



## PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE SYNOD CONSULTATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DURBAN

*TO BE READ AT ALL MASSES CELEBRATED IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DURBAN OVER THE  
WEEKEND OF 16-17 OCTOBER 2021 IN THE PLACE OF THE SERMON.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Last weekend, the Ninth and Tenth of October, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, initiated the solemn process which will culminate in the opening of a special Synod in Rome in October 2023. The intention of the Holy Father is that this gathering will *hear the voice of the universal Church*. In recent years it has been emphasised that every effective leader's very first and constant endeavour should be to listen. In this way the Church can become a real *communion* where every member would more effectively *participate* in the essential *mission* of the Church.

I have a real sense that we are standing at the cross-roads of a vitally important moment in the history of the Church - and recall words of the prophet Jeremiah: "**stop at the cross-roads; look for the ancient paths; ask, 'where is the way that leads to what is good?' Then take that way, and you will find rest for yourselves.**"{6: 16}

Here in the Archdiocese, during the weeks and months ahead, we will begin our own process of listening. This will include a variety of activities, gatherings and discussions. The very first stage will be devoted to prayer and reflection in order that we may all be better equipped to discern the Spirit. We must all learn better how to listen to the Lord and to each other. At the same time we should be wary of the danger of attempting to

provide quick answers. Complex problems and questions need time for the development of effective solutions. Simplistic answers fail to provide honest and realistic solutions.

The greatest commandment of God is that we love him and our neighbours. Listening to our brothers and sisters is a way that we communicate love and respect. When given with love, the smallest indication of our willingness to listen and really hear what another is trying to say becomes a tool for further dialogue and deeper communion. This is especially true when we make sincere efforts to reach out to our younger people, immigrants and refugees. All of these have specific ideas and experiences which add relevance and richness to our conversations and consultations. We must all learn to have a deeper understanding and a broader tolerance.

The response from the Archdiocese of Durban to Pope Francis' invitation to voice our ideas on how we should become a listening Church and a believing community that is open to collaboration and eager to journey together will be a valuable contribution. The Holy Father wants to hear what we have to say - he is both willing and eager to listen. The Church itself awaits us.

It is my earnest hope and prayer that all of us will respond with a joyful enthusiasm which is full of faith. The Gospel, in numerous places, tells us not to be hesitant - and Matthew reminds us of Jesus' promise to "*be assured I am with you always to the end of time.*" (28:20)

Devotedly in our Lord

+ MSJwara

+ Siegfried Mandla Jwara CMM

**Archbishop of Durban**