

ARCHBISHOP *of* CARDIFF
—
ARCHESGOB CAERDYDD



BISHOP *of* MENEVIA
—
ESGOB MYNYW

Response to the Document of the Continental Stage from Archbishop Mark O'Toole, in Cardiff and Menevia.

The DCS was sent to all in both the Archdiocese of Cardiff and the Diocese of Menevia, inviting clergy, parishes and parishioners to send responses direct to me on the reflection questions posed. I also invited responses through the coordinators in each Diocese for the Synod process (Fr John Patrick Thomas in Menevia and Madeleine Walters in Cardiff). I am grateful for the work they have done, and the fidelity they have shown to the process. Both gave responses through the networks and teams they had built up during the Diocesan processes, involving the participation of circa 10 parishes in Cardiff and 7 parishes in Menevia, as well as responses from some religious communities and individuals. Some of these also sent their responses direct to me and, in addition, I received 22 responses from individuals.

The numbers of parishioners responding to the DCS is extremely small, smaller than in the Diocesan process, amounting to less than 5% of the Church-going Catholic population. There were no responses from non-Catholics, or groups on the margins, as hoped for at the beginning of this Synodal process. The preparatory documents of the Synod make it clear that it is especially important to listen attentively to this voice of God's holy people. (See Documents of the Synodal Process, General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops), within a prayerful setting. The limited participation of practising Catholics, and of clergy, in the process, despite strong encouragement, is a concern. Whilst it is important to reflect the areas that those who participated raised, it is difficult to judge whether these represent a 'wide spread' summary of the whole people of God, in Cardiff and Menevia. I note that the title of the Synod, is "For a Diocesan Synod.....". This suggests that this active listening process is only at its very beginnings, and there is still a long way to go, to listen to, and engage, more fully.

Archbishop's House, 41/43 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9HD | Tŷ'r Archesgob, 41/43 Heol y Gadeirlan, Caerdydd, CF11 9HD

Tel / Ffôn: (029) 2022 0411 Fax / Ffacs: (029) 2037 9036 Email / E-bost: archbishop@rcadc.org

www.rcadc.org [@Cardiff.Archdiocese](https://www.facebook.com/Cardiff.Archdiocese) [@CatholicCardiff](https://twitter.com/CatholicCardiff) [cardiff.archdiocese](https://www.instagram.com/cardiff.archdiocese)

It is also important to highlight that the centrality of the Synodal journey in the life of the Church, following the Second Vatican Council, does not imply that it is the people of God who determine the path of the Church. In the Catholic Church, our walking together is not a parliament or a democratic process. ‘Synod’ and ‘Synodality’ carry a certain history in our English-speaking world given the experience in other Churches. We need to continually purify these approaches to Synodality, in our own discussions and reflection, to discover afresh a fully Catholic understanding. It is true that there were contributions from clergy in our dioceses. Yet to this part of the process there must be added “the pastors' task of discernment” (See Interview with Cardinal Grech, May 2021, General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops). From what the people of God say, the pastors must grasp what the Spirit wants to say to the Church. In responding to the DCS, and offering this to the global reflection, there is a need to continuously allow an interplay between the “voice of the people of God” and “the discernment of the pastors”. I believe we are still only at a very early stage of rediscovering this interaction in the Catholic Church. It requires more patience and attentive listening, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, moving forward. But it is important for us to note, at this point, that it is in listening to the people of God that discernment begins. This has been our experience.

From those we have heard from, most expressed their gratitude for being able to have their say. Whilst the image of “the tent” was appreciated by most, the DCS text itself was regarded as too complex, and too full of jargon. As one respondent wrote to me, *“We are simple folk, like the fishermen, tent makers and taxmen were. Give it to us in simple language. Open the door.....”*

Generally, in responses, there seems to have been more of a focus on “The Church of the Lord”, rather than on “The Lord of the Church”. There is a challenge here for us, for the future - to bring a sense of engagement with those who do not attend Church, and always placing before ourselves and others, the person of Jesus Christ. This is the invitation of being a synodal Church. It is for Mission. In view of this, and

bearing in mind what has been shared in the responses, I offer a series of reflection questions¹ to hopefully move things forward under the following headings.

Missionary Conversion

- How do we accompany one another on this journey of personal and communal conversion which mission in our countries requires?
- How might we heal the wounds of those who have been abused, coming to see more fully through the eyes of those who have been abused?
- How might we meet the needs of the most vulnerable, be missionary in places, or with people, who have been overlooked or left behind in contemporary society in our countries? How do we partner with others - fellow Christians, other faiths, community groups, government - to do this?

Prayer and Liturgy

- How might we deepen our sense that the Eucharist is an encounter with Christ who sends us out to 'make disciples of all nations'?
- How might we become a more contemplative people, committing more fully to prayer as a way of life?
- How might we more fully embrace the diverse liturgical traditions of those who make up the Catholic Church, generously celebrating the gifts of immigrant communities to enrich our liturgy and worship?

¹ In framing these reflection questions, I am grateful for the responses of God's holy people in synodal process, which I have seen in Cardiff, Menevia and Plymouth, as well as for the insights gained from the synodal processes in Liverpool, Limerick, Ireland, some Dioceses in the USA, and Australia.

Formation

- How might we better form leaders for mission - adults, children and families, and especially our young people?
- How might clergy be enthused to equip and enable the growth and development of missionary disciples?
- How can ongoing formation, of bishops, priests and deacons, and of the priestly people, lead each one in their vocation to holiness lived in missionary discipleship?

Structures

- How can the parish become more fully “an oasis where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 27), such that they better become centres for formation and the animation of missionary disciples?
- How can the Churches in our countries be structured more for mission, at all levels - nationally, diocesan, parish, religious congregations, ecclesial communities?

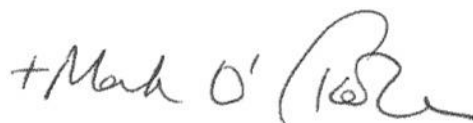
Governance

- How might we recast Governance, at every level, in a more missionary key?
- How might all of God’s holy people, laity and clergy, women and men, approach governance in the spirit of co-responsibility, reflecting our individual calling, for more effective proclamation of the Gospel? What particular gifts do women bring to this endeavour?

Included within our 'walking together' process is the desire to listen to the voices of those who are not on the road with us, but who are nevertheless our brothers and sisters and who are perhaps silently pleading to us from the side of the road - maybe having fallen into a ditch, maybe having taken a different path, maybe having been left behind, maybe having been deliberately passed by on the other side. We need to strain our bodies, our ears, and our hearts to reach out, to listen deeply to them, not just once, but again and again, so as not to leave anyone on the side of the road. For these, too, are invited to be part of us.

Many of us take inspiration from the earliest apostolic experience. The Church had few formal structures - no buildings - but all the followers of Jesus were disciples on the way, a people on mission, a people on the move, filled with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. We listen afresh to their experience in the apostolic letters and in the Acts of the Apostles, which we rightly call the "Gospel of the Holy Spirit". We steep ourselves more fully in that first apostolic witness, recognising that this is not about preserving a safe harbour but about venturing out afresh, sometimes on stormy waters, to fish for others.

It is often said today that Christendom is dead in our societies. We no longer live in a time when most people know what we are talking about when we proclaim a belief in Jesus Christ. Let us not hanker after some ideal past. For we live in a new apostolic era in which the Gospel is to be proclaimed afresh from the house tops. Where men and women of courage are needed even more to witness to the presence and power of the Risen Jesus among us. We have encountered Him. We continue to encounter Him on the road with others. We experience Him especially in the Eucharist, in prayer and in service, in the face and lives of His poor. Again and again, we can acclaim as those earliest Apostles exclaimed, "It is the Lord" (John 21:7).



+Mark O'Toole

Archbishop of Cardiff

Bishop of Menevia

Archbishop's House, 41/43 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9HD | Tŷ'r Archesgob, 41/43 Heol y Gadeirlan, Caerdydd, CF11 9HD

Tel / Ffôn: (029) 2022 0411 Fax / Ffacs: (029) 2037 9036 Email / E-bost: archbishop@rcadc.org

 www.rcadc.org

 [@Cardiff.Archdiocese](https://www.facebook.com/Cardiff.Archdiocese)

 [@CatholicCardiff](https://twitter.com/CatholicCardiff)

 [cardiff.archdiocese](https://www.instagram.com/cardiff.archdiocese)