

# Walking Together

Synodal Update for the Diocese of Plymouth



## Welcome to the first of our Walking Together Updates

We are currently setting out on our listening journey in the Diocese of Plymouth with people coming together in our parishes, schools and communities in the coming weeks to listen to the Holy Spirit and to each other. We hope that this will be a wonderful journey for you all. A small working group is supporting this listening journey and we want to be as inclusive as possible. We will be sending out information, materials and opportunities for everyone to get involved and putting materials on our website. If you have any questions please contact [synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk).

Canon John Deeny and Deborah Fisher—Diocesan Co-Contacts

### **Synodality: what does this all mean?**

Synodal comes from a Greek word meaning the 'walking together' (syn-) on a particular way (-hodos) This 'Walking Together' is a listening exercise to take place in every church across the world in preparation for the Synod of bishops in 2023. Pope Francis invites all of us, the People of God, to make this journey together. It is a journey of prayer and discernment. There are three phases to the journey: diocesan, continental and universal, culminating in the Synod in Rome. Bishop Mark launched the Diocesan listening phase of our Walking Together on 17 October with a Mass at Plymouth Cathedral [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADx-80E\\_Fk4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADx-80E_Fk4). He highlighted the importance of listening and the need "to foster as broad a consultation as possible, reaching out to integrate the voice of the poor and excluded."

### **Want to find out more?**

The Vatican's official website for the global synod has lots of information and resources. Key documents are the Preparatory Document, the Handbook and the Adsumus prayer <https://www.synod.va/en.html>.

We also have lots of material on our Diocesan website including links to a super talk by Austen Ivereigh on 16 November and introductory presentations to the process by Canon John and Deborah:

[www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/synod/](http://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/synod/)

Any questions, please email [synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk)

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

Matthew 13:31-32

### Come Holy Spirit!

May the synodal process lead us to become like the first assembly of the Church where the disciples persevered steadfastly in prayer with Mary, recalling the memories of Jesus, his words, deeds and promises. We ask the Spirit of love to lead us to that common vision which will unite us as a community of faith in one mind and one heart.

Congregation of Our Lady  
of the Cenacle  
Casa Generalizia



## What is the listening phase?



The listening phase “ is not a study group, a democratic political process or parliament. It is a grace-filled event, a process of healing to bring us home” (Bishop Mark). The coming journey is an exciting opportunity for us to reflect on how we move forward together into the future with a focus on three particular themes – communion, participation and mission. Our journey must be a spiritual one, inspired by scripture. The Holy Spirit has to remain central to our journey. 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.

We understand that this approach will feel a little strange to some of us. It is different to the way we normally have discussions or debates. Parishes have been sent resources to help with this process and some reflections for Advent which parish facilitators can use as they find helpful. All parishes have been invited to nominate facilitators and if you are not sure what is happening in your parish, please contact your Priest or parish secretary.

**PRAY FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH** [www.prayforthesynod.va/en/](http://www.prayforthesynod.va/en/)

### The main question:

We are invited to focus on an overarching question as we move along this journey:

*How does this ‘journeying together’ which takes place on different levels 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?’*



### What is going to be the outcome of all this?

At this point, none of us know what will be the fruits of this listening journey. However one positive outcome will be the journey itself—offering us all an opportunity to come together and listen to the Holy Spirit and to reflect on our Church—how we listen, our mission, how we celebrate and our dreams.

We also want ensure voices from our Diocese are heard in this global debate. Facilitators will be asked to feedback views and reflections to the Synodal Working group which will compile this feedback for reflection and discernment at two pre-Synodal events. Those events will help us discern what themes are sent forward to the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales as our Diocesan contribution to this global listening. We are also looking for ways to reach out to those of other faiths or none, those who no longer come to our parishes and those on the margins of our society.

Ideally groups will come together to listen to one another and share ideas but people can also reflect as individuals using the materials provided and share their views online [www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/walking-together-reflections/](http://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/walking-together-reflections/) or via email to [Synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:Synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk).