

## ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice; turn to the Lord and his strength; constantly seek his face.

## COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

## FIRST READING 31:7-9

*A reading from the prophet Jeremiah*

The Lord says this:

Shout with joy for Jacob!

Hail the chief of nations!

Proclaim! Praise! Shout:

The Lord has saved his people,  
the remnant of Israel!

See, I will bring them back

from the land of the North

and gather them from the far ends of  
earth;

all of them: the blind and the lame,  
women with child, women in labour:

a great company returning here.

They had left in tears,

I will comfort them as I lead them back;

I will guide them to streams of water,

by a smooth path where they will not  
stumble.

For I am a father to Israel,

and Ephraim is my first-born son.

*The word of the Lord.*

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 125

*Response: What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad.*

1. When the Lord delivered Zion from  
bondage,

it seemed like a dream.

Then was our mouth filled with

laughter,

on our lips there were songs. (R.)

2. The heathens themselves said: 'What  
marvels the Lord worked for them!'

What marvels the Lord worked for us!

Indeed we were glad. (R.)

3. Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage  
as streams in dry land.

Those who are sowing in tears

will sing when they reap. (R)

4. They go out, they go out, full of tears,  
carrying seed for the sowing:

they come back, they come back, full

of song,

carrying their sheaves. (R)

## SECOND READING

5:1-6

*A reading from the letter to the Hebrews*

Every high priest has been taken out of mankind and is appointed to act for men in their relations with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; and so he can sympathise with those who are ignorant or uncertain because he too lives in the limitations of weakness. That is why he has to make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honour on himself, but each one is called by God, as Aaron was. Nor did Christ give himself the glory of becoming high priest, but he had it from the one who said to him: You are my son, today I have become your father, and in another text: You are a priest of the order of Melchizedek, and for ever.

*The word of the Lord.*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

**I am the light of the world, says the Lord,**

**anyone who follows me**

**will have the light of life.**

**Alleluia!**

## GOSPEL

10:46-52

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark*

As Jesus left Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (that is, the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and to say, 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me'. And many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity on me'. Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here'. So they called the blind man. 'Courage,' they said 'get up; he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he jumped up and went to Jesus. Then Jesus spoke, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Rabbuni,' the blind man said to him 'Master, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has saved you'. And immediately his sight returned and he followed him along the road.

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

## PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look, we pray, O Lord, on the offerings we make to your majesty, that whatever is done by us in your service may be directed above all to your glory. Through Christ our Lord.

## COMMUNION ANTIPHON

We will ring out our joy at your saving help and exult in the name of our God.

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May your sacraments, O Lord, we pray, perfect in us what lies within them, that what we now celebrate in signs we may one day possess in truth. Through Christ our Lord.

## GOSPEL REFLECTION



Is physical blindness the only way that one does not have sight? Can you be blind in other ways? How?

Do you sometimes choose to be blind?

*How can your spiritual blindness be cured? What part might others play in curing this blindness? What part can you play in curing your own blindness?*

How can you be blind to seeing Jesus in your life? Might others stand in your way at times when you look for Jesus? Why?

How is your prayer like the pleading of the blind man in this gospel passage?

Do you believe that Jesus actively calls you to live a good life? How and where do you hear this call? Is this call ever repeated in your life?

When Jesus calls you to a life of service, how do you respond? Do you sometimes fail to hear his call?

## GOSPEL ACTION

*Make a list this week of all the people who have been a sign of the presence of Jesus in your life. Make a list of people who have been a challenge to your faith. Is it possible Jesus was present in the people in the second list? Look for Jesus in these people again!*

## Readings – 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday Year B

**First Reading: Deuteronomy 6: 2-6**

**Second Reading: Hebrews 7: 23-28**

**Gospel: Mark 12: 28-34**

## Homily

24<sup>th</sup> October 2021

30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

Dear friends, today is **World Mission Sunday** when we join with every single Catholic parish throughout the world to reflect on and pray for the spread of the Gospel particularly in countries where the Church is new, young or poor. Through our prayers we support missionaries everywhere in spreading the Good News and by donating we respond to Christ's call to tell everyone the Good News that God loves them.

The theme that Pope Francis has chosen for this year's World Mission Sunday is 'We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard,' words that were spoken by St John and St Peter in the Acts of the Apostles. We are reminded by Pope Francis in his letter for World Mission Sunday that 'to be on mission is to think as Christ does, to believe with him that those around us are also my brothers and sisters. May his compassionate love touch our hearts and make us all true missionary disciples.'

Next Sunday we have the opening of **COP26**, the 26<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Conference taking place in Glasgow, that will be attended by leaders from over 200 countries to discuss climate change and how to tackle the global ecological crisis. I think that this is the most important Climate Conference there has ever been and provides the UK government a unique opportunity to lead the way in international efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

In his 2015 encyclical **Laudato Si'** Pope Francis makes it very clear about our responsibilities as stewards of creation and the importance of caring for Our Common Home. He says that to 'harm the environment was to harm human beings' and he asks the key question 'what kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?' He also makes the link that our current environmental crisis represents a sociological crisis as well, with the effects of climate change disproportionately affecting the world's poorest communities.

Over the last couple of years we have done much in our parish, under the guidance of the Our Common Home group, but now more than ever in the run up to COP26 we must redouble our efforts and pray that the leaders meeting in Glasgow work together for positive outcomes for all in our human family and for the planet. The Bishops' Conference in partnership with CAFOD have produced a prayer resource which has been included with the Bidding Prayers this weekend and I ask that we try and say this prayer every day at Mass and at home asking the help of the Holy Spirit to inspire all political leaders at COP26

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as they try and agree the changes that so desperately need to be made to tackle the climate crisis.

Last Sunday we began the diocesan or local phase of the two-year Synodal Process that will culminate with the 2023 Synod of Bishops '*For a **Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission.***'

Synodality means 'walking together on a particular way' and the Synodal Process is an invitation to the whole People of God in discerning the way the Church needs to be in its localities and worldwide at this moment in time. Pope Francis has invited the Church throughout the world to engage in this process and to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I think that this is a really important moment for the Church as we journey together and look to the future. Pope Francis in his homily at the opening of the Synodal Process reflected on three words that he said characterised the Synod – *Encounter, listen and discern*. He encouraged us to take time to encounter the Lord and one another, and to devote time to prayer and to hearing what the Holy Spirit wants to say to us and the Church at this moment of time. He asked us to listen attentively to the word of the Lord alongside the words of others and having encountered and listened he asked us to discern and to ask ourselves 'what is it that God wants to say to us at this time, and the direction in which he wants to lead us.'

With the newsletter this weekend I have included a copy of the questions that Bishop Mark has asked us to reflect on during this process which include the questions provided by the Secretariat for the Synods of Bishops in Rome and we will be doing this over the next weeks either individually or in groups.

Next Sunday we celebrate the Feast of All Saints and during the month of November we will be praying especially for all the faithful departed. We will have our traditional **November lists** with the names of our deceased loved ones placed before the altar and we will pray everyday for those named on our lists and indeed all the faithful departed. We will celebrate our annual bereavement Mass on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November and this year it will be a Mass remembering those who have died over the last two years as we were unable to have a bereavement Mass last year. Please bring your November lists to Church next weekend as we join in prayer together for all the Holy Souls throughout November.

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There is so much for us to reflect on and pray for at this time, so we will be having times of Eucharistic adoration to help us pray and focus on all these important matters. This week on Monday after the 9.30 Mass there will be adoration until 10.30am. On Tuesday, before the 6.45pm Mass, there will be adoration from 6.15pm until Mass begins. Next Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> October, there will be a Holy Hour with adoration from 3 - 4pm. I do ask you to try and come and join us in prayer if you are able or if you are not able please join us in prayer at home.

In the Gospel today we hear how Jesus restored the sight of the blind beggar Bartimaeus who said to Jesus 'Master, let me see again,' we hear how once his sight had returned Bartimaeus followed Jesus along the road. Let our prayer this weekend be that of Bartimaeus, 'Master, let us see' and let's pray that we too may follow Jesus faithfully as we journey along the road together.

With love and in prayer, **Fr Phil x**

## **Bidding Prayers and CAFOD and Synod Prayers**

**24<sup>th</sup> October 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year B**

### **Priest:**

In confidence and trust we offer all our prayers to the Lord.

### **Reader:**

For Pope Francis, Bishop Mark and Christians everywhere: may we be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in this first phase of the synodal process.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For COP26 and all the political leaders who will gather in Glasgow: may they be inspired by the Holy Spirit as they discuss how to tackle the climate crisis and commit their nations to the care of Our Common Home.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For ourselves: may we be good stewards of Creation as we encourage one another in ways of living on Earth wisely, sustainably, justly and reverently.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For missionaries and the spread of the Gospel particularly in countries where the Church is new, young or poor. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For unity and peace in our world and an end to hatred, war and violence.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For all those in our parish who are sick, housebound or who are in any kind of need: may they experience the power of the healing love and grace of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For all the faithful departed especially **Sir David Amess** & all who have died recently: **“Eternal rest grant unto them...”**

We ask Our Lady to join her prayers with ours as we say: **“Hail Mary...”**

For a moment in silence we bring our own private prayers and intentions before the Lord.

### **Priest:**

Loving Father,

We offer these and all our prayers to you,

through Jesus your Son,

who is Christ Our Lord, Amen.

# **Bidding Prayers and CAFOD and Synod Prayers**

## **24<sup>th</sup> October 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year B**

### **A PRAYER for the COP26 Climate Talks**

Loving God,

We praise your name with all you have created.

You are present in the whole universe, and in the smallest of creatures.

We acknowledge the responsibilities you have placed upon us as stewards of your creation.

May the Holy Spirit inspire all political leaders at COP26 as they seek to embrace the changes needed to foster a more sustainable society. Instill in them the courage and the gentleness to implement fairer solutions for the poorest and most vulnerable, and commit their nations to the care of Our Common Home.

We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, **Amen**.

### **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**

## Shrewsbury Diocese

### JOURNEYING TOGETHER

#### 'Lived Synodality'

#### Communion – Participation – Mission

#### A Time for Listening

Pope Francis invites us to be attentive to the Holy Spirit during the preparation for the October 2023 International Synod of Bishops which follows the devastation and disruption of the pandemic. The Holy Father reminds us, this is primarily a “spiritual process” and not about opinion surveying. This attentiveness primarily means spending time in the silence of prayer. The time leading to Advent and Christmas brings this invitation to prayer especially in the silence of Eucharistic Adoration, in the quiet reading of the Scriptures and perhaps taking up the contemplative prayer of the Rosary. The Pope also asks us to be more attentive in listening to each other, especially to the cries of the poorest and those left on the margins of society. May this time lead us to contact those who have been isolated or marginalised during the pandemic.

Below you will find a diocesan time-table for this initial phase together with some questions to help with our reflections. Let us also use the opportunities across the Diocese in our parishes, deaneries, missionary areas and Catholic associations to listen to the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit which lead to deeper communion with the Church; more fervent participation in the Sacraments and a renewed sense of mission.

#### Diocesan Time-Table

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October Synodal Pathway opens at the Cathedral and in Parishes of the Diocese

October/November/December – Meetings of Deanery Conferences, Local Pastoral and Missionary Areas and Parish discussion groups. Discussions in Religious communities and Catholic Associations.

All feed-back from individuals and meetings to be sent in writing either electronically to [synod@dioceseofshrewsbury.org](mailto:synod@dioceseofshrewsbury.org) or by post to: **Bishop's Office, 13 Belmont, Shrewsbury SY1 1TE**

*On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> January, the Bishop will offer his reflection and discernment at the Cathedral*

#### **Some questions for your quiet reflection individually or in groups:**

**Communion:** In what ways has the unity of our parishes in faith and charity, above all in Eucharistic communion, been strengthened or weakened by the experience of the past two years? Have we grown in our desire for the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist?

**Participation:** What has the experience of this time taught us about participation in the life of the Church?

**Mission:** What have been the fruits of this time for mission to those outside the life of our parishes and especially to those on the margins of society?

#### **Questions provided for reflection from the Secretariat for the Synods of Bishops in Rome:**

This Synod poses the following fundamental question: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

In responding to this question, we are invited to:

- Recall our experiences: What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?
- Re-read these experiences in greater depth: What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?
- Gather the fruits to share: Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our local Church?

To help people explore this fundamental question more fully, the following themes highlight significant aspects of “lived synodality”. In responding to these questions, it is helpful to remember that “journeying together” occurs in two deeply interconnected ways. First, we journey together with one another as the People of God. Next, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family. These two perspectives enrich one another and are helpful for our common discernment towards deeper communion and more fruitful mission.

The questions accompanying each of the following ten themes can be used as a starting point or helpful guideline. Your conversation and dialogue do not need to be limited to the following questions:

#### 1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road. In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

#### 2. LISTENING

Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

#### 3. SPEAKING OUT

All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity. What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

#### 4. CELEBRATION

“Walking together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy? What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

## 5. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. 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? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

## 6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding. To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.? How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

## 7. ECUMENISM

The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

## 8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

## 9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

## 10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning. 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? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way.



## Approaches to the Synodal Pathway

*As you know — it's not a novelty — a synodal process is about to begin, a journey in which the whole Church is engaged around the theme: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission," three pillars. Three phases are foreseen, which will take place between October 2021 and October 2023. This itinerary was thought out as dynamism of mutual listening. I want to stress this: a dynamism of mutual listening carried out at all levels of the Church, involving all the People of God. The Cardinal Vicar and the Auxiliary Bishops must listen to one another, the priests must listen to one another, the Religious must listen to one another, the laity must listen to one another and then, all inter-listening to one another; to listen to one another; to talk to one another and to listen to one another. It's not about gathering opinions, no. This is not a survey, but about listening to the Holy Spirit...*

Pope Francis, *Address to the Faithful of Rome*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2021

The Holy Father has called for the Synodal Process to begin in the Dioceses of the world on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The address he gave to the faithful of Rome highlights the importance of 'mutual listening' and that this will be at the heart of the synodal process throughout the Church and beyond the boundaries of the Church.

In his meeting with the Council of Cardinals on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, Pope Francis continued his reflection on the process by saying that the Synodal process is not about a specific theme, but "a way of living the Church marked at all levels by mutual listening and a pastoral attitude, particularly in the face of the temptations of clericalism and rigidity." In response to the Holy Father's reflection, the Cardinals present added that there needed to be a clear overcoming of "sectarianism and partisan interests."

As the Church in England and Wales begins its own process of listening, reflection and discernment, these themes will be important to the approach taken in our dioceses and communities to the whole question of "what is this Synod?"

## Journeying Together...

The basis of the lived synodality which the Holy Father envisages, is that of the Church as the pilgrim People of God journeying together. The image of the people of Israel in their Exodus is the foundational basis of this image (see *Lumen Gentium*, 9) and how, by travelling together and being schooled by God and entering into a covenant with him, the people "were made holy unto himself."

The parallel with the Church is clear; the People of God journey together on their pilgrimage of faith in the "more perfect covenant ratified by Christ" and, in addition, they journey with all humanity as a common family. This was expressed in a profound way by the Holy Father in his *Statio Orbis* address on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020 when he stood alone in St Peter's Square. He said:

*We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying "We are*

*perishing” (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.*

Pope Francis, *Statio Orbis Homily*, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Thus, the synodal process is, by necessity, both a conversation within the Church and one that goes beyond its borders in a fruitful engagement with those who are baptised into other Christian denominations, and with other world faiths and those who profess no faith at all. This reflects the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* which noted that through the incarnation, Christ has united himself with every human person by virtue of his humanity, and by analogy, so has the Church that is his Mystical Body here on earth (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

## Approaching the Process

It may seem daunting to try and have a fulsome conversation throughout all of the dioceses of the worldwide Church within the short timeframe offered by the process, that is, from mid-October 2021 to the end of February 2022. However, if the Church is to embrace the challenge set before us by the Holy Father, this must be our aim. The synodal process is not about an end goal in 2023 with a gathering of bishops in Rome, but about a new way of acting, of being the Church at every level where mutual listening is the cornerstone. It is about the Church gathering together people and their pastors for a common journey; it is about approaching with confidence other Christians and those of other faiths, and those of no faith, so their voice can be heard too on that journey.

Above all, it is to be a spiritual action of the Church. The Synod Office in Rome has adapted the prayer *Adsumus* which was used at the beginning of every session of the Second Vatican Council to invoke the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to their work. This invocation calls on the Holy Spirit to enlighten the minds of those participating and to “see” where the action of the Spirit is, so that all may be aware of the fruits of that action.

*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.*

The synod process can only be authentic if it is rooted in prayer, in the revelation of the Scriptures and in the liturgical life of the Church. Prayer is how we open ourselves to the inspiration of God and is the light which illumines the pathway on our pilgrim journey. The synodal conversations must promote a deeper understanding of the 'journeying together' which the Pope sees as 'the way' for the Church's pilgrimage of faith. At the heart of the conversations, starting in prayer and ending in prayer, is the fundamental question posed by the Synod Office:

***A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together." How is this "journeying together" happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together?"***

It is helpful to frame the synodal discussions in three phases which allows for the influence of the Spirit to enlighten the discussions. The three phases can be thought of as:

1. Recall our experiences...

*Where do we find ourselves now? The world has come through a profound period with the covid-19 pandemic. The experiences of isolation, of sickness and death, of not being able to grieve as one would have contributed to the anxiety of life. On the other hand, there has been an outpouring of a generosity of spirit, of gratitude and care, of innovation and creativity. What strengths and weaknesses have emerged during this period in your lives and in your communities? What has been the experience of the touch of God in these times? What challenges and vulnerabilities have been exposed in our lives, both individually and ecclesially, which need to be addressed?*

2. Re-read those experiences in greater depth open to the inspiration of the Spirit...

*Look at these experiences in greater depth relating them to the Synod themes of communion, participation and mission.*

3. Gather the fruits to share...

*The third part of the process will be to gather the fruits of the discussion considering what needs to change to make the Church more missionary going forward. What has the last 2 years taught us about journeying together as Church?*

In reflecting on these three phases, all who participate in the process should speak with *parrhesia*. This word, which is used often by the Holy Father, draws on that inspiration of the Holy Spirit to speak with candour, directness and sincerity. Speaking with *parrhesia* though, must also be tempered with freedom, truth and charity. In other words, speaking with *parrhesia* necessarily requires the virtue of *prudence*; this enables us to see, in any given moment of life, what is virtuous and what is not, and how to embrace what is good and avoid what is evil.

This moment of speaking with *parrhesia* and *prudence* requires the art of discernment. A useful image of discernment is when we stand in brilliant sunlight. When we face the sun, we are illumined by its rays and the shadows are cast behind us; we feel its warmth and are drawn towards it as a source of good. When we speak through our experiences resulting from our prayerful reflection of the issues in our hearts, we can genuinely speak with *parrhesia* and *prudence*. However, when we face away from the sun, we look into the shadows which are cast in front of us and the path ahead is not illumined. We walk away from the source of light; this is not speaking with *parrhesia* and *prudence*. The process of discernment, which is necessary for this synodal process, requires us to be open to

the Spirit's illumination which will always draw us into the heart of God, the source of light for the world.

The Holy Father speaks eloquently of this in his book *Let us Dream*:

*When we face choices and contradictions, asking what God's will is opens us up to unexpected possibilities. I describe these new possibilities as "overflow," because they often burst the banks of our thinking. Overflow happens when we humbly set before God the challenge that we face and ask for help. We call this "discernment of spirits" because it involves learning what is of God and what is seeking to frustrate his will.*

*To enter into discernment is to resist the urge to seek the apparent relief of an immediate decision, and instead be willing to hold different options before the Lord, waiting on that overflow. You consider reasons for and against, knowing Jesus is with you and for you. You feel inside yourself the gentle pull of the spirit and its opposite. And over time in prayer and patience, in dialogue with others, you reach a solution which is not a compromise but is something else together.*

Pope Francis *"Let us Dream: The Path to a Better Future"* page 21

## Ten Nuclei

To focus the reflection that takes place in the local churches, the Synod Office has proposed ten nuclei to explore. These articulate the themes of the lived synodality of the Church; they are not prescriptive but aids to the discussion. Each of them can be embraced in the three phases spoken of above to give a context for reflection, however no one group should feel the need to address all of the questions. Some reflection questions are offered...

### I. The Journeying Companions

*Look at who forms the community which is journeying together? Who are on the peripheries who we need to reach out to? Who do we know who no longer walk with us, who used to and now we don't see? How do we engage with the covid curious? What is our welcome like?*

### II. Listening

*Do we listen to each other? How do we best do this – people to people, clergy to clergy, bishops to bishops and each to each other? How do we make our listening "a listening of the heart" not just of the issues and subjects at hand? How do we listen to the signs of the times outside the Church and respond to them?*

### III. Speaking Out

*What is the communication like in our group/parish/diocese? Do we have the freedom, truth and charity to speak with parrhesia and prudence? What defines our speaking – when we speak, what to say, how to say it? How am I living out my prophetic vocation given at baptism?*

### IV. Celebrating

*Does the liturgy of the Church inspire a deeper encounter with the risen Lord? How does my prayer – both individually and in community – affect my discernment of my participation in the mission of the Church? Is the Eucharist the centre of my, and my community's life? What flows from the Sunday (or daily) Eucharist out of the Church into the world from our communities? What do I give thanks to God for in prayer? What do I seek from him?*

## V. Co-responsibility in the Mission

*Who do I understand the mission of the Church both in my own life and participation, and in the local church and the universal church? How is what we are doing relate to the Great Commission of Jesus (Matt 28:18-20)? What formation do I need to be more committed to the mission of the Church? what impact is our local community making in the area – do we make a difference?*

## VI. Dialogue in Church and Society

*How do we understand dialogue in and outside of the Church? Do we see dialogue as a unique contribution that the Church can make to the world? How do we address the challenges that dialogue brings about? How do we begin to dialogue with others?*

## VII. With the other Christian Denominations

*What is our relationship with the other denominations like? Do we listen to each other as we journey on our pilgrim way? What enriches us from the other traditions? What do we offer them from ours?*

## VIII. Authority and Participation

*How is authority exercised in our communities? What are the organs of co-responsibility that allows for the expression of our baptismal consecration as priest, prophet and king? How do the lay faithful collaborate effectively in the life of the local church? What are the fruits of this collaboration, and what are the obstacles and challenges?*

## IX. Discerning and Deciding

*How do we discern together the direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading us? Is there freedom to exercise our particular ministry in the Church and participate in this common work of discernment and decision making? Is my local community accountable and transparent in decision making? What can help improve this? Do I support the Bishops and the Priests in arriving at their decisions?*

## X. Forming ourselves in Synodality

*What additional formation do I need to be a missionary disciple? Is the local community effective in catechising and passing on the faith? What tools are necessary for the Church to be truly synodal, listening and journeying together? How do we continue the listening and dialogue beyond this process so that the Church have a “lived synodality” as the Holy Father asks?*

## Reporting Back

Each diocese, including all entities within it, have the right to speak on the issues that arise in the synodal discussions. These should be fed back to the diocesan Synod team in each of the dioceses. That team will gather together the responses and prayerfully, with their bishop, review and collate what has been said to assist with the submission of a final diocesan response to the Bishops' Conference.

The same process will occur at the Conference level. The two bishop delegates elected by the Conference for the Synod will perform the same task with the Conference Team and create the National Synthesis. This will reflect the lived experience of the participants at the local level, both positive and negative and the process will prayerfully discern how to reflect the national picture.

The diocesan reports which are submitted to the Bishops' Conference should reflect the following points which have been developed by the Synod Office in Rome. Again, these points offer a framework for reporting, they are not strict guidelines for answers to specific questions:

**1. Process**

Describe the methodology of approach in the diocese. How was engagement promoted and what were the questions that were posed? What was the estimated number of people engaged in the process as a proportion of the Catholic population?

**2. Experience**

Summarise the joys and the challenges of the synodal experience? Were there any issues (positive or negative) that came to the fore and were of note? What was the experience of listening and discerning? Was there a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit at work in the local church?

**3. Feedback**

What was particularly significant, surprising, or unexpected? What new perspectives emerged from the process? Which points of view seem to have strong repeated resonance? Which points of view were mentioned less but are interesting and noteworthy?

**4. Assessment**

What has the discernment process led to in terms of the lived reality of synodality in the communities? What formation is needed to help people embrace this new way of "being Church"? What areas of the Church need healing and conversion, looking especially at spiritual life, culture, attitudes, structures, pastoral practices, relationships, and missionary outreach?

**5. Future Growth**

What practical steps do the communities within local Church ask for to see the mission grow, both in their immediate place and across the diocese? How can the structures of the local Church be developed to embrace the challenges of this desired "lived synodality"? What is needed to support the national development and indeed, the universal Church to live the synodal way that the Pope is calling for?

The Synod Office suggests that each Diocese should send a report of no more than 10 pages. This can have supplementary material to illuminate the synthesis that has been produced locally. The main focus of the National Synthesis is to draw the common threads together in each of the five areas above so that a picture can emerge of the Church in England and Wales.

The methodology for creating the national Synthesis, along with the identification of who has provided this, and the final report will be published so that all are aware of the work that has been done in the dioceses of England and Wales. It is strongly encouraged that all dioceses publish their submissions as part of their work as well.

Rev. Canon Christopher Thomas

4<sup>th</sup> October 2021

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