Dear Canon/Monsignor/Father/Deacon,

As you know the Holy Father has asked the whole church to be involved in and journey together towards the General Assembly of Bishops in 2023. The focus of the Assembly will be, “For a synodal church: Communion, Participation and Mission“ Still without an Archbishop, we have been slow to begin this process in our Archdiocese but we are inviting you and your parish to consider hosting parish synod meetings to consider these three topics. Many parishes have begun this process. Many thanks to them.

If you wish to gather your parish for a meeting, much advice and handouts are available on the internet not least on the Vatican own synodal webpage. [www.synod.va](http://www.synod.va) The heart of our meeting will be listening to the Word of God, then listening to one another, to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying, through each of us. It is important that we try to get people not normally active in our parishes involved. People who have fallen away from Mass, families who have not returned after the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, people on the peripheries of church life. If we are to journey together and embrace renewal we need as many on board as possible.

 We would like your feedback from the parish meetings to be fed into Deanery Synodal Meetings. Maybe two representatives from each parish could meet at a Deanery level. We would need all of this done for April 2022 to collate a Diocesan response. As Pope Francis said, at the 2018 synod on Youth “the purpose of the synod is not to produce more documents but to plant dreams, draw forth prophesies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken the dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts and give strength to our hands”

Enclosed a simple offering of a “Listening Meeting” which you may find useful for parish/group use.



Parish Synodal Meeting.

Participant Ground Rules Active listening

• We listen to what is being said, not focussing on what we will say afterwards

 • We give full attention and presence to the person who is speaking.

• We allow ourselves to be influenced and learn from the other

• We are able to sit with silence

• We have an awareness that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the other person. Speaking from the heart

• We speak about our own experience as we see it and as we live it, but do not impose our judgements on others.

• While each person is speaking, the others listen.

• No one may interrupt the speaker.

 Note Taker Role

The notes will be anonymous. The notes will be formed into one feedback report. This will be sent to the Deanery where the Deanery Group will create a summary of all listening sessions.

**Opening Prayer***(from Second Vatican Council)*

**We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.**

**With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.**

**We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.**

**Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.**

**All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.
Amen.**

**Reflecting on ‘journeying together’**

**Scripture Reading.**

[**Mark 7:31-37**](http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/online-bible/niv/mark/7/) Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it.People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Jesus opens the man’s ears: we pray in silence for the gift of gentle and respectful listening to each other………………………………………………………………….

Reflecting on your experience of the pandemic, have you experienced a journeying together as a parish family?

What strengths did I find in my faith and faith community?

Does your Parish family ‘journey’ with others, including those Catholics who no longer participate in your community, those who are not Catholic, and those experiencing poverty, hardship or exclusion?

How do we foster participation in our parishes journey of faith?

How can we support families whose children leave the faith after the celebration of the Sacraments?

How do we support couples to build Marriages on Jesus Christ?

Break.

**Reflecting on ‘journeying in MIssion’**

 **Mission**: The Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centred on ourselves. Our mission is to witness the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deep missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God’s kingdom. *(Document: For a Synodal Church)*

**Scripture Reading.**

[**Matthew 28:16-20**](http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/online-bible/niv/matthew/28/) Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus sends out his first Apostles and disciples, do you feel any sense of being commissioned and sent?......................................................................

Am I, an intentional disciple?

Am I comfortable in talking about faith to others? At home, at work?

How can our parish be more evangelising?

How can we share the Good News of what our parish/catholic community already does for others?

**Closing Prayer**

**Lord Jesus I give you my hands to do your work**

 **I give you my feet to go your way**

 **I give you my eyes to see as you do**

 **I give you my tongue to speak your words**

**I give you my mind that you may think in me**

 **I give you my spirit that you may pray in me**

**Above all, I give you my heart**

 **that you may love in me your Father and all mankind**

**I give you my whole self that you may grow in me**

**so that it is you Lord Jesus who live and work and pray in me. Amen**

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