

Walking Together

Synodal Update for the Diocese of Plymouth



Welcome to the fifth of our Walking Together Updates

It has been great to see so many people participating in this journey of discernment and reflection. We have already received over 700 different contributions during the listening phase. We would like to thank all those who have participated in or facilitated meetings or sent through individual feedback. - Canon John Deeny and Deborah Fisher—Diocesan Co-Contacts

What are the emerging themes?

A whole host of issues have been discussed – people's views on the structures of the Church, how we walk together as a People of God; how we encounter others and reach out; how we communicate; how we practice our faith; the role of Priests and Laity; the importance of the youth; inclusion and diversity; tradition and modernity; gender issues; LGBTQ+; safeguarding and abuse; leadership and Mission. The listening journey has highlighted many different points of view on all these issues but there has been an almost universal welcome for the process of Synodality and a hope that we can continue to walk together, listening to each other and the Holy Spirit and engaging in dialogue to strengthen the Mission of the Church.

We Are Here to Help

We are keen to support anyone who has shared a distressing or difficult personal experience regardless of where and when it happened. Our Diocesan safeguarding team are always happy to speak to anyone and talk over tricky and painful issues. Our team can be contacted on 01364 645430 or email safeguarding@prcdtr.org.uk. Any contact will be treated as confidential in line with best safeguarding practice. If someone in your parish has shared anything that causes you any distress or concern, then you can report this to our safeguarding team as above or to your Parish Safeguarding Rep.

Alternatively in all cases contact can be made with Safe Spaces [Safe Spaces England and wales](#) on the national helpline 0300 3031056 or email safespaces@victimssupport.org.uk. This is a national confidential service to help those who have experienced church-related abuse of any kind.

Listen with the ear of your heart

Listen with the ear of your heart and hear the voice of God, calling us to respond creatively and share the gifts we have.

Brothers and sisters, we are all one family, building God's Kingdom here on earth today.

Living the message of the Gospel in our lives, we must strengthen one another in faith.

Sow the seeds of faith, hope and love: what you plant will yield abundant fruit.

Work for peace and justice, freedom for all; then shall the whole world live in harmony.

Whatsoever you have done unto the least of these, in the same way you have done unto me.

Eat this bread and drink this cup in memory of me. When you gather in my name, I am there.

*Benedictine Monks of Weston Priory
USA*

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 it's branches.



The Pre-Synodal Events

We organised two pre-synodal events – one in Poole and one in Plymouth – to enable as many people as possible to attend. We are particularly grateful to those who made long journeys in order to participate. Bishop Mark attended both events, along with members of the Synodal working group, to hear first-hand from over 100 people about our Synodal journey so far and what we can learn both about the process and also about the key themes and issues that have arisen.

In his reflection, Bishop Mark said *'At the heart of what we are doing today is about a miraculous catch of fish – that's why we are here – it's what being a Christian is all about. There is in some sense the truth that we have each been caught by the Lord. We have been brought into His net – the life of the Church, in which we receive His life, and we want to help to bring others into this reality too. That is what is at the heart of being a Synodal Church. Fishing – the Mission – is at the heart of what we are doing.'*

We are on the road together, but we are not heading nowhere. All of us are creatures of God, made in his image and likeness, and that is true of every human person. That's one of the reasons why listening is at the heart of this Synodal process – a very deep and profound listening which is as extensive as possible. All those meetings, all those written submissions – what is at the heart of that is patient and attentive listening, which of course must go on. And the reason that we want to listen is because we see in all people the likeness of the Creator.' (The full recording can be heard [here](#))

We are still reviewing the feedback from the two events as well as all the other information shared with us throughout this listening journey to enable the working group to discern what is submitted to the next phase of listening at the level of the Bishops' Conference. Members of the working group, along with Bishop Mark have also been invited to a national meeting in early June to contribute to the national synthesis, so plenty of opportunity to ensure that our listening journey is part of that final document submitted by the Church in England and Wales

What will happen next?

The Diocesan working group will be meeting at the end of March/early April to finalise our Diocesan synthesis for submission to Bishop Mark. The working group consists of 10 people, clergy and lay, men and women. The aim of this diverse group will be to fairly reflect everything that has been shared with us. Some people expressed concern that the synthesis would be 'censored' to exclude more sensitive or critical comments. The structure of the final synthesis will include both the joys and the pains expressed during the process to mirror the breadth of views shared during this journey. Bishop Mark will also contribute his reflections.

This isn't the end of the process and people will be invited to reflect on the Diocesan synthesis and consider what it means for their local context and how we can continue the journey together. There will be more information in our next newsletter about next steps at Diocesan level. We know that many parishes are already taking forward new initiatives – do share your plans and ideas as we would love to hear them.

Any questions or comments please email Synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk

