

# A Synodal Church

Laity, Pastors and Bishop of Rome Walking Together  
The Local Level



Listening Church

*Christus Vivit*

*Make your voices heard*



POPE FRANCIS



CHRISTUS VIVIT  
Christ is Alive



Apostolic Exhortation  
to Young People and to the Entire People of God

## Synod of Bishops

- Preliminary consultation with many including the laity
- Presence of observers (religious and laity)
- Presence of “experts” (religious and laity)
- Voting restricted to bishops/heads of religious orders
- The results of the Synod are advisory.
- Results of the Synod presented to the Pope and he produces the final document



## Synodality and the National Church

- Synods at the national level
- Australia
- Germany

Australia



**Plenary Council 2020**  
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

Australian Church

**Plenary Council 2020:  
Listen To What The Spirit Is Saying...**

**Phase I: Listening and Dialogue**

More than 222,000 people participated in Phase I: Listening and Dialogue, contributing 17,457 submissions. The voices of the faithful help all of us to understand something of the historical experience and the current reality of the Catholic Church in Australia. This gathered data also reveals some deeper hopes and questions, and the diverse yearnings, that we are now challenged to consider together.



Australian Church  
**Plenary Council 2020:**  
**Listen To What The Spirit Is Saying...**

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•**Phase II: Listening and Discernment**

Catholics all over Australia continue to participate in Writing and Discernment sessions, discerning on the submissions with prayerful hearts and minds. These responses make their way to our Writing and Discernment Groups via our website portal, who are drafting thematic papers towards making the agenda for Assembly 1.

Australian Church  
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**Towards Assembly 1**

With the calling of the delegates, we begin to work towards Assembly 1 of the Plenary Council in earnest. While Discernment continues across the country, delegates will undergo formation and be sent documents in advance.

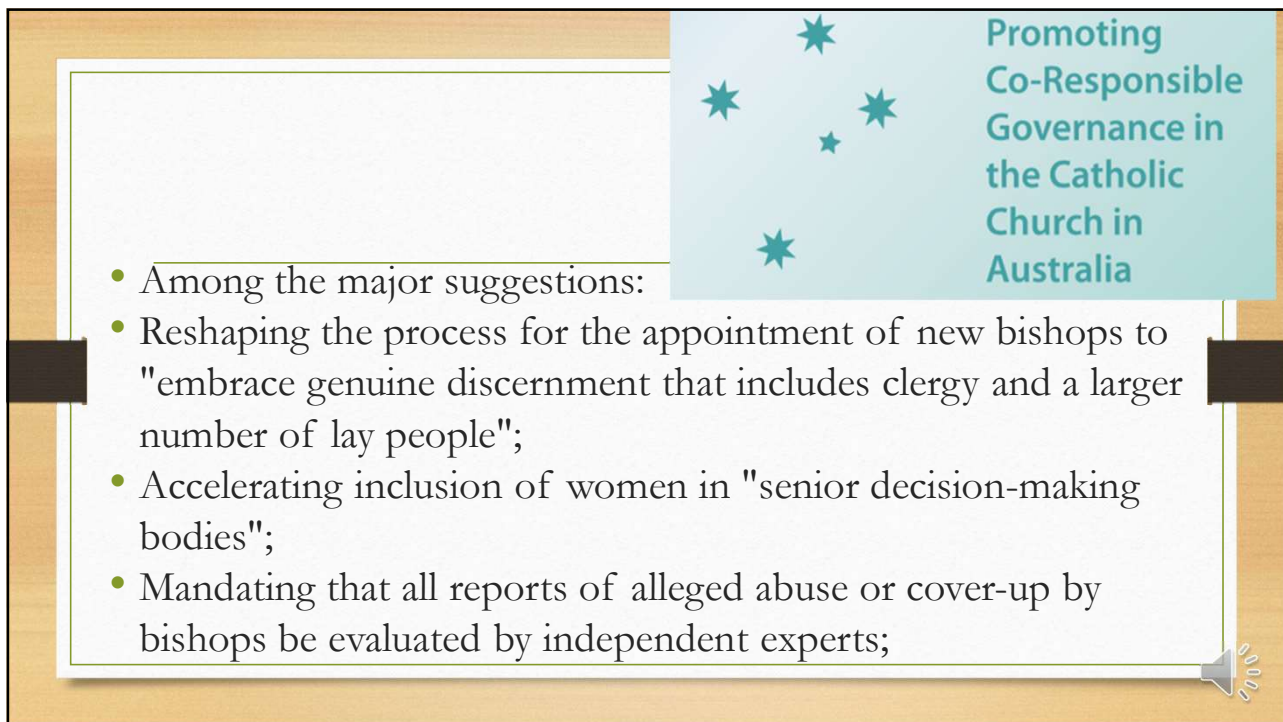
On March 23, we announced more than 250 delegates for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, including delegates nominated by dioceses, eparchies, ordinariates and a personal prelate. The delegates will represent those local churches at the celebration of the Council over two assemblies – originally planned for Adelaide in October 2020 and in Sydney in mid-2021.

A special review on the governance and management of Catholic dioceses and parishes in Australia outlines a way to discern a synodal path as a new practice of church governance.

### Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia

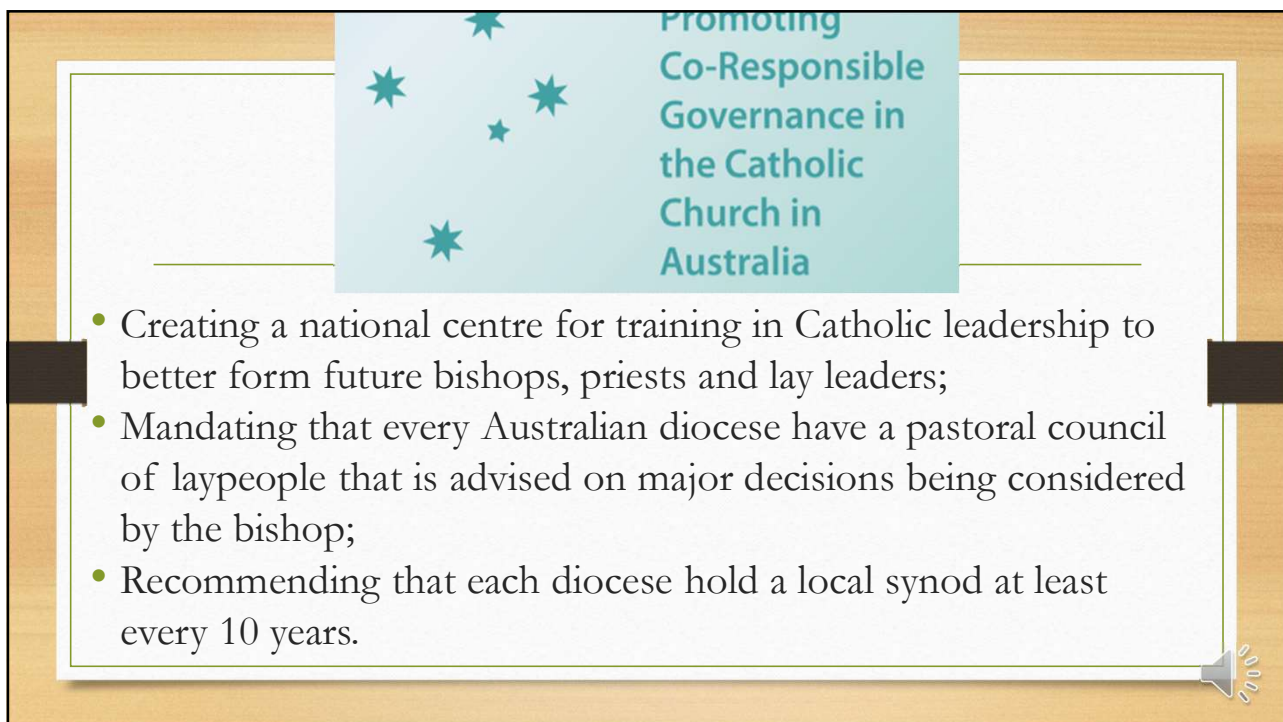
- Special report contains recommendations in areas where bishops, religious leaders, parish priests and lay leaders can together implement changes and in a spirit of co-responsibility.

- In a section on "Synodality as a framework for exercising co-responsibility," for example, the review highlights that while the diocesan bishop holds all the legislative, executive and judicial power to govern his diocese, he does not exercise this power alone but in cooperation with clergy and laity in his diocese.
- It says the failure to utilize the knowledge, skill and expertise of lay women and men has also been a significant contributor to poor past governance practices.
- Recommendations indicate certain priorities such as a more central role for women in church leadership, and for lay Catholics generally.



Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia

- Among the major suggestions:
- Reshaping the process for the appointment of new bishops to "embrace genuine discernment that includes clergy and a larger number of lay people";
- Accelerating inclusion of women in "senior decision-making bodies";
- Mandating that all reports of alleged abuse or cover-up by bishops be evaluated by independent experts;



Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia

- Creating a national centre for training in Catholic leadership to better form future bishops, priests and lay leaders;
- Mandating that every Australian diocese have a pastoral council of laypeople that is advised on major decisions being considered by the bishop;
- Recommending that each diocese hold a local synod at least every 10 years.



## German Synod

The Gospel message has been 'obscured and even terribly damaged' by the clerical sexual abuse of minors.



## German Synod

The two-year German "synodal procedure" for church reform was officially launched on the first Sunday of Advent. (2019)



## German Synod

- Four synodal procedure forums
  - “power and checks and balances”,
  - “sexual morality”,
  - “the priestly lifestyle”
  - “women’s place in the Church”



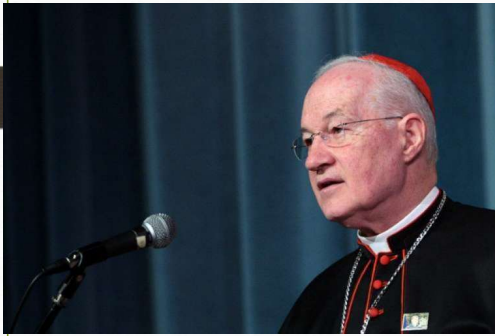
## German Synod

- The German bishops said the process would end with a series of “binding” votes -- raising concerns at the Vatican that the resolutions might challenge Church teaching and discipline





## German Synod



- In a Sept. 4 letter addressed to Marx, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, head of the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops, said that plans for a Synodal Assembly must conform to guidelines issued by Pope Francis in June, especially that a synod in Germany could not act to change universal Church teaching or discipline.

## First Assembly of German Synod

- For a majority of the 230 participants, the German synodal procedure's first work session in Frankfurt from 30 January-1 February began positively.
- However, a small conservative minority around Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne has spoken of an attempt to establish "a kind of Protestant Church Parliament".



The president of the German bishops' conference has called for a synod in Rome that would discuss resolutions of the German "synodal process" at the level of the universal Church.

- "What arises synodally must also be clarified and answered synodally," Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg said, explaining he was "very much in favour of transporting to Rome, to the level of the whole Church, the insights and decisions that we garner from the Synodal Process - also with regard to [the role of] women and ecclesial ministry."



## The Three Levels of Synodality

- In theory, synodality exists at three levels: the universal (for the entire Catholic Church),
- the regional (national, continental, or sub-continental) and
- the local (diocesan or parish).





## Synodality and the Local Church Learning from the Early Church

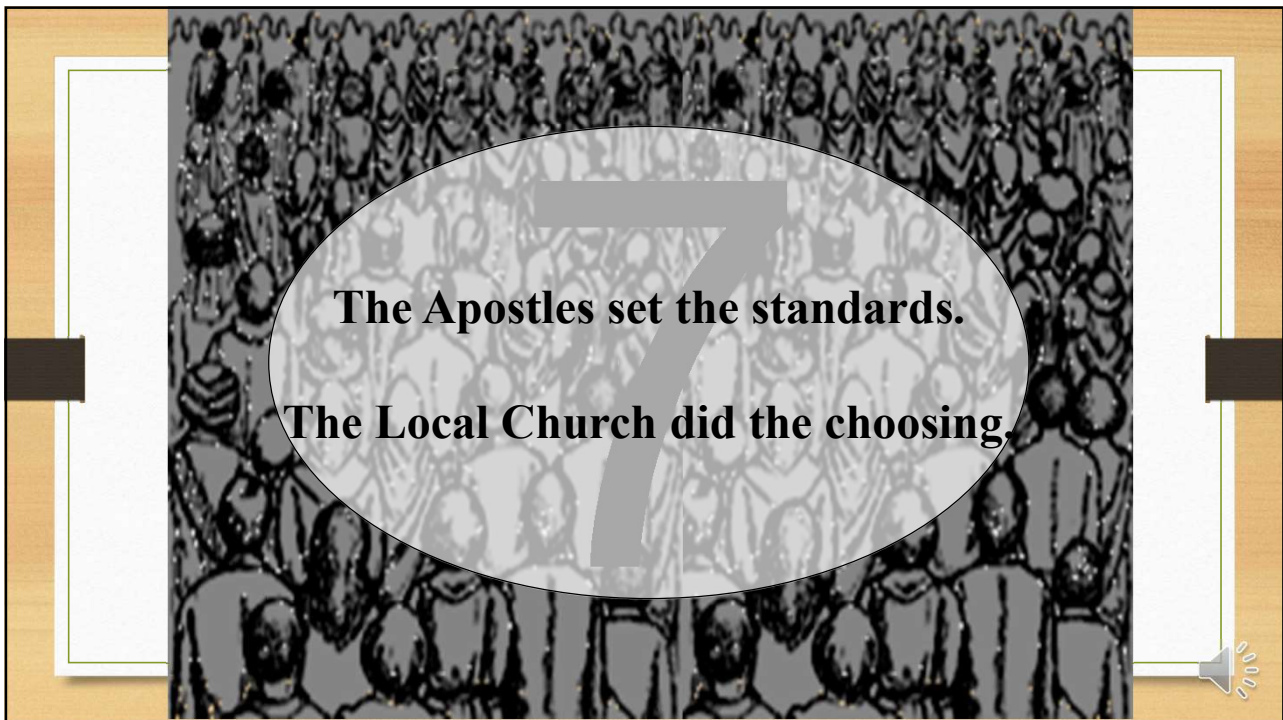


## The Hellenists and Hebrews

- <sup>2</sup> And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said,
- “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables.
- <sup>3</sup> Therefore, friends, **select from among yourselves** seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task,
- <sup>4</sup> while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.”







## The Hellenists and Hebrews

- <sup>5</sup> "What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch."

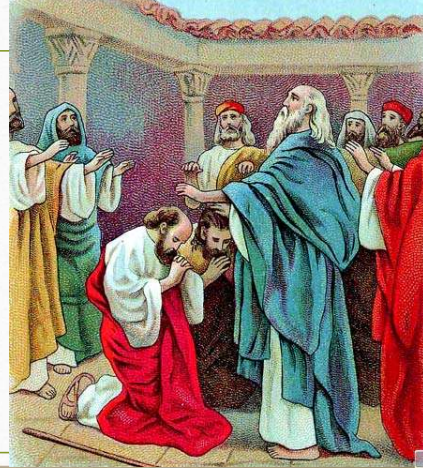
...seven men of good repute full of the Spirit and of wisdom...

Parmenas Nicolas Philip Stephen Timon Nicanor Procorus

## Church in Antioch

### Barnabas and Saul Commissioned Acts 13:1

- 13** Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers...<sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."<sup>3</sup> Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.





**Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.**

**Acts 14:23**



## **A Biblical Eldership**

1. In every congregation – a plural number appointed (never just one)
2. Each congregation was autonomous
3. Paul appointed elders “in every church”

**Acts 14:23**





## Returning to Antioch

- 14; 26 They sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.
- 27 **On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.**



## Appointing Elders Titus

- 5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.
- 6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.
- 9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

## Didache late 1<sup>st</sup> century Handbook of Christian Discipleship

### DIDACHE FIRST CENTURY DISCIPLESHIP

- **15:1 Appoint for yourselves therefore overseers and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and do not love of money, and who are true and approved;**

## Synodality and the Local Church

- Leaders of each local church came from within the community of that church
- Leaders were either appointed from within the community or, in some cases, the community itself elected its own leaders



## Acts 14:28 – 15:2

- Not everyone was pleased with the success of Paul and Barnabas' 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey

Paul and Barnabas have baptised Gentiles in Cyprus, Perga, Lystra and Derbe (Asia Minor)

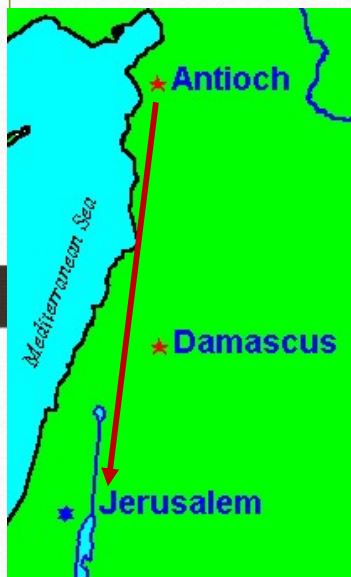




## ACTS 15

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15 Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”



<sup>2</sup> And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders.

<sup>3</sup> So they were sent on their way by the church,

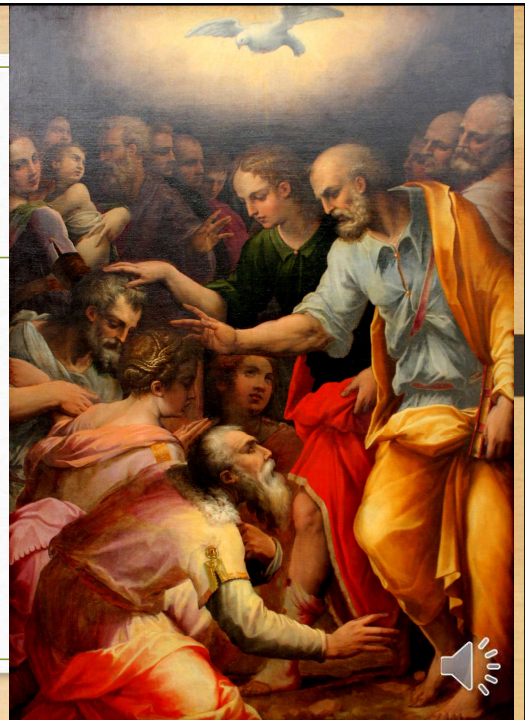
**(Acts 8:5) Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.**

They believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.



## Peter and John in Samaria

- 8:4 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. <sup>15</sup> When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.





## The Three Levels of Synodality

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## INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

- **CHAPTER 1 SYNODALITY IN SCRIPTURE, IN TRADITION AND IN HISTORY**
- **CHAPTER 2 TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF SYNODALITY**
- **CHAPTER 3 IMPLEMENTING SYNODALITY: SYNODAL SUBJECTS, STRUCTURES, PROCESS AND EVENTS**
- **CHAPTER 4 CONVERSION TO RENEW SYNODALITY**



## INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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- The participation of **"all"** is put in motion through *consultation* in the process of preparing the Synod, with the aim of reaching all the voices that are an expression of the People of God in the local Church.
- Those who take part in Assemblies or Synods *ex officio*, and those who are elected or are appointed by the Bishop are the **"some"** whose task it is to *celebrate* the Diocesan Synod or Eparchial Assembly.
- It is essential that, taken as a whole, the participants give a meaningful and balanced image of the local Church, reflecting different vocations, ministries, charisms, competencies, social status and geographical origin.

## INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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**80.** In the local Church, it is laid down that there should be various permanent organisms whose task it is to assist the ministry of the Bishop in various ways in his ordinary pastoral leadership of the Diocese

Vatican Council II stipulated that the Council of Priests and the Diocesan Pastoral Council be set up as permanent bodies for the exercise and promotion of communion and synodality.

## INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

84. In the parish there are two structures which have a synodal character: the **parish pastoral council** and the **financial council**, with lay participation in consultation and pastoral planning.

In this sense it seems necessary to review the canonical norm which at present only suggests that there should be a parish pastoral council and to make it obligatory.

Bringing about an effective synodal dynamic in a local Church also requires that the Diocesan Pastoral Council and parish pastoral councils should work in a co-ordinated way and be appropriately upgraded.

## INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

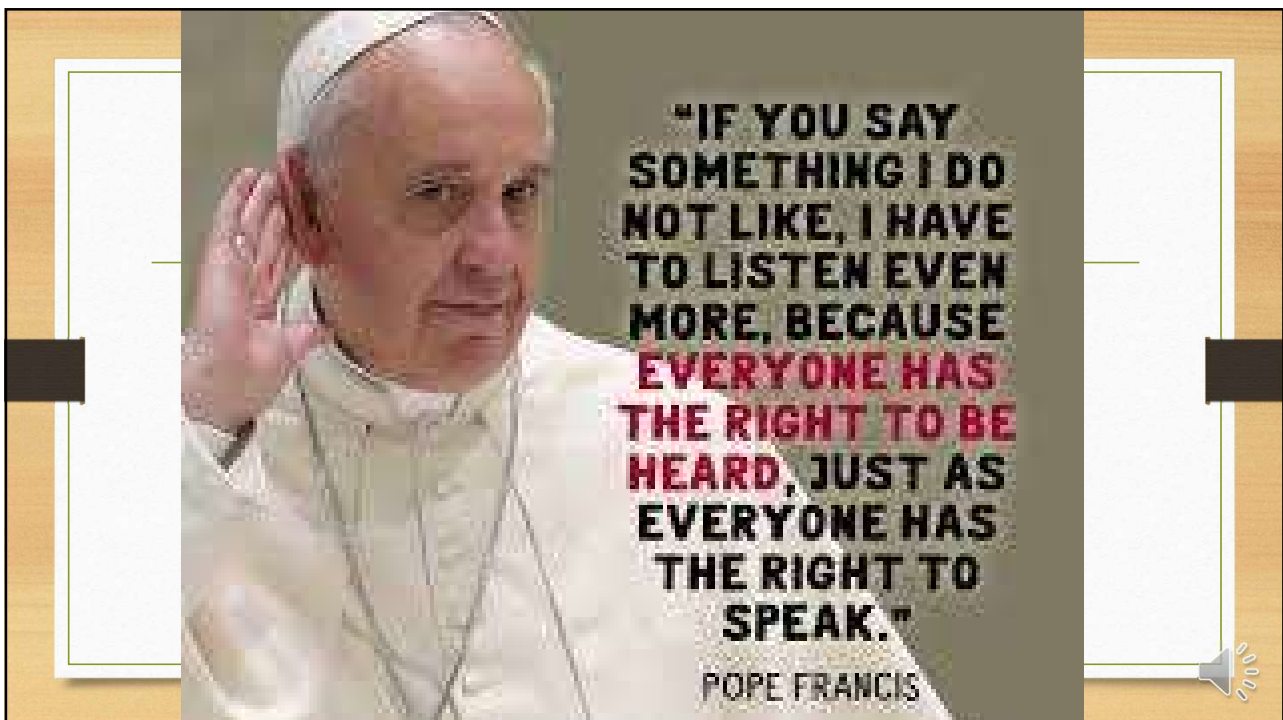


## INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

90. The importance of Episcopal Conferences in promoting the synodal journey of the People of God lies in the fact that "the individual Bishops represent each his own Church".

The development of an effective methodology of participation, with appropriate procedures for consulting the faithful and acceptance of different ecclesial experiences in the phase of working out the pastoral orientations that have come from Episcopal Conferences, with lay people participating as experts, helps to enhance these structures of episcopal collegiality to assist in the implementation of synodality.

Ecclesial conventions organised by Episcopal Conferences, for example the ten-yearly conventions of the Church in Italy, are important for initiating synodal processes a national level.





# **“MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER IN HOPE”**

## **LIMERICK DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN**

**2016-2026**

**Based on the April 2016 Diocesan Synod**



### Diocesan Synods Diocese of Paisley

- **The New Evangelisation & The Role of the Laity**



## Archdiocese of Liverpool

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- Over fifty years after the Second Vatican Council and in view both of the multiple challenges facing us as well as the opportunities that contemporary cultural changes afford us, we are at a significant moment in the history of our Archdiocese. There is clear duty on us to discern carefully together what the Spirit is saying to the Church in the Archdiocese of Liverpool and agree on common goals and actions for the coming years.
- Our Synod Themes are:
  - All called and gifted by God
  - Sharing the mission of Jesus
  - How we pray together
  - Building community, nurturing belonging

## Synodality

### A Means to an End

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- A Church fit for evangelisation



"You can say today we are not living an era of change but a change of era..."

"Before the problems of the church it is not useful to search for solutions in conservatism or fundamentalism, in the restoration of obsolete conduct and forms that no longer have the capacity of being significant culturally..."



Christian doctrine is not a closed system incapable of generating questions, doubts, interrogatives -- but is alive, knows being unsettled, enlivened. It has a face that is not rigid, it has a body that moves and grows, it has a soft flesh: it is called Jesus Christ.





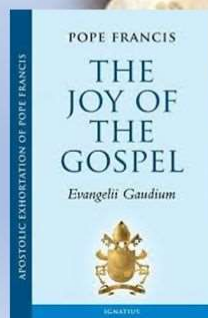


The reform of the church then, and the church is *semper reformanda*... does not end in the umpteenth plan to change structures. It means instead grafting yourself to and rooting yourself in Christ, leaving yourself to be guided by the Spirit -- so that all will be possible with genius and creativity."

~ Pope Francis



"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ...EG 3



• “Our own constantly renewed experience of savouring Christ’s friendship and his message. It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelization unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to”  
*(Evangelii Gaudium, “The Joy of the Gospel,” No. 266).*

## THE QUIET REVOLUTION OF POPE FRANCIS



Faith is above all a personal, intimate encounter with Jesus, and to experience [His] closeness, [His] friendship, [His] Love; only in this way does one learn to know [Him] ever more, and to love and follow [Him] ever more. May this happen to each one of us.

— Pope Benedict XVI —

AZ QUOTES



## Road to Emmaus

Pope Francis views “the account of the disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35) as paradigmatic, a model for our understanding of the Church’s mission”

The synod has its origins in the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who, as they “talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them”.



## Meeting the Risen Christ in the Gospels

- When they’ve poured out everything that’s making them desolate, he starts to explain the scriptures
- This stranger explained to them in a way they had not understood before.





## The Road to Emmaus

- “[W]e need a church capable of walking at people’s side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a church that accompanies them on their journey; a church able to make sense of the ‘night’ contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a church that realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus.”

- Address to the bishops of Brazil 2013

