



Walking Together

Synodal Update for the Diocese of Plymouth

May 2023 Edition



Welcome to our latest Synodal Newsletter where you will find updates on 'The Synod' and also some ways in which we, as a Diocese, are becoming more 'Synodal'.

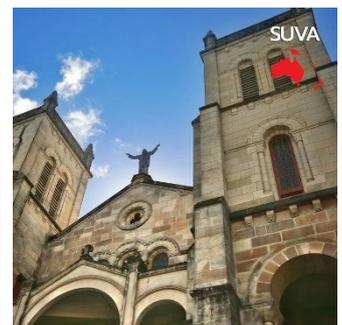
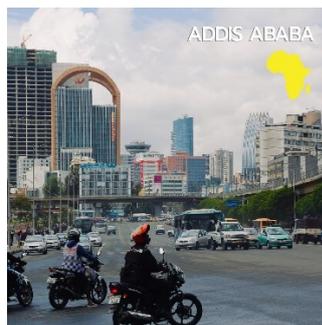
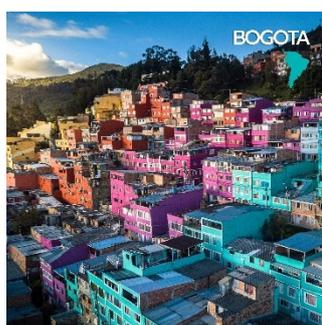
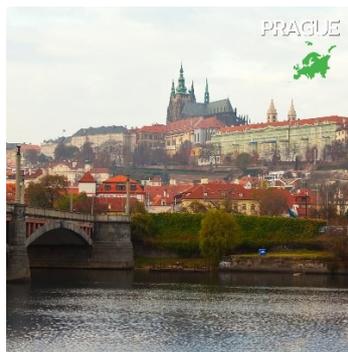
And as we draw near to the Feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the followers of Jesus; we ask that same Holy Spirit to give us the gifts to become a more Synodal Church.

In communion with one another; working together; sharing the Good News with others.

Synod Update

Since our last newsletter, 7 Continental Assemblies have met across the world following the publication of the 'Working Document of the Continental Stage' to reflect on the feedback from their respective areas on this document. This period of discernment ended on 31st March and marks the end of the Continental Stage of the synodal process.

Each Continental Assembly produced a document summarising their meeting. These can all be found at: [Final Document \(synod.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/synod/2021-2024/continental-stage/continental-stage-final-document-2023-03-31.html)



The European Continental Assembly

Made up of lay people, religious and clergy, this assembly met in Prague during February and, following this, the Bishops of Europe have committed themselves to 'keep living and promoting the synodal process in our Diocesan structures and life'.

'We want to walk together, as holy people of God, both lay persons and pastors, pilgrims along the roads of Europe to proclaim the joy of the Gospel which springs from the encounter with Christ. We want to do it together with our brothers and sisters from other Christian denominations. We shall work tirelessly to enlarge the space of our tents so that our ecclesial communities become even more places where everyone feels welcome'.

Visit [European Synodal Continental Assembly – For a synodal Church \(synod2023.org\)](https://synod2023.org) for a day by day account of the Assembly and to download the final report.



People with disabilities and the Synodal Journey

As well as continental assemblies, other groups have been meeting and listening to each other. One such group comprised of people with disabilities from 5 continents who have been participating in the Synodal Journey for the past year. The fruits of this can now be found in the document 'The Church is our Home', which can be viewed at: [People with Disabilities and the Synodal Journey - Catholic Bishops' Conference \(cbcew.org.uk\)](https://cbcew.org.uk)

The document calls for a change of mindset with a move from 'them' to 'us' and challenged the common assumption of an inseparable link between disability and suffering.

"In an inclusive community, each person walks his or her own path of conversion. Recognising one's limitations and fragilities, people are led to walk alongside others without feeling superior, inferior or different, rather as brothers and sisters and fellow travellers. People with disabilities are faithful called to conversion like anyone else and not 'already saints' or 'sufferers,' or 'Christs on the Cross' because of their condition of disability."



What Next?

With regard to The Synod, we now await the publication of the 'Instrumentum Laboris', due in June, which will form the basis for discernment in October for the 1st session of the XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. This assembly will now be made up of not only Bishops, but also other clergy, religious and lay women and men as well.

However, this does not mean we should wait as a Diocese to become more Synodal because, as the General Secretariate for the Synod makes clear, 'much of what has been discussed and identified so far at the local level does not require the discernment of the universal Church nor the intervention of the Magisterium of Peter.'



The Diocese of Plymouth Synodal Journey

In looking at how we move forward as a Diocese, it is worth reminding ourselves of the eight major marks of a Synodal Church that Pope Francis outlined in the initial preparations for the Synod which are: journeying together, listening, discerning, Eucharistic, inclusive, participative, humble, and missionary.

Here are some initiatives that our Diocese is currently engaging with. If you/your Parish have been getting involved in other ways, or have any suggestions how our communities can become more Synodal, do let us know. Email: synodfeedback@prcdtr.org.uk

Safeguarding

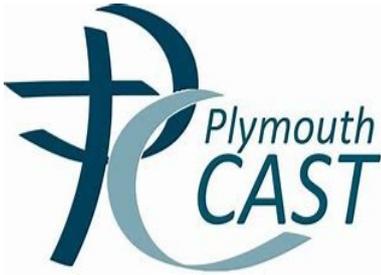


Plymouth Diocesan Safeguarding Office supports the ministry of the Church to protect children, young people and adults, ensuring that our worshipping communities are safe places. During the synodal process a number of people shared their anger, disappointment and personal experiences at the way the church has dealt with the issue of abuse, and the lack of support that has been offered to survivors.

In response to this feedback, the Safeguarding Office held an online meeting in January giving an opportunity for people to discuss the whole area of safeguarding. Then in March, the Diocese held a Loudfence event in Plymouth. In this visible display of support and solidarity, attendees prayed together and tied ribbons or messages of support to church railings.

The Diocese is currently hoping to form a 'survivors' advisory group to give survivors the opportunity to work together with the Diocese to improve support and services for survivors. If you would be interested in participating in this initiative, please contact Sophie Scagell on 01364 645436 or sophie.scagell@prcdtr.org.uk.

Schools



This term, a number of schools are taking part in a pilot project where the whole school community of children/young people; their families; and staff listen to each other and share their experiences of faith in school. Through doing this, we hope to see how our Catholic schools are living their faith and to journey forward together in deepening and strengthening that faith.

Parishes

In June a number of Parishes in the Torbay area will be coming together to share how they welcome people. It might be those who come to our Churches, or those our Church communities go out to.

In listening to each other's experiences, we aim to become ever more welcoming communities, open to all.



Find out more about the synodal journey of our schools; Parishes; and the Global Synod in our next newsletter.



The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

Matthew 13:31-32