



Archdiocese  
OF Wellington



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

# DIOCESAN SYNTHESIS

## Archdiocese of Wellington

*Aotearoa New Zealand*





## FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

*Communion - Participation - Mission*

### DIOCESAN SYNTHESIS

The Archdiocese of Wellington spans an area of central Aotearoa New Zealand covering the lower North Island and upper South Island. It comprises 23 parishes with an average pre-pandemic Sunday Mass count of 11,000 <sup>1</sup>. The Archdiocese is committed to a bicultural Church that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and recognizes Māori as tangata whenua.<sup>2</sup>

The people of the Archdiocese of Wellington are familiar with synodality. Since 1988 local synods have been held in this diocese at intervals of approximately ten years, the latest taking place in September 2017. Outcomes from the various synods have shaped pastoral plans and continue to guide our vision: ‘We, the Catholic People of the Archdiocese of Wellington, challenged to follow Christ, are called to proclaim the Kingdom of God by celebrating God in our lives, sharing our living faith, growing in community, and working for justice and peace.’

### OUR JOURNEY

The Archdiocese of Wellington welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the global Synod which began in October 2021. A Synod Team was established by Cardinal John Dew within Archdiocesan Church Mission with the aim of promoting the Synod, preparing materials for discernment, training facilitators, and engaging parishes and other faith communities within the Archdiocese. While the process of group discernment was promoted and encouraged as the ideal way of practicing and experiencing synodality, it was acknowledged that not everyone was able or willing to engage in such a process. Online surveys were set up to encourage submissions from young people, those who are no longer connected to the Church, and anyone who preferred to respond individually. Special Synod materials were sent out to schools to engage students and their families.

The Synod process took place in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic with resultant restrictions on gatherings and a reluctance by many to engage in social interaction. Another obstacle was timing, with the summer holidays halting the process through December and January. A universal 4-month extension by the Vatican of the Diocesan Phase was warmly welcomed.

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1 While numbers have visibly declined through the pandemic, the 2021 Mass count of 4,754 was based on a 100-person limit on gatherings and is not a true picture of the current reality.

2 Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) is New Zealand’s founding document – refer [https://www.catholic.org.nz/about-us/history/#section\\_37](https://www.catholic.org.nz/about-us/history/#section_37) ‘Tangata whenua’ – ‘the people of the land’, the Māori people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Despite these setbacks, it was encouraging to receive submissions from all the parishes in the Archdiocese. Parish teams, parishioners, ethnic groups, schoolteachers, prayer groups, social justice groups, youth groups, groups of women and many others came together to engage in the discernment process. Those who participated in the group discernment process found it to be a safe space that encouraged a depth of sharing and a life-giving experience of Church as a faith community. Many commented that they had never had such a deep and personal experience of prayer with others. *“I came away from the evening with a sense of hope I had not experienced in years.” “The Synod process has been an integrative tool; friendships emerging, becoming community. Deep listening opening us to the bigger picture.”*<sup>3</sup>

Overall, the process was received with enthusiasm and a sense of hope that we are moving towards a more open, welcoming, and inclusive Church – a true outworking of Vatican II. However, this was often dampened by a feeling of powerlessness in the face of a hierarchical system perceived to be set in its ways. This emerged in comments like, *‘but will they listen to us anyway?’* In response to Pope Francis’ invitation for the People of God to dream, some questioned whether the Synod of Bishops would show the same openness to new ways of being Church. On the other hand, a smaller group expressed deep concern that the Synod is yet another deviation from the one true Faith and Tradition, promising only a *‘watered down Catholicism.’*

Altogether, we received 237 group submissions and 395 individual submissions, engaging over 1,500 people. While the numbers are encouraging, we are aware that there are voices that remain unheard and are not necessarily included in this report.

- **Bicultural Church:** Of those who engaged with the Synod process, only a small number were Māori. This outcome reflects a need for stronger relationships and better inclusion of tangata whenua in the Archdiocese.
- **Multi-ethnic communities:** Although there was a reasonable representation of ethnicities, we still missed the voices of many ethnic groups whose people often feel unwelcome and whose culture is often unacknowledged and unappreciated in the local Church. There exists a tension between inclusion and a desire to maintain group identity in a culturally diverse country.
- **Younger generation:** The largest proportion of submissions came from older New Zealanders. It was disappointing not to hear from more young people and students. Sadly, this is indicative of the relative absence of the young in our parish church communities<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, the high level of participation of our Catholic school teachers was significant.

## Listening to those on the peripheries

The Synod Team reached out to members of the Wellington deaf community and the L’Arche community of Kapiti. Prison chaplains spoke on behalf of prisoners who could not be visited because of pandemic restrictions. We received submissions from groups of elderly living in aged care facilities. We heard from groups involved in social agencies and those dealing with poverty, ecology, justice, and peace.

The voices of many on the peripheries came to us through individuals making time to engage in meaningful conversations – with family members who have left the Church; friends who because of gender orientation or life choices feel excluded or judged; collaborators from different faith backgrounds. These conversations have added to the richness of our Synod submissions. Yet we know that many other such conversations still need to happen if we are to be a truly synodal Church journeying with everyone.

<sup>3</sup> All italicised quotations are taken from actual submissions unless otherwise stated.

<sup>4</sup> Aotearoa NZ is blessed with a very strong and widespread Catholic education system. Although our schools are part of our parish faith communities, the appeal of the Sunday Assembly to young people remains very low.



## A guiding local image – Hīkoi Ngātahi

With such a strong ‘journeying’ theme as a guiding motif, a Māori language image for this synodal experience that has emerged for us is of that of ‘hīkoi ngātahi.’ Hīkoi ngātahi, journeying together, has for many New Zealanders become a synonym for pilgrimage and even protest (seeking to bring about change). In the Archdiocese of Wellington, the synodal hīkoi ngātahi continues.

## HĪKOI NGĀTAHI - JOURNEYING TOGETHER

*“Synodality is recapturing the vision of the Second Vatican Council, where we are all the People of God together. What we are engaging in now is about growing closer to one another as disciples, and being supportive as we walk alongside one another, as we try every day to make a Gospel response to the situations life puts before us.”*

(John Dew, Archbishop of Wellington)

At the heart of our synodal discernment process was the fundamental question on journeying together. We were invited to reflect on our experience of the journey together as the Church in the Archdiocese of Wellington. The following are some of the blessings our people identified as cause to celebrate:

**We celebrate our synodality.** Our regular diocesan synods are a way of journeying together as the People of God. The 2017 Synod with the theme, “Go, you are sent”, invited us to be mission-focused: to go to the peripheries; build community; accompany one another; find leaders; deepen our bicultural relationship; journey as members of the One Body, and much more. While some of the accompanying recommendations are still in the early stages of implementation, the theme of ‘journeying together’ reminds us that we are still being sent, still a ‘People on the Way’.

**We celebrate our bicultural partnership,** which makes the Aotearoa Catholic experience truly ours. Journeying together, our ongoing Catholic hīkoi ngātahi, is to capture the shared story of our history and, building on and learning from that same history, to move forward together.

**We celebrate our diversity** in a Church that is multi-ethnic and brings together cultures from all around the world. We appreciate the experience and wisdom of our older generations, and welcome the freshness and energy of the young, especially our school students and young families.

**We celebrate our people** – lay and ordained – who continue to respond to the Gospel message, care for one another, serve in our communities and be beacons of hope despite our many challenges.

**We celebrate our earthly home,** as we consider the importance of making ‘care for creation’ an integral part of all our diocesan activities and decisions here in Aotearoa New Zealand. We acknowledge that we have much to learn and implement and that there is growing urgency for an effective response.

**We celebrate our faith in Christ,** who is the very heart of our Church and our hīkoi ngātahi. With Christ in our hearts, and a love for the Church and the world, we continue our mission to ‘proclaim God’s Kingdom by celebrating God in our lives, sharing our living faith, growing in community, and working for justice and peace.’ (Archdiocese of Wellington vision)

## We asked our people:

*Where, in these experiences, can the Spirit be heard or seen? What is the Spirit asking of us?  
What are we doing well? What needs to change? What steps do we need to take?  
Where do we agree? What paths are opening for us? (SynPrep26)*

Our reflections were guided, but not limited, by the ten supplied thematic questions on lived synodality. As submissions came in, our own local set of themes emerged. The following is a succinct summary of the seven key themes that emerged from our diocesan synod submissions.

## 1 A SYNODAL CHURCH THAT LISTENS AND LEARNS

The invitation to participate in the Synod has helped us understand that to grow and change, we need to first listen and learn. The synodal process has given us a glimpse of a new and deeper way of journeying together. Our people said that:

- *“In a synodal Church, the promise of shared responsibility, planted by the Second Vatican Council over half a century ago, finally grows, flourishes and matures.”* In a truly synodal Church we, the People of God, journey together and are all Church ministers, inwardly and outwardly. We are decision-makers and partners with our priests and bishops.
- We need to understand what synodality means in our bicultural and multi-ethnic context. *“Who defines what this journeying together means? What areas of our lives together are we allowed to ask questions about? Does it mean more Māori at the table? More Māori in decision-making?”* What about others, such as Pasifika and Asian voices? *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* needs to be upheld in visible ways, and deeper conversation is needed.
- We are called to journey with other Christians, but our churches often work as if in separate silos. We must find new ways of collaborating and praying together. Our liturgical structures and rules around shared communion hold us back. We have much to learn from other Christian denominations.
- We are called to journey with the human family, no matter what ethnicity, faith, or gender. The trauma and lessons of the 2019 Christchurch mosque attacks, and the plight of refugees from around the world, are opportunities to extend and deepen bonds of friendship, mutual hospitality, and collaboration.
- In an increasingly fragmented world, a synodal Church must focus on accompanying others – those who are with us and those to whom we are called to reach out.

*“As a Pilgrim Church, the distinctions of lay and ordained are replaced by a shared vision of authentic leadership, authority and responsibility.”*

*“Synodality is about sharing woundedness and deepening community; about being Christ to one another in fragility and vulnerability.”*

- As a listening Church we are called to a new openness of heart. To replace judgement with respect and to seek to learn from the marginalised, the disabled, the young and the old, those on the peripheries and those who have felt excluded. *“To walk side-by-side we need to be open to the ‘other.’ There are people who want to be part of us, but we are not open to them. They are real people, with faces and names.”*
- Listening needs to be the stance of the Church. We need to start by seeking to understand other people’s experience of our Church which may be quite different from our own. Our journey must be about the people. *“He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.”*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.*  
Māori whakatauki (proverb).



## 2 AN INCLUSIVE CHURCH & THE VOICES OF WOMEN

A strong theme that came through was the need for inclusivity, with particular attention to the role of women. Our hope is for a Church that is truly inclusive and welcoming of all, where everyone feels a sense of belonging, can live out their true calling and share fully in the Church's mission. Our people said that:

- Pope Francis' encouragement of a more inclusive Church, reaching out to *"the minorities, the excluded and discarded"* (Synod Booklet) is welcome.
- The Church needs to be intentionally inclusive of genders and cultures. We are poorer for the lack of a balanced interpretation of scripture and theology. We miss the voices of women, married people, young people, the disabled, and the many diverse cultures in our communities.
- It hurts to see family members and friends leaving the Church because they feel judged unacceptable due to life situations, gender issues, or what is regarded as 'irregular' family life (e.g., intermarriage of various kinds, gay partnership, solo parenting, etc.) As one person commented: *"It is a shock to be reminded that Church doctrine is exclusive of some people. This does not reflect what we hear of Jesus Christ."*
- Many are no longer with us because of the scandal of clerical abuse. As Church we must face the deep wounds of the past that need healing for all. Meaningful reparation for the sexual and power abuse by our Church is urgently needed if we are to move forward in true synodality. *"We are unable to reach the whole People of God. We are missing those whose pain from past experiences keeps them away from the Church."*
- The appointment of women in key leadership roles in the Vatican is overdue and welcome. However, this needs to filter down to the local level. Typically, women carry the load of voluntary service within their community and on the peripheries. Yet for centuries, their voices have been dismissed in a Church that is patriarchal in its structure.

*"It is not only women who do not have a voice; others in the Church community such as Māori, Pasifika peoples, young people, LGBTQI+ people, the divorced and separated, and the sexually abused are rarely fully represented or even heard."*

*"As a woman I pay a very high price in remaining Catholic."*

- The ordained ministry should be the result of a discerned call independent of gender. The call of some women to ordained ministry must be recognised and celebrated. Women are ready and willing to serve, though they do not wish to be locked into the current outdated and unworkable model of priesthood.
- Women hold key leadership roles on the world stage. The Church needs to pay heed to their wisdom, insight, and leadership skills by granting them equal participation in key decision-making and liturgical roles.

## 3 RENEWED MODELS OF LEADERSHIP

A key theme that emerged from the submissions was that, if we are to be a truly synodal Church, we need to move beyond hierarchical decision-making structures which tend to put immense pressure on the ordained while disempowering the laity. Our people said that:

- We are held back by structures that are too rigid and make little space for co-responsibility, transparency, and accountability. Leaders are needed who model openness to collaboration, critique, and change. Default Catholic leadership emphasises the ordained at the expense of lay people – this must change. There should be no 'ordained' or 'lay' differentiation. We are one People of God, sharing one baptism and one mission to which we are all called (LG 33).
- The selection of local bishops should involve the people of the local Church far more intentionally than the current process allows.

- Acknowledging that we are part of the universal Church, the local Church in Aotearoa New Zealand would benefit from being more locally directed to respond most effectively to the needs and realities of the people we serve. Locally informed decision-making is crucial. We are ready for change even if many other countries are not.
- Priests are valued, and their wellbeing concerns us. Priestly ordination should not however be primarily tied to leadership roles but be centred on sacramental and pastoral ministry. The current model of Parish Priest sees diocesan clergy bogged down by bureaucracy and the pressures of leading multi-church parishes. This often leaves them little time for pastoral ministry and can rob them of the joy of their vocation.
- The future of the vocation to ordained priesthood is at risk in its current state. Celibacy should be optional for the ordained. The current model of priesthood is keeping many good people who feel called – men and women – from becoming ordained ministers, sharing the load, and broadening the life-experience of our presbyterate. *“We keep praying for ‘vocations.’ Perhaps they are there but excluded. That might well mean rethinking the model of priestly ministry.”*
- There is often a disconnect between priests and those they are called to serve. The current model of seminary formation that segregates young men and isolates them from everyday family life in Aotearoa New Zealand, needs to be reviewed.
- Our communities would be better served by ‘sacramental and pastoral chaplains’ collaborating with lay people who are educated and formed in pastoral leadership and skilled in community building.
- *“Clericalism needs to be called out in both lay and ordained behaviour and attitudes.”*

*“A new model of priesthood could liberate the priest.”*

## 4 OUR GATHERING: LITURGICAL REFORM & MODELS OF COMMUNITY

Catholics have been traditionally highly ‘Mass-focused’.<sup>6</sup> How we celebrate Eucharist as well as how we celebrate community emerged as two interrelated themes. Our people said that:

- Good liturgy celebrates community and diversity. It is meaningful, engaging, inclusive, and provides for the participation of families, children, and the marginalized.
- Eurocentric liturgies must give way to bicultural and multi-ethnic expressions of worship. Our diversity is often not reflected in our congregations, worship, or leadership. *“Liturgy at our place needs to reflect us as a community of Christ together and be an expression of our identity.”*
- The language urgently needs to change. Despite earlier commitment to inclusive language in this country<sup>7</sup>, our texts remain masculine, exclusive, and even offensive. We need language that includes, builds up, heals wounds, and affirms.
- Homilies must reflect a range of perspectives on scripture and theology (e.g., male/female, married/celibate, young/old, etc.). We need reflections that are relevant to everyday life and address the struggles of grief, unemployment, aging, anxiety, depression, etc.
- Liturgical scruples impoverish us. We need flexibility to ensure enlivened liturgies, with both music and message that speak to today’s young. Our children and young people do not feel that our Church is meeting their spiritual needs.

*“Our young are shouting ‘irrelevance’ with their feet.”*

<sup>6</sup> This is not to deny the fundamental Catholic belief that Eucharist is our centre. Rather it points to a near-fixation for Catholics that Mass is all that really matters. Gathering for other reasons (possibly excluding devotions) is often felt to be almost unnecessary and undesirable.

<sup>7</sup> Refer the NZCBC’s 1997 statement on inclusive language- <https://www.catholic.org.nz/about-us/bishops-statements/gender-inclusive-language/>

- Whereas Second Vatican Council promoted full, conscious, and active participation, many Catholics remain mostly passive spectators who sit in the pews and watch while the priest prays the Mass.
- We are the Body of Christ, called to journey together in community. Yet, for many of us, the celebration of Mass remains more a personal than communal experience and it is difficult to feel a sense of belonging.
- The current model of merged parishes needs to be reviewed. Large, impersonal gatherings often leave people feeling lost and disconnected. Where the Sunday Assembly is larger, small groups remain crucial in that they are so much more conducive to community and outreach, as all churches have found. *“A Church made up of many small diverse communities could permeate complex modern society in ways that parishes no longer do.”*
- Te Ngākau Tapu, our parish particular to Māori, is a place of healing and nourishment.
- Young people still seek God as much as previous generations, but they need and expect a Church that reflects their life experience (their world) and provides a sense of relevance and belonging. They often find these things more readily in other Christian churches (especially Pentecostal churches) but report eventually missing the depth of the Sacraments and the Catholic faith tradition.
  - Our current way of gathering (Mass) meets the needs of some but excludes many. The ritual and symbolism of the liturgy, while comfortingly familiar to Catholics, often feels alien to newcomers. Additional types of gathering are needed in which dialogue, sharing, and mission can take place. *“Facilitating experiences where people commune with the sacred outside of Mass and in everyday life would enliven and renew faith.”*
  - Covid has changed our experience of worship and community life (e.g., online Masses) and raised questions about how and why we gather and celebrate.

*“Parish communities should be places of encounter where we cross borders.”*

*“Our Church tends to be individualistic and entirely focused on the Eucharist and not on community.”*

## 5 EDUCATION & FORMATION

Another common thread was the need for ongoing formation and education. *“Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation and ongoing learning. How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together”?”* (Synod Booklet) Our people said that:

- To grow in synodality we need to be formed in the art of prayerful discernment. The group discernment process has the potential to transform our communities, but we need further training.
- A personal relationship with God must be at the heart of our Catholic character. There is a need for formation in prayer and spirituality with a focus on ongoing conversion and encounter. Religious education that does not form disciples short-changes our young people and impoverishes our Church. *“Our young people may be catechised, but they are not necessarily evangelised.”*
- There is a great need for adult faith formation that is rooted in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and is future focused.
- Young people seek answers to deep questions in life. Our response to this – catechesis, formation in faith and spirituality, etc. – must connect to their world and help them discern their path in life. The broader concept of vocation needs to be reintroduced and explored.
- Most Catholics have little understanding of the mission of the baptised. Catholic faith formation here is inadequate in enabling our people to engage in mission. The study and discussion of scripture and the Church’s documents on mission and social justice are a fundamental part of that mission.
- A lack of education on what our Church teaches often keeps Catholics from speaking out. There is a need to better understand what we stand for.



## 6 MISSIONARY FOCUS

A strong voice emerged for a more outward-looking Church that is truly missionary both in word and action. Many of our respondents are active in reaching out within their own communities and beyond, to the peripheries. Our people said that:

- It is essential for Catholics to understand that the Church is at the service of Christ’s mission to establish the Kingdom of God. The ‘mission has a Church’ (rather than the ‘Church has a mission’). The Kingdom of God is about love, truth, justice, and peace in the world. This is the mission to which we are all called.
- Although all of us are called to mission by virtue of our baptism, most Catholics struggle to understand what mission is and how it applies to them personally. *“The Church says all the baptised are called to the mission of the Gospel, then clings to theological deliberations that exclude their participation.”*
- Our mission must flow out of a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Being a missionary Church does not mean seeking to ‘make more Catholics.’ Rather, it is about bringing people to a personal and transformative relationship with God in Jesus Christ and helping them to find Christian community.
- As Catholics we tend to rely on ‘letting our good deeds do the talking’ rather than explicitly sharing our faith with others. *“Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you.”* (1 Peter 3:15).
- Our mission needs to be relevant for our time and guided by the needs around us.
- We are hindered in our mission by an unwillingness to do things differently. We need to return to the core Gospel message and imitate Jesus as we listen to, connect with, and include others. *“What comes first? Bringing Church to people or bringing people to Church? How do we bring Church to people like Jesus did?”*
- The first Catholic missionaries came here to journey with Māori. We need to find ways to continue this journey with integrity and allow our tangata whenua to be truly Māori and deeply Catholic.

*“The Church needs to look outwards and learn from the community it wants to serve. Rather than try to make the community conform to the ways of the Church.”*

## 7 TRADITIONS vs CHANGE

*“Open to changes and new possibilities, the Synod is for everyone an experience of conversion”* (Pope Francis, “Let us Dream”). Submissions highlighted a tension between the need to do things differently and the desire to hold on to long held customary practices<sup>8</sup>. Our people said that:

*“Don’t let history limit the future.”*

- We are on the right track in this journey of growing together (hīkoi ngātahi). We want to be open to change while holding on to what is central to our faith. Discernment is key to this process. *“Don’t be afraid to open the doors of the Church to let the air circulate.”*
- There will be no growth without change. If we are to continue to be light to the world and salt of the earth, we must avoid letting our history limit our future. *“Tūngia te ururuā kia tupu whakaritorito te tupu o te harakeke.”*<sup>9</sup>
- We change not to ‘fit in’ but rather to remain relevant to future generations in a world that is ever-changing.

*“Tūngia te ururuā kia tupu whakaritorito te tupu o te harakeke.”*

<sup>8</sup> The reference to ‘tradition’ here is not to be confused with the Tradition of the Church. It instead refers to behaviours and preferences from earlier eras that are not crucial to the Catholic Tradition and need updating.

<sup>9</sup> Set the overgrown bush alight, and new flax shoots will spring up. Māori whakatauki (proverb)

- The lack of change in the Church has caused frustration and led people to distance themselves. There is a sense of despair for the future of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand if things do not change. We are being held back by those who are determined to preserve the past at seemingly any cost. *“The Church must boldly risk being led anew by the Holy Spirit. It must deconstruct the monument it has created and again become a breathing, living entity of the Christ Way.”*
- Amid the overwhelming calls for change, some shared a sense of desolation and abandonment, feeling that the Church is *“currently driving away devout Catholics”* by discarding tradition. A few submissions expressed a desire to preserve the Tridentine Mass, reminding us that, *“the more conservative of us feel ignored.”*
- Another voice named the struggle in balancing the need for change with a strong cultural sense of the importance of obedience to Church hierarchy and, what they understand to be, Church doctrine.
- Over the last 50 years there has already been enormous change in our Church. We need not fear change moving forward because our faith, and our destination, is in God. The journey too is in God’s hands.
- We are being asked to move from a *“thou shalt not”* religion of exclusion and judgement, to a *“thou shalt”* Catholicism of welcome and inclusion.
- We need to be open to the ‘other’ and particularly to the younger generation, trusting that the Spirit is at work as we listen to them.

*“ We do not know how to walk side-by-side with the younger generation. How can we connect with them? They have a spirituality they live out of, whereas the older generation were taught to obey the rules.”*

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## CONCLUSIONS

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### For the Archdiocese of Wellington

The commitment of the people of the Archdiocese of Wellington to an ongoing synodal journey together was powerfully evident at the pre-synodal gathering on 28 May 2022. Over one hundred of our people gathered in Our Lady of Kapiti Church, Paraparaumu, including ethnic, age-group, vocation, geographic, ministry, education, and leadership representatives. A strong endorsement was made to over thirty years of synod (hīkoi ngātahi) even as recognition was made of the need for substantial change ahead. The themes outlined in this synthesis were received and acknowledged. The people of the Archdiocese of Wellington are urged to actively engage with these voices and issues at all levels in coming months and years. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council will be doing so. Archdiocesan assistance is available for Parish Pastoral Councils as they seek ways to implement the spirit and recommendations of this submission.

In a somehow fitting illustration of the tumultuous times in which we live, Cardinal John who was to join his people was instead forced into isolation with Covid-19. In his absence, his prepared address was given on his behalf and his conclusion helpfully summarises our commitment:

*“What we are engaging in, not just today, but over the last few months, and into the future, is acknowledging that it is time for us to implement decisively a participatory, inclusive, and collaborative model in our diocese and parish structures. We are about a culture of humility and accountability in service. It is not about a top-down approach, a centralised approach. We are talking about a synodal Church at every level, with everyone listening to one another AND learning from one another. Listening is constitutive of a synodal Church. It is about all of us taking responsibility for proclaiming and living the Gospel.”*

(John Dew, Archbishop of Wellington)

## For the Synod of Bishops 2023

Emerging from the submissions of the people of the Archdiocese of Wellington were a number of issues that require discernment at the level of the universal Church. Until progress on these issues happens at this level, we will be held back from being able to respond appropriately at the local level. To this end, issues that our people earnestly raise for our bishops to address in Rome in 2023 include:

- empowering the local Church, led by its bishop, with the mandate to renew models of leadership in our dioceses.
- reviewing the current model of priesthood to:
  - enable a focus on the sacramental and pastoral rather than management responsibility;
  - open it up to the married as well as celibate;
  - avoid the segregation of seminarians in formation.
- the full inclusion of women in every ministry and decision-making role (including ordination to priesthood).
- the active and transparent involvement of the local Church in the selection of bishops.
- entrusting liturgical reform (at least to a limited degree) to local bishops' conferences so that our assemblies can become culturally and geographically our own.
- a change to the language of liturgy and catechesis to be fully inclusive and never judgmental and moralistic.
- reviewing the Church's sexual moral teaching taking into account contemporary scientific understanding as well as the lived experience of the People of God (*sensus fidelium*).
- an emphasis on inclusion rather than exclusion:
  - the acceptance of intercommunion between Christians of different denominations;
  - the welcoming of LGBTQI+ people into our communities without judgment;
  - the welcome to the Eucharistic table of all people without judgment.
- continuing to emphasise the call to holiness and mission for all the People of God today.
- leadership that accepts that change is a vital part of our Catholic synodal journey rather than something to be feared and avoided.
- continuing the work of the Second Vatican Council as demonstrated so clearly in the concept of synodality – listening carefully, discerning prayerfully, and journeying together.

Addressing these issues in the *parrhesia* of the Spirit (in trust, frankness and courage), the Archdiocese of Wellington will be equipped to respond effectively to the needs of our time and place. As the People of God newly attentive to the Second Vatican Council's call to synodality, we look forward to a future of communion, participation and mission - hīkoi ngātahi.



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## **Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi**

*As an old net withers another is remade*

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### **CHURCH MISSION**

Church Mission is the pastoral support team that seeks to enable intentional missionary discipleship in the parishes of the Archdiocese of Wellington.

Visit <https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/about/church-mission/>

Archdiocese of Wellington, PO Box 1937, Wellington 6041  
04 496 1715; [www.wn.catholic.org.nz](http://www.wn.catholic.org.nz)