

## **Summary of Synodal Process Conference, held at St Mary's Church in Poole, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2022.**

As you can see from the programme supplied by the Diocese, much time was set aside for prayer, particularly and most appropriately, to the Holy Spirit for assistance in our purpose for the day, and for the cessation of the invasion of Ukraine.

I was asked to read out the purpose of the Synod, as follows:

*“The purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but “to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to be nourished, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands””.*

About 45 people were present. During the morning, people from various parishes had been selected to speak and their main topics were:

- a) the exclusion of women from church activities, which seemed dominated by men: habits of inappropriate speech and semantics;
- b) the urgent need for catechesis and formation for adults.
- c) the formation and equipping of parish leaders and participators.

All spoke with passion about their topics.

Mary and I were together at a table/ working group, with Bishop emeritus Christopher Budd, Joe Harrison, Deacon Jonathan from Sherborne and a young priest from our host church, Father James.

Our afternoon task was to discuss “journeying together” with some guiding questions.

Our group felt that the following topics were of particular relevance:

- d) The importance of the welcomer;
- e) The use of language and semantics;

f) Restoring a Christian understanding of leadership;

g) Continuous review as part of the Synodal process.

It was explained that our diocese had received more than 500 feedback sheets from parishes, individuals and groups so far, which, together with the outcomes of this consultation day and those of the similar day being held in Plymouth on 12<sup>th</sup> March, will be synthesised into a 10 page document, to be submitted to the Bishops' Conference for England & Wales. All dioceses' contributions will be again synthesised into a 10 page document, to be submitted to the European Conference of Bishops, who will again synthesise all documents into a 10 page document for submission to the Holy Father, along with those from other regions of the world.

It occurred to me that the organisation "Catholic Voices" could be better known, who have had training in speaking to the media on Catholic topics at appropriate times, ever since the visit of Pope Benedict to the UK.

Bishop Mark was present and involved throughout the day.

The Synod Prayer reads:

*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 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.*

Reported by tony Moore. Our Lady's, Marnhull & St Benedict's, Gillingham.