

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

22 July 2011

Dear Brother Bishops, Congregational Leaders and Leaders of Lay Movements

As you would be aware the Holy Father has convoked a General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops scheduled for October 2012. The theme of the Synod is "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith."

At the recent meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Bishops Tim Costelloe SDB and Christopher Prowse were elected as the representatives for the Synod. Bishop Julian Porteous was elected as substitute should one of the others be unable to attend.

In order to assist these bishops in their preparation, and in order to allow the whole Church in Australia to be involved in the work of the Synod, a discussion paper has been prepared. It is offered to you as one instrument which you could use in facilitating discussion, reflection and prayer on the Synod theme.

Of course the preparatory document (the *Lineamenta*) is freely available and you may well decide to make use of it in generating interest and involvement among your people. It lays out the themes of the Synod in three chapters and each chapter concludes with a number of questions for reflection and discussion. The document is available on the internet at the following address: www.vatican.va

The local discussion paper, which is attached to this letter, invites reflection around four issues which the *Lineamenta* identifies as being at the heart of the New Evangelization: our changed and changing cultural and social situation; the need to re-read the "memory of faith"; the need to energetically accept the new responsibilities to which this new situation gives rise; and the search for new energies which will underpin a joyous and convincing proclamation of the Gospel. A number of questions are posed for discussion, prayer and reflection, and space is given for the jotting down of individual responses.

Bishop Prowse, Bishop Porteous and myself would be very grateful to receive any feedback from whatever discussion takes place among the people of your diocese, parish or community. As we are asked to submit a report to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops by November 1 this year, time is relatively short. Given that the bishops will be in Rome in October for the *Ad Limina* visit we would need to have any material by the beginning of October if it is to be included in our report. Of course, there is a value in undertaking and

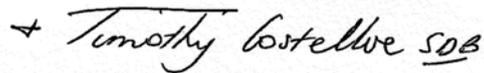
continuing discussion beyond this date. Any material received after the report is submitted will still enable us to shape our own thinking and responses in preparation for the Synod itself.

For the sake of convenience it would be best if you could forward any responses, either by email or by hard copy, to Fr Brian Lucas, Secretary of the ACBC, at the following address: gensec@catholic.org.au or at GPO Box 368, Canberra ACT 2601.

The question of finding effective ways to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in our changed and changing situation is one which is at the very heart of the Church's vocation and mission. The Synod offers us a great opportunity to engage in serious and sustained reflection on an issue of vital importance to us all.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Timothy Costelloe SDB". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+Bishop Tim Costelloe SDB
(on behalf of Bishop Christopher Prowse and Bishop Julian Porteous)