministries and Qwayne Guevara as the Lead Facilitator.

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God into a journey of listening and discernment, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide us towards personal conversion and renewal in the Church. Pope Francis explains that '*The journey of synodality is the journey that God wants from His church in the third millennium*'.

In preparation towards the Synod, I encourage you to participate in prayer, listening, discernment and local action, guided by the Holy Spirit, as we seek to witness to the Gospel and foster a more welcoming, compassionate, and humble Church. The Diocesan Synod will have a significant impact on the way in which we live out community and mission.

The time is now, here in the Diocese of Parramatta, for us to 'go out into the deep' (Luke 5:4) and step into the future that awaits us - one that is inspired by the deep understanding that God's love is not reserved for a few, but for all. Let us accompany one another along this path with firm hope and abiding trust in our God who desires our good, and who dwells among us.

St Mary of the Cross McKillop, pray for us.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

**Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv.  
Bishop of Parramatta**