



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF SYNODAL REPORT

“... the Synod is not a parliament or an opinion poll; the Synod is an ecclesial event, and its protagonist is the Holy Spirit.

If the Spirit is not present, there will be no Synod.”

Pope Francis

DIOCESAN SYNODAL TEAM

Profile: Archdiocese of Cardiff

The Archdiocese of Cardiff covers an area of some 3,000 square kilometres (1,915 Square Miles) in south-east Wales and the adjacent county of Herefordshire in England. In Wales it includes the counties of Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen, and the Vale of Glamorgan. It falls into roughly three geographical areas – firstly the coastal strip including the cities of Cardiff and Newport and the rural Vale of Glamorgan, secondly the hilly Valleys area behind the coast, with many smaller towns, and thirdly the essentially rural areas of Monmouthshire and Herefordshire. The diocese has its roots in the ancient Christian foundations of the Celtic times, and then the medieval dioceses of Llandaff and Hereford. In more recent times it evolved from being part of the diocese of Newport and Menevia in 1850, into the diocese of Newport in 1895 and, finally, the Archdiocese of Cardiff in 1916. The total population in the area is around 1.5million, of whom it is estimated that some 130,000 are baptised Catholics. Of these the average Mass attendance according to the last pre-pandemic count, was approximately 11,500. A number of people are bilingual, speaking the Welsh language. However, this is a smaller proportion than in the more

western and northern areas of Wales. Mass is celebrated in Welsh once a month in a parish church of the diocese.

Currently there are approximately thirty-eight diocesan and eighteen religious priests active in the Archdiocese, along with nineteen permanent deacons. There are also female religious active in some parishes. The Archdiocese has many primary and secondary schools across its length and breadth. 21 primary schools, 5 secondary schools submitted reports, about 50%, and one Catholic VIth Form College. Some schools worked with their parish rather than sending in a separate report.

There are some 59 parishes, but many of these are grouped together, either canonically united or constituting a cluster. The united parish of All Saints in Newport includes nine communities and churches. There is a large range of types of parish. The Cathedral, like many others, is in the centre of Cardiff, drawing people from many parts. There are parishes in Cardiff and elsewhere that include some of the most deprived areas of Wales, while others such as those in north Cardiff are more affluent. Many parishes reflect their location, ranging from the industrial and post-industrial towns of the Valleys to the market towns of Monmouthshire and Herefordshire,

to the seaside towns of Penarth, Barry and Porthcawl. Cwmbran, near Newport, was designated a “New Town” over 50 years ago. The make-up of congregations also varies. Some have an older age profile than their general population. Many have a multi-cultural aspect that would include parishioners with a background in countries in Asia, such as Iraq, Syria, Philippines, Malaysia, China, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; in Africa, such as Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Nigeria; in Europe, such as Italy, Spain, and Poland; and in Latin America.

In the summer of 2021 Archbishop George Stack offered his resignation and the Holy Father asked him to stay on *nunc pro tunc* i.e., with full powers until the appointment of a new archbishop, which the Archdiocese, as of April 2022, is awaiting. There is uncertainty as to our future relationship with the neighbouring diocese of Menevia, where Archbishop Stack has also been Apostolic Administrator since July 2019.

Methodology

Archbishop George Stack appointed a Diocesan Synodal Co-ordinator in October 2021. A team was formed to oversee the process, comprising seven lay people, (including a school chaplain), a permanent deacon and two priests. All parishes of the

Archdiocese of Cardiff were asked to appoint two parish representatives. 41 parishes and parish clusters and one university chaplaincy did this; five parishes did not. The parish representatives were trained via Zoom by the Archdiocesan Synodal Team in November 2021, over a two-week period. Parish representatives were advised to use the time before Christmas to build a team of parishioners to help them, to raise awareness of the Synod in the parish and to begin to plan how they were going to proceed.

In the lead up to Christmas, parish teams met together to draw up a plan of action and decided on which processes they needed to put into place, in order to inform parishioners, elicit and analyse responses and complete a report. Some parish priests were fully involved whilst others chose to stay in the background in order to allow respondents to speak more freely. Many parish representatives gave lectern addresses to explain the nature of a Synod and the synodal process, its three themes of Communion, Participation and Mission and outlined how they intended to proceed. The Synodal Prayer was also disseminated to parishioners and in many parishes was said at daily Mass and Sunday Masses to invoke the wisdom and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. A small number of parishes created online

portals to disseminate information. Others distributed prayer cards, leaflets, and flyers at Mass times and almost all used their parish newsletters to inform parishioners of how to be involved and to publicise times of meetings. A small number of parishes held meetings during this time.

In January 2022, all parishes began their open meetings. There was generally a good effort to hold these meetings in a prayerful way and participants were encouraged in listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other and in discernment. Meetings began with the Synodal prayer, a Scripture reading, followed by a couple of questions. In some cases, the questions were sent out before the meetings.

The methods of collection of views were very varied and creative, with the use of listening walls, listening tables, word walls, key questions, newsletter thoughts, face to face discussions and open meetings. Questionnaires were more widely used than was intended in quite a number of parishes. This was largely due to Covid preventing people from coming to face-to-face meetings and from people's preference. Many parishes listened to parishioners on a one-to-one basis and used zoom calls, telephone calls and emails; WhatsApp groups were set up; dedicated pages were put on websites and on social media. Some parishes held drop-in sessions

at the weekend or made themselves available for an unlimited time after Sunday Mass. Questions were delivered to the housebound and interviews held with some of these. Post boxes and baskets were put out in a small number of parishes for parishioners, who wanted to send in written comments. At least one parish reported that they had carried out street canvassing, where they interviewed people in the local shopping area; they also did door-knocking and visited a residential home to interview the residents. Some parishes canvassed the views of Catholic friends and colleagues. One parish ordered 'logo' banners which were erected outside the church.

In March, most parish representatives began the work of drafting their reports, collecting the relevant responses both written and oral and analysing the data, in order to draw out the relevant emerging themes. Many parishes showed their reports to the parish priest, and some circulated it to parishioners.

As the People of God, we are all called to co-operate in the building of a communion and to support participation in the ongoing mission of the Church. While this was a pattern set as far back as the Council of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles, it is particularly so in this time of ecclesial and social change.

Leadership

There was wide-spread support for this Synodal process across the Archdiocese and, in some reports, a hope that synodality would replace a perceived patriarchal and hierarchical culture with a flatter, more inclusive Church. A number of parish responses referred to the current state of the Archdiocese and it is evident that the various reports understood, and used, the term 'Archdiocese' differently. Sometimes it referred to the episcopal leadership; in other reports, it inferred a lack of wider structures for support and consultation. The pandemic had been a challenge, to which most parishes felt they had made a positive response. There were many references to a sense of loss experienced by people during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many churches were closed or inhibited. This included reference to the parish as an 'extended family,' 'good friends' and 'worshipping community' There was some concern that not all parishes had provided as good a service across the time of Covid. Emergence from the pandemic, like the synodal process itself, requires more visible and effective leadership. Several suggested more regular visits to parishes by the Archbishop.

Reference was made widely to those parishes that no longer have a resident

parish priest and that have subsequently fractured in some way. This included, for example:

- a lack of communication.
- the demise of the distinct parish newsletter for that community.
- the loss of Masses (or changes to Mass times) and of other services such as Children's Liturgy and
- the loss of a parish identity; and of many of the activities, including catechetical programmes, that once took place in the parish.

The development of Parish Advisory Councils in all parishes, with lay members trained and able to oversee parts of the life of the parish during the absence of a parish priest or deacon, was regarded as an essential way forward. It would provide for clear structural alternatives for parish leadership, and start to utilise, effectively, the human capital that exists within the majority of parishes.

Most reports focused on the parish more than the diocese; many saw the parish as the embodiment of Church. References to the diocese, where they occurred, tended to be negative. Nonetheless, some saw value in Deanery Councils and a Diocesan Council to ensure oversight of a possible post- synodal plan.

Training & Formation

There are a number of comments in a wide range of reports that focus on the lack of investment in the training, formation, and development of the whole people of God. Standards of catechesis were in need of improvement in some areas. If synodality, as a way of being

church, is to succeed then more people need to feel that this is how they live their faith. A number of reports saw the synodal process as a means of reviving the parish as a community of faith. The need for the provision of adult formation was often cited.

A number of reports referred to developments in the Catholic Church over the last few decades. The creation of the Ordinariate had challenged the practice of a celibate clergy. The positive development of the diaconate had presented opportunities for the Church to reconsider the role of women in this part of the Church's ministry. These are subjects for discussion by clergy, religious and people alike.

Some reports highlighted ways in which the Church might learn from wider business and cultural practices. This included a reference to accountability, public relations, and better communication. At the same time there was a recognition that much of the demand for assistance was falling on a smaller number of people. Support for a system of volunteer management and development is another critical need. In part related to this issue is the one of the post-pandemic register of parish members. The pandemic has changed much in the last two years, including the availability of parishioners and their changed needs. A review of the value of a parish register might be required, as an initial part of the process of determining capacity and need.

Many reports referred to the growing ethnic diversity of the parish. This was true of those in the Valleys and on the

coast as much as in the cities. Most reports recognised the special charisms that they brought to their community and considered the need for celebrating it more.

Communication

Limited and poor communication is felt to be an issue that reduces the Church's effectiveness. This is evident at parish level, in some instances, and at diocesan level. A need was expressed for a more visible sign of spiritual leadership and direction. On the issue of communication, some felt that the Church needed to communicate in language that is understood by the majority. Some reference was also made to the Archdiocesan newspaper, and to the Archdiocesan website, both of which were perceived to be under-developed. In this area, there was also some reference to a lack of contact with the Archbishop.

At a different level, there were concerns about the Church, nationally, failing to articulate Christian positions on key issues. One report spoke for many in suggesting that the Catholic Church did not speak out with the conviction that people now associate with Premier League footballers.

Prayer and Worship

Parishes are worshipping communities. There were a number of comments about the need for a broader range of liturgies that might appeal to a wide variety of people. A number of reports made reference to homilies in the parish, some of which were positive and some of which indicated the need for on-going training.

There were, from several reports, an appeal for a return to and encouragement of traditional Catholic pious practices. Some referred to traditional Corpus Christi processions as a means of witness. A few reports highlighted the desire to be inclusive of those who prefer the 'Extraordinary Form' (elsewhere: 'Tridentine Rite'), though one report indicated that where the Extraordinary Form had been experienced as 'imposed,' 'division and hurt' had occurred. Many reports indicate a hunger among the people for wider prayer and spiritual formation opportunities, as the world, and Church, emerge from the pandemic.

Children & Young People

The overwhelming majority of reports highlighted the lack of support for children and young people. Insufficient resource and an over-reliance on sacramental programmes rather than accompaniment were seen as issues to be addressed. The relationship between primary school and parish was generally believed to work well. Suggestions for secondary age children ranged from an increased chaplaincy resource, a Youth Worker within the diocese, and more liturgies developed *by* and *for* young people. Much of the current provision for young people in terms of faith journeying

ceases at Confirmation. There has been too great a tendency to focus on sacramental preparation at the expense of mentoring. Many reports highlighted areas of the Church's work – in climate change, in service to the poor, in social justice for minorities – that were exactly where young people wished to be engaged. The synodal process should permit the Church to re-engage with the basic Gospel message of Jesus and present this to young people as worthy of their commitment. The synodal process calls for a renewed commitment to the children and young people of the Archdiocese with resources to match the scale of the need.

The Archdiocesan Schools Report identified the strong wish of most members of school communities, who expressed an opinion, for a Church that was welcoming to all with a strong commitment to the Church being accepting of all - Diversity, Inclusivity Equality. Frequent mention is made, in the Schools Report, of the need for the Church to 'move with the modern times' in order to appeal to people, especially the young, examining Church teaching especially in areas such as sexual morality, celibacy, contraception, gay marriage, divorce and remarriage, 'two mums/two dads', women priests, etc., i.e., where such teaching appears at odds with the modern sense of 'equality'

There is a willingness, on the part of many young people, to be involved with the Church. Young people expressed a concern for social justice and the development of an equitable society. More needs to be done to listen regularly

to them and to address their concerns through education and discussion.

Notwithstanding the investment in Catholic schools, school leaders identified some lack of knowledge and understanding of the Church's teachings as a barrier to participation.

Ecumenism

From the outset, the synodal process was intended to engage Christians across the faith spectrum. It is unclear how extensive engagement with other faith groups has been in the Archdiocese. There was a recognition in a number of reports for there to be more collaboration with other churches in a spirit of ecumenism. Some parish reports cited examples of joint working; this may be in areas of social support or shared liturgical events. Too often, there has been a tendency to work in isolation but in the areas of meeting local need, a shared endeavour was considered important. This might involve sharing resources- and should include shared use of buildings. Declining numbers in most Christian churches should encourage collaboration to achieve informed dialogue and understanding between our communities. A few reports identified good work being done in some other faith groups in terms of engaging and retaining young people. Several reports highlighted the difficulties of joint celebration of our Christian faith because of doctrinal matters associated with the Eucharist.

Clerical Sexual Abuse

Almost every report referred to the issue of clerical sexual abuse and attempts to cover it up. It seemed to many that this has caused incalculable damage to the Church. It has shaped people's attitudes and undermines its authority as an arbiter in moral affairs

The Marginalised and Alienated

There were very few reports that did not focus on the Church's failure to address the needs of the marginalised. Pope Francis' call to synodality had made a special mention of the need to hear the voices of those on the periphery. Many reports indicated the efforts that had been made to reach out to those on the margins of society

In one parish this entailed paying heed to the needs of the Traveller community. In others, there was a recognition of the effects of poverty within the community and efforts to address it through initiating Food Banks and other means. Almost all reports expressed concern for those who feel alienated from the Church with particular reference to:

- the historical silencing and subjugation of women, and their experiences, in the Church. There was widespread support for women to play a co-equal part in decision-making and Ministry in the Church, which included positive statements in many reports regarding the ordination of women as clergy.
- the alienation of divorced and re-married, and LGBTQ+, people.
- the historical abuse of children and how it was dealt with by the Church.

- those who had been hurt, historically, in some way by clergy; and,
- those who reject the Church because of its patriarchal, and authoritarian, culture.

The Church was seen by many to be lagging behind the rest of society and was at variance with models of equality with which most people identified. One report referred to the early Church's attempts to understand the needs of the Gentiles, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. The marginalised and alienated were now the New Gentiles and, it was suggested that they needed a champion as Paul had been for the Gentiles at the Council of Jerusalem. Several reports spoke of the special effort made to reach out to parishioners no longer attending church, and the need to remain committed to them in the future.

Many reports highlighted the need to place women in real leadership positions where their strengths and abilities would be of great benefit. The Church may be perceived as failing to make full use of the enormous wealth of experience, the talents and special perspective of more than half of its membership. By making intelligent use of the talents of women, they will contribute to the developing of the Church for the modern world. Many parish reports recognised that in our age of equality, women have the right to be ordained priests and deacons. It was highlighted that, by making greater use of the talents of women, they will contribute to the development of the Church for the modern world. Many parish reports stated that, in our age of equality, women have the right to be ordained priests and deacons. By failing to recognise and use the gifts of women, the Church will be all the poorer. There was a suggestion in some reports that the Church's attitude towards a number of

marginalised groups is overdue, as there appeared to be a growing distance between the teaching of the Church and the attitude of its members. A few reports highlighted the needs of young married couples-support and mentoring often ends with the wedding and a more supportive role was advised. Most reports called for a more considered pastoral response to those who were experiencing difficulties with the Church's teachings. Though a minority view, there were concerns expressed by some at a tendency to dilute the Church's position on key matters.

Technology at the Service of the Church

Most reports started with an assessment of how far the parish had developed since the beginning of the first lockdown. There were a series of statements about the effectiveness of the outreach and the capacity of the parish to present its liturgy online. There were a number of reports that looked at the issues of technology to support Mass attendance, to support communication and to address the isolation of the housebound. Some of the good work that was done by agencies and societies [such as Cafod and the SVP] was made possible because of the prevailing technologies. There was a need expressed for engaging more with people through the social media platforms with which they conducted other parts of their life.

Conclusion


It is clear in many of the reports that several parishes have begun their journeying together along the road to a Synodal Church. Some spoke of their hopes, aspirations and their eagerness to continue 'listening and discernment' forums in order to move their parish forward and to effect development, growth and lasting change.

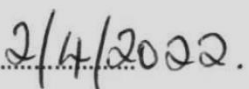
Recommendations from the Diocesan Synodal Team

The Diocesan Synodal Team has had access to more than forty Parish Reports, a synthesis of the reports from primary and secondary Catholic schools/ V1Form College, the University Chaplaincy and group reports from the Knights of St Columba, the Family Life Commission, The Welsh community [Y Cylch], ACTA and the Catholic Guiders Guild.


1. Re-establish and consolidate Parish Advisory, and Deanery Advisory, Councils across the Archdiocese, alongside the establishment of Archdiocesan bodies to assist in communication, formation, and participation of all in the Mission of the Church.
2. Develop formation programmes that are accessible to as wide a range of people as possible in the areas of 'Communion', 'Participation' and 'Mission'.
3. Establish a Youth Forum to hold conversations with young people and develop an Archdiocesan plan to increase support and work for young people.
4. Urgently review the area of Communications in the Archdiocese, including the consideration of a full-time Communications Officer to direct and lead on all aspects of Communication both within and without the Archdiocese.
5. Develop programmes of formation and liturgical celebrations for the institution of the Ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist as one tool in the formation of men and women.
6. Reinforce efforts to find agreement among Christian churches and to achieve informed dialogue and understanding between our communities.

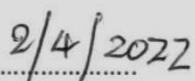
Submitted by the Diocesan Synodal Team

.......... Madeleine Walters, Chair

Date.....

Accepted by the Archdiocese

.......... George Stack, Archbishop of Cardiff

Date.....

APPENDICES

ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

SYNOD 2021-23

GROUP/ SOCIETY REPORT: Catholic Guiders Guild

Introduction:

The Catholic Guiders Guild is an organisation set up to support catholic guide leaders and leaders of catholic units within the Cardiff archdiocese. We are under the umbrella of our national organisation, the Catholic Advisory Council who provide training, advice and support to the guilds and its members whilst communicating with Girlguiding about the role of Catholicism in guiding.

Methodology:

An email was sent to members of the guild inviting them to a discussion by zoom in March. Some members unable to attend responded with comments by email. Due to the shortness of notice given for the discussion only two members were able to join the zoom group.

Report:

Communion - How does our Church function in our local area.

Guides attend services arranged by other churches of all denominations e.g. Carol services, Remembrance services and parades. Units have hosted services in their own parishes for other uniformed groups of other faiths and none, and within their own parishes Stations of the Cross have been organised for the parish and units have been involved with Church Parade at Sunday Mass as well as an annual mass at various parishes throughout the Archdiocese for Guild members.

The national Advisory Council has communicated with Guiding UK to promote our faith and to voice our disagreement with the lack of reference to God in our Promise.

When attending parish masses, we are always made very welcome.

Communication with parishes is not consistent with a reluctance to pass on information and promote Catholic guiding within the Archdiocese, and there appears to be a reluctance by the archdiocesan newspaper, Catholic People to publish reports from uniformed groups.

We had a Chaplain from the archdiocese, but he can no longer continue in this role due to his commitments, currently there is no one to take his place.

Participation- How do we work with others in supporting our local area.

Leaders report that pre pandemic, within their local guiding areas they have supported joint guiding ventures raising awareness of homelessness, fund raising and donating specific necessary items. Guides in the Penarth area have assisted with Christian Aid collections. The Guild at their annual masses have collected food to be donated to the Foodbank. Brownies have organised sponsorship for Dogs for the Blind. Guide, Brownies and Rainbows have raised money for Toilet Twinning within their local parish.

Mission- How do we take the Gospel message out from our parish community.

Leaders report that they feel hampered in taking the Gospel message out from their parish communities due to a lack of support by the clergy in spreading information about guiding both within parishes and the archdiocese. Leaders have experienced reluctance by some priests in welcoming and supporting individuals who are not Catholic or linked to the parish, but they are leaders of uniformed units with girls of all denominations including children who are parishioners.

The Guild has not been able to meet since the pandemic. Individual units initially met online and then outdoors. Catholic units lost some of their members i.e., girls aged 5 and above, or units moved to other denominational churches where they were allowed to meet in their church halls. In the opinion of the Chair, the delay in opening Catholic church halls has affected the continuing sustainability of some uniformed groups which had previously been attached to parishes.

This report is submitted to the Diocesan Synodal Team on behalf of:
The Catholic Guiders Guild (Cardiff Archdiocese)

Signed: **G.M.Dorman**
Geraldine Dorman
Chair

ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

SYNOD 2021-23

GROUP/ SOCIETY REPORT: Family Life Commission

THOUGHTS OF FAMILY LIFE COMMISSION MARCH 2022

Q1 What is your Dream for Family Life in the Church?

A Community of listeners and able to participate.

A church able to offer everything from birth to grave and respect and support for all.

Everyone feels welcome and included, able to offer everything from birth to grave.

Families are recognised for their worth and are valued. Church is a family of Families,

Family is the bedrock of the Church and that nothing will ever be perfect.

That we will see everyone, no matter Colour, Race, age sex. etc. as all part of the family.

The Church must move to welcome all. We are not a unique club that has rules to join.

To be less concerned with the rules and to see the individual.

A church that addresses its past and rectifies the harm done.

Women must feel confident that their part in the Church is equal to everyone and in fact the Church depends on such people.

To look at the importance of Church and not spend so much money and energy on church.

We are a little too hierarchical and we need to realise that the structure is only as good as the supporting layer...THE LAY PEOPLE

Q2 What do we love and cherish about our faith and the Church?

A place of support, a place I can own my own beliefs. It's the moral foundation to live my life

Where everyone is valued. A place creating equality being part of a community that wants to make changes and wants to make the world a better place.

Faith gives us a common ground.

A place to make mistakes but to learn from them.

We can refer back to scripture for guidance and each one of us is free to interpret in our own way. We are now a more listening church, and the worship is less formal. I like that it is a Catholic Church so that it is worldwide, and we have things in common with people in all parts of the world

3. What's preventing that dream from coming true?

Lack of Communication and a willingness to learn from others.

Man-made rules and judgmental attitudes especially of senior clerics.

Lack of acceptance to change; small changes are not insignificant.

Lay people must have more confidence in their knowledge and ability. We are all part of the one body and each one of us has an equal part to play. The Church must tackle the ugly things that are happening and deal with those who use the Church for their own needs.

We must allow married clergy.

We must allow women to play a vital part in the life of the Church and not just pay lip service to their contribution, but women must also recognise that they have a vital role to play.

We must have a shared vision for the Church, and we need to be prepared to play our part fully and not leave it to others. We are the Church, and we need to step up.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

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GROUP/ SOCIETY REPORT: The Knights of Columba

The Knights of St. Columba had their monthly meeting on Thursday 17th March.

The Synodal report was specifically discussed in respect of the Holy Father's reference to a meaningful involvement of the laity in action within the church.

This was received with a positive response by the Knights.

We, as with all laity, are indeed Full and Active members of the CHURCH. Our Local Council has empathy with Women being active within our order. Although this is practised with various open orders within the Church, it does not, yet recognise their values in a possible formal membership with the Knights Order. I believe views within the Church, through the authority of the Church, should help to promote such a membership, remembering of course the energy and true faithfulness that women have exercised throughout the centuries. Needless to say, our local council is in favour of women members in our Order. But we are anticipating much resistance.

1. In reference to the detailed report :

We have some concern as to any **mechanism** the Synod may be able, or would be prepared to, any of the changes that would be conceived from the detailed views/statements laid out in any of the many Dioceses across the country.

2. Changes:

The responses by the Synod may well be vital in the future attitude of the Church that the faithful may conceive in its final analysis.

Let's hope the Holy Spirit will empower the Synod in its conclusions.

Eugene McCarthy
Secretary KSC Bridgend Council.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

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GROUP/ SOCIETY REPORT: Y Cylch

Synod 2023

‘... in our own languages we heard them speaking about God’s deeds of power’.
Acts 2, v. 11 NRSV

We live in 21st century Wales – a bilingual country where both languages have official status and recognition. From the Senedd and local government to supermarkets and road signs, both languages are visible and are means of communication.

In her use of both these languages, the Catholic Church in Wales falls way behind modern Wales. Catholics who speak Welsh as a first language are a very small number of many congregations. But all parishioners see Welsh from day to day – everywhere except in their parish church. Students learn Welsh at school but never hear a prayer in Welsh at church.

This lack of connection with the ancient language of Dewi Sant, St. David Lewis and all the saints of Wales affects all three aspects of the Synod discussion.

1. Communion.

Communion within parish life:

If part of the definition of communion is *belonging*, there is a lack of communion where those whose first language is Welsh are hardly ever greeted in their mother tongue in a Catholic church. Very simple greetings, a hymn or the Sign of the Cross in Welsh, would be such an inclusive step. And for so many young people and learners of Welsh, it would be a confirmation that their faith and their acquired language connect with the faith and language of their land.

Communication

- the very basic issue of bilingual names for churches and schools is deficient in the diocese. Some are incorrect, others non-existent.
- I haven't seen a word of Welsh in a parish bulletin in many years. (except the ones I send about the Mass in Welsh!).
- Very few churches have a word of welcome in Welsh at the door.
- Great banners are produced, for example those for *The God who speaks* without any Welsh word on them.

How does the Church belong in a bilingual Wales with glaring omissions like these?

Communion with the Christian community:

The Welsh language is an essential part of ecumenical discussion with other Christian churches. At present being part of the scene of Christian Unity is only undertaken by lay Catholics – we have no Episcopal leadership in language or culture who can fully partake of such a vital part of our mission.

3. Mission:

The Church's mission is incomplete in modern Wales without the use of both languages of the country. Serious consideration should be given to developing the learning of the language by some of the clergy; the laity are getting on with it in their own lives in order to participate more fully in the contemporary culture.

At present clergy who would develop their mission in the language and who see its importance to the life of the Church are hindered by a lack of understanding of the importance of the language and culture in the life of the Church.

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GROUP/ SOCIETY REPORT: Y Cylch

Synod 2023

‘...yr ydym yn eu clywed hwy yn llafaru yn ein hieithoedd ni am fawrion weithredoedd Duw’. Actau 2, 11 Y Beibl Cymraeg Newydd

Rydym yn byw yng Nghrymu’r unfed ganrif ar hugain – gwlad ddwyieithog lle mae gan y ddwy iaith gydnabyddiaeth a statws swyddogol. Gwelir y ddwy iaith ymhob ymwneud â’r Senedd a llywodraeth leol, yn yr archfarchnad ac ar arwyddion heol.

Yn ei defnydd hithau o’r ddwy iaith mae’r Eglwys Gatholig ymhell ar ei hôl hi yn y Gymru fodern. Rhaid cydnabod taw lleiafrif bach o unrhyw gynulleidfa yw’r Catholigion sy’n siarad Cymraeg fel eu mamiaith. Ond mae pawb yn gweld yr iaith yn eu bywydau bob dydd – ymhob man heblaw yn eglwys y plwyf. Mae myfyrwyr yn dysgu’r Gymraeg yn yr ysgol ond byth yn clywed gweddi yn Gymraeg ar ddydd Sul yn yr eglwys.

Mae’r diffyg cysylltiad yma gyda iaith hynafol Dewi Sant, Sant David Lewis a holl saint Cymru yn effeithio ar holl agweddau trafodaethau’r Synod.

1. Cymundeb

I) Cymundeb o fewn bywyd y plwyf:

Mae ymdeimlad o *berthyn* yn rhan o’n dealltwriaeth o gymundeb, ac yn bendant mae diffyg perthyn yn deimlad cyffredin i Gymry Cymraeg pan na fydd gair o Gymraeg i’w weld nac i’w glywed mewn eglwys Gatholig. Byddai cyfarchiad neu ambell emyn Cymraeg yn gam bach fyddai’n awgrymu dealltwriaeth o bwysigrwydd yr iaith i’w siaradwyr. Ac i bobl ifanc a’r rhai sy’n dysgu’r iaith, byddai’n gydnabyddiaeth bod cysylltiad agos rhwng eu ffydd a’u hiaith mabwysiedig â ffydd a iaith eu gwlad.

Cyfathrebu:

- yn yr Archesgobaeth mae diffyg dybryd yn enwau dwyieithog eglwysi ac ysgolion – rhai yn anghywir ac eraill yn uniaith Saesneg.
- Mae'n anodd gweld gair o Gymraeg mewn cylchlythyr wythnosol.
- Nifer fach iawn yw'r eglwysi hynny sydd yn cynnig gair o groeso yn Gymraeg wrth y drws.
- Pan fydd baneri yn cael eu creu i bob eglwys drwy'r wlad, er enghraifft ar gyfer *Y Duw sy'n siarad*, fydd byth air o Gymraeg arnynt pan gallent yn hawdd fod yn gwbl ddwyieithog.

Sut gall yr eglwys berthyn mewn Cymru ddwyieithog gyda'r anwybodaeth yma?

ii) Cymundeb o fewn y gymuned Gristnogol:

Mae'r Gymraeg yn rhan hanfodol o drafodaethau ryng-eglwysig. Does dim un o esgobion Cymru yn gallu cynnig arweiniad yn y rhan hanfodol yma o'n cenhadaeth yng Nghymru.

3. Cenhadaeth:

Mae cenhadaeth yr Eglwys yn anghyflawn yn y Gymru fodern heb iddi ddefnyddio dwy iaith y wlad. Mae angen rhoi ystryiaeth o ddifrif i annog rhai o'r offeiriaid i ddysgu Cymraeg; mae llawer o Gatholigion lleig yn bwrw ymlaen i ddysgu'r iaith er mwyn bod yn rhan mwy cyflawn o fywyd y Gymru gyfoes.

Ar hyn o bryd mae offeiriaid sydd â diddodeb yn yr iaith Gymraeg ac yn gweld ei phwysigrwydd i fywyd yr Eglwys wedi eu hanfon i blwyfi lle nad oes cefnogaeth iddyn nhw; a hyn oherwydd diffyg dybryd ym mhlith yr esgobion am bwysigrwydd yr iaith a'i diwylliant i fwd. yr Eglwys.



SYNOD 2021-23

REPORT

For submission to the Diocesan Reports of all the
Dioceses of England and Wales

Introduction

ACTA – A Call to Action – has existed as an organisation since 2012. It aims to bring together laity, religious and clergy to discuss and review issues of common concern with the Catholic Church. While the organisation just predates the papacy of Pope Francis, it is entirely in tune with the Pope's wish for a synodal church. There is a palpable sense that, as a result of the pandemic, we need a Church that is more comfortable with the dialogue of clergy, religious and laity than was the case beforehand.

The discernment that underpins this report comes from a number of sources and across a period of time. The trustees have been asked to review this report ahead of its submission. As a national body we feel confident in submitting it as a Group Report to each of the dioceses of England and Wales. We believe that it is best included as an appendix to the Diocesan Report as set out in the *Vademecum*. It provides a national overview and supplements reports generated by the work of local ACTA diocesan groups which have carried out their own specific discernment listening exercises.

In October 2015, the Vatican conducted a Synod on the Family – The Call, the Mission, the Journey. A number of diocesan ACTA groups committed time and effort to supporting this initiative. In the summer of 2015 ACTA published a report – *The smell of the sheep*. It was an extensive survey of the opinions of Catholics and others, gleaned through an online and paper survey, and with responses from every diocese in England and Wales. A copy was forwarded to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and to each bishop. Its Executive Summary is attached.

A number of other local and national organisations also reflected on marriage and family life as part of that period of spiritual discernment. These include the Association of Interchurch Families, the Catholic Women's League, the Union of Catholic Mothers, Two in One Flesh, the National Board of Catholic Women and the Dorcas group. Not all of these used the format of The Call, the Mission and the Journey so it has not been possible to incorporate their feedback here. However, some of the main conclusions of the ACTA survey incorporated into the main body of this report.

More recently, in 2018 ACTA's Annual Conference concentrated on the issue of discernment and the capacity of the Church to act out the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Issues such as a more participatory model of Church were considered alongside the need for individual Catholics to reflect on their baptismal commitments.

Early in the pandemic ACTA arranged a series of talks reflecting on the place of the Church during the pandemic. Some presentations reflected on the ministries required – others on the challenges to the Church's capacity for social action. The series "The Post Pandemic Church- Business as Usual?" explored the very issues that underpin the current Synod on Synodality. As a series, it prepared members for a presentation early in 2021 by Fr Augusto Zampini-Davies, Secretary to the Vatican's Covid 19 Commission.

Later in 2021, ACTA's National Conference focused on the Synodal Process with input from Sr Gemma Simmonds CJ, Dr Peter Coughlan, Dr Pat Jones and Fr Philip Inch. We considered the issues of discernment, of the previous efforts at discourse within the Church as well as the early results of the Liverpool Synod.

The final element that contributes to this Group Report is the work that ACTA has done through some of the dioceses of England and Wales. Some meetings have been organised by ACTA members, while in some dioceses there has been a collaboration between ACTA, Root & Branch and the National Justice and Peace Network.

Communion

Under this heading we will reflect on the issues associated primarily with relationships within the Church; the balance of responsibility and leadership between clergy and laity, the need for a more flexible model of leadership and the requirement for improved training and development. The basic unit of organisation within the institutional Church is the parish, though there are a number of groups that represent Church to their members. Pope Francis promulgated a report from the Congregation for Clergy in the summer of 2020 titled *The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church* which considered the need for parishes to move from a position of self-preservation to one that recognised its missional role in the community. There is a general acceptance that the work of all Catholics is to contribute to the work of spreading the Gospel and that lay people have a special advantage in their engagement with the secular world.

The document identified the important role of lay people “to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community for its growth and life, by exercising a great variety of ministries” and to prevent the development of a culture of the “clericalization of pastoral activity”. The document is careful to advocate but not mandate the establishment of pastoral councils comprised mainly of “those who have effective responsibility in the pastoral life of the Parish”, whilst re-stating that these bodies have purely consultative votes. Nonetheless, Pope Francis has stated that “A parish priest cannot guide without pastoral councils”. The report devotes considerable space to the consideration of the process of parish suppressions and amalgamations. However, the deliberations of the Congregation do not seem to reflect the changing nature of parishes, certainly in parts of England and Wales. While churches might, after a due process of consultation be amalgamated, the capacity to manage these larger entities, with variations of culture and need, will require a greater reliance on co-responsible laity.

The report gives little guidance on the powers of these entities other than to ensure that terms such as “team leader” or “coordinator” are avoided. A more transparent model for managing the mission of the parish is required, and one that reflects the best practice found in many of the public and private enterprises to which parishioners frequently contribute. If the lay members do have “effective responsibility” for areas of pastoral life, transparency in terms of communicating what the appointment process is, who is serving and in what capacity is crucial to ensure that parishes “read the signs of the times” and to “bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation.”

From discussions held over the last few years, it is clear that the current training and ongoing development of the clergy is inadequate. Our *The smell of the sheep* survey found that 77% of respondents concluded that the clergy were not in touch and proposed changes in training. The world has moved dramatically forward in the last few years (accelerated by the pandemic) and the clergy’s capacity to use the means of communication that most citizens take for granted needs to reflect that change.

The challenge of the Synod on Synodality lies mainly in the fact that the majority of laity and secular clergy have not been trained to engage in the kinds of discussions and the exercise of discernment that the synodal process requires. Much has been learnt in the last few months, but dioceses need to make a significant investment in the formation and development of clergy and laity, particularly if we are to fulfil part of our missionary purpose to become “ever attentive to new forms of poverty”. We recognise that this Synod is the start of a long-term synodal process and that the development of materials to support the missionary activity of the parish will be critically important.

Participation

In this section of our report, we intend to address those matters that affect our engagement with others in the Church, the need for us to grow in our faith and to collaborate with others. The work that ACTA has undertaken in the last few years highlights the need for a more participative model for many of our Churches. The pandemic has created a new nexus for parishioners – a different model from the one that preceded the Covid 19 outbreak. The suspension of the Sunday obligation has challenged people to reconsider their relationship with their local Church, and even the extent to which their sense of parish belongs to the traditional one of geography alone. One elderly participant recently commented that, unable to attend her local parish, she now has become a “parishioner” of a church in Alabama, USA.

The number of people aligning themselves with the traditional parish church is in serious decline and the pandemic has hastened the process. A movement away from the maintenance of the parish as it was to a more dynamic missionary approach is required. This will require new ways of encouraging participation, of recognising more flexible forms of parish membership and blended models of activity.

In some dioceses, radical plans for the closure of surplus Church estate are under consideration. The closure of churches/Mass centres can be traumatic and should only be undertaken in consultation with Church members. We need to recognise the opportunity to work with those from other parts of the Christian family, with those of other faiths as well as with civil society. For too long our preoccupation has been with working in isolation. We need to learn from other churches and other parts of society to understand the work in which we need to engage.

Participative models of parish activity and management need to be developed with special consideration for the views of those who are not regular members of our congregations. We need to consider the damaging impact that the absence of women from leadership roles in the local Church can have on the recruitment of new members and the retention of the young.

There is a growing sense that Pope Francis’ advocacy for the environment represents a significant shift in the Church’s attitude towards our stewardship of creation. It is an area that young people care about and we need to emphasise the leading role of the Church on this matter.

The Catholic Church’s history of clerical sexual abuse continues to affect membership and commitment and has been an issue raised at a number of diocesan events. The development of more inclusive management systems and means of effective participation in the local Church will help to develop the transparency that has been lacking for too long.

Although important, models of participation and structural change are only one aspect of the issues contributing to decline in attendance. ACTA’s *The smell of the sheep* survey also concluded that there was an urgent need to review specific teaching in areas such as sexuality where a number of findings showed that the Church was unwelcoming to groups such as those in so-called irregular relationships. The report indicated that the *sensus fidei* on issues such as divorce and remarriage and homosexuality had changed radically in recent years. The ACTA report also drew on other research that concludes that the Church is seen as being overly judgmental in certain areas.

The metaphor for the Church that Pope Francis developed several years ago was that of the field hospital. The qualities of a field hospital are a capacity to meet urgent need, to be immediately responsive, to treat people as they are, and not as a medical textbook describes them. This might be the kind of Church in which more not fewer people want to participate.

Mission

Synodality is a relatively new concept for parishioners to get used to. The other new concept is that of evangelisation and being a missionary parish. Generations of parishioners have been brought up to consider issues merely as ones of personal salvation. Our practice was personal, our worship was personal, our faith was personal. Synodality is the logical extension of a Church that is coming to terms with being a missionary Church. In the past, the faith was handed down from parent to child. The process of transmission was an unbroken journey from childhood to marriage to parenthood, so that each generation passed on a faith unchanged and unchanging. Those days are gone.

Current statistics on Mass attendance numbers and the near absence of young people speak of a Church in terminal decline.

Yet synodality is as old as the Church itself and it has always required a spirit of evangelisation if it was to reach the further corners of the world.

What was felt to be lacking in terms of preparation of the laity and some clergy for the Synod is equally true for the missionary activity of the parish. Evangelisation – spreading the Gospel message – is regarded with some suspicion and as a very unCatholic activity. And yet, it is at the core of our Baptism, our sacramental life and our participation in every Mass when we are sent out to continue this work. It is also expressed through our commitment to meeting the needs of the poor and those suffering from social injustice.

What is required is a process of education and development that runs in parallel with the work of managing participation and building our community of faith. The three elements – Communion. Participation and Mission – are mutually dependent. If we get the first two right, we will become a parish that has the needs of its local community at its heart.

On the eve of the conclave that elected him, Cardinal Bergoglio preached on the need to open the doors of the Church, not to let people in but to let Jesus out into the world. The implications of this call to mission is profound – it will require considerable resources to raise the awareness and acceptance of this mandate and still more to make it a reality.

This challenge has to be seen in the context of the other challenges that each parish will face. A synodal process has started but how successful it will be in supporting communion, encouraging participation and in developing a greater sense of mission will be dependent on the laity. With an active, developed sense of commitment to this missionary role, parishes can become the field hospitals that the post-pandemic world requires.

An ongoing commitment to synodality will help to build the sense of a team that is at the heart aware of the need for a form of Communion that underpins the sense of being participators in the missionary work of the Church.

This Report was considered by the Board of Trustees of ACTA- A Call to Action – on Tuesday 8th March 2022 and is submitted to all the Dioceses of England and Wales in support of the Synod 2021-23 process