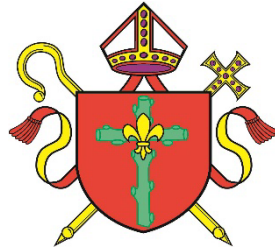


Our Nottingham Diocesan Synodal Journey



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Report Submitted to
The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales

Friday 8th April 2022

Preface: How our journey began...

On Monday 11th October 2021 we distributed Prayer cards, liturgy templates for parishes & chaplaincies in advance of a Pastoral Letter written by Bishop Patrick. World Mission Sunday marked the announcement of our first parish meetings over the next fortnight. The suggested questions for each parish to consider were:

- 1) What is my dream for the Church, for my parish/chaplaincy so that it can become more outward-looking, more missionary?
- 2) To achieve this dream, what do we need to stop doing? What are we doing that needs to be developed or done differently?

On Monday 1st November we then began our schools process of listening to pupils & as well as outreach through the NDCYS (Nottingham Diocesan Catholic Youth Service) for encounters with young people who are not in Catholic schools. The six parish questions were adapted to three questions. Our Clergy Deanery Meetings in November considered:

- What's been happening in parish meetings so far; what ideas are emerging?
- Planning for the January Special Deanery Meeting: who will lead the Deanery discussion?

The Day of Prayer for the Poor spurred the second set of questions to consider:

- 3) As a parish/chaplaincy do we know who are the people who feel marginalised or separated from the parish/chaplaincy & society?
- 4) How best can our parish respond? Suggest at least two identifiable ways (an immediate action & a long-term change) in which, as a parish, we will reach out to, & listen to, the marginalised or separated.

Our World Youth Funday provided an opportunity for our school communities to celebrate their connectedness with schools & young people around the world, recognising that the Holy Spirit brings us all together in the Church as a single family of God. The First Sunday of Advent marked the introduction of the final set of questions:

- 5) How do I hear & respond to the voice of God's Holy Spirit, in my life; what signs of the Spirit at work do I see in the life of my parish/chaplaincy?
- 6) What steps may the Holy Spirit be calling us to take, as a parish/chaplaincy, on our journey together into God's future?

On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord we announced special deanery meetings open to delegates (lay, religious & clergy) from every parish/chaplaincy to share two actions it had decided upon; prayerful discern, discuss & agree on what as a deanery could be done better together, to enable more fruitful dialogue with the wider community (ecumenically, with other faiths, in charitable outreach & with civic bodies). Each deanery then submitted a report which was collated & presented at the Cathedral on the Feast of Chair of Saint Peter to share their hopes, dreams & action plans. This report was presented to the diocese as a working document for feedback & additional comments by the Solemnity of St Joseph, patron of the Church.

Key: [C]=Catholics not in parishes, [Cu]=Curia, [E]=Ethnic Communities, [Ec]=Ecumenical Partners, [H]= Hospital Chaplaincy [L]=LGBTQ Community, [NC]=Non-Catholics, [NP] Non-Practising Catholics, [P]=Parish Laity Male & Female & Clergy, [Pr]=Prisoners, [R]=Religious Men & Women, [S]=School Pupils, [Sp]=Spanned, [T]=Travellers, [U]=University Students, [W]=Woman's Group, [Y]=Young Adults Group, [7]= Seven Steps Scripture Group.

The first steps on our journey...

1) What is my dream for the Church, for my parish/chaplaincy so that it can become more outward-looking, more missionary?

Dreams about Greater Participation

- The need for a greater role for women in the liturgy & leadership of the church. [P]
- To administer the sacraments, cherish each other & build a family in common fellowship of faith, but do our church doors need to open wider to encourage people to become part of our faith but also to reach out to people who have no interest in being part of our family & effectively engage with them in some way? [Sp]
- Concern about the points women raise being 'discerned out' by the Bishops, but they are aware that this is a matter of concern & so will probably be careful not to do it [W]
- A greater emphasis on outreach to marginalised communities/groups, a reemphasis on the Common Good! [P]
- Keep up with the times & the issues affecting young people; be at one with their concerns, e.g., Climate Change, Bullying, Social Exclusion, child poverty, diverse family situations etc. Modern websites & develop its youth mission. [P] [YA] [S]
- Everyone should understand that the parish needs many other people & the Parish Priest to enable it to operate & flourish, inspiring peer to peer ministry. [YA] [P]
- To see young families at Mass & becoming and recognise that they have a vital contribution to make to the spiritual & community life of the parish. [P]
- Parishes need to invest more time & effort in building a relationship/bond with its local community [P]
- Support of Local chaplaincies. Going out versus just opening the doors & hoping. [P]

Dreams about Church Teaching

- Confidence in herself – staying true to the magisterium of the Church [YA]
- A deep desire to see the opportunities of the Second Vatican Council to be realized. [P]
- Move from a centralized, hierarchical structure that excludes or alienates people. [P]
- Re-examine church teaching: married clergy, women priests/deacons, divorce etc; a greater awareness of the changing needs of the people & their relationships with each other & diverse communities; [P] [YA] [C]
- Catholic education needs to "re-set" itself, with the Gospel & Christ at its heart. [P]
- Open senior leadership (reserved) positions in our schools to faith-filled Catholics from the LGBTQ community, those who are remarried & those in long-term partnerships. [S]
- The current church practice of allowing married Anglican clergy to become catholic priests is contradictory logic and extraordinary in its practice. A further recent somewhat hypocritical act was allowing Boris Johnson to wed, when so many are declined sacraments for their marital status. [NP]
- The plethora of rules to become a Catholic is hard to navigate [P]

Dreams about working alongside other Christians & non-Christians

- All willing to 'walk' together on the synodal journey, especially with other denominations – we need to take ecumenism seriously. [P]
- We need to work with the other churches to build fellowship for the youth, men, women, prayer groups, fellowship & support of local projects [P]

- Would like us to be an organisation that people turn to for help, no matter what their faith, ethnicity, background, circumstances. [C]
- The most painful issue that I feel personally regarding church unity, is that the beautiful Eucharistic meal that Jesus gave to all believers, remains one of our strongest points of separation (between me & my Catholic friends). [Ec]

Dreams to be more welcoming

- The church might be a place where all feel welcome as part of a community & are loved & valued for their diverse gifts & experiences. [L]
- All people with any sort of disability be welcomed, included in whatever happens in our parishes, their needs be considered whenever decisions are made & recognised as the valuable members of the Church that they are. [Sp]
- That our own parishioners return to their church. We can't welcome other people by way of evangelisation if we are incapable of welcoming our own parishioners [P]
- Greater social action is required [U]
- Inclusive of different languages, BSL, disabled access, ministry of women [YA] [P]
- More dialogue – more opportunities like this, more accepting of lay roles [YA]
- Try & break the clique, rotating the parish council, back the catechists [YA]
- More school & parish dialogue with support of the clergy [YA]
- Everyone is treated with equal dignity & respect without distinction or preference, without title or hierarchical structure, but all of us working together as a family in the service of our Saviour. [Sp]
- Create a strong community of faith with consistency & accessibility [YA]

Dreams about our Liturgy

- The Mass should be restored to its full form (pre Covid); our churches should be unlocked in between Masses so the faithful (& those seeking faith) are able to sit in quiet contemplation, rather than online Mass becoming the norm [YA][P]
- For all liturgies & catechesis to be relevant – to have beautiful liturgies [YA]
- Have faith woven into day-to-day experiences e.g. Football Mass with Adoration, Pub with a talk on theology [YA]
- Healthy participation rather than observing [YA]
- Vary Mass styles; retain online/virtual services; more inclusivity at celebrations; more emphasis on adult catechesis especially on difficult topics; [P] [YA]
- Widen availability of the Latin Mass & other rites [Eastern Churches] [YA] [U]

Dreams about growing in our faith

- To be a true reflection of Christ as his bride. We should live like Christ in his humility, kindness, love for humanity, his boundless forgiveness, & his quest for lost souls. [E]
- More Catechesis to increase knowledge & understanding of the faith. [YA] [P]
- Evangelise & Form Mass-goers! [YA]
- That the word of God can be spread throughout the world & that families & individuals come together to pray & understand the scriptures. [P] [YA]
- People have good intentions, but many have not had the 'encounter experience OF Christ Jesus' including knowledgeable catechists who don't operate/cooperate with the Holy Spirit. [P]
- Reinforce the commandments, 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, & with all your soul, & with all your mind & love your neighbour as yourself [P]
- Weekday Mass at times people who are working can attend, other opportunities outside the Mass for prayer & to connect with faith [YA]

- Priestly formation shouldn't be all at Seminary. Women need to be involved in the training too. [P]

Dreams about more fruitful communication

- Pandemic made evident that parishes are not 'real' communities – no records, email addresses, etc., [W]
- The Church needs a greater culture of transparency so that everyone feels they have a stake in the business. Confidentiality sometimes seems to be used as a reason for not sharing information. [C] [P]
- Evolve our church from grey haired men making decisions in clandestine rooms [P]
- The Church should stop treating us like ignoramuses & use the skills of all [P]
- The Church needs to question why Catholics in some other countries are drawn to a more charismatic style of worship, why is the Briars' worship style successful & transfer these values to parishes. [P]
- Stop talking about rebuilding & commit resources to rebuilding. [W]
- Often parishes splinter into small, closed groups with no cross communication. [W]
- Giving witness to our faith & belief through our words & actions in conversation with friends & acquaintances who may not be Catholic or even church going. [P]

2) To achieve this dream, what do we need to stop doing? What are we doing that needs to be developed or done differently?

Explore our use of buildings

- Addressing the use & the number of buildings in our local area. [P]
- Improve Parish facilities– improve hall seating – good coffee machines [YA]
- Keeping churches open. Really important, even when there is no resident priest. [W]
- Use the space of the Church more creatively take out pews & make room for a toddler space, child friendly notice board. [P]

Explore our relevance

- Encouraging younger members of the church & younger families to participate in the life of our church communities. [P]
- Being active in the community, beyond the church building. [P]
- I think the clergy need to move away from costly vestments and elaborate processions. Neither sit well with a humble, contrite church "smelling of the sheep." Even the popular Blessed Sacrament procession smacks of triumphalism; and it just doesn't seem to be what is wanted by the Holy Spirit. [P]
- Ongoing exploration & development of faith or communities become lukewarm. [P]
- Keep reminding & encouraging parishioners to help the Church, ask them to consider what they can give or do for the Church & to celebrate what the Church does [P]

Exploring our prayer & worship

- Making the church community more than Sunday Mass. [P]
- Helping people find their way back to the church, refocusing on Jesus' teachings. [P]
- To pray every day especially for the Church, its community & Parish Priests
- Seek God in prayer, in the sacrament of reconciliation, retreats. [E]
- I would like more lively music at Mass. [T]
- More activities are needed for children at their level. [T]
- More formation in faith & lively celebrations e.g., healing services are needed to counteract the Born-Again Christian; Nightfever Adoration [P] [T] [YA]
- Serious worship that draws us to the transcendent & is at the heart of our faith. [U]

- More encouragement for taking on more roles in the Mass [YA]
- While forming committees etc. it is equally important to pray, hear & discern what we are being called to do when we are being asked to 'dream'. [C]
- A strong emphasis on Sacraments, the Saints Pilgrimages & traditional devotions [U]

Exploring education & catechesis

- Address the crisis of ongoing adult formation & the unfortunate exclusion of working persons from being able to attend daily Mass/word & communion. [P]
- Equip everyone, there are many courses available. We need each one of us to have that initial 'encounter experience with Christ Jesus' then identify our calling. [P]
- Move from our corporate CMAT Leadership Model to a Wisdom Based Model. Appointments are made from those exemplary teachers nearing retirement who are invited to share their gifts for their love of their faith rather than a huge salary. [School Governor]
- Orthodox teaching & preaching. Particularly moral teaching & aesthetics [U]
- The Church's stance on Artificial Intelligence & Metaverse & digital world [U]
- OFSTED for parishes & move away from a focus on buildings & anxieties. [YA] [P]
- Don't expect the parents & the schools to do it all [YA]
- Catholic Schools to teach the meaning of Latin words [YA] [P]

Exploring our inclusivity

- The parish (& the Church at large) should continue to promote &, where necessary seek to extend, an 'inclusive' environment in all aspects, recognising the importance of engaging with the diverse nature of the parish community. [P]
- The church needs to stop: Talking about LGBT people as other, using unfriendly terms such as homosexual (for example use gay), being swift to judge & slow to listen. Covering up & hiding behind a document about what constitutes a 'practicing Catholic' in school appointments. Bishops who are openly hostile to LGBT+ people in places like Pol&, Nigeria & in some US dioceses. [L]
- Ask parishioners to be kind & caring to others, inviting them to join the parish [P]
- Eradicate clericalism & remove terms such as 'intrinsically disordered'. [L]
- Actively listen to the lived reality of LGBT+ people, accompany, care for & offer healing for the past damage done to some of these baptised Catholics.
- *Stop being* – exclusive; judgemental; negative; violent; precious; let go of hurts; hierarchical; we don't have all the answers; male dominated; legalistic; selfish; insincere; divisive; intolerant; male dominated; clergy dominated [R]
- Travellers now like to be more involved in parish life & would like to be more included as welcomers, readers, & other parish ministries. [T]

Exploring our connection with others

- Missional communities – based on areas of interest – places to bring friends who aren't catholic to ease them into church [YA] [U]
- Making things more accessible – Lourdes is expensive [YA]
- Greater diocesan communications – the diocese is bigger than just Nottingham! [YA]
- 5-a-side football tournaments between parishes [YA]
- When all Prison Wings are together there is a different atmosphere & there is a different atmosphere with Church on the "out". [Pr]

Explore leadership

- Everyone has a part to play; tap the potential of our cultures; develop CARITAS; be more visible in the locality; penitential services with general absolution; live the Gospel; formation at every level & for everyone. [R]

- Lay people want to be respected as grown-ups – able to take responsibility, make decisions without clerical oversight; clergy have arbitrary powers, can make decisions without consulting, lack skills in teamwork & collaboration. [W]
- Many older people reflected that it is time for the next generation to step up [W]
- Rather than the parish council, have regular meetings for ‘parish team’ – with representatives of every group in the parish [W]
- Appoint salaried Parish Directors where priests are not available. [W]
- Formalise & honour lay ministries. Train lay people to officiate at baptisms, funerals, word & communion services. Deacons could take on more leadership roles [W]
- The agreement here is that Catholic Students need to stand up & be counted. [U]

Explore what we do well

- A place to gather & speak to, come close to & seek forgiveness from God [Pr]
- I experience healing, trust, compassion, kindness, & forgiveness. [T]
- The Mass & sacraments are important to me & my family. [T]
- At a time of difficulty, the Church is where I can go to be supported & listened to. [T]
- Wherever I travel to the first place I look for is the Church & always feel at home. [T]
- The Church understands my culture when I am celebrating the sacraments & that is important to me & when I am struggling, the place I want to visit is the Church. [T]
- I realise individual priests are doing good things, but the ‘machinery’ around the structure of the Church seems to misuse its power and energy in excluding rather than including people. [NP]
- The reception of the sacraments is important to me & my family. [T]
- Parties & social events [U]

3) As a parish/chaplaincy do we know who are the people who feel marginalised or separated from the parish/chaplaincy & society?

Welcoming as key to mission

- Inclusion needs to be a key driver of missionary activity – especially regarding those who feel marginalized & separated from the church e.g., divorced, LGBTQ [P]

Welcoming those not able to celebrate in church

- The sick & housebound are important members of our parish family. [P]
- We do not know those who are marginalised [P]
- COVID has created a wish not to be physically present in some communities. [P]

Welcoming our growth in learning

- The Church is not in the 21st Century in its outlook & not accessible [S]
- Barriers must be broken down & opportunities for growing, learning, sharing must be encouraged, a community where everyone is valued. [S]
- Students felt that people were now scared to attend Mass & be labelled Catholic because of all the adverse publicity around abuse in the Catholic Church. [S]

Welcoming those who feel/are separated

- More follow up for the children who disappear after First Communion & welcome those who are part of the LGGBT+ Community. [S] [P]
- Be less judgemental, stop stereotyping & be more supportive [S]
- Excluded communities; this may vary from the sick, the disenfranchised youth, those with undocumented immigration status, those battling financial challenges.
- African students struggling with studies, loneliness, paying school fees. [E]

- Map out the current church goers & invite them to 'seek & find the marginalised rather than make assumptions that the church is not interested or concerned. [R]
- The Church has much to learn from secular society; including people who 'don't fit'
- Church response to refugees, asylum seekers & human trafficking very positive. [W]
- The idea of 'God fearing' people seemed to inculcate fear and imply that people weren't good enough. I did witness a sense of belonging to a community, from the adults around me who visited the sick and dying, but it didn't help me to feel welcome or to belong. [NP]

Welcoming difference

- To be sensitive to cultural differences & preferences in styles or worship whilst maintaining the uniqueness, integrity & excellence of our traditional liturgies. [P]
- Diocese /Parishes need to be ready to pay for professional skills where these are needed – new technology, fund raising, training, music. [W]
- For too long they [People with disabilities & learning difficulties] had been seen as passive receivers of whatever the Church decided to allow them to be included in but had a distinctive contribution to make, as valuable as any other. Better accessibility to Churches for those with additional needs. [Sp] [S]

Welcoming the contributions of a non-Faith based community

- In terms of society, it is those who have lost their faith in Christ our Lord. They lack the means to mitigate their pains & difficulties because they do not know how to access unconditional love that God alone can give [P]

4) How best can our parish respond? Suggest at least two identifiable ways (an immediate action & a long-term change) in which, as a parish, we will reach out to, & listen to, the marginalised or separated.

Immediate Action

Actioning a vision of unity

- A quality census programme to allow an effective communication strategy [P]
- To implement a welcoming group & to find those Parishioners who are not on the Parish List to better Communicate. [P]
- The Diocese is Nottingham-centric with little understanding of the challenges & possibilities of the four counties within their remit. [P]

Actioning outreach

- Greater outreach towards the marginalised, through practical support & advice from the parish community to anyone who needs it; support refugee & asylum seekers; be more welcoming to the stranger with more social opportunities [P]
- Produce a Welcome Card to be given to new parishioners & follow this up by offering a Welcome Pack to the respondents. Send out the parish newsletter along with their own newsletter every week, send cards to those who feel excluded [S] [P]

Actioning stewardship

- Plant trees; recycle; re-use & throw away less; be kinder & more considerate; call out bullying, homophobic attitudes & language, sexist & non-inclusive language; don't gossip & use the internet/phones for the wrong reasons – i.e. to hurt, undermine or slander people; reach out to the local community especially the sick, elderly & housebound; work with the SVP to establish 'Young Vinnie's in schools; more prayer spaces & resources; school chapels, & school chaplains [S]

Actioning sacramental growth

- Sacramental life – sacramental preparation being more than a programme, but an evangelization of families; sacraments as a welcoming point to the church community, rather than a “hurdle” to be overcome. [P]

Actioning more fruitful celebrations

- To encourage families to church with music & a revitalised little church. Encourage some of the parents to volunteer. Try & make more of a celebration & coffee after Mass. (This action is underway with meetings planned with volunteers) [P]
- To restore the social life of the parish to what it was prior to the Pandemic [P]
- Invite the parishioners to the liturgies in school which are led by the children. [S]
- A more active prayer life both within the church & in Catholic homes. [P]

Actioning a learning culture

- Catechesis of the parish: starting as personal, leading to a missionary heart, leading to a desire for evangelisation. [P]
- A young person from the school to be invited onto the PCC for one year term. [P]
- Educate/ promote the sacraments more (Communion etc). [S]
- More school visits to church to understand the religious artwork & symbolism. [S]

Long-Term Changes

Changing from maintenance to mission

- Develop Personal Prayer opportunities & retreat days involve parents in these too [S]
- Appoint a ‘welfare officer’ in every parish, who would work with a team within the parish to keep regular contact with those in need [P]
- RE Department, Chaplaincy & Clergy to speak to students about the concerns & misconceptions students have on a range of moral issues [S]
- Develop greater unity between the Protestant & Roman Catholic church in this city – can we make it easier for Roman Catholics to bless our city in a meaningful way [Ec]
- Only put out good news –put out bright photos not just dark & gloomy ones [YA]
- Mission team that would work with the parish (not the role of NDCYS) [YA]
- Priests need to listen & be more welcoming of new people [YA]
- More charitable giving [YA]
- There needs to be a return to Parish Missions which could include Mass at 7am followed by discussion/breakfast; with a similar event in the evenings [P]
- More advertisement videos for different events [YA]
- Doing more stuff for the environment e.g. more projectors & less printing [YA]
- Support hub for parishes at deanery level [Cu]

Changing from being served to serving others

- Looking to become a “Hub” for services to the local community, [P]
- Improve communications & encourage more volunteers; [P]
- A church of community vs a church of strangers [P]
- Bereavement Group (this was requested repeatedly) [P]
- Ensure parishes have enough staff to achieve what is required of them [C]

Changing from exclusivity to inclusivity

- All Masses should be advertised in all the deanery parishes; develop stronger links between the parishes; wider use of technology & more professional; offer on-line courses; be pro-active & positive about God’s call to the priestly or religious life. [P]
- To run a café or a soup kitchen after mid-week Mass for people feeling isolated [P]

- Ask the parish council to take a more active role in the synod process. [P]
- International Mass at Pentecost led by communities from all over the world. [P]
- We must learn from dynamic and successful diocese such as Philadelphia who have a diocesan shrine plagued by addiction. [Pr]
- Those who feel barred or excluded from the Eucharist could be included & welcomed in the parish through involvement in other parish groups. [P]
- In reaching out to the marginalized and in developing the spiritual life of the parish in ways which will engage all. [P]
- Visiting Catholics who are sick & going through difficulties. [E]
- Engage with members who no longer come to mass through social media. [E]
- Be welcoming when Travellers visit your parish & look at ways in which you can build relationships with them positively. [T]
- Carry on streaming to allow the housebound to connect to their parishes [P]
- Pastoral Team to ring the elderly/ housebound. [P] [Sp]
- Preserve & protect life from its beginning to its end. Particularly those born with or likely to be born with disabling conditions & support those families. [Sp]

Changing from lone rangers to collaborators

- Greater collaboration between schools & parishes in key events [S] [P]
- Be an invitational Church, focus on welcome ministry/hospitality team [YA] [P]
- Support young people by appointing Youth Ministers to engage with them at parish & Deanery level & prepare them for a meaningful role in society [P]
- It is time for serious thinking, not just going back to that way it was. If we can see & understand the problems, it's up to us – the laity – to do something about them. [W]
- The importance of friendship, drawing people into groups & activities. [W]
- Setting up a Parish Council [P]

Changing from education to formation

- The need to address the crisis of ongoing adult formation [P]
- Reform our parish into domestic church units that will facilitate formation & evangelisation. [P]
- We need many people in our church as catechists & training are imperative. [P]
- To develop a Parish Pastoral plan [P]
- An older parishioner and a First Holy Communion child paired as prayer partners. [P]

Changing from reactive to proactive

- Review notice boards, social events, & the liturgy to see if they could be more welcoming & inclusive. [P]
- Explore & implement a range of communication techniques to try to get input of thoughts & ideas from a wide range of people. [P]
- A 'What's On' event to which groups will be invited to send a representative(s) to explain to the community, what they do and how they can be involved [P]
- Review previous consultations & assemblies that have taken place & ensure any outstanding action is progressed. [P]
- Carry out an evaluation of people's needs. [P]
- Reach out to new housing developments. [P]

5) How do I hear & respond to the voice of God's Holy Spirit, in my life; what signs of the Spirit at work do I see in the life of my parish/chaplaincy?

Hearing through Prayer & Scripture

- Coming together in prayer especially Exposition to rebuild relationships [P]
- *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi*, means that prayer & belief are integral to each other & that liturgy is not distinct from theology but also builds on our relationship [P]
- Encourage Prayer groups & Bible Studies, perhaps in each other's homes [P] [E]
- Attending to the things of God & coming to Mass [E]
- Meditation & prayer based on scriptures & reflecting upon this in order to spread the Gospel, in the family & towards our neighbours [P]
- Encouragement of Marian devotion e.g. Diocesan wide 'Rosary Zoom' [P]

Hearing through communication

- Better communication of ideas & things that are happening across the Diocese. [P]
- We can appear unfriendly whilst trying to respect newcomers' privacy. [P]
- To encourage more participation in activities rather than leave it to the few. [P]
- Much more communication which is open, honest & true. [P]

Hearing through celebration

- Parish churches could organise together common feasts with neighbouring churches of other denominations, especially Anglo-Catholic churches. [P]
- Organise regular pilgrimages & support diocesan pilgrimages [S]

Hearing through the community of faith

- By supporting the church through a stronger community, we would become more welcoming of marginalised people & more evangelising. [E] [P]
- Families & friendships that support each other in times of need. [P]
- Action in community e.g., Refugees; fund raising for charities. [P]

6) What steps may the Holy Spirit be calling us to take, as a parish/chaplaincy, on our journey together into God's future?

Growing in discernment

- That Scripture sharing groups based on the Seven Steps model should be established throughout the Diocese; these would be open to priests, religious & lay people; they could be lay led but would need, as a minimum, the support & encouragement of parish clergy. Such groups could have a significant role in the development of a more mission focused Church. [7]
- The signs of the Holy Spirit already at work: Volunteers, active laity [P]
- Whatever loaves & fishes we bring, God will multiply. [P]
- By encountering Christ and practising what we preach. [E] [P]

Growing in humility

- The Church needs to give a public "genuine" apology, supported by publicised action, to those it has damaged/abused – this is the first step needed to regain the trust [P]
- The Church is declining in membership, not just the Catholic Church, across the board, we need to understand & why the church is no longer relevant to people [P]
- Removal of some Masses & closure of parishes results in the eroding of parish communities & reinforces the message of "irrelevance". [P]

Growing in communion

- Share good practice with neighbouring parishes e.g. catechesis & outreach [P]
- Pray together on a regular basis (creating a rhythm of prayer), so that we can listen collectively to the Holy Spirit & what God is calling us to do. [C]

Growing as evangelisers

- Adult formation “We need to evangelise ourselves to evangelise others” [P]
- By spreading the word of God to family members & friends. [E]
- To remember the commission given by the Lord to make disciples & evangelise. [P]

Growing in hospitality

- Many members remain anonymous & cold. The community should imitate the life of the early Christians & the Apostles. [P]
- Inclusivity with no exceptions, we need to welcome all, even if personal circumstances mean we cannot always live the expected ideals of Church [P]

Growing as communicators

- Really Engage with social media – Meet young people where they are. [P]
- To use the rich variety of resources available to evangelise– possible funding [P]
- Catholic community needs to reboot, refresh, re-educate, update. [P]
- Create a family outreach team in union with Catholic schools. [P]
- What about a series of Q & A on the website – clearly explaining the Catholic tradition and why the Church seems contrary to modern culture. [P]

Growing in empowerment

- Empower the laity by equipping them to be outspoken on social issues [P]
- The declining number of priests is an opportunity for the church to re-evaluate [P]
- Deanery Faith Co-ordinator to develop opportunities for faith discussion [P]
- A deanery co-ordinator (not a cleric) to get info from parishes & disseminate it [P]
- A lay Synodal deanery team [P]

The next steps on our journey...

Epilogue

Critique of the Diocesan Process

- There was a strong sense that the synodal process has not been fully thought through, & that there are many highly skilled & competent lay people in the Church with professional experience of qualitative research, project planning & project management, & research quality control, who could be invited to help improve the process. (We have five universities & a lot of advanced engineering businesses in the diocese & they all teach or practice these skills). [W]
- Noted that deanery event [Leicester] seems to have been dominated by clergy. [W]
- Parishes are supposed to have two people leading synodal process, but who are they? Diocesan leads are Joe Hopkins & Fr David Cain. Good to have more diversity – women, people from the ethnic minority communities – to ensure that all voices are included in the Report. *[Excellent point, Fr David & Joe will step away from the process now to facilitate other voices to lead the implementation stage]*. Would be helpful to have more people involved in drafting/editing the Report for the same reason – diversity of perspectives. [W]
- There is a genuine fear that the prophetic voice will be ignored or silenced in favour of an intense 'moving of deck chairs' while many of us make for the lifeboats! [P]
- The first feeling of unease came when I saw the Synod Prayer for the first time, and it grows every time we say it all together at Mass. Instead of a simple invitation to the Holy Spirit to guide us, it seems to be designed to put us off with the threat of loss of eternal life if we dare to "stray from the way of truth and what is right." The second disappointment came with the six questions we were given. Most people I know said they just didn't understand them, or even if they did understand the words, they were very unsure about how to answer them. Some people thought the questions were deliberately structured to prevent them from saying what was in their hearts. [P]

From a Listening Process to Discerning Process

As a diocese, through Lent to Pentecost each parish, school & chaplaincy is asked to make use of this period to begin implementing the two actions it decided to take forward & each deanery is asked to do the same. Pentecost then offers a special time to celebrate the movement of God's Holy Spirit within our diocese over these past months, & to begin to discern afresh where the Holy Spirit is leading us, the People of God, in our Diocese of Nottingham.

- "There will be no real outcome from next year's event & all the preparation that is going into it, unless each one of us dedicates ourselves once again to 'the mission' that Our Lord is giving to us." [Sp]

Ecumenical Address at Diocesan Evening Prayer

Responses to Roman Catholic Synodal Question:

How do you think the Roman Catholic Church could work more effectively with other traditions?

1. Thanks be to God! I am among those who delight in rich and fruitful friendships with Roman Catholics and significant experience of cooperation at local church level. I rejoice that I live in a generation beyond the “us” and “them” teaching that held until a few decades ago. One key to good work together is to recognise we are all Catholics – you are Roman Catholics.
2. At a local level colleagues stress the importance wherever possible for the embodied engagement of the local parish priest. Relational ecumenism bears the richest fruit. Many of our traditions are facing a vocational and deployment crisis so it is recognised that clergy diaries are very full but persistent absence from ecumenical gatherings makes a statement – even if unintended.
3. At a regional level – and here +Patrick is exemplary – the attendance at church leaders’ meeting by the bishop makes such a difference. As a Moderator of the United Reformed Church and a Roman Catholic bishop the two of us are members of several county meetings but being with ecumenical colleagues, sharing openly and praying together sets such an example.
4. For every congregation, regardless of tradition, there is a risk that the wider community regards us a gathering of people whose sole activity is worship. (And, of course, that is our primary privilege and responsibility.) Increasingly we are judged as much by what we do as church outside the walls of the sanctuary, as we are within as and when we meet social challenges on the doorstep of the church. Our shared service to the community is enhanced as and when we resist the temptation to do it alone and instead open up to sister congregations to serve together. Every time our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers add their presence and energy to community service, we are all enriched.
5. For a tradition with such a high emphasis on the ministry of the priest your ecumenical partners urge you to strengthen and enable lay leadership and service. Your Free Church sisters and brothers speak often about the priesthood of all believers yet one of the most inspirational examples of this, from my own local church ministerial experience, was within a congregation in the Hallam Diocese where it was a group of church members who requested an ecumenical Lent Course with each of our five churches hosting and leading. The Free Church minister and Anglican priest led the sessions their churches hosted; our Roman Catholic friends led theirs themselves – inspirationally – and of the 50 attending 30 of them were Roman Catholics! Over time I have seen some of those church members leading prayers and offering a Homily within Vigil worship.
6. In short, continue being who you are – but be who you are alongside the diverse partnership of sister churches.

Geoffrey Clarke,
Moderator, United Reformed Church, East Midlands Synod,
22 February 2022

Concluding Remarks Part 1: The People of the Diocese

The Church is not an 'it' but an 'us' [P]

- We have spent many months, praying, listening, sharing and discerning, it is now time to respond through action, remembering that that this does not bring synodality to an end, we need to continue to return to this wellspring of the Holy Spirit. "Synodality involves at its heart mutual sharing, sacrifice, and service, as the icon of Christ servant... [The opposite] is not synodality, it's not Church, it's autocracy, as is a diocese micromanaged from Bishop's House!" [P]. No one wants this for our diocese. If we do not place a servant's heart at the centre of parish and diocesan life, ultimately "the synodal process is now over and done for laity, except our own prayers to the Holy Spirit." [P]
- We are called to be "a Church that is more than just about going to Mass on Sundays and receiving Communion (out of a sense of duty or habit) but a Church that is accepting of its failings, breaking out of an isolation method of working and (from the observations of this diocese) it's insistence on clinging onto assets of buildings/property, rather than to utilize, manage and support its most important assets of priest deacons and laity." [P] This means joyfully claiming our baptismal calling to be active agents of the Holy Spirit, to be missionary is not dependant on church teaching changing as one parish submission noted: "Personally, I do not disagree with these matters [married priests and women priests] – in fact we already have many married priests, and the prospect of women exercising the priestly ministry is one I would welcome... However, there are two problems here: first of all this is not going to happen overnight and secondly, it could be argued that all we're doing is 'clericalising' more lay people, which is quite the antithesis of the Pope's thinking, that involves clearly the 'empowerment' of lay people, enabling them to serve the community." [P]
- The role of each member of the faithful is crucial in the mission of the Church. Each and every baptised person has a role to play in carrying on Christ's saving work in our local community. "We need to get some 'oomph' back into our parish life and get more people involved, too many people sit there and say, "I could do it better" – well here is your opportunity!" [P] "The most important thing is the parish level groups who are tasked with guiding blue skies thinking" [P]. We hope each parish has felt the Holy Spirit calling them to a deeper sense of mission and that especially all lay people feel: 'valued for this role- we are not just Father's helper, but undertaking our Christian vocation given in baptism.' [H]
- The running of a parish and its mission to the people of that area should not be cared for by the Parish Priest alone: "I am dreaming of a church where strategic leadership is shared, where decision-making does not depend on the priest to whom you are always subordinate (regardless of skill, experience and wisdom), and where people are paid to share their skills." [P]
- As the synod process moves beyond the diocesan and parish level, we have presented our dreams and concerns. Now it is imperative that, as parish communities, we learn from this experience and commit to the agreed actions that will bring the joy of the Gospel to all peoples. By working with our parish clergy and religious, in making our parishes places where people can truly encounter the life changing love of God the Father, grow in holiness as disciples of Christ, and be Spirit filled missionary disciples. [P]

Concluding Remarks Part 2: Bishop Patrick McKinney



I wish to thank all who have responded to the Synodal Process in our diocese. It was not understood by everyone, and some expressed a little unease about engaging with it. But, that said, many people from across our diocese, from the young children in our primary schools, the young people in the secondary schools, young adults, to a wide range of people within our parishes, chaplaincies, church organisations and religious houses, engaged generously with the process through the use of beautiful hope-filled drawings in the case of the young children, as well as in meetings and written reflections.

People of all ages were very much taken with the notion of dreaming about how the Church, how their parish or chaplaincy, might become more outward-looking, more engaged with those who, for a variety of reasons, no longer come to church, and more missionary in witnessing to Christ in the way we all live our daily lives. People were encouraged to reach out to and listen humbly and with love to those, in their own families or among their friends, who no longer come to church. Attempts were made to engage in the listening process those who have been hurt or feel let down by the Church. This work has only just begun, but we recognise how essential it is that, as a diocese, we continue to find creative ways to listen carefully to people and discern how best to respond.

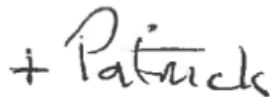
The Synodal Process was grounded in prayer as, throughout the diocese, we distributed the Synod Prayer and prayed for the grace and openness of heart to be guided by the Holy Spirit in our prayerful reflection and in our listening to each other. There are some clear differences at times in what was expressed by people, but I recognise and rejoice in the shared love for and commitment to the Church, and the desire to see us all become more and more committed to the mission that Jesus Christ has entrusted to the whole Church. There is a growing recognition of the sense of co-responsibility there needs to be, between clergy and laity, for the life and mission of the Church. A shared responsibility that is solidly grounded in baptism and in our discipleship, and not just in a desire 'to help Father'. I recognise that this is something that we must all seek to build upon. So, I would want to encourage opportunities across all the parishes for ongoing adult formation in the Catholic Faith, in its Social Teaching, and especially in a deeper appreciation of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. I commend to you the work of our diocesan Director of Adult Formation for Mission, Joe Hopkins, and Paul Bodenham, our Caritas Programme Leader for Social Action, who have gathered together a range of good quality resources.

In our Synodal gathering in Saint Barnabas Cathedral, on the Feast of The Chair of Peter, I was greatly encouraged by the participation of some ecumenical representatives and by the number of practical initiatives that were being proposed by parishes. These initiatives are clearly an expression of a strong desire by parishes to be more engaged with the wider

community and to put our faith into action. As the Preparatory Synod Document reminded us, the purpose of this Synod is not to produce more documents. "Rather it is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from each other, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission." I look forward to gathering again in the Cathedral after Pentecost, on the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, with parish representatives and others to hear how these initiatives are developing.

'Unless the Lord build the house, in vain do its builders labour' (Psalm 127). I am heartened that in the submissions to this Diocesan Synod Report there is a clear recognition of our personal and collective need to keep Christ, through prayer and reflection upon the scriptures, at the centre of everything we try to do: 'without me you can do nothing' (John 15:5).

Let me end by expressing my gratitude to Father David Cain and Joe Hopkins, our diocesan Synod Leads, for their hard work and great care in compiling all the submissions into this Report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Patrick". The plus sign is positioned to the left of the name, and the signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick McKinney
Bishop of Nottingham
8th April 2022



www.dioceseofnottingham.uk