

Report on the Three Synodal Meetings
Parish of the Good Shepherd, St Leonards on Sea during Advent 2021

In May 2021 all the R.C. Bishops of the world were contacted by Rome to invite them to appoint a person or team in every Diocese, to lead the first stage of the Synod on Synodality, which opened in October 2021. The Synod is due to run until October 2023. This was to be the local listening stage. All are invited to participate (see abdiocese.org.uk). For our meetings during Advent we used material sent from the diocese, the Preparatory Document and the Handbook of the Synod (Vademecum) both from Rome which can be accessed via the Internet.

What is synodality? SYNOD comes from two Greek words meaning “together” and “ path”. Pope Francis calls synodality “ journeying together”. He says it is an attitude and that listening is central, listening to each other and to the Holy Spirit. He has asked that Catholics meet and discuss these 2 key questions:

1. How is “journeying together” happening in our particular Church?
2. What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”

Week One: Communion.

Those who came to the meetings shared their experiences of being part of the parish community. There was a sense of decline and a feeling, as Catholics, of being downtrodden. The negative impact of the Covid pandemic was mentioned. It was also stated that there’s much good being done in the parish e.g. Fr Míceál visiting the sick, the Faith in the Family group. Personal contact can be maintained via the Internet. A need for being welcoming and for training in listening skills was expressed. There are many who are hurt by the Church’s teaching and feel their voices aren’t heard. There was a consensus that regular family gatherings, such as monthly family masses, would help build up our community.

Week Two: Participation.

Regarding the Liturgy there was a desire expressed for action so that young people could become more involved. The importance of inclusivity was noted, thinking especially of the ethnic and cultural diversity in our parish. Also there was a hope that a Bible Group, the Welcoming Ministry and an Adult Faith Formation Group could be restarted. It was stated that there’s a lack of moral leadership in society and yet whilst society has moved on in matters of equality and diversity the Church has not, and many people feel alienated. Concerns were expressed for those in hospital who may feel isolated and also for the aftercare of prisoners. Regarding dialogue with other Churches there have been some good examples locally of ecumenical efforts. It was felt that personal contact is vital to promote participation in the parish community.

Week Three: Mission

The issue of Catholic education was raised. It was felt that there’s a real need for teaching of the Catholic Faith, for catechesis. Moving forward we need to listen to the Holy Spirit. What is our mission? To build up God’s kingdom here on earth. On the whole it was felt that we can exercise our gifts within the parish but that sometimes more encouragement would be helpful. United with all peoples and all of creation we are called to “ journey together”.

For information about the monthly Synodal Action Group please contact Margaret at m.guyeland@yahoo.com

The Synod Action Group will hold its first meeting of 2022 on Saturday, 29th January from 10.45 to 12 noon in the Holy Redeemer Church hall. Do come along! All welcome. For more information contact Margaret at m.guyeland@yahoo.com