

# How to be a Synodal Church in Mission?

Take-outs from the Final  
Document:  
“An Informal Reaping of  
the Fruits”



Synodal Pathway 2021-24



Diocese of Westminster



## **Synodality is henceforth to be understood as constitutive of the Church, constitutive of a Church which goes forth in mission**

“Synodality is the walking together of Christians with Christ and towards God’s kingdom, in union with all humanity ... synodality is a constitutive dimension of the Church ... a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary.” (28)

“Synodality and mission are intimately linked: mission illuminates synodality and synodality spurs to mission ... Synodality is not an end in itself. Rather, it serves the mission that Christ entrusted to the Church in the Spirit.” (32)

“Synodality articulates in a symphonic manner the communitarian [all], collegial [some] and personal [one] of each local Church and of the whole Church.” (130)



## **Synodality is, at heart, a spirituality; a spirituality of listening leading to discernment and action**

“Synodal conversion calls each person to enlarge the space of their heart ... Pastoral action cannot be limited to tending to relationships between people who already feel attuned to one another but rather encourage the encounter between all men and women.” (110)

“Synodal assemblies are events that celebrate the union of Christ with His Church through the action of the Spirit.” (27)



## **Conversation in the Spirit is a proven tool**

“Conversation in the Spirit ...enables listening in order to discern ‘what the Spirit is saying to the Churches’ [Rev. 2, 7] ... and has been experienced as a path of renewal that transforms individuals, groups, and the Church.” (45)

“Conversing ‘in the Spirit’ means living the experience of sharing in the light of faith and seeking God’s will in an evangelical atmosphere within which the Holy Spirit’s unmistakable voice can be heard.” (45)





### **Synodality calls for conversion: a conversion of relationships, of processes, and of bonds**

“The synodal process does not conclude with the end of the current Assembly ... but also includes the implementation phase ... The local Churches are asked to continue their daily journey with a synodal methodology of consultation and discernment, identifying concrete ways and formation pathways to bring about a tangible synodal conversion in the various ecclesial contexts (parishes, Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic life, movements of the faithful, dioceses, Episcopal Conferences, groupings of Churches, etc.).” (9)



### **A synodal Church should not be excluding of individuals on account of their marital situation, identity or sexuality**

“What emerged throughout the entire synodal journey ... was the call for a Church with a greater capacity to nurture relationships ... Many participants were delighted ... to be asked to share their thoughts and to be given the opportunity to have their voices heard in the community ... to express the pain of feeling excluded or judged because of their marital status, identity or sexuality.” (50)



### **A synodal Church places the poor at its centre**

“The poor are at the heart of the Church ... The Church .... needs to recognise them as agents of evangelisation.” (19)

“The Church is called to be poor with those who are poor, who often constitute the majority of the faithful, to listen to them, learning together how to recognise the charisms they receive from the Spirit.” (19)



### **The features of a synodal Church shine out in Mary, Mother of the Church**

“We see the features of a synodal, missionary and merciful Church shining in full light in the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, of the Church and of humanity. She is the form of the Church who listens, prays, mediates, dialogues, accompanies, discerns, decides and acts.” (29)





## **At the heart of synodality is the sacrament of baptism**

“The identity of the People of God flows from Baptism .... This identity is lived out as a call to holiness and a sending out in mission.” (15)



## **A synodal approach calls for formation in synodality itself**

“The holy People of God require proper formation so that they can witness to the joy of the Gospel and grow in the practice of synodality ... Synodality implies a profound vocational and missionary awareness.” (141)



## **Formation is needed to help the People of God realise the call of every baptised person to exercise the charism with which they were endowed at baptism**

“In the Christian community, all the Baptised are enriched with gifts to share, each according to his or her vocation and way or condition of life.” (57)

“They ask the Church ... to enable them to feel that they are sent and sustained in mission ... they ask the community to accompany those who, through their witness, have been drawn to the Gospel.” (59)

“Shared synodal formation for all the Baptised constitutes the horizon within which to understand and practise the specific formation required for individual ministries and vocations.” (147)



## **Synodality calls for formation in the faith and in what it means to be missionary disciples**

“The formation required ... needs to explore theological, biblical and spiritual foundations. All the baptised need this formation in witness, holiness and service, which emphasises co-responsibility.” (80)





## **Synodality works out of a vision of co-responsibility of ordained and lay**

“The lay faithful, both men and women, should be given greater opportunities for participation ... in Church discernment processes and all phases of decision-making processes (drafting, making and confirming decisions); (and) greater access ... to positions of responsibility in dioceses and ecclesiastical institutions.” (77)

“In families ... we first learn ... to be co-responsible and accountable.” (35)



## **Decision-making needs to be more participatory**

“A wider distribution of tasks and responsibilities and a more courageous discernment of what properly belongs to the ordained ministry and what can and must be delegated to others will enable each ministry to be exercised in a more spiritually sound and pastorally dynamic manner. This perspective will surely have an impact on decision-making processes, enabling them to have a more clearly synodal character.” (74)

“Formation is needed in order to engage in decision-making processes grounded in ecclesial discernment and which reflect a culture of transparency, accountability and evaluation.” (80)



## **There should be a striving to implement all those roles which Canon Law allows the laity to exercise**

“By virtue of Baptism, women and men have equal dignity as members of the People of God. However, women continue to encounter obstacles in obtaining ... recognition of their charisms ... This Assembly asks for full implementation of all the opportunities already provided for in Canon Law with regard to the role of women, particularly in those places where they remain underutilised.” (60)





## **Women's roles in leadership need to be fostered**

"There is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the Church." (60)



## **Bishops and priests need to listen to laypeople and vice-versa**

"A Bishop's task is to preside over a local Church as a visible principle of unity within it and a bond of communion with all the Churches ... 'the fullness of the sacrament of order is conferred by episcopal consecration' [Lumen Gentium 21] ... he receives the grace and the task of recognising, discerning and bringing together in unity the gifts that the Spirit pours out on individuals and communities." (69)

"It is ... important that ... the Bishop can spend time with the faithful to listen to them as part of his own ongoing discernment of needs ... his ministry is greatly enhanced when, in a truly synodal Church, it is supported by the active participation of all the People of God." (71)



## **What the Synod calls *participatory bodies* must be mandatory**

"Participatory bodies represent one of the most promising areas in which to act for a rapid implementation of the synodal guidelines, bringing about perceptible changes speedily." (103)

"A synodal Church is based upon the existence, efficiency and effective vitality of these participatory bodies ... we insist that they be made mandatory, as was requested at all stages of the synodal process, and that they can fully play their role ... in a manner appropriate to their diverse local contexts." (104)



**Participatory bodies include Parish Pastoral Councils, Diocesan and Parish Finance Councils, Councils of Priests, Diocesan Pastoral Councils, Diocesan Synods**

“The Baptised participate in decision-making, accountability and evaluation processes through institutional structures, primarily through those already provided for the local Church set out in the existing Code of Canon Law ... Diocesan Synod ... Presbyteral Council ... Diocesan Pastoral Council ... Parish Pastoral Council ... Diocesan and Parish Finance Council ... ” (103)

**There needs to develop an ethos of transparency, accountability and evaluation**

“Evaluation ... assists the local Church in learning from experience, adjusting plans of action, determining the outcomes of its decisions in relation to its mission, and remaining attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.” (100)

**The People of God should be more involved in the selection of Bishops**

“The Synodal Assembly desires that the People of God have a greater voice in choosing Bishops.” (70)

**Bishops and priests need to give an explanation if they decide against what they had been party to discerning collectively**

“Those who are consulted ... assume the responsibility of offering their input honestly ... respecting the confidentiality of the information received ... This will enable the pastoral authority to explain how they have taken the consultation into account should the decision differ from the opinions offered.” (93)



- Synodality is “primarily a spiritual disposition ... requir(ing) ... humility, patience and a willingness to forgive and be forgiven”; (43)
- “synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory, missionary and merciful” (28);
- synodality “involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue and community-discernment”; (28)
- it “need(s) accompaniment .... and formation.” (43)

