The Parishes of St. Michael, Hathersage and Our Lady of Sorrows, Bamford

YOUR INVITATION TO A JOURNEY: SYNOD 2023

INTRODUCTION

Two things presently dominate our lives: COVID 19 and Climate Change/COP26. Each of these, in different ways, has caused us to take stock of our lives and how we live them. Each presents us with very real challenges about our health, about our social, economic, environmental situations and so on and often leaves us worried, confused and divided in our opinions.

But each also offers us opportunities to reflect, to pray and to act within our own lives and within our communities. Most importantly, as individuals and collectively we have been given a wake-up call about our future and that of our children and our children’s children.

It is in this environment that another call comes: to get involved in a process about a “synodal” Church. Put simply, Pope Francis has asked us to “walk or journey together” (for this is what synod, synodality and synodal mean) and to listen, take stock and share our views or concerns with each other in our parishes and with our Diocese and our Bishop.

NOT JUST ANOTHER SYNOD

There have been many synods over the years, some with positive outcomes, others sunk without trace. Most recently there have been synods on marriage, the family, young people, the Amazon – each with a single theme or issue at its heart. This synod is different. This is not just Bishops and a few invited guests getting together but an invitation to the whole people of God to get involved in the future of their Church.

THE PROCESS

We are asked simply to come together to think about how we can live a life of faith; what the obstacles or challenges to this might be; what strengths we might draw on from within our own parishes and Church

organisations. Each one of us is asked to participate in whatever way we are able. This can be done through our parish (and our two parishes have come together for this purpose) by attending meetings, responding in writing with our views and about our experiences or simply by praying for a successful synod. We hope that this opportunity to talk, to listen and to look outside ourselves into the wider community will be welcomed by our parishioners.

Pope Francis has posed a number of questions, and these are attached in the Annex. Also included are other questions that might help to concentrate our minds as we start the synodal process. None of these are prescriptive – we can range as far as we wish but they may help to make the process less daunting.

We are asked to make this consultation as wide as possible. If you know people who no longer attend Mass or who are interested in the Church more generally, please feel free to share this information with them and invite them to respond to you, to our Parish Priest or directly to the Diocese at synod@hallam-diocese.com or to come along to a meeting.

Our first meeting will be held on **Tuesday 30 November at 10.45 (after Mass) at Bamford.**

THE TIMETABLE

Parishes have been asked by the Diocesan Working Group to record and deliver responses by 17 April 2022. Our Bishop will then bring these together to present to the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales by June 2022. And in October 2023 Pope Francis will call the Bishops to Rome to discuss the outcome of the consultation.

This note has been prepared by Fr John Metcalf PP and the parish representatives: Maria Kenyon, Maeve Geraghty and Steve Brennan. Don’t hesitate to ask for more information.

 ANNEX

HELPFUL (we hope!) QUESTIONS

These are the questions Pope Francis has asked us to consider:

* What are your experiences of “journeying together” in your diocese, your parish, for you personally?
* What joys, difficulties have you encountered? (The Holy Spirit is in all those experiences).
* What is the Holy Spirit saying to you through those experiences?
* And what steps is the Holy Spirit inviting you to take in order for the Church to grow as a synodal Church?

And these are the more specific topic areas and questions that have been devised to help us to contribute to the synodal journey:

Companions on our journey

Who are these? Are there others (perhaps people we used to know within the parish) who we have neglected or forgotten? How welcome do we make visitors and new parishioners feel?

Listening

Do we really listen to each other? Do we respect other people’s views within the Church?

Do we listen and respond to the views of others outside the Church about the Church?

Celebrating

Are we inspired by the liturgy? Does it help us to pray and become involved in the work of the Church? If not, what can we do?

Taking forward the work of the Church

What do we think is our purpose as members of our parish/the universal Church? What would help us to be more effective?

What impact does our parish have locally? Do we contribute to this?

Relationships with other Christians and other faith groups

How involved are we? Do we listen? Do we share experiences and become enriched by these?

Understanding (“Discerning” a favourite word in theological circles) and decision making

Are we growing in our knowledge about our Church? Do we feel involved? Are our talents and experiences recognised and put to good purpose? Is decision making in our parish transparent? If not, how could this be changed?

Self-development and training

What help do we need to become more effective as members of the parish community? Are we confident about informing others about the Church? How can we make sure that this journey together will continue beyond the synod?

Use these questions if they are helpful. Respond in your own way as you prefer. All your thoughts, views, opinions are entirely valid. You can remain anonymous if you wish.

You might also find it helpful to look at two documents, available on-line at synod@hallam-diocese.com (or just Google titles):

* Synod Preparatory Document for a Synodal Church - Communion, Participation and Mission
* Vademecum for the Synod on a Synodal Church