



Catholic
Archdiocese
of Adelaide

A PASTORAL LETTER

On the Occasion of the Convocation of the

2026 Archdiocesan Synod

on Pentecost Sunday, 8th June, 2025

“As the Father Sent Me, So I Am Sending You”

(John 20:21-22)



ARCHDIOCESE OF ADELAIDE

**SYNOD
2026**

togetherontheway.au

To God's Holy People in the Archdiocese of Adelaide.



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This Pentecost, as we recall the birth of the Church in fire and wind, I write to you as your bishop with a heart full of hope and anticipation. The coming year holds great promise: we stand on the threshold of our 2026 Archdiocesan Synod, we journey together in the Jubilee Year, and we give thanks for the election of our new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, who has already begun to lead us with wisdom and humility. These are signs of the Spirit moving among us.

1. Introduction

Peace be with you! These were the first words the risen Christ spoke to his disciples as he appeared among them on that first Easter evening—words that echo across the centuries and reach us anew in this sacred moment. The Gospel of John tells us, “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:21–22).

The Spirit that Jesus breathes upon the disciples on that first evening of the Resurrection is not only the comforter, but also the divine propulsion into mission. The Father sent the Son in love, in humility, in service, and in suffering. Now the Son sends us – the Church – in the same way. Pentecost is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of the Church’s life in mission. So too, our synodal journey is not a task to be completed, but a way of being Church that must continue to unfold.

This passage is not only a recounting of a past event. It is a commissioning that reverberates into the present—a sacred echo that resounds today in our communities, our parishes, and our Church. It finds new life this Pentecost Sunday as we prepare for the Archdiocesan Synod in 2026, reflect on the Australian Plenary Council and our Diocesan Assemblies, and receive with hope the leadership of Pope Leo XIV, inaugurated in a world yearning for renewal and communion.



2. The Breath of the Spirit and the Mission of the Church

The scene in John's Gospel is intimate. The disciples are locked away, fearful and confused. Jesus enters, bearing peace and the wounds of His passion. He commissions them: "*As the Father sent me...*" – not with power or status, but in self-emptying love. This sending is no vague inspiration. It is *incarnational*, that is it shows us what it means that God is with us, and within us. And with it, Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon his disciples: "*Receive the Holy Spirit*", forming them into a new creation—a Spirit-filled people sent forth to proclaim the Kingdom of God. This breath is more than a gentle breeze; it is the wind of a new beginning, recalling the breath that moved over the waters at creation and the breath that gave life to Adam.

Pentecost, the feast we celebrate today, is the Church's birth in the Spirit. The Church is not merely an institution or a gathering of like-minded individuals. It is the Body of Christ, animated by the Spirit and sent into the world to be a sign of God's mercy, peace, and justice.

Jesus' words—"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you"—are not a suggestion but a mandate. We are not to remain locked in our own "upper rooms" of comfort or fear, or unnecessarily fixated in the past. Like those first disciples, we are sent into a world marked by fragmentation, inequality, ecological devastation, and spiritual hunger. We are called to be bearers of reconciliation, instruments of healing, and heralds of hope.



3. Synodality: Walking Together as a Spirit-Led People

In recent years, the global Church has been invited by the Holy Spirit into a renewed understanding of *synodality*—a way of being Church that listens, discerns, and walks together. The late Pope Francis has spoken of synodality not as a temporary theme, but as the "*path God expects of the Church in the third millennium.*"

In the Archdiocese of Adelaide, we have already begun to walk this path through three Archdiocesan Assemblies, marked by prayerful listening, shared discernment, and bold dreaming. These gatherings have been moments of grace—signs of the Spirit's quiet but powerful activity among us. They have called us to rediscover the richness of our baptismal call and to listen with the heart to the joys and sorrows of our communities.

The Australian Plenary Council, too, has been a profound moment of the Spirit. It has reminded us that synodality is not a matter of strategy but of spirituality. It is about humility, conversion, and openness to the surprising movements of God. The Plenary Council has not offered quick fixes, but a deeper invitation: to become a more missionary, Christ-centred Church in Australia, one that listens and learns, prays and acts, reconciles and reaches out.

All of these movements of the Spirit have opened our ears and hearts to the ongoing call of the Spirit.

4. Toward the 2026 Archdiocesan Synod: A New Pentecost?

As we look to 2026 and prepare for our Archdiocesan Synod, we stand at a crossroads—indeed, at a threshold. We are invited to dream not just of a better Church, but of a more faithful one: faithful to Christ, to the Gospel, and to the Spirit who renews all things.

The Synod will be a moment to listen deeply—to the Word of God, to one another, and to the cries of the earth and the poor. It will be a time to ask how we might become a Church that reflects more clearly the face of Christ in our time. How can we foster greater co-responsibility among laity and clergy? How can we accompany our young people, strengthen our families, and heal the wounds of abuse and exclusion? How can we be a Church that welcomes the stranger, protects creation, and witnesses to hope? How can we foster the vocations of ordination and marriage?

These questions are not theoretical. They are deeply practical and spiritual. They are questions that can only be answered through discernment, humility, and communion. The Synod must not be an event but a process, not an end but a beginning—a Pentecost moment for our local Church.





5. A New Pope, a Renewed Mission

The inauguration of Pope Leo XIV arrives as a beacon of continuity and renewal. In his homily at his installation Mass, Pope Leo invoked the same Spirit that fell upon the apostles at Pentecost, calling the Church to “go out with courage, not clinging to the past, but rooted in Christ, to be light for all nations.”

His words remind us that synodality is not about novelty, but fidelity—a fidelity to the mission that Christ entrusted to his Church, a fidelity to the Spirit who continues to guide us, often in unexpected ways. Pope Leo has already signalled his desire to build upon the legacy of Pope Francis, not by repeating formulas, but by calling the whole Church into deeper communion, participation, and mission.

We are blessed to live in this time. Not an easy time, but a Spirit-filled one. Pope Leo’s election is not simply a change of leadership—it is an invitation for renewal at every level of the Church. It challenges us to ask: What is the Spirit saying to the Church in Adelaide today? How might we respond with courage, creativity, and faith?

6. Sent in the Spirit: Living the Mandate of Christ

“As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” These words are as much a description of our identity as they are a commissioning. To be a Christian is to be sent. To be the Church is to be missionary. This is not optional. It is the very nature of our baptismal calling.

But we are not sent alone. Jesus breathes his Spirit upon us. It is this same Spirit that we received at baptism and confirmation, the same Spirit that animates the Church’s life, that guides our discernment, and that renews the face of the earth.

In the coming months, as we continue to prepare for the Archdiocesan Synod, we must pray for a deepening of this Spirit in our hearts and communities. We must be willing to be disturbed, to be challenged, to be renewed. This is the path of synodality. It is also the path of discipleship.

Let us walk this path together—not as individuals or isolated parishes, but as a pilgrim people, united in Christ and led by the Spirit.

7. Conclusion: Come, Holy Spirit

Pentecost is not simply the end of the Easter season. It is the beginning of the Church's mission. It is the birthday of a community sent to the ends of the earth. In our time, in our place, the Spirit is once again breathing life into dry bones, setting hearts on fire, and calling us forth.

Let us not resist this Spirit. Let us not remain behind locked doors. Let us open wide the windows of our hearts and the doors of our Church.

Let us go forth, as Christ sends us, into our Parishes, our neighbourhoods, Schools, workplaces, and the margins of society. Let us speak the languages of mercy, truth, and justice. Let us carry the Gospel with joy, knowing that the One who sends us also walks with us.

In the words of the ancient prayer, let our daily prayer be:

***Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful,
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created,
and you shall renew the face of the earth.***

And may this Pentecost be for us the beginning of a new chapter in our journey together—toward the Synod, toward a renewed Church, and toward the Kingdom that is already among us.

In Domino

+ Pat O'Regan

+Pat O'Regan
Archbishop of Adelaide

8th June, 2025



ARCHDIOCESE OF ADELAIDE

SYNOD 2026

togetherontheway.au



Catholic
Archdiocese
of Adelaide

39 Wakefield Street,
Adelaide, SA 5000

GPO Box 1364
Adelaide SA 5001

8210 8210
cco-reception@adelaide.catholic.org.au
adelaide.catholic.org.au