

Diocese of Kilmore

**Report on the Continental stage
of the Synodality process**

Diocese of Kilmore Synodality Committee

The following response is based on our reading and reflection of:

- **Kilmore Synodal Synthesis Document.**
- **Synthesis of the Consultation in Ireland for the Diocesan Stage of the Universal Synod 2021-2023.**
- **Enlarge the Space of your tent (IS 54:2) Working Document for the Continental Stage.**

A. New illuminating experiences

1. There was a clear positive sense that the Working Document for the Continental Stage resonated with the Irish and Diocesan ones. It was very apparent that the issues we face in our Diocese and Country are repeated worldwide. It was noted that the Working Document for the Continental Stage contained some direct references to the Irish one, emphasizing that the Irish synthesis was read and that the Irish peoples' voices were relevant and heard. The feedback highlighted that those who participated in the discussions at the Diocesan, National, and Universal levels were happy to have the opportunity to partake and felt privileged to be a part of what is understood to be a very significant historical event in the life of the Church.
2. There was a strong call throughout all the documents for the Church to be more inclusive. There is a deep sadness at the exclusion of women in the Church. This exclusion was illuminated in the Universal Document as women came in under the heading of 'Neglected and Excluded' groups. It was evident that women's gifts were not recognized even though they were the most active in Church life. There was a strong sense that the people's voice very powerfully affirmed Pope Francis's thoughts on communion, participation and mission themes. It was also noted that the challenge of getting youth involvement is an issue not just in Ireland but throughout the world.
3. The Working Document for the Continental Stage communicated that the Universal Church is much bigger than our national Church. It was stronger on issues such as ecumenism and the environment.
4. There were different views expressed on the spirituality of the continental syntheses. Some pointed to its self-understanding as the Spirit-led voice of the people, and were delighted with the acknowledgement of this in the Working Document for the Continental Stage. Another voice questioned whether it was sufficiently Spirit led.

B. Challenges to address

- 1 It was frustrating that the issues that were highlighted in all the documents were not new ones. Many of these have already been discussed in our Diocese and Country for many years but to no avail. There is a strong call for action as we are now at a 'crisis' point, and it is not an option to stand back at this stage. The challenge is discerning what actions to take to move us towards a more synodal church while addressing the issues highlighted in our Diocesan report.
- 2 There was a sense among some that people have not understood their baptismal calling and that Baptismal theology had not been developed. This has resulted in people not feeling that they have to play an active role in their Church. The challenge we face now is addressing this and developing people's understanding of their calling. However, another viewpoint expressed here referenced the Vatican's pre-synodal document which distinguished between the disciples and the 'crowd', making space for both in today's church.
- 3 Another challenge is that many of our Clergy are unsure and confused about their role in a synodal church. There is no clear roadmap, and while some priests can embrace change, others are reluctant to move forward and allow the laity to take on a more active role. There is also the need to enable the Clergy to have a 'voice' and express their thoughts and concerns honestly and freely. It was felt that in times past, this was not the case. For some priests and laity, the ingrained sense of the role and identity of the priest was changing. This changing role is a cause of disquiet and anxiety for many.

C Priorities and calls to action

1 Local Diocese/Community

- To take appropriate action on the feedback of our Diocese

a. The need to link with youth

There is a strong sense that young people across the Diocese are calling for change within the Church. There is a greater demand for church leaders to become more linked in with issues that are important to our young people.

b. Greater inclusivity

The call for greater inclusivity came across in the social groups, very strongly in the youth consultation, and was also echoed in the feedback from PPCs.

c. Desire for a church that is close to the life concerns of people

The word connection came across strongly when people were reflecting on church. There is a desire for a church that speaks the language of the people and reflects their lives in its liturgies.

d. The importance of faith

Despite all the cultural changes in both rural and urban Ireland, and despite the great reduction in the status of the church, the experience of the Christian faith for many people continues to be a positive one. Our call in the Kilmore Diocese is to take heart from this message and to build upon and deepen this faith by nourishing it with meaningful prayer opportunities such as Lectio Divina and other enriching faith development initiatives. What gives us hope is how important FAITH is to people.

- To carefully and strategically plan for the coming year.
- Continue to consider the amalgamation of parishes and its implications.
- Model Synodality through all our groups – Diocesan Pastoral Council, Parish Pastoral Groups, etc
- Consider the model of applied theology in adult education initiatives.
- To deliver Scripture-based programmes in parishes to enable people to gather around to listen to the word of God and spend time in silence. These sessions will be prayer-led and Spirit-led
- To engage the skills and wisdom of ex-priests still living in the Diocese. They have plenty to offer in terms of their time, gifts, knowledge and desire to play an active role in Diocesan life
- To re-educate people on the role and function of the Holy Spirit. Many have not heard of the Holy Spirit since confirmation.
- Address the healthcare needs of clergy with the assistance of a healthcare support person.

2 Catholic Church in Ireland

- To conduct our own review of the abuse scandals and their cover-up as a step towards recovering credibility

- To put in place synodal structures at national and diocesan levels to model best-practice for local level
- To provide training in a synodal way of working for people and priests – this involves a spirituality of synodality, but also practical people skills.

3 The Universal Church

- Continue with prayerful listening, the openness to the Holy Spirit and establish synodal structures.
- Renewal of the language of the liturgy
- Pro-actively address abuse issue as above.