

Walking Together

Synodal Update for the Diocese of Plymouth



Welcome to the third of our Walking Together Updates

We want to send a huge thank you to everyone who has continued to send in feedback over the Christmas and New Year period. We now received contributions from parishes, schools, Universities, other groups and individuals. We are particularly grateful to our facilitators who have worked hard to offer a range of opportunities for participation across the Diocese.

Canon John Deeny and Deborah Fisher—Diocesan Co-Contacts

FEEDBACK SO FAR AND NEXT STEPS

We have so far received over 160 separate pieces of feedback from schools, parish groups, University groups, youth groups and individuals. We are grateful that so many people took part in the Advent Synodal Journey and that others are continuing that journey in January. We know that the feeling of being rushed has been frustrating for so many of you but we want to get as much feedback as possible to send forward to the Bishops' Conference. We are very grateful to everyone and in particular for the hard work of all the facilitators.

The Diocesan Synodal working group is meeting in late January to review feedback received so far and to start to prepare materials for our Pre-Synodal meetings in February and March as well as other events that we will be holding to start to share the fruits of this listening journey. Feedback received after that date will still be integrated into our final Diocesan Synthesis but we would need that feedback by mid February.

Bishops are invited to convoke a pre-synodal meeting to culminate the diocesan phase. This gathering should have wide representation from across the diocese with the aim of coming together to pray, listen, reflect, and discern the synodal path along which God's Spirit is calling the whole diocese. This meeting will include a liturgical celebration. Pre-Synodal events are being held in Poole and Plymouth and we are asking parishes and other groups to nominate participants to ensure we get as broad a spread of feedback. We are sorry that we are limiting numbers of participants to ensure representation from across the Diocese, but will be offering online meetings and other opportunities for everyone to engage. If you would like to be on a waiting list to attend a pre synodal event please register here and we will contact you if places become available <https://forms.office.com/r/ibCQhMvd7w>

These events are not the end of the journey but another step along the road. 'This kind of discernment is not only a one-time exercise, but ultimately a way of life, grounded in Christ, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, living for the greater glory of God. Communal discernment helps to build flourishing and resilient communities for the mission of the Church today.' (Vatican guidance)



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.

HEARING THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE



An emerging theme from our Synodal journey so far focuses on young people and how to enable their deeper and more active participation in the life of the Church. We are already hearing from some young people about their dreams for the Church of the future, their personal aspirations and barriers to participation, but we would like to hear more.

St Boniface and St James parish in Mid Devon have shared their experience of organising an event to listen to the views of young people. They invited past confirmation groups (older teens and young adults) to get together for a reunion and a Synodal listening event. The format of the meeting and the time was arranged in consultation with the young people, considering their personal work/study circumstances. The event was disseminated through the newsletter and through word of mouth, using the youth themselves and the catechists as a bridge to reach the groups. Eight young people between the ages of 16 and 19 participated in the event.

The event was organised in two parts: the first part was a social event for 30 minutes, with cakes, drinks and music, and with the priest also present to welcome them, especially those who do not attend regularly. The catechists who led the confirmation groups were also invited, so there would be someone who knew every person as they came in. For the Synodal listening (1h and 30mins with a short break for more cake), the priest left and the facilitators led the session covering a wide range of topics, from the Sacramental life of the Church, to those who are listened to, and how the Church welcomes those who are different and marginalised. Everyone had the opportunity to speak and in the last 5 minutes all were offered the opportunity to provide further written thoughts, to make sure that all ideas were captured and welcomed. The young people really enjoyed the event, participated enthusiastically and shared their ideas in a honest and in-depth way: it was inspiring to listen to the Holy Spirit at work through them!

If your parish hasn't yet organised an event with younger people there is still plenty of time. Younger people can also be invited to fill in our short online questionnaire <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/9MVCQ7M>

THOSE LESS HEARD: REACHING OUT

Pope Francis has encouraged us to focus on **maximum inclusion and participation**, reaching out to involve **those on the periphery who are often excluded and forgotten**. Encouraging the widest participation possible will help to ensure that the syntheses formulated at the levels of dioceses, episcopal conferences, and the whole Church capture the true realities and lived experience of the People of God. Sarah Watts is working with the Synodal Working group to reach out to marginalised groups but the best engagement will be at parish level. Please contact us (synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk) if you have reached out into your wider community to share your experience. If you haven't reached out yet, please don't forget you can use the short online form (which we can also provide in paper format) or why not invite someone to a cup of coffee....

19,000 CUPS OF COFFEE

We are launching a new initiative—19,000 cups of coffee—to encourage continuing conversation. We would encourage everyone to take up this challenge and have produced a poster for parishes and a short guide which we would be grateful if everyone could share widely. People can return paper forms or fill in an online survey [link]. This link will close on 25 February 2022.

Please contact us at any time with feedback or reflections—synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk