

# ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN

## SCHEMA 3.0

*Journeying together  
With Christ, Building the Kingdom of God*



## Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2. Our Catholic Landscape Today</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3. Proposed Pastoral Priorities for the next 10 years</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 Lifelong formation of clergy and laity for evangelisation and mission	19
3.1.1 Why this matters	19
3.1.2 Our current reality	21
3.1.3 Proposed direction and focus	26
3.2 Build communities of faith, at the parish and across, for and including different groups	34
3.2.1 Why this matters	34
3.2.2 Our current reality	35
3.2.3 Proposed direction and focus	40
3.3 Enhance differentiated co-responsibility of clergy and laity	50
3.3.1 Why this matters	50
3.3.2 Our current reality	52
3.3.3 Proposed direction and focus	52
3.4 Build unity in diversity across all levels	56
3.4.1 Why this matters	56
3.4.2 Our current reality	57
3.4.3 Proposed direction and focus	58
3.5 Embrace Synodality as a way of being Church	62
3.5.1 Why this matters	62
3.5.2 Our current reality	63
3.5.3 Proposed direction and focus	64
<b>4. Enablers for our Pastoral Priorities</b>	<b>66</b>
4.1 Governance and structures to support mission and evangelisation	66
4.2 Support Organisations	68
4.3 Transparency and Accountability	69
4.4 Care for our people	70
a. Caring for our clergy	70
b. Caring for our staff	71
c. Caring for our volunteers	72
4.5 Technology	73
<b>5. Invitation to discern as a community</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Appendix A: APC members</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Appendix B: APC Study Group Members</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Appendix C: Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Appendix D: Feedback Summary from Conversations on the Schema 2024</b>	<b>79</b>

## **The Risen Lord Accompanies Us on Our Journey of Faith**

“As the disciples of our resurrected Lord today, we must walk in faith, and always with the Risen Lord. As a resurrected people, we must walk with each other as a community so that we can recognise and encounter His presence in our lives.

Today, the Risen Lord is present in a real way when we strive to be a synodal Church at every level of Christian and Church life. To be a synodal Church is to accept God’s invitation and grace to imitate the Holy Trinity, so that the Church becomes better at listening to how the Holy Spirit lives and moves among the faithful. Therefore, we need to walk with each other, in good times, and in bad, always forgiving and encouraging each other along the way, never giving up hope on each other.

We are called to share our faith, our struggles, pains, and our joys and aspirations as Church, as part of parish neighbourhood groups, church ministries, parish councils and organisations, and in the larger Church. Priests, religious, and laity must walk as one Church, one body of the Risen Lord, with Christ as our head. We cannot walk alone. We must walk with each other in this journey of life so that we can leave the desert of sin and enter into the Promised Land of love and life.”

*- Cardinal William Goh*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Archdiocese Pastoral Council (APC) was established in February 2023 to provide a platform for the clergy, religious and laity to express the hopes and concerns of the people of God, and help the Archbishop shape and realise the vision of the Archdiocese in Singapore.

Our immediate task is to discern the pastoral plan for our Archdiocese for the next 10 years. Over the past two years, we have engaged with the clergy, religious and laity to understand their hopes and concerns, and to engage in deeper study of how we may as a Church, move in response to them. This document provides an overview of some of the findings as well as possibilities for our Pastoral Priorities in the next 10 years. It is not the finalised pastoral plan, but presents some preliminary ideas on its possible directions, for further conversation and prayer. We invite you to this at the Archdiocesan Assembly. Together, we will discern, pray and converse on where the Holy Spirit is leading us, and build our Church's pastoral plan for the next 10 years.

### **Responding to Christ's call - the focus for our proposed Pastoral Priorities**

The journey to discerning the pastoral priorities for our Archdiocese came about through many rounds of listening and reflection within our Church from 2021-2024.

In discerning these priorities, it is critical to keep in mind Jesus' call to us to participate in his mission of building God's kingdom. As such, the focus of our pastoral plan is: **With Christ, building the kingdom of God.**

Our starting point must be our personal encounter with Christ and the journey we are making with him. All our efforts must be guided by the person and teachings of Jesus.

At the same time, his call for us is not just to maintain or build our Church, but to look beyond and to build the kingdom of God. This is at the heart of Christ's mission, a mission to which we are called to build as the baptised.

With this in mind, we propose 5 priorities for the pastoral plan:

#### **With Christ, building the kingdom of God, through:**

1. **lifelong formation** of clergy and laity for **evangelisation and mission**
2. Building **communities** of faith, at the parish and across, for and including different groups
3. Enhancing the **differentiated co-responsibility** of clergy & laity
4. Building **unity** in diversity across all levels of our Church
5. Embracing **synodality** as a way of being Church

The following outlines the possibilities for each of these areas. We invite you to read, converse, pray and discern together with us what the Holy Spirit is calling us to in our Archdiocese.

## Pastoral Priority #1: Lifelong formation of clergy and laity for evangelisation and mission

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:19-20)

In the person of Jesus, every Christian is called to evangelisation and mission. We are Jesus’ disciples in today’s world, and are called to love God and neighbour as He loved. Jesus calls us to actively witness the faith to other people in Singapore and the world. However, to be the missionary disciples Jesus calls us to, we need to learn and live out our faith, evangelise others and reorient our parish communities towards mission.

Feedback indicates that many Catholics lack the desire and confidence to evangelise.<sup>1</sup> Among both youth and adults, some also become inactive Catholics after receiving the sacraments of initiation. While we have many existing programmes to aid in forming missionary disciples, improvements are needed in the following areas:

1. **Enhance Faith Initiation** through accompaniment, rather than a milestone checklist to be ticked off. Strong support of the faith community is needed to help children, youth and adults to see life beyond the completion of their sacraments of initiation. Proposals to enhance faith formation during faith initiation include reviewing catechesis, enhancing support for parents, and revitalising the RCIA process.
2. **Strengthen Lifelong Formation** after the sacraments of initiation through ongoing faith formation and the formation of leaders. This can include implementing regular and diverse faith formation programmes e.g. the formation and empowering of lay leaders to lead pastorally; ongoing theological and pastoral education and continued leadership formation for the ordained ministry.
3. **Strengthen evangelisation** through supporting Catholics in showing the face of Christ to the world and making disciples of others within and outside the Church. Recommendations include formation on interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, utilising social media for formation, and incorporating Catholic values into various aspects of life.
4. **Enhance the missionary focus of parishes** from maintenance to active missionary engagement. This involves reorienting parish structures and cultures, implementing strategies for community outreach (supported by Archdiocesan organisations) and a pastoral conversion in nurturing the spiritual life of the faithful to witness the Good News in the Church and the world.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2022 Document for Continental Stage (DCS) Report #2.2

**Pastoral Priority #2: Build communities of faith, at the parish and across, for and including different groups**

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34)

Jesus showed in his earthly life how to love family, friends, enemies, those who were on the margins and excluded from the community. Today, Jesus calls us to do the same.

Within the Catholic Church in Singapore, there are many ministries and organisations serving families and communities. Nevertheless, there are many who feel disengaged from the Church or feel they have been overlooked in the Church’s pastoral care. Adding to this, family structures are changing and the population of seniors is growing.

How can we respond?

- 1. Greater accompaniment and journeying with Catholics** to encounter the love of God and closeness with the Church. A Church where everyone feels welcomed is called for: where there is intentional, relevant accompaniment and pastoral care, and where there is integration and care for all. This includes Catholics who are ready to return to the faith, those who may feel ‘overlooked’, those who are practising the faith nominally, disengaged youths, seniors, foreigners and migrants, as well as those with underserved needs, mental health challenges, special needs and in different circumstances.
- 2. Strengthen families as the domestic church.** A renewed pastoral approach centred on a childhood-to-early-married-life formation programme is called for to enrich couples embarking on Holy Matrimony and offer continued support in their married life. Our growing senior congregation also calls for coordinated effort across the Archdiocese to support their pastoral needs. The understanding of family can be broadened, and pastoral and language sensitivity be considered so that all Catholics feel included and valued.
- 3. Strengthen Catholic ethos and community in Catholic schools.** Catholic education in Singapore, through our 35 Catholic schools, offers an education that is rooted distinctively in authentic Gospel witness. To realise this, there is a need to strengthen the Catholic ethos of schools for the holistic formation of our children and youth, as well as build collective leadership of the Church, sponsoring authorities, school boards, school leaders and parents to provide guidance on school governance.

### Pastoral Priority #3: Enhance the differentiated Co-responsibility of Clergy and Laity

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.... For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” (1 Cor 12: 4-6, 12)

Jesus modelled for us God’s way to live, pray and serve, and in doing so, fulfil God’s plan for salvation. He showed us how to live in community and to be community - by valuing each person and their giftedness. Today the Church calls each of us - lay, religious and ordained - to embrace the universal call to holiness and put in place “differentiated co-responsibility for the common mission of evangelization.”<sup>2</sup> We do this well when we relate and cooperate for mission and evangelization in ways that are respectful of the irreducible uniqueness of each member, that is, their respective gifts and tasks.

Feedback from our Catholic community indicates there is a desire for enhancing the differentiated co-responsibility among laity and priests, and a recognition that we need to better support the vision and practice of co-responsibility. Possibilities to enhance differentiated co-responsibility include:

1. **Shift mindsets** to embrace shared responsibility in mission and ministry. This includes clarity from leadership on co-responsibility and how it is realised. Policies should be developed explaining the differentiated roles of clergy and laity in shared responsibility and educating leaders (clergy and lay) on them. Building greater trust and regular dialogues between laity and clergy are also needed.
2. **Create supporting structures and guidelines** (at parish and Archdiocese level) to support co-responsibility.
3. **Formation** for both clergy (e.g. management training) and laity (e.g. theological and spiritual) to equip and support them to be more effective in their respective roles.
4. **Expand the avenues of service** for greater lay participation to serve in the mission of the Church in the world. In addition to their apostolate in the world in social, political and economic sectors, laity are invited to be more involved in the pastoral mission of the Church. These include greater opportunities for the laity to participate in leadership and service within the Church, more roles for lay women across all ages to serve, being more intentional in recruiting and forming lay leaders, and having better career paths for church workers.
5. **Regular check-ins** to ensure continued alignment e.g. annual survey of leaders, annual Archdiocese pastoral report.

---

<sup>2</sup> A Synodal Church in Mission, Synthesis Report, Part 1.1a

## Pastoral Priority #4: Build unity in diversity across all levels

“But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.”  
(1Cor 12:24-26)

Jesus gathered the different groups of people into a community and restored them as one family of God. Communion is a gift from the Triune God, who is communion itself. This gift is “at the same time a task, which is never exhausted, of building the ‘we’ of the People of God”<sup>3</sup>.

In our Archdiocese, while many share in the love and mission for Christ, we can aspire to greater unity within the Church. Our Church organisations, ministries and groups, while each seeks to fulfil its mission, have sometimes been parochial in their approach. Greater unity, improved communion, and collaboration is needed across the parts of our body, if we are to accomplish the larger vision that Christ calls us to, of building the kingdom of God. Some possibilities for us to build greater communion are as follows:

1. **Recognise that we are all part of one Archdiocese** which includes parishes, religious congregations, international and local lay organisations.
2. **Develop a shared mission and vision**, taking a collaborative approach between all parts of the Archdiocese. This collective approach draws on the charisms of each unit within broader pastoral priorities, aligning all towards the same mission and purpose.
3. **Foster communication and dialogue** to build understanding and trust among different members of the Church, with processes and platforms to facilitate this.
4. **Promote respect for roles and authority** for all parties, as defined within canon law and relevant governing documents. Greater understanding between all parties, including for diocesan priests to have a better understanding of charisms of lay and religious orders.
5. **Support reconciliation and conflict resolution** with an enhanced framework for conflict resolution for the Archdiocese, which encourages reconciliation, ownership, participation and dialogue. Establishment of a ministry with a panel of mediators to support reconciliation and conflict resolution across the Church.
6. **Conduct biennial study on relationships between entities** (e.g. parishes, curia and lay organisations) to help to understand the impact and progress in transforming the relationships.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Instrumentum Laboris*, For the First Session, XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops



## **Pastoral Priority #5: Embrace synodality as a way of being Church**

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47)

In Jesus and his companions walking together on mission, we glimpse the spirit of synodality. Synodality means journeying together as the People of God. It indicates a way of listening to each individual person as a member of the Church to understand how God might be speaking to all of us. In this way, synodality reminds us of the work of the Holy Spirit through each of us and through all of us working together for our common mission. The early Christians understood this; in the Acts of the Apostles, they show us what it means for a community of Christians to journey together as a synodal Church.

In 2021 our Holy Father called for the Church to reclaim the spirit of synodality as our way of being Church. Our Archdiocese responded to the call, and we have reached this stage in our journey by following the synodal path. It has been a powerful experience: we have been challenged, inspired and transformed by what we have heard from each other.

The most significant part of our journey together as a synodal Church still lies ahead of us, and we need to embed synodality as our way of life within the Archdiocese to move forward, in all that we do.

Some possibilities for us to become a church that embeds a synodal way of life are:

- 1. Provide formation on synodality.** We need to learn to Listen to one another, Dialogue in the Spirit, Discern together as a community and exercise differentiated Co-responsibility for Christ’s mission.
- 2. Enhance our structures and processes for synodality.** This includes putting in place decision making institutional structures to embed synodality and adopt synodal ways of working within our organisations and parishes. To entrench it for the life of the Archdiocese in Singapore, a synodal office can support and facilitate synodal ways of working at all levels within the Archdiocese, including across the parishes. This can be an expanded role of an existing Archdiocesan office.
- 3. Archdiocesan Assembly to be enhanced and held biennially,** to provide the people of God a forum to participate in the discernment and development of the Archdiocese.

## **Enablers for our pastoral priority**

To support our pastoral priorities, we need to strengthen our foundation and build enablers. These are in the following areas:

1. **Enhance governance and structures** to support evangelisation and mission. This includes developing and promoting clear governance requirements, clustering church organisations into functional groups with lead coordinating bodies, and identifying gaps and redundancies in our existing organisations.
2. **Improve the support provided by Archdiocesan organisations** by fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support between organisations and their stakeholders, and introducing and enhancing shared services in suitable areas such as procurement to facilitate more efficient resource sharing, consistent and efficient operations.
3. **Strengthen transparency and accountability** to build trust between constituents and facilitate greater unity, collaboration, and participation.
4. **Care for our people**, making sure that we look after all who toil in God's kingdom. We should take a holistic approach to caring for clergy's well-being: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, as well as support their developmental needs. We can also strengthen the talent management and employee experience of our church staff, and enhance the engagement and formation of ministry members and volunteers.
5. **Leverage technology** as an enabler to support pastoral priorities. This includes shared digital services to improve collaboration, operational efficiency and governance; technology solutions to support lifelong learning and evangelisation, and using data to improve decision making and strengthen pastoral care.

## **Invitation to discern as community**

We invite you to join us on this journey, to discern our pastoral priorities for the next 10 years, together as one Church. Together, let us ponder, pray, converse and discern our shared pastoral priorities.

Your discernment and conversation are important to us. Following the discernment from these conversations at the Archdiocesan Assembly 2025, the document will be refined and a 10 year pastoral plan will be developed for endorsement by the Archbishop.

# **ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN**

## **SCHEMA 3.0**

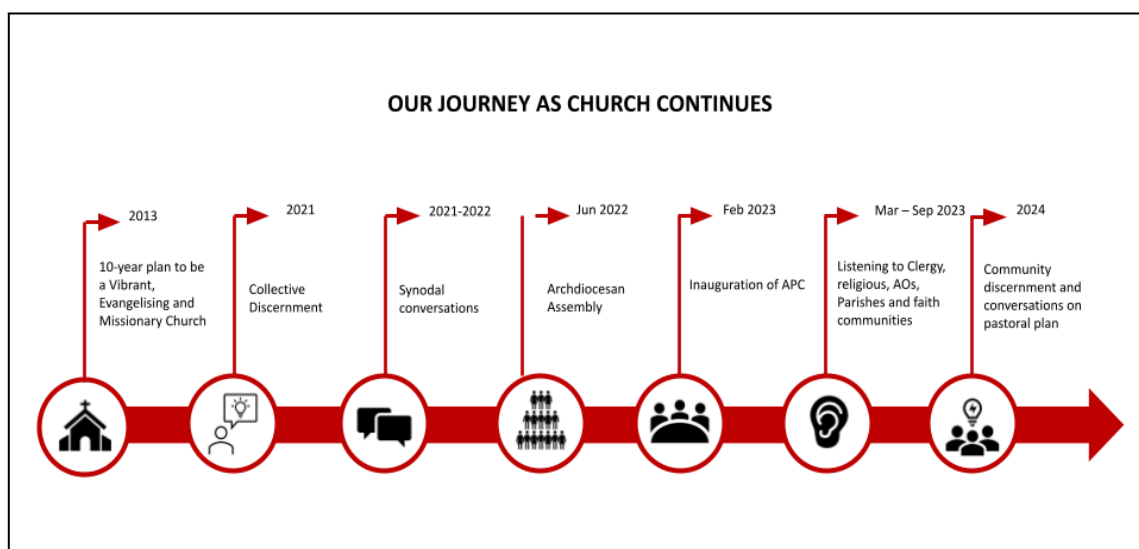
*Journeying together*  
*With Christ, Building the Kingdom of God*

## 1. Introduction

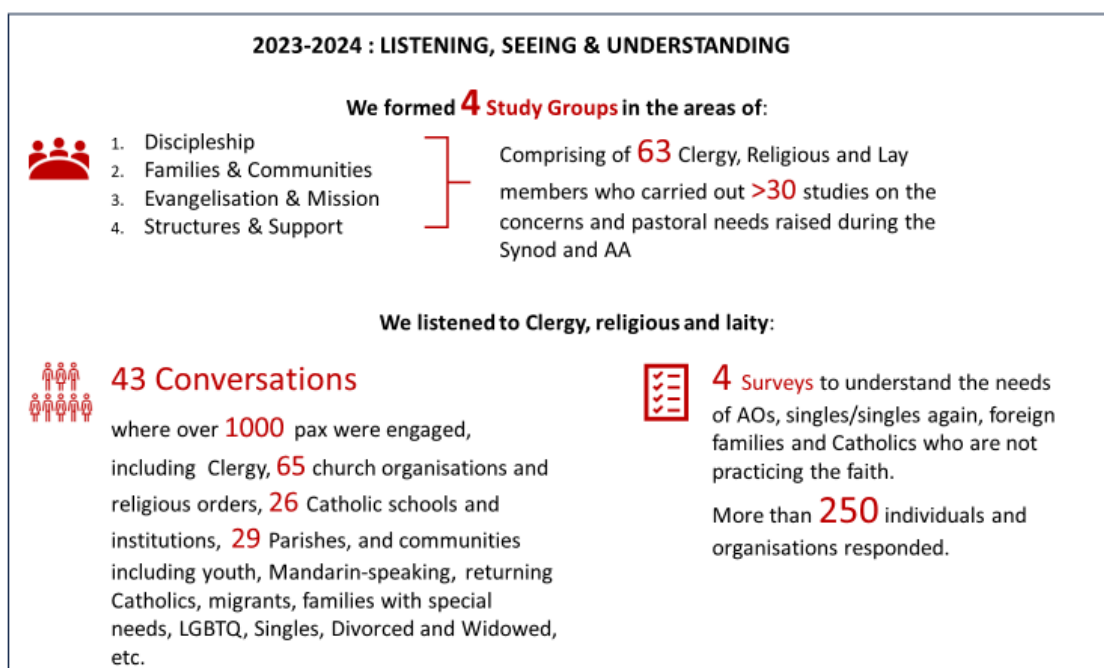
The Archdiocese Pastoral Council (APC) was established in February 2023 to provide a platform for the clergy, religious and laity to express the hopes and concerns of the people of God, and help the Cardinal shape and realise the vision of the Archdiocese in Singapore.

The immediate task of the APC is to discern the 10-year pastoral plan for the Archdiocese's priorities from 2024 – 2034. Upon Archbishop William Goh's appointment in 2013, a 10-year plan was formulated for a Vibrant, Missionary and Evangelising Church, and many parishes and Archdiocesan organisations responded to the call.

In its endeavour to chart this plan, APC draws on the good work of the parishes and Archdiocesan organisations. It also builds on the community conversations and discernment processes initiated during the Catholic200SG Collective Discernment, the 2021 – 2022 Synodal Conversations, and the 2022 Archdiocesan Assembly. These gatherings saw Catholics of all age groups and parishes coming together to share their thoughts and define the Church's future direction. Their good work enables the journey we now undertake together.



In 2023-2024, the APC engaged with communities to discern and understand the hopes and concerns of the faithful identified in the Collective Discernment Exercise, synodal conversations and Archdiocesan Assembly. To gain a deeper understanding, the APC conducted further studies, surveys and conversations. In 2024, a schema of the pastoral priorities for our Church was put forth for discernment by the whole diocese, and the document updated with the community's discernment.



In addition to these, many parishes also organised conversations and reached out to their parishioners to dialogue and discern the pastoral plan.

This process has been an experience in being a ‘Synodal Church’ – a Church that listens carefully to how the Holy Spirit speaks through the lives, wisdom and concerns of all its members. It is a journey that continues as we listen to each other and discern the way forward together.

### **Purpose of this Schema**

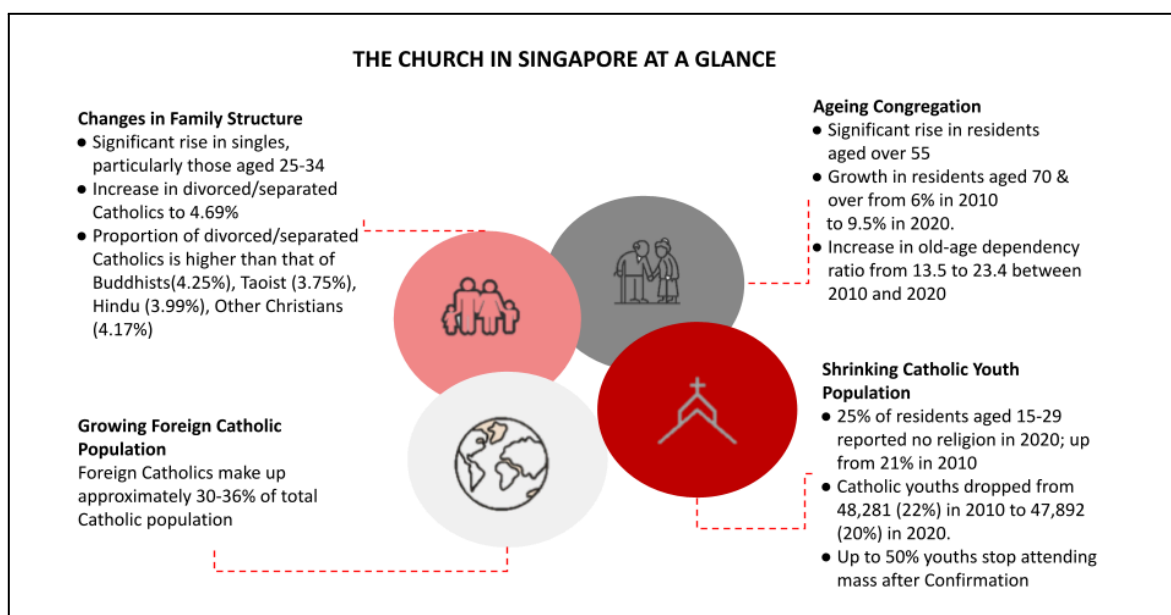
This document, Schema 3, provides an overview of recommended pastoral priorities for the next 10 years and highlights the hopes, concerns, and possibilities for moving forward together as one Church. It has been updated to incorporate the discernments, contributions and insights from our community. Between May to December 2024, our clergy, religious, parish, Church organisation and faith communities have come together to discern on the draft Schema. This process allowed us to gather important feedback that deepened our understanding of the collective aspirations and needs of our Church. Their discernment and feedback have been summarised in Appendix D. This updated document is prepared for the community’s support and continued discernment at the Archdiocesan Assembly on 1 March 2025. It will subsequently be further refined with inputs from the Assembly, after which a final pastoral plan will be prepared for the Archbishop’s consideration.

## 2. Our Catholic Landscape Today

In Singapore, there are close to 395,000<sup>4</sup> Catholics. This number constitutes 6% of Singapore's resident population, and marks a 5.8% increase from 2010 to 2020.

This growth, however, is accompanied by a significant proportion of self-reported Catholics who do not attend mass. The *Catholic Conversation Report* in 2016 highlighted that 64.2% of Catholics<sup>5</sup> in Singapore were not accounted for, meaning, they did not come to Church or did not participate in parish surveys. Further insights from focus groups and interviews revealed that many Catholics do not attend Mass regularly.

Upon deeper examination, there are noticeable shifts in the profile of Catholics:



● **Changes in Traditional Family Structures.** Between 2010 and 2020, there was a decrease in the proportion of married persons and an increase in singles across all age groups, with the sharpest increase for those aged 25-34 years. This came alongside an increase in divorced/separated individuals. The proportion of divorced/separated Catholics at 4.69% in 2020 was higher than that in most other religions in Singapore - indicating a shift from the traditional family structure<sup>6</sup>.

In addition, technology is transforming family interactions, with 87% of Singaporeans having internet subscription/access in 2017<sup>7</sup>. This brings with it the challenges of managing the impact of social media, cyberbullying, and exposure to inappropriate content.

<sup>4</sup> Statistic is derived from *Singapore Census of Population 2020*

<sup>5</sup> *The Catholic Conversation Research Report*

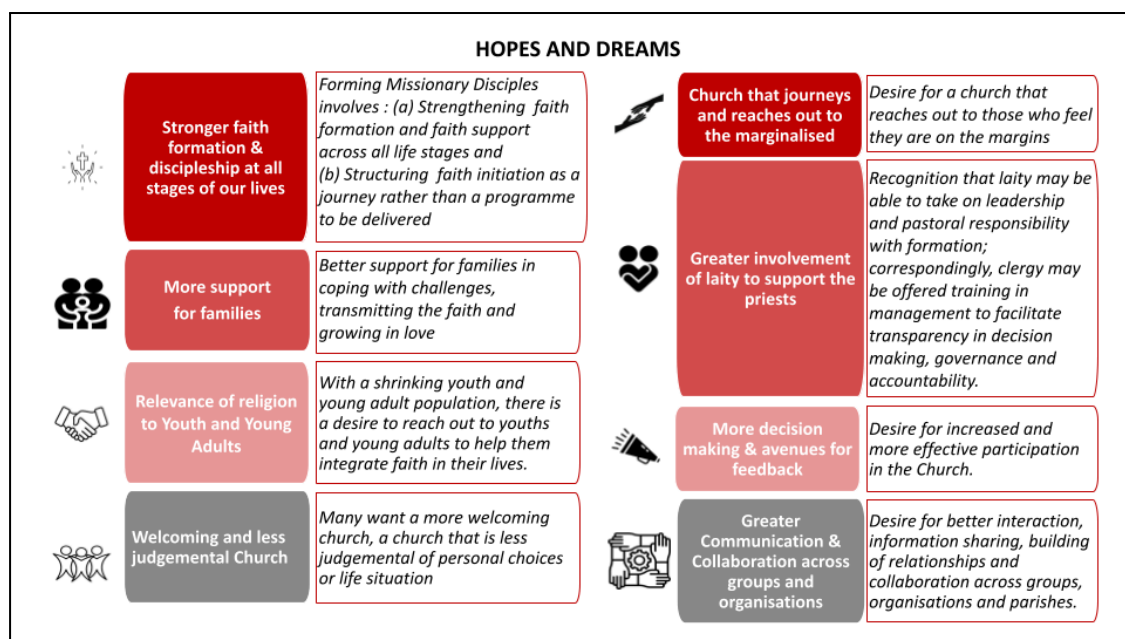
<sup>6</sup> There has been a noticeable shift from traditional nuclear families to alternative family structures. This includes single-parent families, childless couples, and blended families.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Statistics Singapore. (2019). *Report on General Household Expenditure Survey 2017/2018*

- **Shrinking Catholic Youth and Young Adult Population.** In 2020, there was an increase of residents aged 15-29 years reporting no religious affiliation. During this period, there was also a decrease in the Catholic youths in this age group. Observations across the Archdiocese indicate that up to 50% of youths cease to attend Mass after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- **Ageing Congregation.** The 2020 Census revealed a significant increase in those aged 55 and over. With rising life expectancy in Singapore, our ageing congregation is expected to grow in the coming years. With the declining youth and young adult population, our church is expected to face an inverted age demographic pyramid in the coming years.
- **Growing Foreign Catholic Population.** From 2021-2023<sup>8</sup>, the non-resident population in Singapore saw significant growth. Within the Church, the number of foreign Catholics has been growing as well, with foreign Catholics now making up approximately 30-36% of the total Catholic population in our Archdiocese<sup>9</sup>.

### Hopes & Desires of Our Brothers & Sisters

Through the many conversations with our faithful in the Synodal Conversations 2021-22, Archdiocesan Assembly 2022 and APC Encounter & Conversation sessions since 2023, we found several common themes of concern and hopes:



Through prayers, discernment and listening, we identified several possible pastoral priorities and the enablers for their implementation. These are set out in the next two sections.

<sup>8</sup> These population trends are released by the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

<sup>9</sup> In *The Catholic Conversation Research Report*, the total population of Catholics in Singapore includes citizens, permanent residents and non-residents.

### 3. Proposed Pastoral Priorities for the next 10 years

The process of discerning the pastoral priorities for our Archdiocese has been a journey of listening - listening to clergy and laity, first at the Synodal Conversations 2021-22, then the Archdiocesan Assembly 2022. Throughout 2023, APC organised numerous Encounter & Conversation sessions, alongside 4 Study Groups that delved into Church documents on specific areas. In Nov 2023, APC conducted a retreat to discern the possible pastoral priorities. These priorities were then presented to parishes, church organisations, the religious and clergy in 2024 for further prayer, conversation and discernment to refine them in preparing version 3 of the Schema.

As we consider the priorities for the pastoral plan, it is imperative to keep in mind Jesus' call to us to participate in his mission of establishing God's kingdom. At the heart of our pastoral priorities, and central to our pastoral plan is:

#### **With Christ, building the kingdom of God**

**With Christ:** All our endeavours must be guided by the life and teachings of Jesus. Without placing Christ at the centre of our efforts, we run the risk of not being faithful to what and how God is calling us to do.

**Building the kingdom of God (and not just building the Church):** Jesus' call for us, is not just to maintain or build our church, but to look beyond and to build the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God extends beyond the boundaries of any archdiocese, parish or ministry. We are called to shed a parochial mentality and instead embrace a wider perspective of our mission field as disciples of Christ. Furthermore, the kingdom of God is built here and now, on this earth; we need to act now and in our lives today.

#### **Hearing the Heart of Jesus: Thy Kingdom Come**

The kingdom of God is the Good News of God's saving love that Jesus Christ proclaims by His life, death and resurrection. "It is a kingdom of love, justice, and mercy, where sins are forgiven, the sick are made whole, enemies are reconciled, captives are freed, and the needs of the poor are met."<sup>10</sup>

As articulated in *the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, the kingdom of God is ultimately embodied in Christ himself, the "Son of God and Son of Man, who came 'to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"<sup>11</sup>

With the nearness of God revealed in Christ as the Word Incarnate who redeems, the kingdom of God is already here. But, in another sense, it is "not yet" here, since the kingdom of God also calls us to an ongoing journey of conversion to Christ's final and fuller transformation of individuals, society, and culture. "While she slowly grows to maturity, the Church longs for the completed kingdom and, with all her strength, hopes and desires to be

---

<sup>10</sup> USCCB, *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 2006: p. 486.

<sup>11</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter I, 5; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, 2816.



united in glory” with Christ.<sup>12</sup> The Church, called to proclaim the Good News of God’s kingdom, is also a pilgrim people walking the way of conversion with and in Christ.<sup>13</sup> “Thy kingdom come” is our prayer from the heart, and is also the desire of Jesus Christ who calls the Church to walk with Him in the Holy Spirit and to work for its coming.

### **Letting God transform us for mission**

We need the Heart of Jesus for God’s mission. It is at Mass, the “fount and apex of the whole Christian life”<sup>14</sup>, that God transforms us to become the Body of Christ, beating with the Heart of Jesus. It is at Mass, most of all, that Jesus is truly with us, forgiving us, teaching us, feeding us and renewing us to build the kingdom of God. In the Eucharist we receive, we share in holy communion with God and with one another. Even more, at the heart of the Eucharist is the paschal mystery of Christ - his saving action that redeems us. This is the ultimate expression of God who is love; in caring for and saving souls sacrificially, this is singularly pastoral. Indeed, it is from the Eucharist that the proposed pastoral priorities flow out from and at the same time lead back to it; for in the Church’s turning to Jesus in the Eucharist we discover the fullness of God’s boundless love for all peoples and our identity as a Eucharistic people, who moved by the Holy Spirit, are called to the responsibility of building a more human world as part of God’s plan.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Local Church in Singapore on the Journey**

The local church in Singapore shares in this mission of the universal Church to proclaim and bear witness to God’s kingdom in Christ. In *Ecclesia in Asia*, St. John Paul II exhorts the churches in Asia to share the gift of Jesus with all: “The Church’s faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia.”<sup>16</sup> This gift of faith in Jesus is also the gift of God’s kingdom “shone out before [people] in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ”<sup>17</sup> already here and to come.

Pope Francis, in the apostolic visit to Singapore in 2024, calls us to remember that love needs to be at the foundation of all that we are and do, and that “faith is at the root of our capacity to love and be loved.”<sup>18</sup>

Entrusted with the gift of faith, the Church in Singapore is called to shine more brightly the presence of God’s kingdom, nurturing and sharing it with others in the multi-cultural and multi-religious fabric of our society. This call invites us to remember, reflect on and renew the following convictions together as we discern God’s dream for our Church in Singapore.

First, we must know and believe in Jesus Christ. If ultimately the kingdom is Jesus Christ and all he means for us, then we must begin with the person of Christ, who revealed to us “I am

---

<sup>12</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter I, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter VII

<sup>14</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter XI, 1

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, nos 1 and 20

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 1999: 10

<sup>17</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter I, 5

<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis, *Homily at the Holy Mass in Singapore*, 12 September 2024

the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, we must continuously find ways to make the good news of Jesus Christ accessible in Singapore, for the kingdom of God begins in Christ.

Second, having encountered Christ, each Christian person must be transformed by Christ within our unique, and particular realities. Christ’s earthly ministry was characterised by a call to conversion and holiness: urging us to turn away from sin, and towards God.<sup>20</sup> In the contexts of our daily lives - in our relationships, families, workplaces and beyond – Christ continues to call us to move away from darkness, and embrace the light. By doing so, we cooperate with grace, to bring the kingdom of God one step closer to its ultimate fulfilment.

Third, each Christian is called to be part of this world where the kingdom of God is in some ways already present - we discern, recognise, and celebrate the good already in place as the fruit of God’s grace. Therefore, while being transformed individually, each Christian person is called to transform the structures and systems present in Singaporean society. The kingdom of God extends beyond the walls of the Church to encompass all creation. For example through her schools and hospitals, the Church serves those of other faiths, showing the face of Christ to all. The Church exhorts us to shape and enhance human society in anticipation of the coming of the kingdom of God – a process already underway, but not yet fully realised.<sup>21</sup>

In summary, the coming of God’s kingdom is at the heart of Jesus’s longing. The kingdom of God is at the heart of Christ’s mission, and it is towards this mission that we are called to contribute. “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” said Jesus.<sup>22</sup> Mission radiates from Christ’s passion for the kingdom, a passion we are invited to partake in. Mission is living the kingdom here on earth, ignited by the fire of the Spirit, and bearing the fruit of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”<sup>23</sup> Mission is kingdom-living in the Spirit, where fruitfulness is realised only in Christ.<sup>24</sup>

With this in mind, we propose the following five priorities for the pastoral plan:

**With Christ, building the kingdom of God through:**

1. **Lifelong formation** of clergy and laity for **evangelisation and mission**,
2. Building **communities** of faith, at the parish and across, for and including different groups,
3. Enhancing the differentiated **co-responsibility** of clergy & laity,
4. Building **unity** in diversity across all levels of our Church, and
5. Embracing **synodality** as a way of being Church

The possibilities for each of these areas are set out below. We invite you to read, converse, pray and discern together with us what the Holy Spirit is calling us to in our Archdiocese.

<sup>19</sup> John 14:6

<sup>20</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1427

<sup>21</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 39

<sup>22</sup> Luke 12:49

<sup>23</sup> Galatians 5: 22

<sup>24</sup> Cf. John 15: 4 – “Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.”

### 3.1 Lifelong formation of clergy and laity for evangelisation and mission



25

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20)

#### 3.1.1 Why this matters

The Church “...exists in order to evangelise.”<sup>26</sup>

In the person of Jesus we understand that every Christian is called to evangelisation and mission. God the Father sent Jesus to the world. He came to proclaim the Good News that God loves everyone and wants to save all. Jesus, in turn, commanded his disciples to go and do likewise. They learned from Jesus to do this in how he lived and served, even more in how He reached out to those on the margins and frontiers. Indeed, to be Jesus’ disciple is to be missionary.

We are Jesus’ disciples in today’s world. We are called to love God and neighbour as He loved. More so, Jesus calls us to actively witness the faith to other people in Singapore and the world. This is a mandate for every baptised Catholic, laity and clergy alike. As the Church, they are to build the kingdom of God by proclaiming and establishing it everywhere.<sup>27</sup> We are to do this in word and deed, keeping in mind that “the specific purpose of missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root.”<sup>28</sup> We do this in word and deed, keeping in mind that the call is to spread the gospel and share the light of Christ throughout the world.

---

<sup>25</sup> Source: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore <https://flickr.com/photos/catholicsg/albums>

<sup>26</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14

<sup>27</sup> See *Ad Gentes*, 1

<sup>28</sup> *Ad Gentes*, 6

For Catholics to participate in mission and evangelisation, the Church must provide lifelong formation for laity, more so, clergy, across the different life stages. Vatican II laid the importance of on-going formation for clergy in the decree on the ministry and life of priests:

“...let bishops... see to it that all their priests at established intervals, especially a few years after their ordination, may be able to frequent courses in which they will be given the opportunity to acquire a fuller knowledge of pastoral methods and theological science, both in order that they may strengthen their spiritual life and mutually communicate their apostolic experiences with their brothers.”<sup>29</sup>

and for the laity in the decree on the apostolate of the laity:

“The apostolate (of the laity) can attain its maximum effectiveness only through a diversified and thorough formation. This is demanded not only by the continuous spiritual and doctrinal progress of the lay person himself but also by the accommodation of his activity to circumstances varying according to the affairs, persons, and duties involved.... This formation, always in need of improvement because of the increasing maturity of the human person and the proliferation of problems, requires an ever deeper knowledge and planned activity.”<sup>30</sup>

Traditionally the Church has formed its members through 4 pillars<sup>31</sup>:

- (a) doctrinal (didake - learning together the apostolic teaching)
- (b) communal (koinonia - learning together from community living)
- (c) liturgical (leitourgia - learning from praying together according to the tradition)
- (d) diaconal (diakonia - learning together through service of those in need, particularly to the poor)

We are formed for mission and evangelisation. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue laid out five principal elements of evangelisation involving parishes:

- I. Be a presence and witness
- II. Be committed to social development and human liberation
- III. Foster liturgical life, prayer and contemplation
- IV. Engage in interreligious dialogue
- V. Proclaim the Good News and catechise

See *Dialogue and Mission*<sup>32</sup> and *Dialogue and Proclamation*.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 19

<sup>30</sup> *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 28 & 29

<sup>31</sup> Acts 2: 42-47

<sup>32</sup> *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*, AAS 75 [10 May 1984], pp. 816-828; <https://www.dicasteryinterreligious.va/dialogue-and-mission-1984>,; also *Bulletin Secretariatus pro non Christianis* 56 (1984/2), No. 13

<sup>33</sup> Joint document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelisation of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (19 May 1991), [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_19051991\\_dialogue-and-proclamatio\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html)

Pope Francis recognises that parishes need to be renewed to cater to the present realities, while still being faithful to their call. He writes, "... the Parish is called upon to read the signs of the times, while adapting both to the needs of the faithful and to historical changes. A renewed vitality is required that favours the rediscovery of the vocation of the baptised as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a missionary of the Gospel, in light of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent Magisterium."<sup>34</sup>

The Synod for Synodality 2024 further emphasises the importance of parishes being oriented towards mission where, "By placing a special emphasis on Christian initiation and offering accompaniment and formation, the parish community will be able to support people in the different stages of life in fulfilling their mission in the world. In this way, it will become more evident that the parish is not centred on itself but oriented towards mission."

<sup>35</sup>

Evangelisation requires for the Church to insert herself into the culture of people in particular places through the process of "inculturation". St John Paul II wrote about inculturation in *Redemptoris Missio*:

"The process of the Church's insertion into peoples' cultures is a lengthy one. It is not a matter of purely external adaptation, for inculturation 'means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.' The process is thus a profound and all-embracing one, which involves the Christian message and also the Church's reflection and practice. But at the same time, it is a difficult process, for it must in no way compromise the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith.

Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within. Through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission."<sup>36</sup>

### 3.1.2 Our current reality

There are 4 areas in the process of forming missionary disciples:

- I. Faith initiation
- II. Ongoing and lifelong formation
- III. Evangelisation & mission
- IV. Parishes as centres of evangelisation

---

<sup>34</sup> Instruction *The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church*, of the Congregation for the Clergy. Bollettino Sala Stampa, 20 July 2020, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/07/20/200720a.html>.

<sup>35</sup> *Final Document, XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Second Session. For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, 117 (26 October 2024)

<sup>36</sup> *Redemptoris Missio*, 52

In developing missionary disciples, formation is critical. In this aspect, our Church is rich in the variety and breadth of programmes offered by parishes, ministries and Archdiocesan organisations. Nevertheless, there are improvements to be made in all 4 areas.

## **I. Faith Initiation**

Faith initiation is the starting point of all Catholics to live out the faith as a disciple and witness for Christ. Our Archdiocese runs many different programs that provide this including weekend catechism programs in parishes, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS), Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) for children attending international schools, the Office for Catechesis's (OFC) Bridging Program and the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults and Youth (RCIA/RCIY).

### **A. Children & Youth**

Feedback received from parishes is that a high proportion of children and youth become inactive Catholics after receiving the sacraments of initiation. Several factors have been identified as contributing towards this trend:

- Sacraments of initiation (First Communion, First Reconciliation and Confirmation) are perceived as the end goals of catechesis, and the milestones to which children and youth are to be catechised towards. The paradigm that catechesis is a lifelong formation journey of faith from womb to tomb, and not just during the school years, is often missing.
- This is exacerbated by the lack of organised and systematic guidance in faith formation for adult Catholics. Youth and young adults lack role-modelling by adults in the ongoing journey of lifelong faith formation, and likewise often stop growing in their faith.
- Limited, sporadic support is offered to parents in faith formation for the 0-6 year age group e.g. infant baptism preparation that creates insufficient awareness of the faith formation responsibilities of parents and godparents; little or no pre-school catechesis available for the majority.
- Faith formation in parishes for the 7-16 year age group is relatively well organised and systematic, with many (but not all) parishes using OFC curriculum. Challenges in parish catechesis include incorrect implementation of the OFC curriculum, lack of sufficient training of catechists, heavy burden on existing catechists, catechist fatigue and a lack of integration between the weekly sessions and catechetical retreats held for the youth & children.

### **B. Adults in RCIA**

The current RCIA programme as a platform for evangelisation and mission can be improved.

RCIA is perceived as a content-heavy programme to be delivered within a set-time frame (9-12 months), with baptism as the end goal. Practices in parishes are varied and there are no agreed local guidelines amongst the parishes and priests with regards to content, methodologies and approaches. There is also a lack of accessibility of RCIA for migrants, as

well as those on the margins, due to scheduling, location, language, etc. where the parishes cannot serve their needs.

The current programme may provide insufficient time and space for participants to discern and grow in their relationship with God, and may pressure them into baptism when they are not quite ready to commit. The time and space afforded to the pre-catechumenate is also insufficient to support participants' faith needs, especially when they are seeking and wanting to ask questions (inquiry stage).

Other areas for improvement include the need for better integration of catechumens with the rest of the parish and increasing the number of dedicated sponsors.

## **II. Ongoing and Lifelong Formation**

Beyond initiation of the faith, ongoing and lifelong formation are critical in forming missionary disciples. Enhancements are needed to support this across different groups.

### **A. Post-Confirmation Youth**

Through our conversations with parishes and with youth and young adults in our Archdiocese, a recurring topic that is raised is the engagement, support and formation for young people after Confirmation.

A 2023 Study of Disengagement of Youths and Young Adults in the Catholic Church of Singapore<sup>37</sup> found that some young people had chosen to disengage with the church due to lack of safe spaces for discussion and healthy disagreements for questions they had on the Church's teachings, such as those on gender and sexuality, abortion and premarital sex.

While touched upon during catechesis before Confirmation, it is an aspect that can be improved on where youth and young adults are provided continuing formation on topics and questions that are relevant to their lives after Confirmation.

### **B. Adults after RCIA (Post-Baptismal Catechesis)**

There is a need for better organisation and support for the mystagogy stage after baptism which lasts approximately 50 days until the end of the Easter season. Insufficient support when the newly baptised who are finding their feet in their newly professed faith could lead to the newly baptised becoming lukewarm or inactive Catholics eventually.

### **C. Baptised Adults**

There is a need for more organised and systematic guidance for adults for their ongoing faith formation. Additional factors which make it challenging for adults to continue in growing their faith include:

- Fast-paced lifestyle and heavy commitments at work and home result in a time scarcity for many adults to devote time to faith formation.

---

<sup>37</sup>This is a 2023 Study carried out by an APC Study Group to understand the perspective of disengaged youths and young adults. 30 interviews were conducted with self-reported Catholics aged 15-35 years where 70% of the participants were previously part of a church group but are no longer participating actively.

- Perceived lack of relevance and adaption of the faith to contemporary issues and advancements.
- There is uneven formation support across the life stages. While there is support by organisations and ministries in parishes for the children and youth stages (e.g. catechesis, youth ministry), there is less intentional support for the other life stages beyond the sacraments of initiation, except for particular areas e.g. marriage preparation courses for marrying couples)
- The formation of lay leaders and mentors, while encouraged by the Second Vatican Council<sup>38</sup>, is currently insufficient in our Archdiocese.

#### **D. Ordained Ministry**

Priests in Singapore have embraced their responsibilities as ministers of sacraments and the Word of God with great seriousness. Their unwavering commitment to their vocation has been a cornerstone of the Church's mission. Many priests embody the pastoral heart of the Good Shepherd, offering compassion and guidance that positively influence the faith lives of local believers. Their pastoral care and dedication have fostered a sense of trust and spiritual growth within the community.

Amidst these blessings, there is a need to enhance the ongoing formation and well-being of our clergy.

- There is limited formal and structured ongoing formation for priests and this is usually confined to an annual retreat and sporadic recollections.
- There is an increased awareness and emphasis of the need to intentionally cultivate community life, as illustrated by a parish priest who highlighted the importance of communal meals and conversations. Such practices foster a sense of belonging and mutual support among clergy.
- Due to the specific difficulties and demands of ministry in Singapore, it is challenging to sustain the ability to replace parish priests. Ensuring regular opportunities for renewal is important for sustaining clergy well-being and effectiveness.

### **III. Evangelisation and Mission**

All the baptised are called to evangelisation and mission. As succinctly put in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, evangelisation “...constitutes the essential mission of the Church.’ It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.”<sup>39</sup>

The 2022 Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) Report indicates that Catholics in our Archdiocese do not have a desire to evangelise. This could be due to:

- The heavy influence by our secular culture which emphasises materialistic values of economic productivity and maximising output. There is also concern that religious behaviour could influence politics or disrupt social harmony.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3

<sup>39</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14

<sup>40</sup> 2019 report by Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) , Singapore



- There is a need for stronger faith formation in the understanding and conviction of the baptismal call and great commission to “go and make disciples of all nations.”<sup>41</sup>
- A majority of our Catholic community belong to a devotional and sacramental generation where focus is placed on devotional practices and sacraments, rather than on evangelisation and mission.
- Much of the formal, structured formation offered is largely centred on the teachings of the Church which helps Catholics to “perform” their faith within the Church, and not beyond.
- Feedback from the Synodal Conversations 2021-22 and Archdiocesan Assembly 2022 indicate that many Catholics do not feel confident evangelising due to insufficient knowledge of the faith.

Areas where we can do better in forming missionary disciples include the following:

- While there are many Catholics who serve actively in ministries, faith communities and beyond, it is important to not neglect other aspects of discipleship, including having a personal relationship with God, sharing the faith with others and other pastoral actions related to living out the life in Christ.
- Participation levels in large-scale events and programmes in parishes and the Archdiocese are generally high. For example, events such as Catholic200SG, or Fatima In Singapore were celebrated with great aplomb. However, the ensuing follow-up actions did not match the interest and participation generated from those events or programmes.
- Move beyond a devotional and sacramental emphasis. To focus on our Christian faith beyond the auspices of the church - in the marketplace; in the daily decisions and actions in our lives; in how we show the face of Christ to our families and neighbours; advocate for social justice; journey together within an authentic Christian community and being ‘mission-minded’ every day, and not just on Sundays and Christian holidays.

#### **IV. Parishes as Centres of Evangelisation**

The DCS Report noted that our parishes are often constructed around ministries with functional objectives. Serving in a ministry thus becomes the sole reason for participation in parish life, with ministry members coming to church at a specific time for a specific task.<sup>42</sup>

The Church in Singapore is primarily concerned about its social mission and is predominantly sacramental in its focus. There is a need to enhance the evangelistic mission of our parishes. Here, evangelisation refers to the proclamation of Christ and his message, which brings people to an encounter with Christ and a deeper understanding of faith. It would seem that the call to evangelisation is not heard frequently enough in the Church. And even where it is heard, the meaning of evangelisation is not defined clearly so that people can understand what is expected of them.

---

<sup>41</sup> 2022 Document for Continental Stage (DCS) Report #2.2

<sup>42</sup> 2022 Document for Continental Stage (DCS) Report #2.7

### 3.1.3 Proposed direction and focus

To form missionary disciples, it is critical to learn to keep the faith and live it. At its core, strengthening faith formation and faith support across all life stages would be needed to accomplish this.

The importance and centrality of the Eucharist to our faith was highlighted multiple times during various APC Conversations with the clergy, parish districts and Church organisations. Such importance and centrality should be imparted to the faithful during faith formation at all life stages.

Pope Paul VI said, “No Christian community ... is built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist; from this, therefore, all education to the spirit of community must take its origin.” This pope proclaimed that the fruits from this source will naturally flow: “This celebration ... should lead to various works of charity and mutual help, as well as to missionary activity and to different forms of Christian witness.”<sup>43</sup>

We propose to develop a holistic discipleship pathway from cradle to grave, with the formation of missionary disciples as the end point. Such a discipleship pathway should incorporate the following:

- Consistent spiritual accompaniment in Christian communities across the life stages.
- Holistic approach in parishes to help the faithful continue their faith journeys beyond the programmes/events they have attended (e.g. Rite of Christian Initiation, Conversion Experience Retreat, etc.).
- Intentional and systematic guide to know and own the faith as disciples at various life stages.
- Help to understand the sacraments as core and essential to their daily living as a Catholic, and to see connections between faith and life.
- Deepen our understanding on how we contribute to the mission of the Church to evangelise

Some possibilities to enhance discipleship across the life stages are captured in the following Figure 1:

---

<sup>43</sup> *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 6

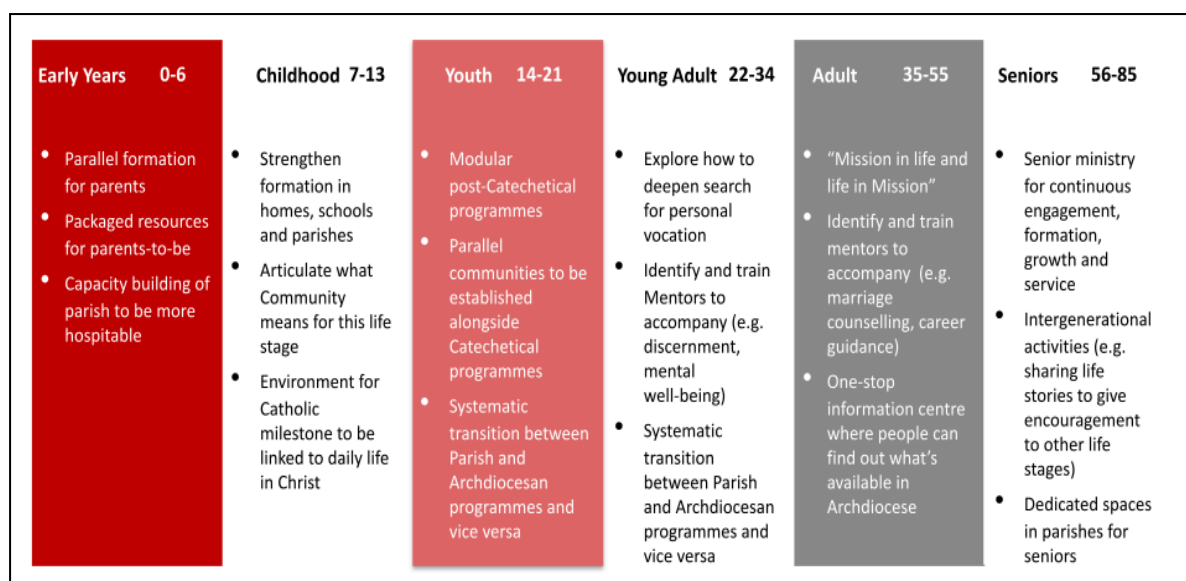


Figure 1: Possibilities across the Life Stages

To accomplish this, we propose 4 key recommendations to enhance the formation of missionary disciples:

- I. Structure Faith initiation as a journey rather than a programme to be delivered
- II. Strengthen lifelong formation
- III. Strengthen evangelisation
- IV. Enhance the missionary focus of parishes

#### I. Structure Faith Initiation as a Journey rather than a Programme to be delivered

The manner and posture by which we hand on the faith should be a journey, rather than a milestone checklist to be ticked off. Strong support of the faith community and role modelling will help children, youth and adults to see their faith life beyond the completion of their sacraments of initiation.

Some possibilities for faith initiation could include:

##### A. Children and Youth

(i) Catechism should be presented and communicated into a journey of faith initiation that is aligned to the guidelines of the Church. The following are ways to enhance the faith initiation journey of our children and youth:

- A set of guidelines to be centrally developed as to the desired outcomes of catechism at every stage for children and youth, based on the Directory for Catechesis (2020). The catechetical curriculum should be presented based on this, to make our teachings more relevant and accessible to our children and youth, so as to guide them in dealing with personal development and social issues that they may encounter in contemporary society.
- Catechism needs to go beyond the delivery of knowledge about the faith – there is a need to emphasise catechetical spaces as prayer spaces where God-encounters are

facilitated, and to teach our children and youth how they can build a personal relationship with God through prayer.

- Encourage dialogue (group sharings) amongst the candidates, especially at the ages of 10-16.
- Offer evangelisation projects to help candidates journey as disciples, and integrate them into the work of ministry in parishes.

(ii) Support our parishes and catechists in accompanying our children and youth on their journey of faith initiation. This includes:

- Continued catechetical training from foundation to electives to be provided by the Archdiocese and supported by the parishes; having decentralised or online training where possible to increase accessibility. In particular, equipping catechists to guide their catechumens in relating faith to lived experiences, especially in relation to personal development and social issues that are prevalent in contemporary society.
- Beyond training, it is important to continue to support and accompany catechists e.g. establish communities amongst the catechists for greater learning and support for the vocation at parish or district levels.
- Establish a yearly time and space for catechists' retreat and renewal.

(iii) Catechism is the work of the entire parish community, and not just the catechists. There needs to be a clear understanding of the differences between catechism and catechesis and this understanding needs to be shared widely amongst the adult community.

- The goals of catechesis (making disciples) to be clearly shared with the parish community by the Archdiocese and echoed frequently by the parishes to their community.
- Encourage intentional collaboration of relevant faith communities within the parishes (youth ministries, young catechists) in the work of catechesis.
- Families are the first catechists of the children. We need to better support families, parents and godparents in their faith transmission to children, and encourage intentional engagement of families beyond their sacramental years.

## **B. For Adults in RCIA**

RCIA could be remade into a journey of encounter, conversion and witness. For instance, having a focus on readiness of the candidate rather than completion of a programme.

It would help to have a baseline content for the catechumenal journey to be shared by all the parishes within the Archdiocese. Other possibilities to enhance the RCIA include:

- Year-long catechumenate with greater flexibility e.g. consider having shorter cycles instead of a longer, set programme.
- Customised programmes for migrants and those on the margins.
- RCIA as a whole-of-parish journey, not just with the RCIA ministry. This could include having mission focused attachments to parish ministries or church organisations.
- Leverage on online resources so that more focus can be placed on accompaniment and other areas.
- Have a pre-catechumenate period, for those who are interested in finding out more about the faith.

- Build a pool of dedicated RCIA catechists, sponsors and godparents at the Archdiocese or district level.
- Forming those in RCIA ministry so they can guide their catechumens in relating faith to lived experiences.

Where RCIA as a journey is not possible, an improved RCIA programme could be offered. This could include more Christ encounters, building an intentional culture of accompaniment by the RCIA community, extension of mystagogy to 6 months, and developing customised programmes for migrants and those on the margins.

## **II. Strengthen Lifelong Formation**

Faith formation does not stop after the Sacraments of Initiation. As *Catechesi Tradendae* sets out, “Catechesis is therefore for adults of every age, including the elderly-persons who deserve particular attention in view of their experience and their problems - no less than for children, adolescents and the young.... nobody in the Church of Jesus Christ should feel excused from receiving catechesis.”<sup>44</sup>

### **A. For Baptised Adults**

Recommendations for continuing discipleship of baptised adults can be classified into two categories:

- a. Ongoing Faith Formation**
- b. Formation of Leaders**

These will be addressed in turn in the following section.

#### **a. Ongoing Faith Formation**

##### **i. Comprehensive Catechesis and Adult Faith Formation**

- Implement regular and diverse adult faith formation programs, including Bible studies, theological courses, and workshops on Church teachings, especially on the pastoral and ecclesiological dimensions.
- Utilize digital platforms to make catechetical resources accessible to a broader audience, especially those who may not regularly attend parish events.

##### **ii. Support the Implementation of Small Faith Sharing Groups**

- Support the formation of small faith sharing groups (CNG/NCC/Cell groups) within the parish to foster deeper community bonds and personal spiritual growth.
- Provide training and resources for group leaders to ensure these gatherings are fruitful and enriching.
- Working with faith sharing groups to make it sustainable and relevant for all age groups

---

<sup>44</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, 45

**b. Formation of Leaders**

**i. Equip and Empower Lay Leaders Who Can Lead Pastorally**

- Offer leadership training programs for lay people to equip them with the skills needed for effective ministry and service within the parish.
- Focus on identifying leaders who can facilitate catechesis, pastoral care, and community building.

**ii. Identify and Empower Lay Spiritual Directors for Communities**

- Develop and promote programs to train lay people in spiritual direction, ensuring they have the necessary theological, psychological, and pastoral skills.
- Create a process to recognize and bring credence to lay spiritual directors to maintain high standards of spiritual and pastoral care.

**iii. Forming Pastoral Care Teams**

- Form pastoral care teams composed of clergy and trained lay ministers to provide ongoing spiritual accompaniment to parishioners, especially those facing life transitions or crises.
- Ensure these teams are equipped to offer support through regular home visits, counseling, and prayer.

**iv. Mentorship Programs for Leaders of Communities**

- Establish mentorship programs where experienced and well-equipped former leaders serve as pastoral guides for newer leaders, fostering intergenerational relationships and mutual support.

**B. For Ordained Ministry**

Lifelong formation is also important for those in the ordained ministry. We are reminded of this in *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* where ongoing formation “is intended to ensure fidelity to the priestly ministry in a continuing journey of conversion, in order to rekindle the gift received at ordination.”<sup>45</sup>

Ongoing faith formation for those in the ordained ministry can come in the form of continued theological and pastoral education, practical workshops on pastoral skills such as counselling, conflict resolution and parish administration. Other aspects for continual formation could include access to spiritual direction, mentorship and psychological and emotional support through counselling and other workshops.

Continued leadership formation could include leadership training; mentorship for priests in parishes; implementing and encouraging sabbaticals for rest; and sabbaticals for advanced studies and specialised training in areas of interest or need.

---

<sup>45</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, 81

### III.Strengthen Evangelisation

Evangelisation is about living our lives in such a way as it expresses the faith and draws others into it. Dialogue and witnessing are important parts of this.

Dialoguing and witness is a fundamental call to every individual Catholic to be able to talk about their faith and to witness through their behaviour and how they live to non-Catholics. Evangelisation is important not just in reaching out to others, but for a call for Catholics themselves to experience conversion in their own spiritual journey

In particular, interreligious dialogue and inculturation are important considerations in our local context. Some recommendations in this area include:

a. **Provide ongoing formation for Catholics on the aspect of interreligious and ecumenical dialogue** across all levels of clergy, religious, seminarian and laity needs. These would enable Catholics to understand their own faith in relation to other religions, and allow for the appreciation and application of the sensitivities regarding such issues to further evangelisation and mission. Social media could also be harnessed to promote and support this.

b. **Inculturation in Evangelisation.** Evangelisation requires for the Church to insert herself into the culture of the people through the process of inculturation so as to minimise the risk of the Gospel being rejected by people as an unfamiliar entity. This involves retaining the message of the Gospel, but adapting and communicating it such that people of a particular culture and time can understand, relate and connect with it.

However, this process of inculturation must be carried out prudently as it must not be allowed to transform the essence of the Gospel. Inculturation must also be carried out gradually and not forced. Interreligious dialogue can be guided by 4 dialogues forms<sup>46</sup>:

- Dialogue of life – people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing joys and sorrows, human problems and preoccupations
- Dialogue of action - Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and upholding and protecting of human dignity.
- Dialogue of theological exchange – deepening understanding of one's own religious heritage and appreciate the spiritual value of other religions
- Dialogue of religious experience – sharing of the spiritual riches from one's own religion, including prayer, contemplation, faith and searching for God

c. **Encourage other ways of witnessing** including:

- Teach Catholics to gather others (including non-Catholics) to break the Word and walk with one another at their workplaces.
- Invite non-Catholics to prayer sessions, Novena devotions, Catholic student activities.
- Weave in Catholic values into secular workshops e.g. Catholic teachings in sex education and how to be good stewards of money.
- Infuse Catholic values and spirituality of the founder/foundress into the curriculum taught at Catholic schools.

---

<sup>46</sup> See *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 42

#### IV. Enhance the Missionary Focus of Parishes

Parishes should be centres of evangelisation and mission and are “...called to sustain the commitment of so many people who in so many ways live and bear witness to their faith through their profession, in social, cultural and political activities.”<sup>47</sup> as set out in the Synod on Synodality 2024.

In order for parishes to live out the call to go forth to their neighbourhoods and share the Good News of Jesus Christ, pastoral conversion of all who live and serve in the parish must be oriented toward the service of evangelisation and mission. In short, parishes need to be reorientated from maintenance to missionary. This could involve:

- Re-orientation of parish model, values and culture. In addition to being a house of worship, parishes also need to be centres of evangelisation and mission.
- Review parish structures to promote missionary endeavours (e.g. there needs to be a concerted effort to examine the realities in a parish, strengthening or building systems and structures to support evangelisation).
- implement a parish-based roadmap for missionary discipleship making (e.g. cultivating a relational, communal faith, with greater faith-life integration).
- Develop and implement a parish community engagement impact strategy (e.g. from living above the land to being a missionary presence in the community).
- Develop a common pastoral formation methodology that all are aligned with. This includes translating this methodology into training programs and activities for clergy and laity. This can be undertaken by an existing Archdiocesan organisation.
- Enlist Archdiocesan organisations in the work of pastoral conversion of the parish, where organisations move beyond being service providers, to equipping parishes for mission.

---

<sup>47</sup> *Final Document, XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Second Session. For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission, 117 (26 October 2024)*



### How can we move ahead together?



**Archdiocesan Offices** can support lifelong formation of missionary disciples:

- (i) Office for Catechesis (OFC) can develop holistic discipleship pathways from cradle to grave, and enhances catechism and RCIA catechumenal journey for parishes. Archdiocesan Bible Apostolate (ABA) and the Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore (CTIS) can offer adult faith formation programs. Archdiocesan Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism Centre of Singapore (AIRDECS) can provide formation and support for interreligious and ecumenical dialogue.
- (ii) Catholic Leadership Centre (CLC) can offer leadership programmes for lay leaders to equip them with the skills needed for effective ministry, service and accompaniment. The CLC and Office of New Evangelisation (ONE) can support parishes in enhancing their missionary focus.
- (iii) The proposed Office for Priests can provide continued formation and accompaniment, and enhance community for clergy.



**Each parish** can support the formation of missionary disciples:

- (i) Review parish values, culture and structure in terms of missionary focus. Implement a parish-based roadmap for missionary disciple making.
- (ii) Enhance the lifelong formation journey for parishioners, and explore how catechism and RCIA can be remade into a journey of encounter
- (iii) Provide ongoing formation for parishioners. Support empowerment and formation of parish leaders and pastoral care teams.



**Each of us** plays an essential role in being missionary disciples. By virtue of our baptism, each one called to actively witness our faith to Christians and non-Christians alike. We should proactively seek formation so as to proclaim the Gospel and be effective witnesses of the faith.

### For discernment and conversation

As we put on the heart and mind of Jesus, we pray for and discern the following:

Which aspect(s) of this pastoral priority of lifelong formation for evangelisation and mission resonate with me?

What new perspectives or possibilities is God inviting my community / organisation to consider through this priority?

## 3.2 Build communities of faith, at the parish and across, for and including different groups



48

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."  
(John 13:34)

### 3.2.1 Why this matters

Jesus showed in his earthly life what it meant to love our family, friends, enemies and even those who were on the margins and excluded from the community. By healing Jairus' daughter who was at the point of death and restoring the son of a widow of Nain, Jesus showed he understood the pains of families and his desire for families to be whole. By welcoming children even when his disciples tried to prevent them from approaching, he showed his love for the most vulnerable members in society.

Through healing the lepers, forgiving the woman who was about to be stoned, going to the house of Zacchaeus the Tax Collector, amongst many other examples, Jesus showed what it meant to love, extend compassion and mercy, accompany and journey with everyone, no matter their life situation.

Today, Jesus is calling us to do the same. He is calling us to build the kingdom of God: a kingdom where people are made whole, the needs of the poor are met. As exhorted by St John Paul II, we are to share the gift of Jesus and shine more brightly the presence of God's kingdom.

Like Jesus, we can do this by loving our families, helping families grow in love, supporting families in their challenges, journeying with our brothers and sisters, accompanying the young, adults, seniors, foreigners in our communities and walking alongside them patiently, no matter where they are on their faith journey.

As proclaimed in the Second Vatican Council, "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age ... are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the

---

<sup>48</sup> Source: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore <https://flickr.com/photos/catholicsg/albums>

followers of Christ"<sup>49</sup>. We are, therefore, to "go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ."<sup>50</sup>

Lumen Gentium reminds us that God calls us into union with each other, "At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right. God, however, does not make men (and women) holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring them together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness."<sup>51</sup>

Pope Francis further reminded us that despite the many challenges which beset families and marriages today, "for all the many signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people, and this is an inspiration to the Church."<sup>52</sup>

At the same time, our fast ageing congregations present opportunities for the Church to journey with them. *The Dignity of Older People and their Mission in the Church and in the World* provides direction to derive new forms that are consonant with the needs and spiritual aspirations of older people, and which encourage them to contribute to the mission of the Church.

Therefore, as followers of Christ, we cannot look towards the future without embracing the men, women, children, youths, seniors, friends, foreigners, strangers, most especially, those excluded and marginalised, in our communities; we cannot build the kingdom of God without sharing the gift of Jesus with all. More importantly, to be a community is to share in the life of the Trinitarian God, whose very nature is community. We seek community in the desire to imitate God, and to commune with God and others.

### 3.2.2 Our current reality

Several organisations and ministries have been set up to look into the needs of individuals and communities. Yet, an estimated 64% of Catholics in our Archdiocese do not attend mass<sup>53</sup>, and of those who do, several report feeling the lack of a sense of community.

In the Synodal Conversations 2021-22, Archdiocesan Assembly 2022 and APC Conversations 2023-2024 held with Catholics, the wider Catholic community shared their desire for:

- A welcoming Church, a Church that reaches out to those on the margins and that is relevant to the youth;
- Greater level of journeying together, within and amongst communities;
- Better support for families, particularly those struggling with daily living, parenting issues, interfaith relationships and their faith journey;

---

<sup>49</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 1

<sup>50</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49

<sup>51</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 9

<sup>52</sup> *Amoris Laetitia*, 1

<sup>53</sup> *The Catholic Conversation Report*, 2016

- Better support for individuals who are physically, emotionally and mentally challenged, and their families;
- More support for seniors, the unmarried, divorced and widowed.

Along with this, the APC Conversations 2023-2024 and Synodal Conversations 2021-22 revealed that there are many Catholics and their families who feel overlooked. These include the unmarried, divorced, widowed; those with special needs and their families; those of same-sex attraction and their families; and Catholics living with addictions, physical/mental challenges.

In addition, a number of observations have been recorded about the following communities:

#### **Catholics who do not practise the faith**

In a 2023 Study of Non-Practicing Catholics in Singapore<sup>54</sup>, the results of a survey indicated that 41% of them have not attended Mass for more than 10 years. The top reasons reported for not practising the faith include:

- Disagreement with Church teachings
- Poor understanding of the faith and/or weak foundation in their catechism
- Personal spiritual journeys, that often involve exploration of other faiths
- Lack of a supportive community and/or mentors
- Disappointment with church leadership
- Absence of connection/relatability with homilies
- Life transitions

#### **Catholics who feel 'overlooked'**

Catholics who feel 'overlooked' form a diverse body in our Church, and this has been growing over the years. Yet there is little knowledge of their pastoral needs and spiritual well being as they are often overlooked in the Church. In conversations with the unmarried, widowed, divorced/separated, they have expressed difficulties in being accepted and finding communities within the Church that resonate with their life situation.

There is little understanding about the participation of the divorced in the sacraments. Furthermore, the language used within the Church has inadvertently excluded them despite the roles they play in their families.

Along with these, there is rising awareness of Catholic youth and adults with addictions, physical/mental challenges and same-sex attraction, as well as families living with special needs and LGBTQ+ members. Individuals with special needs and their families have voiced their desire for greater accessibility to church facilities, participation in Mass and catechism.

In conversations with Catholics of same-sex attraction and with parents of children professing same-sex attraction, they shared experiences where they felt judged and unwelcomed in the Church. The perceived requirement for perfection, as propagated by some clergy, exacerbates their feelings of guilt, isolation, and self-doubt regarding their

---

<sup>54</sup>This is a 2023 Study carried out by an APC Study Group to understand why Catholics have chosen to step away from the faith. There were 80 participants in the study with equal representation in all age categories.

loved ones' salvation and acceptance by God. In navigating their challenges, pastoral groups, such as Courage and enCourage, have been highlighted as a source of solace and reassurance for providing a non-judgmental space.

### **Catholics who attend church alone**

In almost every parish, there is a noticeable group of Catholics who participate in Mass and devotions on their own, without any family members. They may not be connected to any individuals, formal or informal communities within the parish. Consequently, not much is known about their needs and concerns, and some could feel lonely and a lack of community within the church.

### **Catholics with underserved needs**

In the APC Encounter & Conversation session with social mission ministries, it was highlighted that Catholics identified as being materially poor receive considerable resources from a wide range of church ministries and organisations that reach out to them.

Nevertheless, there is a growing group of vulnerable Catholics with underserved needs. They suffer from issues ranging from child protection problems, family abuse, addictions to recidivism. In addition, there is a rising number of Catholics without much social interaction and suffering from loneliness. There is also a significant number of individuals in poverty who do not benefit from government aid because of their life situations.

There is also a rising number of Catholics suffering from mental health challenges. Over the past decade, there is an increase in the number of children and youths having a spectrum of depression and anxiety issues, as well as seniors having mental health challenges. These seniors may also be suffering from deteriorating health and social isolation.

Currently, there are a number of church organisations which are equipped to provide support to vulnerable Catholics, such as Caritas and its member organisations. In the area of mental health, church organisations have been actively serving those who require consultations, counselling, and/or medical care; one example is Clarity Singapore.

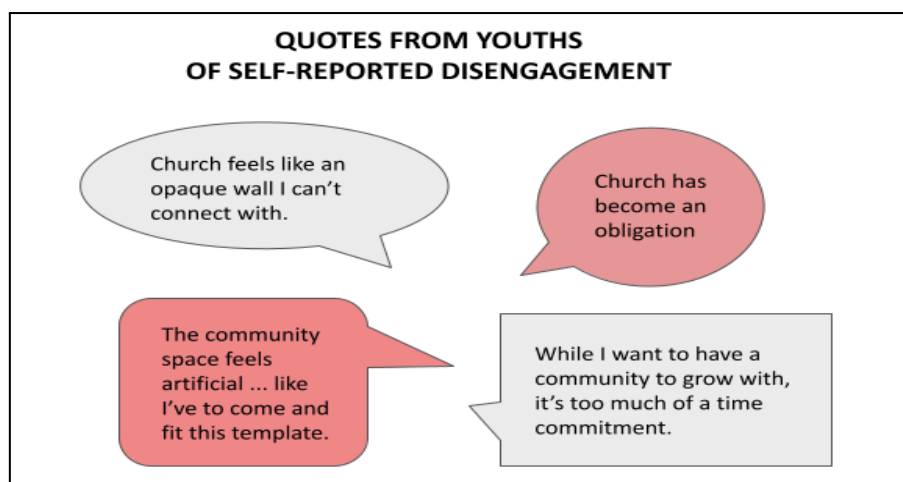
### **Youths and Young Adults**

In Singapore, just like in many developed countries, youths and young adults are exposed to multiple influences and perspectives on social media and at a young age. Many are living in a culture of achievement and economic pragmatism. In a 2023 Study of Disengagement of Youths and Young Adults in the Catholic Church of Singapore<sup>55</sup>:

- A number of youths reported having different priorities as they mature and participation in the Church is often seen as an obligation;
- Many have questions about the faith, but feel that there is no space within the Church for healthy dialogue;
- Many feel the lack of authenticity in their Catholic community.

---

<sup>55</sup> This is a 2023 Study carried out by an APC Study Group to understand the perspective of disengaged youths and young adults. 30 interviews were conducted with self-reported Catholics aged 15-35 years where 70% of the participants were previously part of a church group but are no longer participating actively.



### Seniors

Within the church, there is an estimated 75,000 Catholic seniors currently, increasing to 93,000 in 2030<sup>56</sup> (based on the 2016 count of 373,000 Catholics). There is also an increasing number of seniors looking after seniors, while their children are absent.

In a 2023 Study of Our Aging Congregation<sup>57</sup>, it was found that seniors have different abilities and needs as they journey to their end of life here on earth. While some face physical and health challenges, there are many who are healthy. Wherever they are in their life journey, all seniors desire meaningful lives and a large number want to contribute purposefully as active members of the community.

### Children, Youth and Catholic Educators in Catholic Schools

There are 36 Catholic schools in Singapore, organised under 8 families of schools, catering to about 46,000 students. Given that schools are places where children and youth spend a large part of their everyday lives, the faith lives of our children and young people in families are inseparable from their experiences of education in Singapore.

Yet, the faith of our Catholic children and youth is much impacted by the importance that their parents place on faith. A significant number of parents are not bringing their children to Mass even as they fulfil their obligation to have them catechised. Nurturing the faith is of secondary importance in many families.

Alongside this, the digital world has become a significant part of young people's identity and way of life. There are limited Catholic educators in our schools today who are confident in engaging and building a faith-centred culture.

### Individuals and Families of Foreign and non-English speaking communities

<sup>56</sup> Based on the 2016 count

<sup>57</sup> This is a 2023 Study by an APC Study Group to understand the challenges and opportunities in our ageing congregation. An examination was undertaken of the availability and level of support for seniors at the parishes and churches in Singapore.

Many foreign migrants are baptized Catholics who bring their faith with them as part of their 'spiritual survival kit'. They create their own support groups by joining prayer meetings and Bible study groups, or by expressing their popular devotions together. Chaplaincies and ministries for migrants are sources of solace and places of refuge and solidarity.<sup>58</sup>

In Singapore, Catholic foreign communities currently make up close to 30% of the Catholic population in Singapore. In APC Conversations with foreign communities, a central theme which emerged is their challenge of assimilating into the local church.

Many families are initially unaware of essential steps such as registering with a parish or enrolling children in Catholic schools. Some communities find the parish-centred activities in Singapore unfamiliar, compared to the more neighbourhood-focused faith activities in their home countries.

In addition, parishes across the Archdiocese are at differing levels in their pastoral programmes for the foreign communities. Yet, many look to the Church to help them integrate into the community.

In this regard, the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants & Itinerant People (ACMI) has been reaching out to foreign communities to extend support, as well as developing programmes to help them integrate with their respective parishes.

### **Marriages and Families**

Amongst Catholic couples, divorce has reached significant levels. In spite of the Church's teaching that marriage is a lifelong commitment and the Church's requirement that couples attend marriage preparation, the 2020 Census showed that the rate of divorced/separated Catholics at 4.7% is higher than the national average and most other religions in Singapore.

At the same time, a large percentage of Catholics (> 50%) are getting married in the Catholic Church to partners of other faiths. These go on to form families of mixed faith that have home environments where the Catholic faith may not be transmitted to the children.

Families in the Archdiocese are having fewer children, and having children at a later age. In conversations with Catholic families, parents share about their struggles with parenting and challenges with living the faith. Many parents also have little understanding of their role as their children's first catechist.

---

<sup>58</sup> Bangkok document, the final document of the FABC 50 Conference 2023, no.72

Summary of Concerns	
<p><b><i>Catholics who do not practise the faith</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disagreement with Church teachings</li> <li>- Poor understanding of the faith</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Catholics who feel 'overlooked'</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Challenges in integrating and being accepted</li> <li>- Desire for more participation</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Catholics who attend church alone</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not much is known about their needs and concerns</li> <li>- Experience loneliness and lack of closeness with God and/or the Church</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Catholics with underserved needs</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suffer from issues ranging from mental health challenges, child protection issues, family abuse, addictions to recidivism</li> <li>- Growing number of children, youth and seniors with mental health challenges</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Foreign communities</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Challenge of assimilation</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Children, Youth and Catholic Educators in Catholic Schools</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youths: disengagement with the Church</li> <li>- Catholic Educators: lack of confidence in building a faith-centred culture</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Youths &amp; Young Adults</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have different priorities as they mature</li> <li>- Desire for healthy dialogue on questions they have</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Seniors</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desire meaningful lives</li> <li>- Wish to contribute purposefully to the community</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Marriages and families</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents struggle with parenting and living the faith</li> </ul>

### 3.2.3 Proposed direction and focus

In an interview in 2013, Pope Francis said, "The thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity."<sup>59</sup> As recently as September 2023, he urged everyone to pay attention to people who face marginalisation, "Let's focus on accepting them, on welcoming all the people who need it."<sup>60</sup>

In APC Conversations with communities to understand the latter's needs, hopes and faith journeys, Catholics have indicated a desire for closeness to God and the Church:

- Catholics want to discern the purpose God is calling them to, bear fruit in Christ and participate in the life of the Church;
- In addition, Catholics want to feel accepted, no matter where they are on their faith journey;
- Crucially, Catholics want the Church, the People of God, to journey with them through life seasons, accompany them through the realities of modern life.

<sup>59</sup> America, *The Jesuit Review* Sept. 19, 2013

<sup>60</sup> The Pope Video Sept 2023



To build a welcoming Church where people feel included and accepted, the following are some areas that we, as an Archdiocese, as communities, and individuals can focus on:

## **I. Greater accompaniment and journeying with all to encounter the love of God and closeness to the Church**

As baptised followers of Jesus, we are called to accompany one another in our journey towards holiness. As explained in *Christifideles Laici*, “the faithful must be sustained by the encouragement, assistance of the entire ecclesial community.”<sup>61</sup>

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the importance of accompaniment is emphasised and it states that “the Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5).”<sup>62</sup>

In providing accompaniment, Pope Francis explains<sup>63</sup> that accompaniment must lead others closer to God:

- The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.
- We need to practice the art of listening, more than simply hearing. Only through respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the desire to respond fully to God’s love and to reach a level of maturity where we can make truly free and responsible decisions.
- One who accompanies others has to realize that each person’s situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without. He or she corrects others but without making judgments, invites others to let themselves be healed, to take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel.
- Genuine spiritual accompaniment always begins and flourishes in the context of service to the mission of evangelization.

From the above, it is clear that as a whole Church, from the clergy to the laity, we are all called to be formed in a deeper understanding and experience of being accompanied and accompanying others. We are called to discover our own unique way of accompanying others from within our unique context and purpose, as led by the Spirit. This requires our own personal transformation, and learning to respond to the Spirit as our authentic selves.

Accompaniment is a sacred task that occurs often in our daily lives. It can happen between individuals, within and between communities, and at the Archdiocesan level. Providing accompaniment can take various forms, and the following areas are some (non-exhaustive) possibilities of where the Holy Spirit may be inviting us to better accompany and journey with the respective communities:

---

<sup>61</sup> *Christifideles Laici* 16

<sup>62</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* 169

<sup>63</sup> See *Evangelii Gaudium* 169-173

- a. **Catholics practising the faith nominally or out of obligation** who form a significant portion of the Catholic population. We need to better understand their desires, needs and concerns.
- b. **Non-practising Catholics:** In conversations with returning Catholics, they shared that the availability of a friend or a community that was ready to accompany them helped them take the first step back to church.
- c. **Catholics who feel ‘overlooked’** and wish to be accompanied in their faith journey and to discern what God is calling them to.
- d. **Catholics who attend church alone:** We need to reach out to them and understand their needs.
- e. **Catholic Youths:** A key theme that emerged amongst disengaged youths was the desire for relevant, intentional engagement.
- f. **Catholics with underserved needs:** Conversations with social mission ministries reveal that these individuals desire closeness to God and the Church, yet their personal situations make it difficult for them to experience the love of God.
- g. **Catholics with special needs and their families:** There is a common desire amongst these Catholics and their families for greater involvement in parish life, and for their children to receive the sacraments similar to other children.
- h. **Catholics of foreign and non-English speaking communities:** Conversations with foreigners and migrants indicate their desire to grow in the faith, live the faith intentionally and develop relationships with the parish community.
- i. **Catholics who are same-sex attracted or identify as LGBTQ and their families** who desire to experience the love and compassion of God, and be accepted within the Church.

Here are some (non-exhaustive) possibilities to provide accompaniment for:

**(a) Catholics practising the faith nominally or out of obligation**

**(b) Catholics who are not practising the faith**

**(c) Catholics who feel overlooked**

**(d) Catholics who attend Church alone**

Level	Suggested Possibilities
Individuals and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage Catholics who have experienced accompaniment to be befrienders and provide accompaniment to others</li> <li>● Connect individuals and families to suitable spiritual directors to discern their calling</li> </ul>

Groups & communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a culture of accompaniment amongst Catholics: one possibility is to establish intentional befrienders programmes to build a culture of befriending and hospitality within each parish</li> <li>• Equip individuals and families with formation in the art of accompaniment to accompany others</li> <li>• Reach out to them to understand how the Church can help them encounter and experience the closeness of God (e.g. through focused discussion groups, etc.)</li> </ul>
Archdiocesan policies, systems, & structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have accompaniment programmes across the Archdiocese to form Catholics in the art of accompaniment.</li> <li>• Build and create more inclusive social spaces (also known as 'third places'<sup>64</sup>) that are more suited to the needs of the individual; or designate 'safe spaces' for supportive conversations.</li> </ul>

Here are some possibilities to provide accompaniment for:

**(e) Catholic youths**

**(f) Catholics with under-served needs**

**(g) Catholics with special needs and their families**

Level	Suggested Possibilities
Individuals and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the parish community to be more welcoming of youths and Catholics with under-served and/or special needs</li> <li>• Reach out to the families of youths and Catholics with underserved and/or special needs to journey with them and integrate them into the community</li> <li>• For those with mental health challenges, create greater awareness of and facilitate acceptance towards support available for mental wellness.</li> </ul>
Groups & communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage youths in dialogue and provide mentorship that allows them to experience healthy, relevant exchange of ideas and information. Empower engaged youths at the parish and Archdiocesan levels to take ownership of areas they can contribute to.</li> <li>• For Catholics with special needs and their families, parishes may consider putting more resources into making spaces, training and manpower available to cater to those with difficulties integrating into regular catechism programmes. For example, consider a catechism which can include families and their special needs children.</li> </ul>

<sup>64</sup> A public space where people can socialize and connect with their community, outside of home and work.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For those with mental health challenges, make resources on mental health available at parishes, pastoral teams and online. Provide formation to parish pastoral teams so that they can support Catholics with mental health needs and direct them to the appropriate channels.</li> </ul>
Archdiocesan policies, systems, & structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inculcate a culture of looking out for one another, such that every parish and Archdiocesan organisation is able to embrace and practise a ‘No Wrong Door’ approach across all communities.</li> </ul> <p>As the needs of youths and Catholics with underserved/special needs individuals are very diverse, conduct a holistic examination of the approaches required, ensure better integration of the current programmes and set up platforms to address their needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up an Archdiocese-wide platform to bring together youth leaders, Archdiocese staff, parish staff and adults who accompany youths in order to coordinate efforts and build closer partnerships.</li> <li>Set up a common leadership development program for all youth leaders and staff of Archdiocesan and parish youth organisations, so as to build a community that works together in serving the needs of youths</li> <li>Set up a registry of special needs Catholic individuals and their families that oversees the support that is being rendered to them.</li> <li>Establish a network that provides better integration between parishes and social mission organisations to look into the pastoral care of underserved Catholics.</li> </ul>

Here are some (non-exhaustive) possibilities to provide accompaniment for **Catholics of foreign and non-English speaking communities**:

Level	Suggested Possibilities
Individuals and families	Encourage the local community in each parish to be part of ACMI’s effort to reach out to foreign and non-English speaking Catholics
Groups & communities	As each foreign community has different pastoral needs, cultural practices and devotions, conduct a deeper study of the needs, practices and hopes of these various foreign communities
Archdiocesan policies, systems, &	Establish a coordinated communications approach amongst Chaplains, foreign communities and parishes so that

structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>resources needed by each foreign community may be better evaluated</li> <li>celebrations may be meaningfully celebrated and well participated in</li> <li>local Catholics gain greater awareness and appreciation of the diversity of the practices and celebrations of foreign Catholics</li> </ul>
------------	---

Here are some (non-exhaustive) possibilities to provide accompaniment for **Catholics who are same-sex attracted or identify as LGBTQ and their families**:

Level	Suggested Possibilities
Individuals and families	Encourage the wider Catholic community to be gracious and open in understanding the needs and aspirations of same-sex attracted individuals and their families.
Groups & communities	Hold regular dialogue sessions with the wider Catholic community to facilitate understanding of same-sex attracted Catholics and encourage the faithful to attend such sessions.
Archdiocesan policies, systems, & structures	Establish the role of the Church in raising awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and nurturing diversity, as well as help the clergy realise the importance of their role in shaping attitudes

## II. Strengthen families as the domestic church

The Church is very clear in highlighting the pivotal role of the family as the domestic church and parents as every child's first catechists<sup>65</sup>. As such, the need for better formation, education, and support systems within the Church to form, empower, and restore families cannot be clearer.

In 2022, Pope Francis emphasised that there was "serious concern that couples who receive a superficial preparation run the real risk of celebrating a marriage ... with such a weak foundation that it "falls apart" ... and cannot withstand even the first inevitable crises. ... Therefore, we have a primary duty to responsibly accompany those who manifest their intention to be united in marriage, so that they may be preserved from the trauma of separation and never lose faith in love."<sup>66</sup>

Some proposals in this area include:

<sup>65</sup> *Familiaris Consortio*, 1

<sup>66</sup> *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*, Preface by The Holy Father Francis, p 8.

- a. **Take a renewed pastoral approach** to help the “lay faithful who feel called to accept the vocation of marriage and to persevere in it throughout their lives<sup>67</sup>”. The Vatican has invited dioceses to consider a longer period of discernment and preparation for the married life, and it is proposed that one possible way to bring about stronger formation for married life is for the **Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life** to be **articulated in the context of the Archdiocese of Singapore** to provide stronger formation for marriages.

This approach takes the form of Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life - a path of faith formation from childhood to the married years, together with accompaniment of the couple towards attaining a Christian couple lifestyle.

Such a marriage catechumenate is not meant to be a simple catechesis, but seeks to bring to life the presence of Christ in couples<sup>68</sup>. The entire ecclesial community is called to walk with couples and provide concrete accompaniment to them. This journey is to be shared with faith-filled married couples and suitable experts, working with priests and religious. Married couples, because of their unique experience, can participate as witnesses and companions of couples, both before and during marriage, in many aspects of married life and family life. In addition, forms of accompaniment are to be offered to couples who go on to become parents, so that they can assist their children’s spiritual growth and be supported by the community in which they belong.

In order to effectively implement this renewed pastoral care of married life, couples, priests and religious offering accompaniment would need to be adequately formed. Pastoral support groups and structures to support families in times of crisis are essential. Coordination with parishes would also be crucial, given that almost all couples and families are part of a parish.

---

<sup>67</sup> *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*, n 7.

<sup>68</sup> *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*, p 18.

CATECHUMENAL PATHWAYS FOR MARRIED LIFE			
This Catechumenate is built upon 4 formation stages, and includes formation, reflection, discussion, dialogue, liturgy, community, prayer, celebration in each stage:			
<b>Remote</b> <i>from childhood to young adulthood</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children are taught self-esteem and respect for others,</li> <li>• adolescents are formed in affectivity and sexuality,</li> <li>• young people are offered a journey of human and spiritual growth</li> </ul>	<b>Proximate</b> <i>includes those seriously dating, discerning marriage</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• couples are initiated into the Sacrament of Marriage to have a clear awareness of its essential aspects</li> <li>• couples are led into deeper understanding of their relationship and to discern their vocation to marriage</li> </ul>	<b>Final</b> <i>focuses on spiritual preparation 2-3 months prior to the wedding</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• couples are led through a recalling of the essential elements of Catholic marriage (indissolubility, unity, fidelity, fruitfulness)</li> <li>• Spiritual experiences are designed for couples to encounter the Lord as the source and centre of all Christian life</li> </ul>	<b>Accompaniment</b> <i>from early years of married life to parenting and 'empty nest' years</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the celebration of marriage, couples are accompanied to live as spouses. They have the opportunity to continue the catechumenal journey through periodic meetings, in the community and as a couple.</li> </ul>

- b. **Coordinate Archdiocesan efforts in supporting families and marriages.** In the 2023 APC Study on Families and Marriage<sup>69</sup>, it was evident that there are many efforts within the Archdiocese to support families. However, these efforts are frequently fragmented and siloed. Those who contribute often do it in parallel with other ministries, with minimal collaboration and coordination. There is therefore a need to map and coordinate these efforts in the Archdiocese.

The strategic direction and coordination of Archdiocesan efforts in supporting families and marriages can be undertaken by the Catholic Family Life (CFL). Many CFL affiliates - such as Engaged Encounter, Marriage Preparation Course, Couple Mentor Journey, Couple Empowerment Programme, and Marriage Encounter - are currently serving some of the roles envisaged within the Catechumenal Pathway, thus CFL is in a good position to co-ordinate these efforts in partnership with parishes.

- c. **Set up Archdiocesan ministry for senior persons.** With the population of seniors in our church set to increase in tandem with Singapore's ageing population, it is proposed that an Archdiocesan ministry for senior persons be established to plan, coordinate and implement pastoral programmes aimed at supporting senior persons and their families at a multitude of touchpoints. This proposed ministry could also facilitate sharing of best practices among parishes and related ministries, and exploring roles that senior persons could take on in the Church's mission. When executed in a coordinated manner, this would ensure that all Catholic seniors are taken care of by the community, with none left on the margins.

<sup>69</sup> This is a 2023 Study by an APC Study Group to understand the challenges of families and the opportunities to form stronger marriages and families. An examination was undertaken of the programmes currently available to support families and couples, and the possible gaps in support were identified.

### III. Strengthen Catholic ethos and community in Catholic schools

Catholic education, through the 35 Catholic schools in Singapore, is a gift to the educational landscape of Singapore. Our Catholic schools have a life-giving influence in offering a humanising vision of education that is rooted distinctively in authentic Gospel witness and the Church's teachings to bring forth God's kingdom in the now.

As highlighted in the Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on Christian Education*: "The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ".<sup>70</sup>

To realise this Catholic vision of education, there is a need to strengthen the Catholic ethos of 'the school as a community of persons', and 'a genuine community of faith'<sup>71</sup> for the holistic formation of our children and youth. The Catholic school, as an educational community of faith, should have a culture of relationships that cares for and enables our young, not only to excel academically, but also to live a life of service to others, based on a love for God and neighbour.

The communal dimension of Catholic schooling also extends to the building of relationships with parishes and families. The aim is to partner with them in the mission of Catholic education and the Church's mission to evangelise. Catholic schools, by virtue of their identity and mission, must collaborate with parishes and families. These efforts would strengthen families and the building of homes centred on Christ.

Thus, there is a call for our Church, as a whole, to recognise and promote the relevance of Catholic education today in order to form our children and youth holistically, and serve as a light to non-Catholics in our Catholic schools.

To achieve this, we would need to:

- Build collective leadership of the Church (between clergy, sponsoring authorities, school boards, school leaders and parents) to gain oversight of and provide guidance on issues of school governance that have a bearing on Catholic ethos and mission. For example ensuring that critical clauses are incorporated into the constitutions of all Catholic schools to include the necessary governance that preserves the schools' Catholic mission and character .
- Review the current state of schools using the 5 Essential Marks of Catholic Schools<sup>72</sup> and work with schools on key areas to strengthen the mission of Catholic education .
- Prioritise the placement of resources to support and drive our Catholic vision of education, especially in the formation of school chaplaincy teams, and the provision of ongoing faith formation of school leaders and Catholic educators, with support from the Archdiocese.

By weaving together these possibilities, we can journey better with one another, no matter where we are in our faith journey.

---

<sup>70</sup> *Gravissimum educationis*, Chap 3

<sup>71</sup> Miller, *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*, 2006

<sup>72</sup> Miller, *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*, 2006



## How can we move ahead together?



### **Archdiocesan Offices can support the overall efforts of building communities:**

- (i) Support accompaniment through more intentional integration and collaboration of the many programmes and initiatives currently in place. Formation centres such as Catholic Leadership Centre (CLC) can also form leaders and individuals who can support and journey with others.
- (ii) Strengthen families as the domestic church through a holistic programme of formation and accompaniment. CFL can be empowered as the co-ordinating body to support the different life stages of families and design initiatives together with parishes and ministries.
- (iii) Enhance the Catholic ethos in our schools and strengthen the partnership between the Archdiocesan Commission for Catholic Schools (ACCS) and the Catholic school community to realise our Catholic vision of education.



### **Each parish and Church organisation:**

- (i) Church organisations can discern how accompaniment can happen within the community. Parishes can consider creating a culture of accompaniment and equip parishioners with the necessary formation. Parishes can also explore ways to collaborate with relevant communities in outreach within the neighbourhood.
- (ii) Parishes can build faith-centered families through providing parents with formation and accompaniment to enable them to be their child's first catechist, and encourage collaboration amongst relevant family ministries to better support families in their pastoral needs.
- (iii) Parishes can support Catholic Schools in their neighbourhood, as well as make parishes places of welcome for children and youth.



### **Each of us** can answer Jesus' commandment to 'love one another as I have loved you':

- (i) Recognise that each of us can be accompanied and can provide accompaniment to others. Let us ask ourselves - how can I play a part?
- (ii) Parents to recognise their role as their child's first catechist, that they are called to build their family as the domestic church, and be proactive in accessing the resources and the formation needed to fulfill this call.
- (iii) Parents and youths to support and work with schools towards the holistic formation of our youth and children.

## For discernment and conversation

As we put on the heart and mind of Jesus, we pray for and discern the following:

Which aspect(s) of this pastoral priority of building communities resonate with me?

What new perspectives or possibilities is God inviting my community / organisation to consider through this priority?

### 3.3 Enhance differentiated co-responsibility of clergy and laity



73

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ... All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”

(1 Cor 12: 4-6,11-12)

#### 3.3.1 Why this matters

“The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through Baptism and Confirmation, all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself.”<sup>74</sup>

Jesus came to proclaim the Good News and establish the kingdom of God on earth. This was his mission, and he went to all peoples to fulfil it. His life, teachings and ministry drew people to him, and through him to God. In encountering him, they experienced God’s love in him. This moved them to follow him and become his disciples. From among them, he chose 12 to be apostles. Each had different gifts and talents to assist Jesus with his mission; more significantly, these enabled them to continue Jesus’ mission after his Ascension.

Whether as disciples or apostles, they learned from Jesus how to love and forgive one another, care for all, especially the poor, and restore everyone to the right relationship with God and each other. He modelled God’s way to live, pray and serve, and so fulfilled God’s plan for salvation. Most of all, he showed them how to live in and be a community - by valuing each person and their giftedness. He also showed them the gift of cooperating with one another to build the kingdom of God. This is what Christian discipleship looks like.

<sup>73</sup> Source: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore <https://flickr.com/photos/catholicsg/albums>

<sup>74</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 33

We are Jesus' followers in the world. He has gathered us to walk together "as baptised persons, in the diversity of charism, vocations and ministries" with "the responsibility of demonstrating and transmitting the love and tenderness of God to a wounded humanity."<sup>75</sup>

Today the Church calls each of us - lay, religious and ordained - "to differentiated co-responsibility for the common mission of evangelization."<sup>76</sup> We do this well when we relate and cooperate for mission and evangelization in ways that are respectful of the irreducible uniqueness of each member, that is, their respective gifts and tasks.

*Apostolicam Actuositatem* sets out the vital role of the laity in the mission of the Church: "Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world."<sup>77</sup>

This was reiterated in *Redemptoris Missio*, where St John Paul II wrote: "The mission ad gentes is incumbent upon the entire People of God. Whereas the foundation of a new church requires the Eucharist and hence the priestly ministry, missionary activity, which is carried out in a wide variety of ways, is the task of all the Christian faithful."<sup>78</sup>

Pope Francis writes in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches, room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge."<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> *A Synodal Church in Mission, Synthesis Report*, XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, First Session, 2023, Introduction

<sup>76</sup> *A Synodal Church in Mission, Synthesis Report*, Part 1.1a

<sup>77</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2

<sup>78</sup> *Redemptoris Missio*, 71

<sup>79</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 102

### 3.3.2 Our current reality

While Vatican II's vision of shared or co-responsibility between clergy and laity for the mission of the Church has made some progress in our Archdiocese, it has not been fully realised. A few parishes are currently working with the ONE and CLC on their parish conversion programme, moving towards reviewing and restructuring the parish with positive results.

Feedback from the Archdiocesan Assembly 2022 and APC Conversations indicate there is a desire for enhancing the differentiated co-responsibility among laity and priests, and a recognition that we need to better support the vision and practice of co-responsibility.

Arising from a lack of differentiated co-responsibility are the following issues, particularly in parishes:

- In running the Church and carrying out its mission, decision-making power is concentrated in the clergy (e.g. parish priest), with the laity mostly in supporting roles.
- Over time, with the laity as an untapped resource, the decreasing number of priests ordained leads to clergy being overloaded, and a corresponding drop in pastoral care for all.
- While more formation of laity is required to take on suitable leadership and pastoral responsibilities, the clergy should also be trained in civic governance and management (finance and administration) so as to better enable them to handle the increasingly varied challenges of administration, and to appreciate how best to exercise oversight when delegating in administrative areas.
- The lack of deeper participation of the laity disrupts continuity when there is a rotation of priests. This is particularly so when incoming priests reverse the decisions and structures set up by their predecessors. The parish is at risk of “rebooting” when the parish priest changes, which makes strategic plans for the parish difficult to bring to fruition.
- There needs to be more clarity on the boundaries and roles of clergy and laity co-responsibility, as well as proper procedures and institutional practices for handover. Without clarity, this results in fractures and tension in the relationship between clergy and laity.

### 3.3.3 Proposed direction and focus

In addition to their apostolate in the world in social, political and economic sectors, laity are invited to be more involved in the pastoral mission of the Church as outlined in the recommendations from the Synod on Synodality 2024.

This Synod recommended the laity be given greater opportunities for participation, exploring new forms of service and ministries in response to pastoral needs in the spirit of collaboration and differentiated co-responsibility. These include encouraging more forms of lay ministries (i.e. ministries which do not require Holy Orders), both within and outside of the liturgical sphere.

More specifically, the Synod on Synodality 2024 has recommended the increased participation of the laity in Church discernment processes and all phases of decision-making processes (drafting, making and confirming decisions), and greater access for laity to positions of responsibility within the diocese and church institutions.<sup>80</sup>

To facilitate differentiated co-responsibility in our Archdiocese, the following are proposed:

## **I. Shift mindsets**

There needs to be a culture shift that embraces shared responsibility in mission and ministry. This starts with the tone from the top and greater clarity from the Church leadership on the importance of co-responsibility and how it is to be realised in the parishes and Archdiocesan organisations. This includes policies delineating the roles of clergy and laity in shared responsibilities and educating the leaders - clergy and lay - on them. In addition, building more trust and having regular dialogues between laity and clergy is needed.

## **II. Create supporting structures and guidelines**

Create the structures and guidelines at parish and archdiocesan levels to support co-responsibility. At the archdiocesan level, guidelines on what co-responsibility means in actual terms for parishes, archdiocese organisations and mission can be set forth.

At the parish level, the governance construct of parishes should be remodelled to support the parish priest and enhance the missionary focus and pastoral care of the parish, where:

- Clergy, leaders of the PPC, parish ministries and staff commit to journeying together to serve the parish
- Staff support for the pastoral and administrative needs of the parish is strengthened
- There are clear guidelines on co-responsibility, including handover guidelines for parish priests and their relationship with lay leadership, so that pastoral care and strategic plans are not disrupted in terms of parish life
- There is a multi-year parish pastoral plan with annual updates shared.
- There is regular reporting to parishioners, including an annual report of accomplishments and the financials of the parish

The new governance construct, supported by an increase in staff structure, should lighten the pastoral and administrative load of the clergy, as well as provide the laity with opportunities to realise their baptismal calling to participate and be co-responsible for the life of the Church and its mission in the world.

---

<sup>80</sup> XVI Final Document of XVI Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2024, Para 66 and 77

### **III. Provide the necessary formation and manpower**

To support the co-responsibility, it is important to provide training and formation to both clergy and laity to equip them for their roles. For clergy, management and administration training will help them understand and be more effective in their leadership roles. For the lay, theological and spiritual formation will help them apply their skills in the context of the Church. Formation is also needed to help the laity to live out their apostolate effectively in the world in social, political and economic sectors.

Archdiocesan organisations, such as ONE, OYP, OFC and CLC, can be mobilised to help implement the parish transformation.

### **IV. Expand the avenues of service**

There can be more avenues of service for lay participation to serve in the mission of the Church. This could include:

- Broaden existing avenues of service for participation and be more intentional in recruiting and forming candidates. For example, to be more intentional in the selection and formation of candidates for parish councils.
- Consider more roles for lay women across all ages, including those recommended by the Synod on Synodality 2024<sup>81</sup> e.g. qualified women in leadership positions in the diocese and ecclesiastical institutions (including seminaries, theological institutions)
- Establish better career paths for lay ecclesial workers. This is also in line with the recommendation from the Synod on Synodality 2024 to give dignity and respect for those employed by the Church.<sup>82</sup> This is further expanded under the “Enablers” section on caring for our workers.
- Identify new avenues of service for lay participation to enable the mission of the Church in the world. For example, new areas of service for laity to support parishes in its outreach to communities, including social mission and care for creation initiatives within and outside of parishes.

### **V. Regular check-ins to ensure continued alignment**

An annual survey of leaders on their assessment and practice of shared responsibility should be conducted, and an annual pastoral report of the Archdiocese should be made available for all.

---

<sup>81</sup> XVI Final Document of XVI Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2024, Para 77

<sup>82</sup> XVI Final Document of XVI Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2024, Para 77

### How can we move ahead together?



**Archdiocesan Offices** can support the overall efforts of co-responsibility:

- (i) Church leadership embraces a cultural shift to shared responsibility in mission and ministry; provides greater clarity on how co-responsibility should be realised; creates policies delineating the roles of clergy and laity, and establishes handover guidelines for parish priests
- (ii) Provide training and formation to both clergy and laity to equip them for their respective roles
- (iii) Consider more roles for lay women in the church across all ages
- (iv) Conduct an annual survey of leaders on their assessment and practice of shared responsibility, and make available to all an annual pastoral report of the Archdiocese



**Each parish and Church organisation** can review and renew existing structures and processes to facilitate co-responsibility, which may include:

- (i) Reviewing the governance construct of parishes for co-responsibility
- (ii) Exploring how the avenues of services can be expanded and identifying new avenues of service for lay participation (including lay women across all ages) to enable the mission of the church
- (iii) Being more intentional in recruiting and forming candidates for lay leadership positions in the parish



**Each of us**, whether lay or clergy, can recognise that an important part of our baptism is to serve in the Church's mission to evangelise and transform society. We are to discern where God is calling us to relate and cooperate for mission and evangelization, in ways that are respectful of the irreducible uniqueness of each member. Equipping ourselves for the mission requires receiving appropriate formation that we may be effective in our respective roles.

### For discernment and conversation

As we put on the heart and mind of Jesus, we pray about and discern the following:

Which aspect(s) of this pastoral priority of differentiated co-responsibility resonate with me?

What new perspectives or possibilities is God inviting my community / organisation to consider through this priority?

### 3.4 Build unity in diversity across all levels



83

“But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.”  
(1 Cor 12:24-26)

#### 3.4.1 Why this matters

Jesus lived and ministered to people in their particular cultures and realities and according to the stage of their life and faith journeys. Whether they were Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (Gal 3.28), He valued each as God’s own. He related to everyone with the respect that each was a child of God, be they tax collector or prostitute, Pharisee or disciple, shepherd or king, chosen or lost. He especially reached out to those on the margins, those that society, religion or family shamed or hated, ignored or excluded.

For every Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus and leper, Jesus cared for each by revealing the closeness of God, the tenderness of His heart for them and His compassionate labour to attend to their needs and give them life to the full. Jesus did all this so that they may be reconciled with God and one another. He thus restored them into community, uniting them with God and each other. Indeed, Jesus’ words and actions remind us that everyone is welcomed, accepted and included in the kingdom of God.

The intentional manner in which Jesus gathered the different groups of people into community and restored them as one family of God explains the Church’s commitment to building unity in diversity across all levels. The recent Synod of Bishops emphasised the importance of communion in the Church. Communion is a gift from the Triune God, who is

<sup>83</sup> Source: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore <https://flickr.com/photos/catholicsg/albums>



communion itself, and “at the same time a task, which is never exhausted, of building the ‘we’ of the People of God”<sup>84</sup>.

As a Church, we want to follow Jesus’ example and reach out to the diverse groups among the faithful in our Archdiocese, our neighbourhoods and society. In particular, those who are at the margins of our church and society, like the divorcees, remarried, migrants, prisoners, the mentally unwell, people with special needs, and the LGBTQ+ community. They, too, are children of God. Like Jesus, we want to recognise and respect them as God’s own, even more so to welcome and include them into the communion that is the Church and help them to live in God’s ways as the Church teaches. Their inclusion will enrich the Church for mission and evangelisation because they can participate in these with their giftedness, talents and holy desires.

Treating these marginalised groups of Catholics any less is hurtful to the Body of Christ. As St Paul teaches us, all members should have the same care for one another: “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.” (1 Cor 12:26). Jesus himself prayed that all may be one for his disciples. When we learn to value ourselves as one, united in Christ, we, the Church, can gather, include and celebrate the diverse groups of faithful as well as others from the multi-cultural and multi-religious backgrounds in Singapore and the world. Diversity within the Church and difference with other peoples of faith is an opportunity for us to encounter and dialogue with them, and through the Holy Spirit’s guidance, work towards the unity of the People of God. When we live like this, making it our mission, our Church walks in Jesus’ way to welcome people from “every tribe, tongue, people and nation” (Rev 5:9). As we do, we realise Isaiah’s prophetic call to God’s chosen: “enlarge the place of your tent” (Is 54:1).

There is beauty in the diversity of our Church. We come from all backgrounds and have different expressions of worship, but we are all united in our love for Christ and zeal for his mission. We all need to have the “same care for one another” – to love and care for each other in service of his mission. In building unity in diversity, we need to do it with charity. In this process, we are transformed to be agents of charity to each other. The mission of Christ transcends any individual, community and organisation. We are called to love one another and build the kingdom of God for all.

“God did not wish to save men and women in isolation, but to form them into a single people united in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who would know Him in truth and serve Him in holiness.”<sup>85</sup>

### 3.4.2 Our current reality

Are we One Church?

One of the most memorable moments of being One Church was during our Catholic200SG celebration in 2021, when different groups of varying charisms and theological persuasions

---

<sup>84</sup> *Instrumentum Laboris*, For the First Session, XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

<sup>85</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 4 and 9; Saint Cyprian, *De Orat Dom.* 23; CSEL 3, p. 285

came together to commemorate the occasion. On 11 December 2021, church bells rang in unison across the island at 6 pm as all 32 parishes concurrently celebrated Mass to commemorate 200 years of Catholicism in Singapore.

Another notable and historic event was when Pope Francis' visit in 2024 brought Unity and Hope<sup>86</sup> to Catholics in Singapore. More than 5000 volunteers across parishes, church organisations and communities came together to organise the papal visit, and the Papal Mass at the National Stadium brought together 50,000 of our faithful to celebrate mass together.

We need to build on such moments, and create more moments like this.

We find that our Church organisations, ministries and groups, while each seeks to fulfil its mission, have sometimes been parochial in our approach. There is tension between groups:

- Within and between parishes and ministries
- Between parishes and the Curia
- Within the clergy
- Within the laity
- Between diocesan and religious congregation
- Between those with a maintenance mindset and a missionary mindset of how we should be Church

Christ calls us to a larger vision, of building the Kingdom of God. We are to share in His mission. We cannot do so and fulfill this call, unless there is greater unity, improved communion and collaboration across the parts of our body. Feedback from our engagements indicates a desire for:

- Reconciliation from past hurts and conflicts
- Better interaction, information sharing and understanding of what each group/organisation does
- Building relationships and reducing divisions, particularly among leaders of different groups, between parishes and Archdiocesan organisations, and between parishes
- Collaboration, rather than competition, to reduce duplication and increase synergy in shared areas (such as family life, social mission, formation and community building across different life stages).

There are some building blocks in place. For example, ONE platforms that build the relational and spiritual vitality of communities, such as for Archdiocesan organisations and PPCs. Platforms within parishes also exist for ministries to come together. The clergy come together monthly for Presbyterium meetings across the Archdiocese. Nevertheless, there is room to further some of these efforts and create more unity in how we come together as One Church in our Archdiocese, to labor together to build the Kingdom of God.

### **3.4.3 Proposed direction and focus**

We are one Archdiocese.

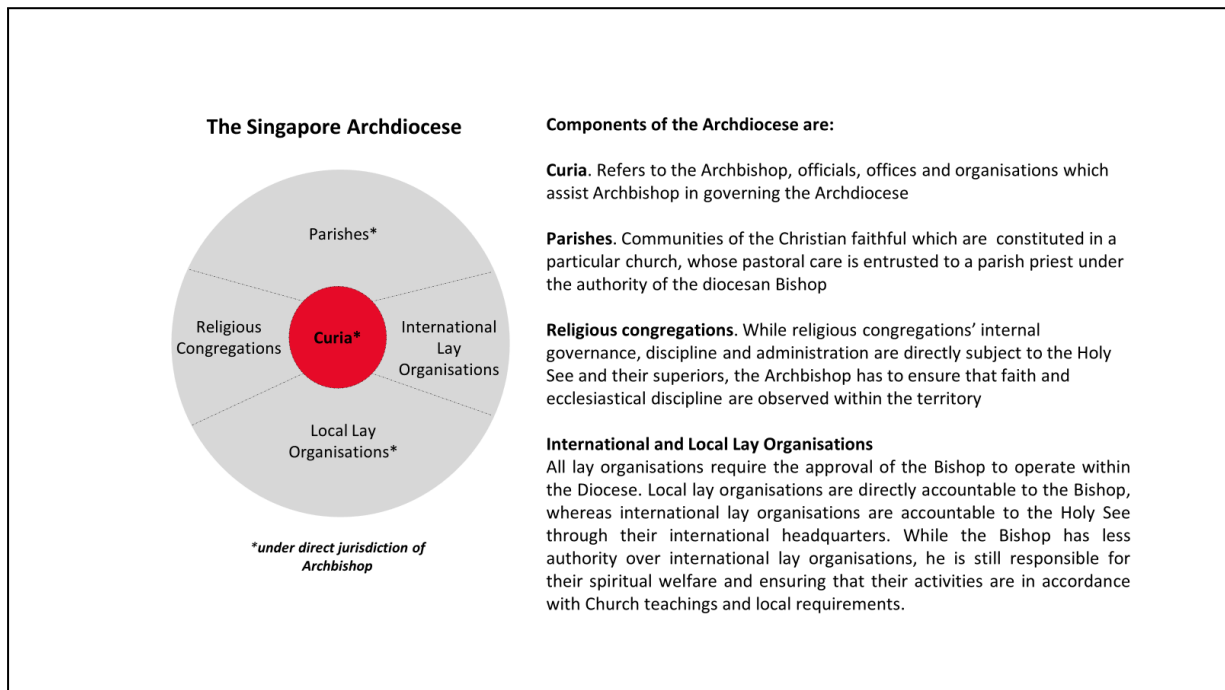
---

<sup>86</sup> The theme for the papal visit was Unity and Hope.

The possibilities for greater unity start with understanding what constitutes our Archdiocese. In canon law, the definition of a diocese<sup>87</sup> has three key elements:<sup>88</sup>

- I. A diocese is geographical - Singapore in our case.
- II. All the faithful in that territory are part of the diocese.
- III. A bishop has the responsibility to shepherd all within the diocese.

A schematic of the Singapore Catholic Archdiocese is as follows:



Unity starts by recognising that we are all part of this one Archdiocese.

However, the term “Archdiocese” has sometimes been misconstrued and misused. It is often used to refer to the components of the Archdiocese under the direct and full authority of the Archbishop (i.e. the Curia and local lay organisations). Parishes, religious congregations, and international lay organisations are sometimes excluded. This exclusionary language has the unintended consequence of encouraging an ‘us vs them’ mentality.

Language is important. It reflects mindsets. It can also create mindsets. We can start by clarifying the terms “Archdiocese” and “Archdiocesan” to move us towards an all-inclusive

<sup>87</sup> An archdiocese is a larger and more significant diocese. Singapore was formerly part of the Archdiocese of Malacca-Singapore, and we came into our own in 1972.

<sup>88</sup> Canon 369: A Diocese is a portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a Bishop for him to shepherd with the cooperation of the presbyterium, so that, adhering to its pastor and gathered by him in the Holy Spirit through the gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.

Canon 372 §1. As a rule, a portion of the people of God which constitutes a Diocese or other particular church is limited to a definite territory so that it includes all the faithful living in the territory.

“One Church”. At the same time, we also need to build better communion with each of our Archdiocese’s component parts.

How can we achieve this apart from clarifying the term “Archdiocese” and using inclusionary language? Here are some suggestions:

#### **I. Develop a shared mission and vision**

A collaborative approach between all parts of the Archdiocese is crucial for forming a shared mission and vision. This collective approach helps to draw on the individual charisms of each unit within broader pastoral priorities, making the best use of finite resources and aligning all towards the same mission and purpose of our Church. We already began this journey from the Catholic200SG Collective Discernment Exercise, Synodal Conversations 2021-22, Archdiocesan Assembly 2022 and the APC Conversations 2023-2024 to discern our pastoral priorities. We need to build on this momentum and continue to journey together for Christ’s mission.

#### **II. Foster relationships, communication and dialogue**

Intentional relationship building, open communication lines and regular dialogue are indispensable for fostering understanding and trust among different members of the Church. There can be more regular engagement and sharing between the different parts of our Archdiocese to foster greater communion. Processes and platforms to facilitate communication and dialogue can be strengthened to facilitate this.

#### **III. Promote respect for roles and authority**

All parties – Bishop, clergy, leaders of religious organisations and leaders of local and international lay organisations – should respect and recognise each other’s roles, responsibilities and authorities as defined by canon law and the relevant governing documents. Where “grey” areas need clarification, these must be brought to the appropriate platform and discussed in a spirit of Christian love, prudence, temperance, and charity. There is also a need for diocesan priests to have a better understanding of the charisms of lay and religious orders. Platforms for regular dialogue can facilitate this.

#### **IV. Support reconciliation and conflict management**

Enhance the framework, capability and processes for reconciliation and conflict management within the archdiocese, parishes and church organisations. This includes:

- a) Enhance and communicate the Archdiocese framework for feedback, complaints and conflict resolution, based on principles which encourage reconciliation, ownership, participation and dialogue.
- b) Encourage parishes to set up conflict resolution protocol so as to encourage ownership and participation at the local level. This could include a feedback panel which addresses the majority of feedback and conflicts within the parish.
- c) Set up an Archdiocesan ministry to facilitate reconciliation and conflict management. This could include a panel of facilitators and mediators who can support parishes and church organisations to help resolve matters.

## V. Conduct a biennial study on relationships between entities

A survey on the relationship and wholesomeness of collaboration between entities (e.g. parishes, curia and lay organisations) should be conducted every two years. This would help to understand the impact and progress in transforming the relationships.

### How can we move ahead together?



**Archdiocesan Offices** can support unity and relationship building:

- (i) Set up platforms to facilitate relationship building, communion and collaboration across the Archdiocese. These could include Archdiocesan organisations building capacity for parishes such as.
  - Decision making platforms to align and coordinate the work of the Curia and Church organisations
  - Platforms and models for mission which bring offices and parishes together. These could include platforms for parishes and districts to come together in mission, more regular dialogues with religious orders, and platforms for organisations and ministries of similar missionary focus to come together.
- (ii) Enhance the framework of conflict management and set up an Archdiocese ministry to support reconciliation and conflict resolution.
- (iii) Track progress through a survey on relationships conducted biennially



**Each parish, Church organisation and community** can support unity and relationship building through:

- (i) Being more intentional in building relationship and communion between ministries and communities within the parish
- (ii) Setting up platforms within the parish district to facilitate parish leadership gathering on a regular basis
- (iii) Collaboration between parish and civic organisations in the neighbourhood
- (iii) Establishing conflict resolution protocol to support conflict resolution and reconciliation



**Each of us** plays a critical role in building unity in our church, when we recognise that we are all part of one Archdiocese, that our mission field is larger than any one organisation or community, and we are open to the acceptance of other perspectives.

### For discernment and conversation

As we put on the heart and mind of Jesus, we pray about and discern the following:

Which aspect(s) of this pastoral priority of unity in diversity resonate with me?

What new perspectives or possibilities is God inviting my community / organisation to consider through this priority?

### 3.5 Embrace Synodality as a way of being Church



“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

(Acts 2:46-47)

#### 3.5.1 Why this matters

Throughout the gospels, Jesus is always on the move to proclaim the Good News. He does this by walking around Jerusalem and the countryside, and even into non-Jewish lands. There, He meets Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, and the holy and sinful. He goes to all of them because they are God's people; no one is excluded. He teaches them God's ways to live and pray. Through his ministry and service, He enables them to encounter the saving love of God, even more, to learn how to love one another as He loves them.

All this begins with Jesus listening to them, with a spirit of openness to welcome and include everyone into the kingdom of God. This is the foundational attitude of Go - He listens to His people. This is, in fact, God's radical action in Jesus to care for, support and walk with His people; this is how we learn to be Church and minister like Jesus.

Jesus makes this journey walking with His apostles. With them are his brothers and some women. They are Jesus' closest companions on the journey. They walk together with Jesus to the Cross and beyond it, into the promise of the resurrected life He offers as the risen Christ. On this journey, they come to know their identity and vocation as Jesus' companions. They also learn about Jesus' mission and how they can contribute.

---

<sup>89</sup> Source: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore <https://flickr.com/photos/catholicsg/albums>

They learn this through conversations with Jesus. He teaches them what it is to be in communion with Him and each other as His friends, their role is in His mission, and how they can participate in it with their different gifts and talents.

In Jesus and his companions walking together on mission, we glimpse the Church's call today to be a synodal Church. The spirit of synodality animates, moves and guides such a Church. Synodality means journeying together as a People of God. It recognises that the Holy Spirit works through each of us, working together for our common mission in Christ. God provides a special gift - the sense of the faithful or *sensus fidelium*, by which the Church is assured of the guidance of God to remain on the right path. God speaks to us as we listen to the voice of Jesus speaking through the voices of all the people – clergy, lay, religious - of the Archdiocese.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the early Christians show us a fuller expression of what it means for a community of Christians to journey together as a synodal Church. We learn from them how the Church is to live, move, act, and make decisions. And that is through prayer and discernment, where we listen to the Holy Spirit in one another. Indeed, this kind of Church “walks with Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to fulfil its mission of evangelisation”.<sup>90</sup>

Pope Francis calls for us to focus on synodality because this is God's way of restoring our relationship as the People of God journeying together in Christ's mission. We need to make synodality a way of life for us, as the first Apostles did.

As Pope Francis urged us: “Walk together. Question together. Take responsibility together for community discernment, which for us is prayer, as the first Apostles did: This is Synodality, which we would like to make a daily habit in all its expressions.”<sup>91</sup>

### 3.5.2 Our current reality

Following the call of our Holy Father, the universal call to a synodal journey started in 2021, our Archdiocese responded by participating in the Local Diocese Phase, which took place between October 2021 and August 2022. Over 16,800 Catholics participated in the Conversations during this period, culminating in an Archdiocesan Assembly in June 2022.

The practice of synodality is not new to our Archdiocese. We have practised it by encouraging participation in and through Parish Assemblies, parish pastoral councils and neighbourhood communities. The Church's present call for synodality invites us to build on these and strengthen how we journey together.

This synodal process continues with the formation of the APC to look deeper into the hopes and concerns raised by our faithful. We have reached this stage in our journey by following a synodal path. It has been a powerful experience. We have been challenged, inspired and transformed by what we have heard from each other. As we discern the way forward together, we must continue to listen to what God is saying to us.

---

<sup>90</sup> *Working Document for the Continental Stage*, General Secretariat of the Synod, 2022

<sup>91</sup> *Synod on Synodality*, 2023

It has become apparent that the most significant part of our journey together as a synodal Church still lies ahead of us, and we need to embed a synodal approach in our life within the Archdiocese to move forward. The hopes raised during the Synodal process echo this – many want to see a more welcoming church, a church that listens and journeys together with the faithful. We need to strengthen our dialogue, reciprocal listening, spiritual discernment and communion amongst our communities and within our Church, so that we can participate more fully in Christ's mission together. We need to embed synodality as our way of life, in all that we do as the Church in Singapore

### 3.5.3 Proposed direction and focus

#### I. Formation on synodality

The *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality* states: “Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and ongoing learning. How does our church community form people to be more capable of ‘walking together,’ listening to one another, participating in mission and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?”<sup>92</sup>

We need to form all levels of the Church on how we can journey together in a synodal way. We need to learn to Listen to one another, Dialogue in the Spirit, Discern together as a community and exercise differentiated Co-responsibility for Christ's mission. We need to walk together to read and discern the signs of our times, to remain relevant in our ever changing world, to discern a faith response to issues that surround us.

#### II. Review our structures and processes for synodality

“The way to promote a synodal Church is to foster as great a participation of all the People of God as possible in decision-making processes.”<sup>93</sup> The final Synod on Synodality held in 2024 outlines some of the key areas where structures and processes are necessary to embed synodality at all levels. These include<sup>94</sup>:

- a) Decision making institutional structures, which include Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, Parish Pastoral Councils, Presbyteral Councils etc., where each body plays a role in the discernment and the implementation of synodal guidelines.
- b) Adopting a synodal working method, which includes selecting members to the councils which expresses as much as possible the reality of the community. This includes encouragement of participation from women, young people, those living in poverty or on the margins.
- c) Regular hosting of ecclesiastical assemblies at all levels, which are open to listening not only to members of the Catholic church, as well as contributions of other Christian communities and religions.

To entrench it for the life of the Archdiocese in Singapore, there is a need to support and facilitate synodal ways of working at all levels within the Archdiocese, including across the

---

<sup>92</sup> *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, 5.3

<sup>93</sup> *Final Document of XVI Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2024, Para 87*

<sup>94</sup> *Final Document of XVI Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2024, Paras 103 to 108*



parishes. This can be an expanded role of an existing Archdiocesan office. In addition, parishes can also review the processes and structures they have in place to facilitate synodality and participation.

### III. Enhance the Archdiocesan Assembly

The Archdiocesan Assembly should be held once every two years, and its format enhanced to provide the people of God a forum to share in the development of the Archdiocese in an institutional and transparent way. A holistic and factual view of the Archdiocese and our pastoral situation can be presented to invite input. This event will help facilitate the gathering of input from relevant offices for common action. It can be helmed and organised by the Archdiocesan office taking on the role of building synodality. The Archdiocesan Assembly can also be a moment to deepen relationships fostered by the synodal process. Smaller events can be held in alternate years to bring the Archdiocese together.

#### How can we move ahead together?



**Archdiocesan Offices** can be appointed to support the overall efforts of synodality:

- (i) Provide formation on synodality for clergy, lay leaders and faithful (e.g. CTIS, CLC)
- (ii) Appoint an office to facilitate synodal ways of working
- (iii) Organise biennial Archdiocesan Assembly



**Each parish and church organisation** can review and renew their existing structures and processes to embed synodality, which may include:

- (i) Parish Pastoral Councils which participate in decision making discernment, and which adopts synodal working methods
- (ii) Avenues and practices for listening to the community, which may include parish assemblies and other channels



**Each of us** to recognise that synodality is a spiritual disposition, which flows from the Holy Spirit and requires listening to Scripture, contemplation and being attentive to each other, and that the spirit of synodality requires humility, patience and willingness to listen to each other, especially those who suffer exclusion and marginalism.

#### For discernment and conversation

As we put on the heart and mind of Jesus, we pray about and discern the following:

Which aspect(s) of this pastoral priority of synodality resonate with me?

What new perspectives or possibilities is God inviting my community / organisation to consider through this priority?

## 4. Enablers for our Pastoral Priorities

To help in our pastoral priorities, we need to strengthen our foundation and build enablers. These are in the following areas:

- 4.1 Governance and structures
- 4.2 Support organisations
- 4.3 Transparency and accountability
- 4.4 Care for our people
- 4.5 Technology

### 4.1 Governance and structures to support mission and evangelisation

Structures and governance are crucial to ensure unity, order, and the effective implementation of the Catholic Church's teachings and mission of evangelisation. Effective structures and governance are especially important in large and diverse organisations such as our Archdiocese.

The Archdiocese of Singapore comprises more than 250 organisations. Every group and organisation is connected to the Archbishop and the Archdiocesan Curia, and thus to the Universal Church. Each group generally has its own governance and governing body.<sup>95</sup>

Historically, most of these groups have evolved organically and operated on a federated basis in the Archdiocese. In recent years, there has been greater centralisation of resources and the setting of common standards and policies.

The feedback from our engagement is that while the organisations do good work, there is limited synergy. They are often seen as parochial and focused on their scope and individual programmes. There were also suggestions to leverage governance and structures to encourage and incentivise collaboration opportunities, mandate leadership renewal, create platforms for authentic dialogue, and streamline organisational missions to avoid duplicating ministries while identifying gaps in outreach. At the same time, it is important to ensure that a healthy balance is struck, so that we do not stifle the organic growth of these organisations and the Holy Spirit's inspiration and the grace of God from working for their good and the good of the Archdiocese.

Some possibilities to enhance the effectiveness of governance and structures in the Church include:

#### a. Develop and promote clear governance requirements

The Archdiocese should establish a set of clear and consistent governance requirements. These could include terms of reference for the different entity types, good governance practices such as dealing with conflict of interests and term limits, and regular reporting to stakeholders. The rationale and processes should be developed in collaboration with the

---

<sup>95</sup> Depending on the organisational construct, there is a greater or lesser degree of autonomy and accountability to the Archbishop as defined by canon and civil law. Philip Heng's *Church Governance Series*, Catholic Foundation, <https://www.catholicfoundation.sg/1-church-structure-governance/>.

relevant stakeholders to ensure that governance and structures are relevant and not simply ‘handed down from above’.

## **b. Identify gaps and redundancies**

While the increase in lay organisations over the years is consistent with the mission and teachings of the Church, most have emerged organically rather than in a structured, planned manner<sup>96</sup>. A review by the Study Groups identified gaps and redundancies in the scope of existing organisations.

The gaps relate to addressing the needs of the professionals, seniors, children, caregivers, children and volunteers, and in areas such as research, communication and formation. The gaps could be filled by new organisations or extensions of existing organisations.

Many of the redundancies relate to shared services (see section 4.2). Other overlaps are addressed by the few organisations involved.

## **c. Cluster organisations**

Group the over 250 organisations in the Archdiocese into functional groups, with lead bodies that would coordinate, synergise and assist in the governance of the groups. The role of a lead body is to:

- Assist the Archbishop in the oversight of the governance aspects of the organisations within its jurisdiction
- Oversee the implementation of the Archdiocesan vision for the cluster area
- Facilitate the communion, relationship building and collaboration of organisations within the cluster
- Facilitate collaboration within the cluster and the rest of the Archdiocese
- Build the capacity of the organisations within the cluster
- Provide an overall annual report for the cluster at the end of the year

Some of these clusters already exist. For example, Caritas Singapore as the social mission umbrella organisation, Archdiocesan Commission for Catholic Schools etc. This arrangement should be extended to the rest of the church organisations. The parish district structure could also be further strengthened to function in a similar manner.

---

<sup>96</sup> These include the Catholic schools, foreign and language faith communities, social mission organisations and lay formation organisations. However, in recent years, some top down planning had taken place, such as (1) the formation of Caritas Singapore in 2006, which led to the formation of CHARIS in 2010, and ABLE and Clarity in 2022; (2) the set up of several “offices” (ONE, OFC, OYP, CTIS) by Archbishop William Goh in 2013, and later CLC and DCO; (3) the formation of CFL to merge AFC and FLS in 2020; and (4) the setup of CPES for preschools in 2020 and CASS for the four Archdiocesan schools in 2023.

## 4.2 Support Organisations

There are two broad categories of support organisations in the Archdiocese:

- Functional support organisations: These provide support to the back offices of church organisations and parishes in finance, human resource, property, digital and technology<sup>97</sup>
- Programme support organisations: These provide support in the formation and related programmes of parishes and Church organisations. They include Offices for Catechesis, Young People and New Evangelisation, Catholic Leadership Centre, Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore and Catholic Family Life<sup>98</sup>

These support organisations have greatly supported the Archdiocese's operations, governance and mission, as well as served the parishes and the larger Catholic community.

The feedback gathered as well as a survey of Church organisations, indicate a desire for greater centralisation, a more collective and unified approach, and more effective management practices.

There has been progress in recent years. There are platforms for conversations and relationship building between organisations, as well as parish communities, such as those organised by ONE. The support organisations have also been increasing the guidance and support provided to parishes. Nevertheless, there is scope for these central Archdiocesan organisations to improve their support and be enabled to do so.

### **a. Foster a culture of collaboration and mutual support between support organisations and their stakeholders.**

The scope of the Archdiocesan organisations needs to be archdiocesan<sup>99</sup> in focus, and have a servant leader and other-centred mindset, prioritising those they serve. In turn, parishes and other stakeholders need to acknowledge and respect the vital role of support organisations, with an eye towards the common good.

### **b. Enhance support for parishes through shared services in selective areas.**

Shared services are the consolidation of operations and functions by multiple organisations. There are currently minimal shared services in the Archdiocese, primarily in accounting and payroll by ABLESEAS to 14 parishes and organisations, and a co-working pilot by ALPS.

Shared services in procurement, IT and property could result in economies of scale and resource savings. In areas such as accounting, payroll, human resource, communications, volunteer management and investments, shared services could also improve the efficiency, quality of services and governance. This could enhance support provided to parishes and

---

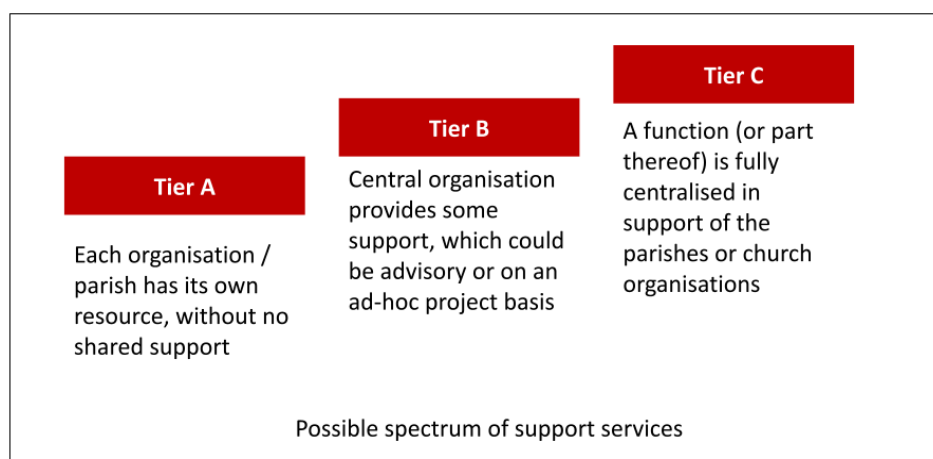
<sup>97</sup> These offices include ArchComms, Archdiocesan Audit Committee, Archdiocesan Emergency Response Operations, Archdiocesan Finance Office, Archdiocesan Human Resources, Archdiocesan Land & Properties Singapore, Archdiocese Professional Standards Office, Chancery, Church Digital Office and Church Technology Office.

<sup>98</sup> Some of the programmes of Catholic Family Life fall into this category.

<sup>99</sup> See Section 3.4.3

free up parish priests to focus on their pastoral work and provide professional guidance where it is required.

Shared services could be viewed as a spectrum of support services which may be implemented to different degrees for parishes and Archdiocesan organisations, depending on the materiality and impact of the function. The degree of support provided could also vary and be tiered as follows:



A preliminary assessment of the tier and level of shared services applicable to the respective support organisations has been made. The next step would be to study each functional support area and implement an optimal shared services model at a level of granularity that allows organisations to collectively achieve their mission efficiently.

### 4.3 Transparency and Accountability

Consistent feedback from the Archdiocesan Assembly, Synod and APC Engagement Sessions shows the need for more transparency and accountability in how organisations operate and the communication of governance and related guidelines.

The Synod on Synodality also emphasised the need for transparency. “Decision-making ... must be accompanied and followed by practices of accountability and evaluation undertaken in a spirit of transparency inspired by evangelical criteria... Wherever the Church enjoys trust, the practice of transparency, accountability, and evaluation helps to strengthen its credibility... This is not a bureaucratic task for its own sake. It is rather a communication effort that proves to be a powerful educational tool for bringing about a change in culture. It also enables us to give greater visibility to many valuable initiatives of the Church and its institutions, which too often remain hidden.”<sup>100</sup>

Enhancing governance, transparency and accountability helps build trust between constituents and facilitate greater unity, collaboration, and participation.

To do so, we need to:

<sup>100</sup> XVI Final Document of XVI Assembly of the Synod of Bishops Oct 2024, Para 95, 97 and 102

#### **a. Communicate governance guidelines.**

Currently, most Church bodies have governance documents, and Archdiocesan policies exist in several areas, such as governance, communications, finance and property. These policies, however, exist in disparate places.

An exercise should be undertaken to holistically identify, review, and update the policies, and they should be published for stakeholders to access.

#### **b. Provide an annual report of the Archdiocese.**

The Archdiocese can require every organisation to produce an annual report of their progress and results for their constituents. Each cluster can summarise such reports, and the reports rolled out to an overall Singapore Archdiocese's annual report, alongside the Archdiocese's audited financial statements.

The report could also include an annual study of the missionary and pastoral impact of the parishes and organisations. This promotes discipline, transparency, and accountability, as well as builds confidence and support for the Catholic community.

### **4.4 Care for our people**

“Come to me, all who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.” (Matt 11:28-30)

We need to make sure that we care for our people and look after all who toil in God's kingdom. This includes the clergy, our Church staff, ministry members and volunteers.

#### **a. Caring for our clergy**

The clergy holds a central and vital role in the Church. “Inasmuch as he represents Christ the head, shepherd and spouse of the Church, the priest is placed not only in the Church but also in the forefront of the Church.”<sup>101</sup>

The clergy is a visible symbol of Christ's presence and role models for living out the Gospel, spiritual leaders to the faithful, primary ministers of sacraments and nurturers of the Church community. Caring for our priests goes beyond supporting individual priests – it ensures the health and vitality of the entire Catholic community. When priests are well-supported, they can more fully engage in their ministry, enriching the lives of those they serve and strengthening the Church's mission.

While their material and medical needs have traditionally been the main focus of care for priests, we should take a more holistic approach to their care, including their physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and social well-being.

---

<sup>101</sup> *Pastores dabo vobis*, 16

The Church should establish an Office for Priests, with full-time staff to proactively and holistically address priests' needs, which can oversee the holistic care and development support for priests.

## **b. Caring for our staff**

The Archdiocese of Singapore and its parishes employ close to 300 staff members. These employed staff members are instrumental in providing the Church with continuity and stability in its operations. They facilitate institutional memory and play a vital role in pastoral care and relationship building within the Church community. The calling to work in the Church should enable our staff to realise their fullest potential with all their charisms and be supported by appropriate resources and an environment conducive to giving their best.

We need to be a Church that cares holistically for our staff. In response to feedback from Synod conversations and APC engagements, the Archdiocesan Human Resource Office (AHR) has undertaken a salary review and will be implementing an updated salary scale in July 2024.

Additional ways to enhance care for our staff include:

### **i. Enhance the experience at every stage of employment**

We should enhance the staff experience throughout the employee's life cycle. At every stage, we should seek to understand our staff's perspectives and what matters to them, and take intentional steps to make the Church a preferred workplace (see Table 1).

Attract and Onboard	Deploy and Support	Coach and Develop	Perform and Recognise	Engage and Retain	Care and Well-Being
What motivated you to work / volunteer with us?	How well do you know your role after your first month? Three months? Six months?	How do you see your role and goals aligned with the org you are working / volunteering with?	How comfortable are you at giving, receiving and asking for feedback in this org?	How would you characterise the quality of your relationships with staff, volunteers, board etc?	How well is your physical, psychological, social and spiritual health supported in this org?
How well are you getting along with your colleagues / fellow volunteers and your team leaders?	How well do you understand who the key stakeholders are and how things are done in this space?	What pathway do you see for yourself beyond your current role?	How satisfied are you with performance standards (quality, speed, timeliness) in this org - yours and others?	How engaged are you with the work and the work environment?	How well have you been able to access resources to support self-care, pursuit of meaning and emotional resilience?
How do you like the culture that you are experiencing in this social space and catholic org?	What support is provided to help you achieve the goals that you agreed to work on?	What kind of development options have you explored to support your continuous learning and growth?	How satisfied are you with the ways your contributions are valued?	What opportunities are you getting to stretch yourselves outside of your comfort zone, personally and professionally?	

Table 1. The Employee Life Cycle: Person-Centric Lens

Working in the Church is a conscious choice for those who have taken this path. What distinguishes the Church workers' experience is the integral Faith Formation & Development

that no other secular organisation can provide. This is also why Church workers expect their lived reality to reflect Catholic Social Teaching in action.

In other words, the organisational culture, structures, systems, policies and processes must also be mapped to the same stages (see Table 2 below). Leadership teams in Archdiocesan organisations need to infuse our faith with best practices available in the marketplace. Only then will the Church worker feel valued and add value to the vibrant, evangelising and missionary Church that the Singapore Archdiocese strives to be.

Attract and Onboard	Deploy and Support	Coach and Develop	Perform and Recognise	Engage and Retain	Care and Well-Being
What is compelling for the right talents to want to join us?	What resources are we providing to our talents to carry out their roles well?	How are our talents provided the necessary leadership guidance to carry out their roles well?	How does our culture encourage giving, receiving and asking for feedback?	What is the quality of relationships between managers and employees between staff and volunteers, between staff and boards?	How is our work and work culture supporting our physical, psychological, social and spiritual health?
What channels are we using to attract the right talents to join us?	How do we ensure each talent's goals are aligned with our values, and org mission?	How does our culture promote continuous learning and development for personal and professional growth?	How are we embedding accountability, objectivity and transparency in the performance management process to ensure the right talents are attracted, developed and retained?	How are we enabling and empowering our talents to go the extra mile?	What resources do we have to encourage self-care, pursuit of meaning, and emotional resilience?
How are we helping them learn about their role, work environment and the larger eco-system?		What investments are we making to help our talents realise their fullest potential?	How can we identify the different ways our talents are motivated and recognise them appropriately?	How are we identifying, developing and retaining top talents?	

Table 2. Employee Life Cycle: Organisation centric lens

## ii. Strengthen talent management and development

Deliberate efforts can be made to identify high-potential staff for grooming into future leadership roles. The talent management and development of such staff should be centrally coordinated, striking a balance between leadership competencies and theological formation. Developmental opportunities can be tailored and aligned with the Archdiocese's needs and the individual's interests and aspirations. Such centralised management and development could begin with scholars who have invested in their studies and are bonded to the Archdiocese.<sup>102</sup>

## c. Caring for our volunteers

Participation in the life and mission of the Church is the baptismal call of every Catholic. The term "volunteer" is sometimes deemed inaccurate in the Church context as it does not capture the duty of service from a faith angle. In this section, while we recognise the baptismal call of all faithful, we use the term "volunteer" to refer to laity who participate in the mission and serve the Church in a capacity which is outside formal employment.

<sup>102</sup> A Lay Ecclesial Service Scheme had previously been discussed by the Archbishop's Office and should be reviewed.



These volunteers play a critical role in the operations, programmes, formation and outreach of the Church. They are part of the life of the Church, where the laity responds to a “universal call to holiness”<sup>103</sup>.

“[The laity] must assist each other to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way, the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ, and it may more effectively fulfil its purpose in justice, charity and peace. The laity has the principal role in the overall fulfilment of this duty. Therefore, by their competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort, so that created goods may be perfected by human labour, technical skill and civic culture for the benefit of all men according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word.”<sup>104</sup>

Feedback from the engagement sessions indicates that many feel that there should be increased and more effective lay participation in the Church. There is a call for the better mobilisation, engagement and formation of lay volunteers, as well as a shift towards a more sustainable, professional approach to church management and ministry.

To enhance volunteer participation and partnership, a Centre for Catholic Volunteers could be set up within the Catholic Foundation to foster and promote opportunities to serve within the Catholic Church. The Centre could promote the cause of service in the Church, develop Archdiocesan-wide volunteer management policies and guidance, and conduct centralised training on volunteer formation and management.

#### 4.5 Technology

Technology can be an important enabler for our pastoral priorities. This includes:

- Shared digital services that improve collaboration, increase operational efficiency and strengthen governance (e.g. centralised platforms for resource management, communication and training).
- Technology solutions to support lifelong learning and evangelisation in catechetical programs and faith formation. Through digital platforms, faith formation can be more accessible and engaging, extending the reach of the church's educational and spiritual mission to all, including the marginalised and non-practicing Catholics. These can foster inclusivity, participation and spiritual growth, engaging people wherever they are.
- Use data to improve decision making and strengthen pastoral care, to generate insights that can help identify trends, preferences and emerging pastoral needs within the faithful, as well as identify gaps in pastoral outreach. This can help leaders to make informed decisions about resource allocation and pastoral strategies.

In 2024, the Archdiocesan Information and Technology Office (AITO) was set up to be a technological pillar supporting the Church’s mission and priorities.

---

<sup>103</sup> *Lumen Gentium, Chapter 5*

<sup>104</sup> *Lumen Gentium, 211*

## 5. Invitation to discern as a community

“Let us work to ‘spend time with the future’, to take from this Synod not merely a document... but above all concrete pastoral proposals... In other words, to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, and give strength to our hands<sup>105</sup>.”

- Pope Francis

We are the Church. The Church exists not for itself, but for those around us. As Catholics we are called to follow Christ, who made his life a mission for those around him. Thus, we are told in Matthew 22:37-40 that the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and that the second is to love our neighbour as ourselves.

As we discern our pastoral priorities for the next 10 years, we invite you to join us on this journey. In the last 6 months, we have pondered, prayed, conversed and discerned our shared pastoral priorities. As we come together during the Archdiocesan Assembly 2025, let us continue to discern and converse about how we can move ahead together.

### For discernment and conversation

As we put on the heart and mind of Jesus, we pray about and discern the following:

Do I support the pastoral priorities proposed? Are there refinements which I would like to suggest?

What concrete actions can I take to realise the pastoral priorities of our Church, through my participation / community / organisation?

Following the discernment from these conversations, the document will be refined and a 10 year pastoral plan will be developed for consideration by the Archbishop.

---

<sup>105</sup> Speech given at the Fifteenth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, 2018

## Appendix A: APC members

Role <sup>106</sup>	Final Slate
President of APC <sup>107</sup>	Cardinal William Goh
Vicar-General	Msgr James Yeo Msgr Peter Zhang Msgr Stephen Yim
Chancellor <sup>3</sup>	Fr Terence Pereira
Chairman of the Senate of Priests <sup>108</sup>	Fr Valerian Cheong
One clergy from each of the districts of the diocese <sup>109</sup>	Fr Shaun Lim - East District Fr Simon Ho - Serangoon District Fr Aloysius Ong - City District Fr Henry Siew - West District  Fr Gregoire Van Giang, MEP - North District (1 Jan 2023 to 31 Dec 2024) Fr Timothy Yeo - East District (1 Jan 2023 to 31 Dec 2024)
Co-Chair for APC - Clergy	Fr Adrian Danker, SJ
Co-Chair for APC - Laity	Kwek Mean Luck
One representative from the Religious Congregations	Fr Francis Lim, SJ  Friar Derrick Yap, OFM (1 Jan 2023 to 6 Jan 2025)
One Lay representative from the Chinese Community	Jane Tan
One Lay representative Tamil Community	Kumar Jude Joseph Rex
One Lay representative from the Foreign Catholic Communities	Sr Veronica de Roza, FMM  Sr Agnes Claire Koh, RGS (1 Jan 2023 to 31 Dec 2024)
One Lay representative from the movements and institutes	Lawrence Chong
One Lay representative from the charity works of the diocese	Willie Cheng
One Lay representative from Catholic Education	Pauline Teng
One Lay representative from the youth	Clare Wu Biqi
One Lay / Religious Representative for Interfaith	Sr Theresa Seow, FDCC
Other delegates that can be nominated by the Assembly	Fr Gerard Louis, CSsR
	Martino Tan

<sup>106</sup> Unless indicated as an ex-officio position, all appointments once made are for the term of this first APC i.e. the person will stay as an APC member and need not be replaced even if the person moves from his or her current affiliated organisation or office. For ex-officio positions, the new office holder will replace the incumbent.

<sup>107</sup> The Archbishop of Singapore will be the President of APC Singapore.

<sup>108</sup> Ex-officio positions.

<sup>109</sup> The priest representative from a district can be either the District Chair or a priest from the same district delegated by the District Chair (through the district's internal processes).

	Ivan Yeo
	Wilbur Wong
	Alexander Budiman
	Andrew Mendes
	Kenneth Poon
	Michael Chong
	Wong Toon King
	Seema Thomas
	Charles Lim
	Gerald Lee
	Teresa Mok

### Appendix B: APC Study Group Members

Study Group Members	Fr Andrew Lin Arthur Goh Celina Lin Jane Lau Janice Say Joanna Ng Tan Li-Cheng Mark Lim Friar Robin Toha, OFM Fr Shaun Lim Alfred Pang Bernard Thio Bridget Lim Damien Ooi Fr Dexter Chua Dominic Tan Grace Chan-Vaz Jay Ong Martino Tan Br Melvin Joseph Nicholas Hong Shirley Lee Fr Terence Kesavan Cassilda Lim Diana Koh Edwyn De Souza Gail Ng Jacob Soo Joanna Chng John Lee Keith Neubronner Leonard Koh Sr Leticia Candelario Lopez, FMVD
---------------------	--

	Agnes Liew Fr Eugene Vaz Gerard Lee Fr Gregory Tan, SJ Joel Jonas Tan Friar John-Paul Tan, OFM Juliana Foo Shirley Lee Sr Maria Lau, IJ Martha Suen Raymundo Yu Winifred Loh Gerald Kong
Advisor	Andrew Sng

### Resource Persons

Resource Person	Alfred Pang Fr Kenson Koh Fr Erbin Fernandez Joanne Ng Nicholas Lim
-----------------	---

### Communications Advisory Committee

Comms Advisory Panel	Benedict Cheong David Ong Terence Kesavan Jane Lau Thomas Nicholas Fernandez Martino Tan Sr Theresa Lim, FSP Sunny Wee Jennifer Theresa Lewis Bernard Lim
----------------------	--

### Secretariat

APC Secretariat	Teresa Mok Magdalene Ho Danielle Lan Laura Snodgrass Benjamin Yap
-----------------	---

### Appendix C: Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AA	Archdiocesan Assembly
ABLE	Abilities Beyond Limitations and Expectations
ABLE SEAS	ABLE - Social Enterprise Accounting Services
AFC	Archdiocesan Finance Council
AITO	Archdiocesan Information and Technology Office
ALPS	Archdiocesan Land and Properties Singapore
APC	Archdiocese Pastoral Council
ArchComms	The Archbishop's Communications Office
CASS	Catholic Archdiocesan Schools Singapore
CFL	Catholic Family Life
CHARIS	Caritas Humanitarian Aid and Relief Initiatives (Singapore) Ltd
CLC	Catholic Leadership Centre
CPES	Catholic Preschool Education (Singapore) Ltd
CTIS	Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore
DCO	Digital Church Office
DCS	Document for the Continental Stage
FLS	Family Life Singapore
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
OFC	Office for Catechesis
ONE	Office of New Evangelisation
OYP	Office For Young People
PPC	Parish Pastoral Council

## **Appendix D: Feedback Summary from Conversations on the Schema 2024**

23 engagement sessions on the Schema were conducted by APC from May – Nov 2024. A total of 575 people attended. Conversations were held with the following groups:

- Clergy & Religious
- Parishes (by district) & Archdiocesan organisations
- Specific communities such as youth, Catholic school educators and Mandarin-speaking Catholics

In addition, parishes and various groups also held conversations on the Schema and approximately 200 responses were received.

Overall, the great majority of sentiments on the Schema were positive. However, a minority felt that the Schema was too long, complex and intimidating. They cited a need for it to be broken down into bite-sized pieces for understanding and digestion, and provide more clarity on objectives, goals, execution plan and what success looks like. Below is a summary of comments and some quotes for each of the 5 pastoral priorities:

### 1. Lifelong formation:

Many people agreed with the need for on-going formation for both laity and clergy, especially for youth, parents, young adults, newly-baptized/newly-confirmed (post-RCIA), newly-weds. Formation was seen as not being on its own but as integral to conversion, encounter, mission, accompaniment and building communities. Also, formation is to be seen as a journey rather than a programme. Suggestions included focusing on the spiritual needs of parish communities i.e. guide individuals towards the right spiritual support (ministries, small groups, spiritual resources), and spiritual disciplines, including accountability, to help individuals and groups deepen their relationship with God and grow in empathy, gratitude and understanding. More focus on the importance of the sacraments and growing the interior life through liturgy, prayer and spirituality as the foundation from which we evangelise.

Formation of children and youth needs support from the entire parish community, in particular involvement of parents in catechesis was mentioned multiple times. A strong need for relevance of faith to everyday life and our local context was highlighted by many. In addition, acts of service as a key part of intentional discipleship was put forth.

However, it was noted that it is difficult to get people to prioritise and take ownership of their own faith formation (including people who serve in parish ministries). Some suggested having teams of facilitators to empower and provide guidance to people on how to evangelise in daily life, creating interest to have faith conversations with non-Catholics. Other suggestions included building intentional relationships with neighbours, holding dialogues and activities with neighbours who are non-Catholics as a form of evangelization (e.g. work through Neighbourhood Christian Communities) and to include a greater focus on interreligious dialogue as part of religious life, clergy and seminary formation.

### Quotes from Conversations on the Schema

“Formation is essential for individuals, families, and the larger Catholic community. It goes beyond prayer and Scripture reading, focusing on holistic growth to prepare each person for their relationship with God. Parents and clergy play a critical role, and many face challenges like time constraints and daily commitments that hinder their ability to prioritize formation.”

“Catholics have rich teachings and resources, yet the challenge lies in making these teachings feel relevant to everyday life. This includes translating doctrine into practical guidance, using homilies to apply Gospel values, and addressing real-life issues, such as in marriage, through authentic community support and shared experiences.”

“Reflecting on the church in the next 10 years, we felt that young people are searching for spiritual accompaniments and an authentic experience of the faith including understanding the traditions and history of the church and liturgical celebrations, stories of saints and different spiritualities. ”

“There's a shift needed from a maintenance mindset to a missionary one, focusing on outreach to non-believers and fostering a sense of belonging. Catholics are encouraged to learn practical ways to share their faith confidently, overcoming barriers like shyness or feeling unprepared.”

## 2. Building Communities:

The need for a more welcoming Church and deepening the sense of belonging in order to retain Catholics was mentioned frequently. Suggestions to achieve this ranged from warmer hospitality at mass, faith communities for different age groups (especially younger teens), fostering cell/neighbourhood/family groups, home visits by or on behalf of priests and support through prayer. Other people highlighted the need to be sensitive in meeting practical needs (e.g. provide babysitting for families), training for leaders to be hospitable and that ministries should also focus on fellowship. Also highlighted was that the sense of belonging to a community as part of an individual's faith journey is an important inspiration for people to go out and evangelise.

Starting small communities may require an initial focus on social activities to promote bonding and draw people in, then later steer these activities to formation i.e. need to strike a balance between social and spiritual so as not to end up as social clubs without guidance and vision.

Many agreed that there needs to be more avenues to reach out to Catholics on the fringes or those 'overlooked' e.g. non-practicing and nominal Catholics, (especially post-confirmation youth who leave) Catholics who attend church alone, migrants, divorced and the elderly. Examples included drawing on youth's desire for purpose e.g. mission trips,



service to less fortunate, and intermingling of young and old to help develop empathy and understanding. Overall, what is needed is a greater focus on engagement, reaching out and increasing participation in Church, with people facing challenges and undergoing transformation together as a community. Parishes need to be safe places where trust is built, generosity and belonging are emphasised. To this end, parish leaders need to be appropriately formed and mentored to foster this and help build an inclusive community.

There were calls for more support for inter-faith marriage where spouses can form a support community with other non-Catholic spouses and the importance of educating young people on the difficulties of mixed marriages as a pastoral priority. Also emphasized was the integration of migrants into existing parish initiatives so as to provide a welcoming hub for migrants.

Also mentioned was the need to develop a system for OYP to link up with parishes to build up the youth and young adult scene together, instead of current OYP practice of having youth communities which are independent from parishes.

With regard to Catholic schools, people highlighted the need to build stronger Catholic communities in Catholic schools and strengthen the Catholic ethos e.g. through focusing on Catholic values, having greater presence of religious in the schools, and invitations to prayer/chapel sessions. Other suggestions included sharing of best practices among Catholic schools and closer collaboration between Catholic schools, parishes and religious institutes, and between school management committees and ACCS to help create an eco-system for nurturing the faith.

#### Quotes from Conversations on the Schema

“Welcoming people: There is feedback that Catholic Churches are not as friendly as other churches. We can be more mindful of the new and existing parishioners. To let all see Jesus in us.”

“More can be done for the Elderly parishioners – show more care and concern. Propose a new Eldercare or Homecare ministry that can work with wardens or ECMs to better handle and service the elderly at home or parish.”

“There is a need to provide a sense of belonging to parishioners across diverse age groups and interests. Further, community should also be an occasion of formation and deepening of faith. Parishioners should seek to be formed in order to serve, contribute, and do things.”

“Platforms to build relationships between families and young people; communities post-youth as holding spaces for families who may not have appropriate communities to turn to”

### 3. Unity in Diversity:

A key area is fostering a greater willingness for collaboration among clergy; among parishes; between Archdiocesan organisations and parishes, and across ministries/parish groups so as to have greater synergy. This includes building more trust between laity and clergy, developing strategies to manage changing dynamics within ministries in order to maintain unity, ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and looking beyond the labels of various foreign language Catholic communities.

Others suggested the need to focus on unity in mission and unity in essentials, and to build unity by getting to know each other through personal sharing, including an explicit mention in the Schema for the need for all to speak of our differences in charity and truth, but submit loyally and trustingly when a decision is made. A call for every person to reconciliation, on a personal and social level, was made. Parishes could have yearly themes (aligned with the Archdiocese vision and goals) which form the overarching framework for parish events and activities. Such themes will help align programmes, encourage inter-ministry collaboration and foster unity.

Allocating dedicated time to unity in diversity initiatives; due to its time-consuming and resource-intensive nature and the need for a rigorous yet pliable methodology for building unity in diversity that is regularly exercised, were also highlighted.

#### **Quotes from Conversations on the Schema**

“The need to bring members of different ministries to work together and build bonds to help community building in the parish and beyond. Inter ministry collaboration, communication and training to bring unity in service to parishioners and community.”

“Resources can be shared with other parishes esp within city district parishes. Eg catechists combining class for walk of faith. Churches should not work in Silo. More unity should be seen across parishes. The mission to be One in Christ’s mission is the responsibility of each of us as Christians.”

“In order to build the kingdom of God, we need to be united in mission. We can have different pastoral priorities and focus, but together with 1 goal in mind , we will intentionally grow and build kingdom.”

“Cultural shift is required to move towards the acceptance of diversity and for change to take place. This is also engineered by those in power, but cultural shift is required both from up to down and from ground-up.”

#### 4. Synodality:

Overall, there was support for synodality to be part of the Church's culture at all levels and help with transformation of mindsets. In particular, synodality was seen as important to bring groups together, foster greater understanding and unity. Synodality is also an opportunity for deeper discernment as a community, especially for ministries, before taking action.

It was suggested however, that synodal process may be too rigid - more customized conversation modalities are needed, and that an archdiocesan synodal office should not replace the responsibility and subsidiarity of individual church organisations in synodality. There was a general consensus that more formation for synodality and in discernment is needed for both clergy and laity, with many posing questions about synodality and how it can be defined and applied.

#### **Quotes from Conversations on the Schema**

"Synodality allows more voices to be heard. How the Church can walk the journey of faith together with its community of believers. Parish assemblies should be representative of the church community so that better discussions of the needs of community can be met through programmes drawn."

"At the choir ministry level, setting aside time to hold dialogues is a good start and an active practice of synodality. At the parish level, sharing of calendar of events forecast for the entire year during Parish Assembly after streamlining, prioritising and deconflicting at the ministry leadership level can help parishioners plan their schedule accordingly."

"Embracing the imperfections of humans, not looking for answers, but communion and understanding and compassion. Image of a net: there are spaces and tensions; but we must focus on what connects us and what unites us as well, and the FAITH we have that keeps the net from breaking (ref, Jesus and Peter)"

#### 5. Co-Responsibility

People were largely supportive of the Schema's differentiated co-responsibility proposals where laity take on more administrative roles while clergy focuses on the pastoral needs, and highlighted the need for effective 2-way communication and lower barriers for laity to attend necessary training to facilitate it. Others cited the need for a culture of continuity at parish and/or a parish policy handbook/guidelines due to rotation of parish priests.

More importantly, it was highlighted that there is a need to educate the laity that their primary focus of apostolate is building the Kingdom of God in their secular domain, and not only volunteering and taking on administrative roles in the Church. To this end, it was suggested that clergy support for laity to live out the latter's apostolate in the world is also needed.

### Quotes from Conversations on the Schema

“Especially in smaller churches, the co-responsibility can engender more commitment and empower the parish community to be more involved. It will also alleviate the burden in terms of man hours and preparation for the priest/s who are working in a small team. This will free up time for the priest/s to minister to the pastoral needs of his community and not spend most of the time in logistical and administrative matters.”

“Clergy could empower the laity to visit the sick or disabled at hospital or home, share the good news, pray together with the homebound and bring communion to them either at the hospital or home, thus bringing Christ to the sick, lonely or lost.”

“Clergy should empower the laity, specifically not over taxing the youth. It would be ideal for spiritual direction from the clergy for the youths, and establish a closer/more personal relationship with them. Youths should not be viewed as resources meant to be used for their energy, but equals whose interior lives need to be cultivated as well.”

“Good for laity and clergy to work together, but there’s an emphasis on the clergy because it is likely that clergy are more well-formed. However, the laity also ought to be well-formed since we form the bulk of the body of Christ. Need for permanent formation and rootedness in prayer and sacraments”

### Enablers for Pastoral Priorities

Concerns about how Schema proposals will be implemented were voiced out as well as some scepticism as to whether there will be impactful follow-through.

Suggestions for enablers included an avenue/portal to share struggles and best practices among those serving in the church (e.g. ministries, PPC members). Another area of need is a conflict resolution mechanism within parishes – for resolving conflicts and promoting reconciliation between parish priests and parishioners, between ministries, among ministry members etc.

Overall, people were supportive of the proposals for shared services, Office for Clergy and improved work conditions for church workers. The setting up of a pastoral formation institute for the laity to facilitate their formation for mission was mooted.

Others highlighted the need for progress/success tracking i.e. guidance to help keep on track with goals e.g. Archdiocese has a timeline to guide parishes; formation targets to be set for each Catholic every year, and the need to cultivate a growth mindset to create awareness of the goals.

### Quotes from Conversations on the Schema

“It is very good that we are reviewing the salary of our workers ... .Perhaps an appeal could be made for parishioners to increase their contribution, in order to support the salary review, and the hiring of additional manpower to implement the suggestions here. Every person in the pews feels the pinch of the rising cost of living, and perhaps this can be tapped to help them empathise with the challenges facing our staff, and to understand how the Archdiocese is trying to implement Catholic social teaching in providing them a living wage for their families.”

“Greater governance - that allows for freedom to be in Mission and Ministry (i.e. to provide the relevant structures, guardrails and to be formed in faith and virtues to love God and His people) “

### Other areas as possible priorities/concerns:

The centrality of the Eucharist in our faith, and a Eucharistic-centered spirituality to transform lives of parishioners was also mentioned. Several mentioned prayer as an essential foundation and driving force for the pastoral plan along with suggestions for prayer to be more explicit in Schema.

Other areas which people felt were missing from the Schema included bringing the church forward in the digital/AI era, care for creation and the need for greater subsidiarity and resources for parishes to support parish programmes. Also highlighted was the need for dissemination of information and communication of any models/proposals need to be strategic and effective - easily understood and explained. Social media (e.g. Instagram, YouTube seen as a key tool for communications to both Catholics and non-Catholics.

Calls for greater transparency and trust with regards to decisions made by clergy that impact the laity e.g. sudden departure of parish priest not explained to parishioners.

### Conclusion:

We are grateful for all the groups, communities and individuals who have taken time to discern and provide their feedback on the Schema. All feedback is valuable and has been carefully considered, brought to prayer and discussed at the APC meetings in October 2024 and January 2025.