



CINCC Assembly 2025 – Report

Pilgrims of Hope: walking together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit

This report summarises the proceedings of the Canberra Inner North Catholic Community (CINCC) Assembly held on 27 September 2025 at the Australian Catholic University, Watson. It identifies convergences, divergences and pastoral priorities emerging from the synodal gathering.

Introduction

Participants



The Assembly brought together parishioners from across the five Catholic church communities of Canberra’s inner north (‘inner north community’): St Brigid’s, Holy Rosary, St Joseph’s, St Patrick’s and St Thomas More.ⁱ A total of 73 participants attended, including representatives from a broad range of parish ministries, ecclesial movements, parish councils, youth and family ministries, school representatives as well as Archdiocesan staff and an invited Master of Ceremonies, Darius von Guttner.ⁱⁱ

Jubilee Year – Pilgrims of Hope

The Assembly was held during the Jubilee Year 2025 – Pilgrims of Hope. Inspired by this, the Assembly theme was: *What is our hope as we, the inner north faith community, walk together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?*

There was a recognition that we live in a complex, uncertain and in some ways worrying world that needs hope.



The Assembly was privileged to host the Jubilee Migrant Cross, set on a boat to celebrate migrants and refugeesⁱⁱⁱ who ‘leave their homelands to seek a better life for themselves and their family’.^{iv} The cross also reminds us of the Jubilee logo of a boat on a rough sea, with the attendant difficulties of the pilgrimage of life during which the cross of Christ is the hope that is never abandoned.



Synodality

The Assembly was convened as an exercise in synodality, ‘the walking together of Christians with Christ and towards God’s Kingdom, in union with all humanity. Orientated towards mission, synodality involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue, and communal discernment.’^v Specifically, Assembly participants came together to prayerfully discern how the inner north faith community is called to walk together in hope, build a genuine sense of belonging, and deepen and share faith.





Youth



Presentations by the inner north youth ministers and *Canberra: You are Loved* leaders represented a strong youth focus in terms of evangelisation leadership experience, where evangelisation can be expressed in everyday terms as ‘making Jesus known and loved’.^{vi}



Diversity

The Assembly reflected a strong diversity of cultural background, vocation and ministry participation. However, young people (other than presenters and organising team members) were under-represented – an ongoing pastoral challenge and opportunity.

Music and prayer

The Assembly journey was accompanied by music and prayer.



Methodology

The Assembly was structured around three specific discernment questions. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

1. *How do we build a sense of belonging?*
2. *How do we deepen our faith?*
3. *How do we share our faith with others?*



Input was gathered from:

- individual written responses on post-it notes (question 1); and
- table groups using the method of Conversation in the Spirit, a tool that ‘enables listening in order to discern “what the Spirit is saying to the Churches” (Rev. 2:7)^{vii} (questions 2 and 3).



Key Convergences

Across all three sessions, a strong unity of vision emerged, grounded in the following interrelated themes.





Fellowship, Belonging and Community Life

A recurring and deeply felt theme was the desire for belonging. Many expressed experiences of:

- Loneliness.
- Feeling unknown or unseen.
- Difficulty connecting beyond Sunday Mass.



There was strong support for:



- Hospitality after Mass (tea, coffee, shared meals).
- Family, social and parish groups.
- Social, cultural and multicultural events across the inner north.
- Intentional practices of welcome, invitation, caring for others and the environment, listening, taking initiative and being present to and walking with others.
- The priests.
- Encouraging volunteers, service and participation in the parish community.

Participants stressed that belonging is created through concrete actions, not intentions alone.

Prayer, Holiness, Eucharist and the Holy Spirit

Participants consistently affirmed that:

- Prayer must be the foundation of all parish life and action.
- Faith is both personal and communal.
- The Eucharist, shaped by the charism of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, is the source of unity, mission and renewal.
- Our faith journey should be marked by trust in God.
- There be an openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- There is a strong desire to promote:
 - Weekday Mass.
 - The Church's Sacraments.





- Special Masses, eg World Days of elderly, disabled, youth etc.
- Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction.
- The Rosary.
- Confession.
- Forgiveness and compassion.
- Opportunities for quiet contemplation, retreats, excursions and pilgrimages.
- Public expressions of faith, eg processions.
- The different spiritual movements within the inner north community.



Parishioners were encouraged to witness to Christ through worship and active participation in the Mass.

There was also recognition that structural or programmatic renewal should be in support of, and not at the expense of, spiritual renewal.

Evangelisation Founded in Love, Joy and Relationship

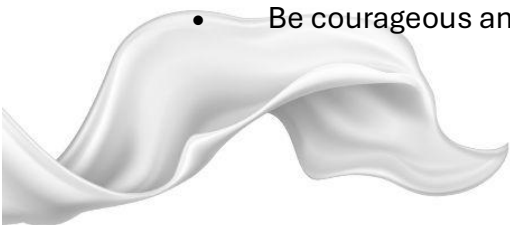
Evangelisation was consistently understood not as proselytism, but as:

- Witness through love of God and neighbour, joy, hospitality and presence.
- Seeing Christ in every person.
- Journeying with others, and proposing rather than imposing faith.



Participants identified the need to:

- Be attentive to one's own ongoing faith formation as well as that of fellow parishioners.
- Look outward, reaching beyond existing parish circles to the unchurched, disengaged, broken, lonely and marginalised.
- Build bridges and collaborate with others beyond our community.
- Put faith into action – 'preach the Gospel and, if necessary, use words'.
- Be humble, non-judgmental and relational in approach.
- Share experiences, eg RCIA and Legion of Mary.
- Be courageous and take risks in walking with others.





- Have faith that God loves us and will walk with us.
- Recognise the Australian context as increasingly secular, while remaining confident in the hope offered by the Gospel.

Attention to be given to:

- Families, recognising the different circumstances and situations in which they are found.
- Migrants and culturally diverse communities.
- The dignity of human life.
- Charitable service and aid to those in need through organisations such as Vinnies, including in conjunction with other churches.
- Those who feel disconnected or invisible within parish life.

Formation for Head and Heart

There was strong consensus that the inner north must become a learning and forming community, offering:

- Ongoing faith formation for children, youth and adults.
- Opportunities for:
 - Sharing experiences of Jesus through conversations, worship and witness.
 - Scripture study.
 - Gospel exegesis, including at Mass.
 - Catechesis and Catholic doctrine.
 - Understanding Church teaching, eg social teaching and recent papal teachings, in contemporary contexts.
 - Learning and valuing the experiences of other communities, including in other countries.
 - Formation in prayer, homilies and discernment.



Participants emphasised the need for formation that:

- Engages both head and heart.
- Speaks the truth in love.





- Builds confidence to articulate faith in everyday life.
- Is open to the wider Catholic community, not only CINCC parishioners.

Some participants expressed confusion in relation to the concept of *synodality*, describing it as a ‘buzzword’ lacking clear meaning or practical expression.

Similarly, while supportive of evangelisation in principle, many felt under-equipped or hesitant, indicating a need for formation in diverse and accessible approaches to evangelisation.

This suggests the need for clear teaching, pastoral explanation and a close working relationship between the clergy and laity.

Participants identified different types and levels of formation, for example at the personal and community levels and from introductory faith to advanced doctrinal formation.

Communication

The Assembly identified communication as critical to unity and participation in the inner north. There was strong support for:

- Improved use of websites, social media and parish bulletins.
- A shared inner north events calendar.
- Clear information about ministries, contacts and volunteering opportunities.



Unity Across, and Diversity in, the Inner North

The Assembly, whose focus was the inner north faith community walking together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was nevertheless not part of the formal process of consultation on the future configuration and canonical status of the constituent parishes. That process, requested by Archbishop Christopher Prowse in a 1 July 2025 letter, has been undertaken as a distinct exercise. As a community of four parishes and five churches under the care of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, the Assembly’s synodal questions for discernment were important in their own right in terms of an evangelisation focus. These questions did not, however, specifically raise other issues of relevance to parish configuration such as finances, governance, structure and maintenance.



At the same time, the conversations highlighted that the nature and degree of connection between the CINCC parishes and churches was an important matter for participants. While collaboration has already been occurring in certain areas, for example through St Vincent de Paul conferences, youth ministry, Alpha and the organisation of the Assembly itself, more extensive collaboration on different levels was advocated through, for example, joint:





- Feast day celebrations and other Masses.
- Meetings of various movements / charisms.
- Evangelisation and prayer.
- Choir events (including for Christmas carols).
- Parish and local Catholic school events.
- Involvement in social justice causes (including others of goodwill).

One suggestion was for leaders of parish groups to meet over a meal to share knowledge and ideas of what's happening in our communities.

Divergences

Some differences in emphasis and divergences emerged, albeit perhaps nuanced rather than necessarily antithetical. One view was to retain the identity and heritage of each local church. Other sentiments were of the desire to build a common identity albeit one that might be said to be grounded in communion rather than uniformity. Or, to put it another way, unity was important while it was also important to value and celebrate diversity.

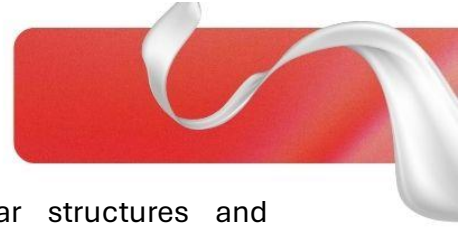
In terms of configuration of the inner north parishes, one view was to retain the current parishes as they are although it was 'good to keep doing things like this (i.e. CINCC Assembly)'. Another view, on the other hand, was to unite the four parishes into one and thereby foster 'a continuity of spiritual growth across all age groups' as a foundation for a new identity.

Pastoral Priorities Emerging from the Assembly

From the discernment process, the following priorities emerged:

- Place prayer, the Eucharist and the other sacraments at the centre of all CINCC initiatives.
- Strengthen hospitality and belonging, especially for the isolated and newly arrived.
- Discerning, identifying and using gifts and charisms to serve God and one another.
- Develop structured formation pathways for all ages.
- Support and expand youth and family ministries.
- Improve communication, collaboration, coordination and shared identity across the inner north.





- Foster lay leadership and volunteer support, with clear structures and encouragement.
- Continue and expand Conversation in the Spirit as a normal way of discerning together.

Next Steps

Specific actions and timelines are yet to be discerned. Participants strongly recommended:

- Further communal discernment before implementation.
- Remembering that evangelisation begins with love.

Planning and prioritisation in light of that further discernment should take into account more detailed and concrete parishioner interest as well as availability of volunteers to lead the priorities.

Conclusion

Overall, participants encouraged ongoing discernment and dialogue, respecting differences, practicing humility and service, trusting in God and being ‘eucharistic in spirit and truth’.

The Assembly was widely regarded as a significant moment of grace for the inner north Catholic community. It revealed a deep love for the Church, a desire for unity in diversity, and a shared hope founded in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit.



There was strong encouragement for such assemblies to become a regular feature of parish life, enabling the community to continue walking together as Pilgrims of Hope.

ⁱ *Canberra’s Inner North parishes unite for first Assembly*, J Doyle, 1 Oct 2025; <https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/canberras-inner-north-parishes-unite-for-first-assembly/> (viewed 3 June 2026).

ⁱⁱ Canberra Campus Dean, Australian Catholic University.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Jubilee Migrant Cross embarks on National Pilgrimage to celebrate Migrants and Refugees*, <https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/jubilee-migrant-cross-embarks-on-national-pilgrimage-to-celebrate-migrants-and-refugees/> (viewed 3 June 2026).

^{iv} *What is the Jubilee?* <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/giubileo-2025/segni-del-giubileo/il-pellegrinaggio.html> (viewed 3 June 2026).

^v *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission – Final Document* (26 Oct 2024), para 28.

^{vi} *Evangelisation Statement 2023*, Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry, para 4.

^{vii} *Ibid* note v, para 45.

