

## **Diocese of Parramatta Committee Consultation on the Synod of Bishops**

*The Parramatta Diocese in New South Wales, Australia, under Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, invited LGBTQIA+ Catholics in the Diocese into a conversation for the Synod of Bishops with the question "If you had 10 minutes with Pope Francis, what would you say?". A group came together and over two meetings agreed on a statement which was submitted to the diocese as a contribution to the Diocese's overall synthesis.*

### **Here the statement**

The Mystical Body of Christ is only whole when all members are equally recognised, valued, welcomed and loved for this is how we have all been created - in God's image and likeness, this wholeness is unconditional. The pain, suffering, silencing and ostracisation that LGBTQIA+ Catholics have had, and still experience from parts of our church, urgently calls us to this synodal journey.

Rather than being a refuge for all, these experiences often result in LGBTQIA+ Catholics and their families turning away from the Church as they feel abandoned by their faith community. These hurtful experiences add further trauma and pain, causing many LGBTQIA+ Catholics to despair, fuelling self-hatred and for some, tragically, self-harm.

To be a truly inclusive church, we know that many Catholics affirm that there must be brave and open dialogue that is followed by active and intentional ministry journeying together. LGBTQIA+ Catholics are serving in every part and level of the church that we love, even when parts of the church wilfully ignore our realities, our stories and even our existence. The sacredness of LGBTQIA+ families, our loving and faith-filled relationships, our children and communities are signs of God's unconditional love and providence.

Over the past few decades, LGBTQIA+ affirming Catholic ministries, affirming theology and pastoral approaches have often been excluded from the official ministries of the church. Harmful language that is pastorally unsound is weaponised to abuse LGBTQIA+ people. These ministries, theologies and pastoral approaches need to be resourced and promulgated widely and courageously. Terms that attribute homosexuality as 'intrinsically evil' and 'objectively disordered' need to be removed from the lexicon of our Church.

When LGBTQIA+ Catholics have been actively welcomed, valued and affirmed for who they are, they become encouraged and empowered to live their lives authentically, and flourish as God's people. This is what it means to journey together as a synodal Church, as One Body of Christ.

We live in a Kairos moment, where the Gospel is calling us to live courageously and authentically and thus, the synodal journey is incomplete without the full and equal participation of LGBTQIA+ Catholics.