

## THE ANNUAL KNOX LECTURE

Presented by Melbourne's Catholic Theological College, a college of the University of Divinity, the Knox Public Lecture for 2016 was given Monday evening in the Catholic Leadership Centre, East Melbourne. The Knox Public Lecture is given annually to honour the founder of CTC, James Robert Cardinal Knox, fifth Archbishop of Melbourne.

This year, the lecture was delivered by the Archbishop of Brisbane, Archbishop Mark Coleridge. Archbishop Coleridge was introduced officially by the Master of Catholic Theological College, Very Rev Father Shane Mackinlay, Associate Professor at CTC (pictured right with Archbishop Coleridge).



The Archbishop chose as his theme for this year's Lecture, 'From Wandering to Journeying: Thoughts on a Synodal Church'.

As the Archbishop pointed out, journey and pilgrimage are important themes in Scripture and throughout Christianity, starting from the fourth chapter of Genesis, in which Cain, having killed his brother, finds himself wandering in the land of Nod (that is, the biblical Nod, a term actually meaning wandering).



Using the pivotal Second Vatican Council of the 1960s as his benchmark, the Archbishop delineated the way in which the Church has moved forward in recent times, and the development from a static sense of the Church to a sense now of a more dynamic Church, a pilgrim people. Vatican II, said the Archbishop, offered a background for considering Pope Francis' election in 2013, his decision to convene two Synods in 2014 and 2015, his proclamation of the Year of Mercy in 2016 and his recent publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* – seeing all these as part of a process which is far from over.

'The journey is Abrahamic,' said His Grace, 'because no-one, not even the Pope, knows exactly where the journey is heading.' The journey continues in these times, he said, with much greater emphasis on the synodal nature of the Church under Pope Francis. Archbishop Coleridge stated in no uncertain terms that the underlying issue now is the Church's engagement with contemporary culture, something Pope Paul VI described in 1975 as 'undoubtedly the

drama of our times.’ Since then, said the Archbishop, we have seen an even greater divergence between what the Church believes and teaches and what the wider culture believes and does.

This gives a context and a momentum for the recent proposal of the Australian Bishops to move towards a Plenary Council of Australian bishops, which will be held in 2020, the first such council since the 1930s. Archbishop Coleridge sees this process of preparation for the Council, and its subsequent implementation as part of the same process, a process which seeks to make the Church more genuinely synodal in the way foreseen by Vatican II and treated more explicitly by Pope Francis.

As well, he stated, it will provide a pathway forward for the ‘wandering’ Church, so that she embraces her flock fully, on the ground, in the reality of their lives, and so ultimately, instead of wandering, will embark on a ‘journey’, with a real destination in view.

But we are not there yet, cautioned the Archbishop. His Grace urged his audience to be attentive to Pope Francis’ post-synodal Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*. There, he stated, we will discover that Francis stands wholly in line with John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The style and language of each are different, but the deep point, the critical point, is that Francis’ voice and all the other voices become one. That’s when we discover the voice of Peter.

The task of Peter, affirmed Archbishop Coleridge, is always to help us turn our own wanderings into journey. In leading us more deeply into the reality of a synodal Church, he said, Francis is doing it in a way that is unusually refreshing and energising. In determining the future of the Church, we must first identify the facts on the ground, and then identify the grace of the moment. Pope Francis has helped us to do both, observed the Archbishop.

In concluding, Archbishop Coleridge pointed out that it’s now up to us to take the path which will lead us not only into a future for the Church in Australia, but out of our wanderings in the desert, and home to the garden, where Cain can finally embrace Abel, his brother.

*Media and Communications Office, Archdiocese of Melbourne*  
*Photos by Peter Byrne*