

Forming Students' Council: A response to the call for Synodality- in- Action

Guidelines for the formation of Student Council & Junior Reps for Catechism



How to form student councils at your catechism centres



The Department of Catechesis

Syro- Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle
Melbourne, Australia

6 Greenock Court, Greenvale VIC 3059

Email: catechism.eparchy@syromalabar.org.au



DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Name	Forming Students' Council : A response to the call for Synodality- in- Action Guidelines to form Students' Council at the catechism centres
Document Owner	Department of Catechesis
Approved By	Bishop Bosco Puthur Syro Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle, Melbourne, Australia & Oceania
Prepared by	Fr Mathew Areeplackal, Director, Syro Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle, Melbourne Presy Tom, Member of National Network of Catechists supported by Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference
Point of Contact	Parish Priest/Chaplain - Parish/Missions , Syro Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle, Melbourne, Australia & Oceania
Facilitator	Principals and Class Teachers of Catechism centres, Syro Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle, Melbourne, Australia &Oceania

DISTRIBUTION STATUS

Distributed To	Purpose	Date of Distribution
Catechism centres across Australia	Formation of Student Council	20/02/2022

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	Revised by	Description
Draft	15/2/2022		Document prepared based on the trial and implementation at St Alphonsa Syro Malabar Mission Parramatta



Theory and Theology behind:

The XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops takes place in October 2023. Pope Francis announced its theme would be “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” He invites the entire Church and all the Catholics to reflect on this and involve in the consultation process to promote a sense of communion and journeying together. The entire Catholic Church is in this journey from October 2021 in three phases starting from a diocesan (October 2021-April 2022), Continental (September 2022 – March 2023) and finally the Universal Church Phase (October 2023).

The crucial question prompts and guides the Church in this process is: How does this “journeying together,” which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church? (*Preparatory Document for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 07.09.2021; No 2) Towards this discussion, three key points are proposed; namely Communion, Participation and Mission. Initiating this Synodal process, the Catholic Church of Australia reflects together the following question; How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St Thomas the Apostle responds to this question in a creative manner through various levels of discussions and encounters these days. As an answer to Bishop Bosco’s exhortation to the Department of Catechesis to involve in the “journeying together and reflecting together” (Prot No 166/21), its directors, principals, teachers decide to hear the voice of their students by forming Students’ Council for catechism centres and attending to their voices. This initiative echoes also a response to the call of Pope Francis for “mutual listening to the Holy Spirit at every level of the Church’s life.” (cf. *Address of His Holiness, Pope Francis, Ceremony Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015 as in Note of Synod of Bishops 21.05.2021).

Objective/Aim of student Council at Catechism centres:

Student council is comprised of a group of students – a male and female representative from respective classes from year 7 to year 12. They are selected by class teachers to participate in and contribute to faith formation activities of each centre.

Junior Reps - a male and female representative selected from junior classes from year 4 to year 6. They will also be part of the council and contribute to the Sunday school activities.

Council members are to contribute towards the planning of events such as faith fest, annual day and their feed backs about general running of catechism and their expectations are to be listened. They can be requested to collect opinion of their class regarding English Holy Qurbana, what they think of having English Homilies during Mass or anything relevant regarding their faith formation.

Council members are to play selective roles during Holy Qurbana like arranging respective classes and encouraging their classmates to sing and pray aloud. If students are participating class wise in Holy Qurbana, let the Council Members wear a badge with Department emblem and stand as the first in the row of their class.



1.0 Formation of Student Council:

Members of the student council and junior reps need to be chosen within a month of commencing the academic year. Principal will inform the date and class teachers supervise the election.

A male and female representative from each class is to be elected within the first 10 minutes of the class and they are to be immediately sent to the principal for the first council meeting.

Principal (and Parish Priest, if he is available) meets the Council on the first day of the formation. Their attendance is marked and inputs are sought. Principal should let the Council know that their feedbacks will be discussed with their Parish Priest and in the further staff meetings

2.0 Offertory and Procession & Pledge:

All the members of student council and junior reps need to participate in the procession and offertory of the next Sunday Holy Qurbana where each member will get a special blessing from the parish priest.

After the Holy Qurbana, Student council and Junior reps must recite a pledge in front of the parish community. Pledge is attached as an appendix to this document. Principal is in charge of taking the oath and the parish priest gives them his blessings with holy water.

A group photo of the student council and junior rep is taken which has to be published in the parish social media forums provided the Centre has the media consent from parents. A photo of Student council has to be posted in the Eparchial Principals' Whatsapp group.

3.0 Meetings:

Council meetings with the catechism principal and parish priest are encouraged to be conducted at least twice a year. Duration of the meeting is recommended to be a minimum of one hour, followed by refreshments.

During the meeting, the councillors are encouraged to share their thoughts regarding catechism classes, and how to get more involved in Sunday school activities and the Holy Qurbana.

Meeting minutes and attendance has to be maintained by the principal.

4.0 Involvement:

Council members are encouraged to participate in the following and other initiatives as discerned by Principal.

- Conducting Sunday School assembly
- Present a saint's life during the assembly,
- Help teachers with any catechism activities.
- To collect opinion of their class regarding English Holy Qurbana, what they think of having English Homilies during Mass or anything relevant regarding their faith formation discerned by Principal and the parish priest.

5.0 Person in charge & Communication:

Principal is in charge of the Student Council. Parents of these children should be informed later and a WhatsApp group must be created to communicate information and related activities.



6.0 Online Get together with the Student representatives, their parents and principals with the Bishop of the Eparchy:

Once the Student Councils are formed across the centres, it is the duty of the Principals' Conference of the Eparchy to organise an online conference between the parents, students and the Bishop of the eparchy at the earliest.

References:

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/05/21/210521b.html>

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