



Synod  
2021  
2023

For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission



YARNING CIRCLE REFLECTION

## WHAT IS THE SYNOD?

A synod means a gathering of bishops. The Church has an Ordinary Synod every few years to discuss important issues in the Catholic Church.

In March 2020, Pope Francis announced that the theme for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly Synod of Bishops (in 2023) would be "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission". More information - <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>

## WHERE WILL OUR RESPONSES BE HEARD?

The responses will be collected on a diocesan level and then forwarded to the Synod of Bishops Coordinating team.

For a more detailed overview of the process, please view <https://youtu.be/QLHy5dKiRGg>. It might be worthwhile to watch the video before you begin discussions in your Yarning Circle.

## HOW IS THE SYNOD DIFFERENT FROM THE PLENARY COUNCIL?

The Plenary Council was for Australia, the Synod involves the universal Catholic Church.

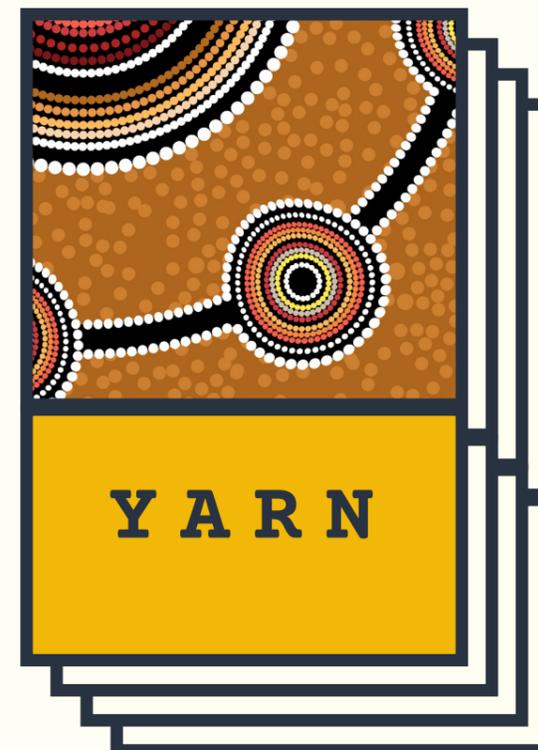
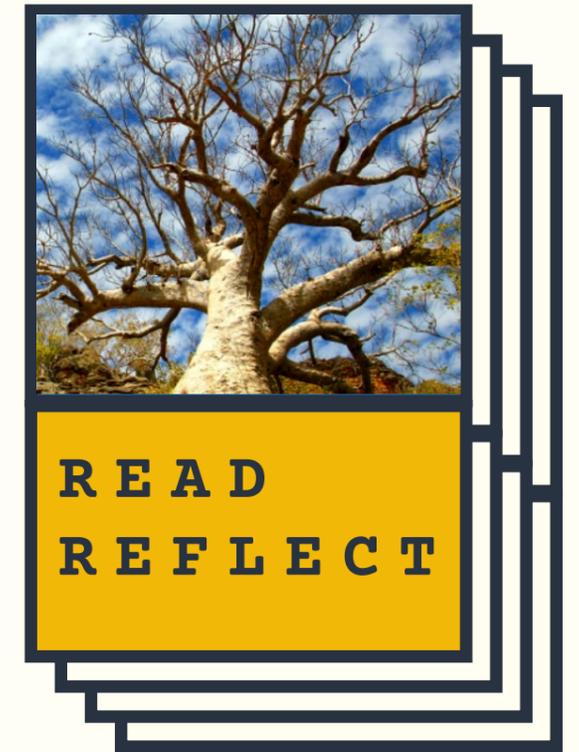
## YARNING CIRCLES

The Yarning Circle method has been utilised as a reflection tool because it is a proven and appropriate method of discussion and decision making within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Very similar methods have been used by other Indigenous people around the world for thousands of years. By forming a yarning circle, the group is committing to creating a collective that is bigger than the sum of its parts. Each individual is an important member of the circle and every voice is important. Used correctly, yarning circles create an atmosphere of respect and a willingness to share with one another.

You can utilise the Yarning Circle Method virtually by making some small adaptations to the way you share. Consider asking participants to place their screen in 'Gallery' mode so that they can see each other's faces. In a traditional circle, an item is placed in the centre to draw the group's focus. In a virtual Yarning Circle, the reflection and/or questions posed become the focus of the group. They sit metaphorically in the centre.

# The process



THE START OF THE PROCESS INVITES YOU TO COME TOGETHER IN YARNING CIRCLES TO PRAY TOGETHER. YOU COULD USE THE PRAYERS PROVIDED BELOW, SCRIPTURE, YOUR OWN PRAYER OR TALK TO GOD WITH YOUR HEART.

## Synod Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.  
With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.  
We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us down the  
wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.  
Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey together to  
eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.  
All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the  
Son,  
forever and ever.

Amen.

## Prayer for Guidance

Creator of all things, Both seen and  
unseen.  
Speak to us in your Great Wisdom.  
Make us strong as we seek  
Your help and guidance.  
Teach us to love all people  
Regardless of race or colour or belief

May we listen with great care  
To the heartbeat of this Land  
And to its people  
Who cared for it so well  
And for so long.

May the peace of these people and  
their land  
Have always enjoyed  
Continue to be strengthened and  
preserved  
By all who wish to come and be part of  
This Country and its 'Ancient  
Dreaming'.

Elizabeth Pike 1998

HAVE A NOTEPAD READY AND READ THROUGH THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

AS YOU ARE REFLECTING, THINK ABOUT YOUR OWN FAITH JOURNEY, CULTURE AND HOW THE CHURCH HAS ACCOMPANIED YOU. WRITE DOWN OR REMEMBER YOUR RESPONSES AND BE READY TO SHARE IN THE CIRCLE.

## COMMUNION

FOCUSING ON HOW WE COME TOGETHER

### OUR COMPANIONS

- Who in your local church is welcoming?
- Are First Nations people welcomed in or do you feel left out?

### LISTENING

- God speaks to us in lots of ways. What ways does He speak to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People that you think non indigenous people don't hear?
- Does your local Church listen to you? Does it listen to the young people and the women?
- Are minorities happy to talk up at Church and meetings?

### SPEAKING OUT

- Do you feel comfortable sharing your views at church?
- Would consecrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women make you feel more comfortable to share?
- What stories about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples would you like to see shared in the Church?

### CELEBRATION

- What part of the Mass makes you feel inspired?
- Does your Church have First Nations artwork, prayers or music in the Mass? Would you like it to?
- Would you like to contribute to planning the Mass? If yes, are there any obstacles to you participating?

# PARTICIPATION

### AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

- Do you think that lay people within the church should be encouraged to be more involved in church life?
- Do community members work with your priest in planning and celebrating Mass?
- How can the church encourage lay people to take up leadership roles?
- Are there opportunities for lay people to undertake formation to become leaders?

### DECISION MAKING

- How does your church community make important decisions?
- Are the community and its leaders involved in decision making?
- How can decision making be improved to include all the people in the community?

### JOURNEYING TOGETHER

- 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?
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture is based on working together and sharing resources with one another to foster communal wellness. What can Traditional Culture teach the Church on working together more effectively?

"We like the way He uses the things of nature to teach, and the important part nature plays in the Sacraments....We can appreciate also the community nature of the Church, because we are very conscious of being part of a group bound by Religious ties.

We are strong on Ceremony, through dance and song and painted bodies. Our ceremony closely involves groups and group participation.....

So the ceremony of the Mass, the ceremony of the Sacraments and the ceremony of the Liturgy should find a ready response in us; provided it is made meaningful, based on a theology that is tuned to the Aboriginal mind.

Deacon Boniface Perdjert

# MISSION

"I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES....." JOHN 15:5

## OUR COMMON MISSION

- Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the church?
- What hinders the baptised from being active in mission?
- What areas of mission are we neglecting?
- Is the Church reaching out to all Her people?
- How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

## ALL THE DIFFERENT VOICES - ARE THEY LISTENED TO?

- Are there ways we could better listen to everyone in the church?
- What are the important issues that the Church needs to speak out about?
- Are there opportunities to speak to leaders of the church on an equal level?
- Could the church in your community work better with other organisations such as land councils, health services, outreach centres etc.? How?

## ECUMENISM

- There are many other religions in our communities. Does the Catholic Church work in partnership with them? How?
- Have you seen a good outcome from different churches working together in your community?
- How would partnerships between all Churches assist the community?

# Yarn together

## 1. SHARE

There is no hierarchy in a Yarning Circle, everyone's voice is equal and everyone listens when a person is speaking.

Guided by a facilitator (who will take notes), move around the circle and share with the group:

- How did you feel when you thought about the reflection questions?
- What made you feel good?
- What made you feel bad?
- Are there any experiences that come to mind when you read the questions?
- Which questions did you have trouble answering?

There is no need to rush this part. Each person has 2 -3 minutes to share their reflection.



## 2. WHAT DID I HEAR?

Again, work around the circle and share what you heard from others.

- What struck me as I listened?
- What was the Spirit saying to us through each other?
- Was I touched by the sharing?

## 3. QUIET TIME

Once everyone has spoken, take some quiet time in prayer.

## 4. MOVING FORWARD

Gathering important and repeated responses. Anyone can speak in any order.

- What were the common responses?
- Did you feel 'togetherness' with others over certain issues?
- How did the group feel - did you all agree?

The Leader will summarise these responses into a united point of view.

# Pray and Respond

**THE YARNING CIRCLES HAVE CREATED A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION. BY SHARING OUR FEELINGS IN A SAFE SPACE, WE ARE COMING TOGETHER IN ONE SPIRIT. IT IS NOW TIME TO SHARE THAT SPIRIT WITH THE SYNOD ORGANISERS.**

## **WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO RESPOND**

The voices of First Nations Catholics are very important. Your input will help create an authentic Australian Catholic Church that Jesus would want.

## **HOW DO WE RESPOND**

Simply - you can respond however you like.  
Some options:

- A written response of about **250 words**
- A painting or artwork
- A poem or prayer
- A video

When you respond, it is important to include all voices from your yarning circle. The united discussions are important, but personal stories, opinions and experiences are also important.

## **CAN WE GET HELP?**

NATSICC can assist you in putting together your submission once you have held a Yarning Circle. If you need help, send an email to [admin@natsicc.org.au](mailto:admin@natsicc.org.au). We can also help edit videos or digitise artwork for submission.

For more information on the Synod, you can contact the National Center of Pastoral Research at [ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au)

## **WHERE DO WE SEND OUR RESPONSE?**

You can submit your response using the **SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE HERE** button at [www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch](http://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch)



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council  
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