



Oblate Church of Mary Immaculate INCHICORE PARISH

SYNODAL PATHWAY: Synod 2023, our journey so far....

Parish Conversation Feedback

In 2021 Pope Francis called a Synod of the Church, to take place in Rome in 2023. He reached out to the whole People of God to take up the challenge, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to prepare creatively for our future as a people called to proclaim with Joy the Good News of Jesus Christ. This is an inclusive event and Pope Francis asked us to ***“encounter, listen and discern so as to become a different Church”***.



In Dublin Diocese the Synod was launched in October 2021, with the symbol of a boat being guided toward a lighthouse. The lighthouse is the Holy Spirit, and we are in the boat together and the water of Baptism sustains us.

Here in Mary Immaculate we began the preparations to have our reflections passed on to the diocese and then to Rome. These included various people, some taking part in training to facilitate the conversations, others prepared the Synod Space in the church providing us with a visual reminder of the journey we are on. We prayed the Synodal Pathway Prayer (adapted by the Pastoral Area) at Mass and invited people of the parish to gather for the conversation or contribute to it through a survey sheet.

The following is an overview of the contributions from the people of our parish who took part in person or who made a written submission. 30 people attended over two sessions (Saturday 26th March and Wednesday 30th March). We reflected and shared on **our experiences of Church** under the following four headings:

...what brings you
Joy?

Being part of a faith community; hearing the Word of God in scripture; lives of the Saints; person of Jesus; hearing about a compassionate and loving God and not a God to be feared; attending Mass and sacraments; space for quiet reflection; hope in God; good liturgy; good music; prayer; adoration of Blessed Sacrament; tradition; use of technology.

...what brings you
Sorrow?

Abuses and reaction to them; small numbers of young people at Mass; scandals and trauma; exclusion of women from diaconate and ordination; negative attitude to LGBT community; empty churches; negative image of God presented ; lack of compassion and understanding; that official Church is still a male and celibate organisation; sin; general attitude to women; laity not being listened to; missing Mass; reduction in Church services; failure to reach out to children and young people; lack of recognition of work done by religious sisters; lack of connection to the community.

...what brings you
Fear?

Closure of churches due to lack of vocations; that we will have no priests in the future; that Synod will not be taken seriously; that narrow sense of ministry and ordination will continue to see laity as 'helpers'; that Church will fail to embrace its humble and simple side; that Services will replace Mass; the loss of a generation; the financial implications of poor Mass attendance; that women and their contribution will continue to be undervalued; that appointment of priests from abroad will be chosen over genuine lay involvement; general confession will become more common; that faith will die out as it is not being passed on; that Church will give in to modern demands; the health of Pope Francis.

...what brings you
Hope?

To see a vibrant Church with young people; celibacy will become optional; ordination and diaconate will be open to women; courage to be bold and embrace the vision of Pope Francis; clergy will practise what they preach; schools will educate young people; that kindness and goodness of people will shine through; Church will put people first; more adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; real support for school programme; courage to pass on the faith; that laity will be heard during Synod process and change will happen; integrity of Mass will be maintained ; laity will engage in faith development.

There were some common themes listed above that were expressed in a variety of ways. Many concerns are common to us all and are global, but there are some issues that could be responded to within our parish and/or pastoral area by the community itself. As a follow up to this process the Dublin Diocese has begun the **Building Hope** programme. This process invites us to reflect, this time on the particular situation in our own parish:

What is working well? What needs to be changed?

What are the challenges? What are the new possibilities?

How might we enliven and revitalise our parish to face the changing reality?

Our Synodal feedback has been sent to the Archbishop of Dublin and will form part of the Dublin Diocesan feedback to the Irish Bishops Conference. The Irish Bishops will make a collated summary of the conversation from the people of Ireland who took part in the Synodal Pathway, and submit to Rome in preparation for the 2023 Synod.

Thank you for being part of this encounter. We can truly revive and energise our worship and our faith lives by being open to the Holy Spirit and working with each other.

Lift us up, abiding Spirit,
Above all obstacles,
and grant us a glimpse of what is possible
when hearts and minds
discover that you are in our fears,
our hopes and our commitments. Amen

(Bruce Sanguin)