

Priorities and Calls to Action Received from Dicoeses and Organisations During the Continental Stage of the Synod



provided to delegates and
representatives following meeting
with the Task Group - March 2023



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This booklet is a collation of the local and national pastoral initiatives (priorities and calls to action) that were received in feedback from dioceses and organisations during the Continental Stage of the Universal Synod (2021 – 2024) following their reflection upon three documents: their original submission/synthesis, the National Synthesis, and the *Working Document for the Continental Stage*, (DCS).

Overall, dioceses and organisations were asked to engage with the following questions:

1. EXPERIENCES OF THE CHURCHES

- What resonates most strongly?
- Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you from the Continental Document?

2. CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

- After having read and prayed with all three documents, what significant tensions or differences are you noticing?

3. PRIORITIES AND CALLS TO ACTION

- Looking at what emerges from the previous two questions:
- What priorities, recurring themes, and actions to be taken are you noticing for
 - Your local diocese/community?
 - The Catholic Church in Ireland?
 - The Universal Church?

However, please note that this booklet only includes a collation of the priorities and calls to action for the local and national context for the Catholic Church in Ireland and does not place any particular emphasis on any of the reflections offered. The priorities and calls to action are listed in alphabetical order for convenience and do not infer any precedence or primacy.

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Abuse Crisis

- Comprehensively Address the Abuse Crisis.
- Given our local experiences of the abuse crisis, there is a vital need to continue rebuilding trust and fostering reconciliation between the various agents of our faith communities.
- To campaign for transparency and accountability in the abuse scandals, ending the reign of a secrecy that gave immunity to malefactors.
- To find ways to reach out and listen to the survivors of abuse and with them to seek ways of atonement.

Baptism

- A rediscovery of the priesthood of the laity. As baptised daughters and sons of God, we all participate in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ.
- To end the reign of clericalism by restoring primary importance to the sacrament of Baptism and the common priesthood of the faithful.

Catechesis/ Faith Formation / Adult Faith Formation / Evangelisation

- The question of how we share the Gospel message and connect this message to everyday life is a concern.
- Parishes are struggling to accompany young people and their families in their faith development. It is acknowledged that the actual faith community will need to educate and lead our children in the faith, which suggests that a strategy, with particular focus on catechetical accompaniment, is required at parish level for young people and their parents.
- Celebration of Sacraments of Initiation alone has not led to a daily life of faith. There is an urgent need for ongoing faith formation at all levels — youth and adult — which is proactive and where no one is excluded. This formation must be given the same priority and resources as the provision of the Sacraments themselves.
- A renewed focus on Adult Faith Formation – including developing prayer, leadership roles, mission, listening skills and community.
- Education and faith formation for the laity to build a vibrant diocese for all parishes. The expectation is some of the training falls to schools or the priests however the reality is schools follow a syllabus and the priests are completely stretched.
- Consider the model of applied theology in adult education initiatives.

- We realise that our people, often very committed to the Lord, do not have a good, adult grasp of the faith. There is a crying need for accessible and high-quality faith formation for the whole community, young and old. It must be rooted in the Word of God and speaks to people's lives today.
- To address the problem of the lack of adult faith formation by clarifying opaque yet vital questions of theology.
- The Catechesis Familial Movement in Latin America is one option where couples catechise parents in their homes.
- Providing services to cater for the sacramental needs of the baptised takes up most energy, rather than reaching out to the uncatechised, the marginalised or the disaffected. The task of being a missionary disciple, which we are all called to at baptism, is often seen as a task for others, especially the ordained and the commissioned few. Formation in faith, and synodal practices of discernment, are a priority.

Clergy / Priesthood

- Improved Formation for clergy - both initial and ongoing.
- Radical rethink of priesthood.
- We need to manage expectation vis-à-vis what the priest can do. The call to ministerial priesthood is a special call, however, this does not mean that clergy have 'cornered the market' in certain aspects and that their role is a privileged one which allows the laity to abdicate their responsibility.
- 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
- Address the healthcare needs of clergy with the assistance of a healthcare support person.
- Engage clergy in the process.
- We must care for our clergy. Recent experiences remind us of the trauma that they often face in their ministry, and we must find ways of supporting them going forward.

Collaborative Parishes

- There is a clear need for greater collaboration between parish communities. The quality of liturgy, the isolation of priests, low morale, and shrinking resources, mean

that it is essential that parishes work in greater collaboration so that our parishes can be places of encounter with Christ and formation of disciples.

- Collaboration between parishes & co-responsible leadership is paramount with the declining number of priests in the diocese.

Conflict Situations

- Focus on conflict resolution and outreach to the world. We must not be apathetic – “Peace is not simply the absence of war”. We must continue to actively seek peace at home.
- Promote the importance of peace.

Communications

- With such limited diocesan clergy now more than ever, there is a need to communicate to the laity the roles/responsibilities of both the clergy and laity.
- Communication required in a co-ordinated manner across the diocese, ensuring all parishes have the right social media platforms, sharing the Good News, informing where resources are available, inclusion of articles and information on catechesis.
- We will bring people with us on the synodal journey by creating a Synod Communication Team. This team, once provided with adequate training, will be responsible for reaching out to the various pastoral areas to explain what is coming through from diocesan, national, and universal synod engagements.
- Communication – utilising technology to communicate the message.
- In our diocese, there is a communications deficit. This must be addressed. The first step in all evangelising is effective communication.

Co-responsibility and Leadership

- The diocese and its parishes have councils and commissions in place that are grounded in co-responsibility. More needs to be done, however, to make these groups truly representative and authentically co-responsible.
- Planning for co-responsible parish leadership is required.
- A desire was expressed to continue using the listening process to engage people in leadership, formation and welcome in our parishes and diocese. Above all, there is a strong desire for co-responsibility and a realistic attitude to the challenges of bringing it about.

- There is an urgent need for a new model of co-responsible leadership between priests and engaged laity at parish and diocesan levels, which will require guidance at national and universal levels.
- To continue our work for the establishment of the structures necessary for the co-responsibility of the laity in the mission of the Church mandated by *Lumen Gentium* 37.
- Focus on the issue of vocation in its widest sense.
- Promote the involvement of new ecclesial movements and associations of lay faithful, which model collegiality/synodality and co-responsibility between clergy and laity.

Culture / Society

- To listen to and dialogue with secular society, unafraid to challenge the injustices and marginalisation of today, and offering a shelter as well as a voice of hope and of meaning to those who are lost.

Dialogue / Faith Sharing / Learning from Others

- There is a desire for transparency and for the creation of spaces where everyone can speak freely. The creation of such spaces grounded in prayer and spirituality is a priority.
- We need to underline the community dimension of the practice of the faith. There's a need for spaces where people can come together and talk about faith, speaking out of a faith experience and context.
- We need to find ways where people can discuss faith matters and continue the synodal listening journey.
- Liberation Theology: the idea of the Base Communities with a focus on Praxis. Small communities of believers coming together to reflect on Scripture and pray and break bread (have a meal).

Diocesan Pastoral Councils

- Introduction of a Diocesan Pastoral Group not a council or committee, membership needs to be personnel who have the right skill sets for e.g. mixture of people with communication, financial, artistic, administration, training skills etc. who will bring the right knowledge and expertise and in turn provide direction and structure. A key part

of the success of this group will be allocating the right resources, personnel, time and finances.

- Diocesan and parish pastoral councils could be set up and formed in a synodal way. It is imperative that all councils become institutional places of 'inclusion, dialogue, transparency, discernment, evaluation and empowerment of all.' This way as a Church, we can foster co-responsibility.
- Develop council structures and understanding of being conciliar, for example Diocesan Pastoral Council.
- We recognise that we are at a very early stage in our journey towards synodality and that this journey requires structures of participation to make it happen. The Diocesan Pastoral Council and Pastoral Development Team have initiated the process of engagement with Pastoral Councils with the aim of empowering them with skills, training, and processes for working in a Synodal way.
- Model synodality through all our groups – Diocesan Pastoral Council, Parish Pastoral Groups, etc.

Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue

- Perhaps a renewed emphasis on ecumenism. A conversion of hearts and minds that challenges us out of our comfort zones.
- Supporting approaches that recognise the interdependence, interconnectedness and unity of faith communities across the diocese.
- Ecumenism is important – having faith conversations with a shared interest would be beneficial. Inclusion of priests in all forms of dialogue needs to be addressed.

Encounter / Faith / God / Holy Spirit / Trinity/ Relationship with Christ

- Promoting approaches to fostering a deep personal relationship with God for each person.
- Growing in the life of the Spirit towards a renewed identity in Christ.
- 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 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 re-educate people on the role and function of the Holy Spirit. Many have not heard of the Holy Spirit since confirmation.
- We must inculcate a spirituality of the Paschal Mystery – letting things die so that the new can come forth.

Family

- Work with families, family Masses, and sacramental preparation.
- Building mission needs vibrancy. Young families involved in the parish can help build that vibrancy. This includes sacramental preparation.
- Families are the domestic church. In a more secular society, Christian families need new supports which will help them to have confidence in professing and living the Gospel and the faith of the Church from one generation to the next.
- Pastoral Care of the Family.
- Parental partnership in sacramental preparation – catechesis, parental support.
- Catechetical formation for parents and children prior to sacramental preparation is essential, as a personal encounter with Jesus is necessary for evangelisation.
- Accompaniment of young and mature couples in living the Sacrament of Marriage.

Governance / Accountability

- The journey ahead requires us to develop broader conceptions of authority and accountability within the diocese.
- Transparency and accountability at all levels.

Language

- The language used in communicating about ‘synodality’ needs to be more accessible to the general membership of the Church. Even the word ‘synod’ is somewhat alien.
- Our language needs to be inclusive and the language of the everyday. We need to support people to experience the presence of God in their lives and speak in words that they understand.
- 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.
- Remove sexist language from readings.
- Refer to “God” rather than “he”.

Laudato Si / Climate Justice

- Refresh *Laudato Si* strategy and embed it practically into how we live and work in parishes.
- Deeper engagement with *Laudato Si*.
- To ensure that across all programmes, integral ecology is embraced as the roadmap for discerning a way forward. That we respond to the urgency of the environmental crisis our world currently faces with the same urgency with which the Church responded to the COVID-19 crisis.
- Climate and Environmental Justice: Supporting communities to sustain their livelihoods and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

Lay Involvement and New Ministries in the Church

- Leadership roles for laity at parish and diocesan level. Acknowledge the fidelity and commitment of parishioners - wider engagement with those who have skills derived from employment and voluntary work.
- Forming Laity to take on roles/responsibilities such as visiting the sick and dying.
- Training laity to become spiritual directors with a focus on accompaniment, dialogue and moving forward.
- Promoting forms of team ministry, which draw upon the whole People of God as humble collaborators upon “The Way.”
- Co-operation with other dioceses to the work of preparing lay pastoral leaders for increased responsibilities. Parishes will need to be kept up-to-date about this initiative so that their eventual ministry will be fruitful. We also identified the need to re-connect those who have already achieved pastoral qualifications with parish leadership so that they can be more involved in their parishes.
- If lay people are to play their proper role in the Church’s mission, they will have to be formed and supported in learning the new skills necessary for their ministries.
- Lay people to celebrate Eucharistic services.

LGBTQI+ People

- To work for the acceptance of LGBTQI+ people in our Church.
- Blessings for LGBTQ+ couples.

- There is a strong call to reach out beyond traditional boundaries and to include the LGBTQI+ community, those experiencing poverty and ethnic groups living in Diocese (see also Other Marginalised Groups)

Liturgy

- Enhancement of liturgical celebrations, concentration on the quality of homilies and accessibility of language coupled to a review of communication structures/practices is a priority.
- Themes can reflect the concerns and interests of the *Pobal Dé*; sickness, death, care of the earth, road safety, care of the elderly, remembering our dead, celebrating the history of the faith community in parishes, celebrating feast days.
- Some way of animating the active participation of the lay faithful in liturgy needs to be found, so that they do not experience themselves as passive observers.
- In relation to liturgy, we must be inclusive, and that means looking at the quality and language of our liturgies. We must broaden those we include and invite to participate in the liturgy.
- Creative liturgies – liturgical renewal.
- The importance of good liturgy with emphasis on the longing for good homilies was expressed in all three documents. We would see that this should be prioritised for action at diocesan level.
- Lay led liturgy is a priority, especially in parishes where there is no resident priest.
- Women to read the Gospel and to preach at Mass.

Mission / Missionary Outreach

- Specific focus on mission – link what we are spending time on and what the outputs/delivery of mission are in the diocese.
- Seeking ways to prioritise mission above maintenance in the life of faith communities and finding the spaces for this to happen.
- Church's Mission – focus more on who can we help locally.
- Sharing and reflecting on our experiences in the Church overseas.
- To explore how to more explicitly be a missionary Church in Ireland today rather than the current emphasis and focus on Church as solely sacramental and institutional.

- The Church's mission is to make Christ present in the midst of His people through reading the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and through all actions that care for the wounded and suffering.

Other Marginalised Groups

- Actively accompany those who are marginalised.
- Outreach to people who have not connected with us as Church – immigrants, travellers, marginalised people and many other groups.
- Do we have a Church solely for the middle-class?
- Special care of minority groups; women, members of the LGBTQI+ community, travellers, migrants, refugees, abuse survivors and anyone who feels marginalised from the Church is also a necessary action item for the Diocese.
- To find ways to reach out to those on the peripheries so that all voices are heard and respected in this synodal process.
- There is a strong call to reach out beyond traditional boundaries and to include the LGBTQI+ community, those experiencing poverty and ethnic groups living in Diocese.

Parish Pastoral Councils

- Each parish to have a Parish Pastoral Council or similar group to coordinate parish development. This will require support, including training and the development of skills.
- Reflect on the role of Parish Pastoral Councils and how they can truly work in a synodal Church.
- PPCs should lead by example and model synodality.
- The careful formation of Parish Pastoral Councils based on co-responsibility. This work is underway and is already bearing good fruits. Priests and people are learning how to discern God's will together.
- As we plan for the future in a rapidly changing Ireland, our Pastoral Councils will have to be adept at helping everyone, priests and people, to negotiate the changes that are so necessary to allow the Church to develop.
- There is a need to establish Parish Pastoral Councils in all parishes, especially in rural areas.
- Transparency and inclusion in pastoral councils is essential.

Prayer and Discernment

- Renewing and supporting communal processes for prayer and discernment.
- A synodal Church is built on us working together, the “we” embracing our diversity, welcoming different spiritual traditions to weave together in communion and harmony; so therefore, we must listen, first and foremost, in a spirit of love that truly reflects the essence of the Gospel of Christ. All discernment and decision making must come out of prayer and reflection on the Word of God.
- Listen to the Holy Spirit, pray to the Holy Spirit, be open to discernment at every meeting, time for prayer and discernment at every meeting.
- Popular piety needs to be promoted and evangelised.

Reconciliation

- We need to bear witness to reconciliation in practice. If we live with the tension, a resolution will emerge.

Sense of Belonging / Inclusion

- Through personal and communal commitment to prayer and reflection, our spirit-filled attitudes and initiatives will seek to include and attract everyone, in our daily interactions and in all organised programmes and activities.
- Personal invitation on a local level, which is common to all three documents (local synthesis, national synthesis and DCS).
- The sense of belonging has to be more than pious platitudes. We need a Church that is reflective of inclusiveness, recognising the inconsistency in the Church’s message and what is perceived to be Christ’s inclusive message, e.g., the makeup of families today, the LGBTQIA+ community, family planning and the Church’s response to poverty and climate change.
- There must be no hint of exclusion and judgment. The practice, the process and the promise is to ‘Enlarge the space of (y)our tent’.
- 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.
- Enlarge the space of our tent. At our diocesan gathering bring in more people, broadening the understanding of the tent itself, expand the tent, be missionary reaching out to young people and others.

- Welcome – efforts must be made to ensure that everyone knows they are welcome within the Church. Parish and diocesan initiatives are a part of our diocesan plan.
- To work at parish level to foster a more compassionate and inclusive Church.
- To listen to the voices of the excluded and find ways to welcome them into the tent.

Scripture/The Word of God

- Arising from this synodal listening process is the desire and appetite for enriching our lives with the Word of God.
- Word of God calls out to be read more widely and studied in our homes and parish communities.
- 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.
- Foster encounter with the person of Jesus Christ through creating and promoting small Christian communities, small faith communities, focused on The Word.

Strategies / Structures / Planning

- Structures including leadership. Decisions need to be made on the future of diocese without bishops, whether it is the placement of a full time bishop to lead and give direction or amalgamation with another diocese.
- To carefully and strategically plan for the coming year.
- Ensure the existence and good functioning of synodal structures, e.g. parish and diocesan pastoral councils
- Continue to consider the amalgamation of parishes and its implications.
- Look at our church buildings in new creative ways.
- An administration framework to alleviate the burden on parish clergy would be helpful.

Synod and Synodality

- Reassure those concerned about synodality that the Church's fundamental teachings will not change, nor how decisions are made within the Church. Local churches should speak about the synodal process, awakening people to the renewal that is taking place. Most are unaware of the process.

- Embedding and integrating synodal working in all areas of the Church to include schools, families, hospitals, businesses – making it part of how we are and not a bolt-on.
- Energy around continuing the conversations that are synodal.
- Ensure that diocesan pastoral renewal projects use and promote synodal practices.
- Bring the mentality that is captured in the image of the tent (from *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent*) into every parish in the diocese.
- Keep the momentum of synodality going.
- To evolve a participatory culture that will facilitate ongoing dialogue regarding areas of concern, such as, the role of women, the process of decision making and the handing on of a lived faith.
- The need to create opportunities and spaces for on-going conversation.
- Modelling of synodality in all aspects of parish and diocesan life.
- Fostering a relational and discipleship approach in parishes and the wider diocese as a formative and pragmatic route towards synodality.
- Expanding the reach of synodal conversations.
- The insights of the synodal process need to make a positive impact on parishes. This will involve continual engagement with clergy and parish pastoral councils, particularly by inviting them to take concrete action in broadening inclusion and representation at parish level.
- There needs to be a wider appreciation of synodality and the synodal process amongst those involved in parish leadership and amongst the faithful in general. To this end, we will organise discussion of the work done so far at local, national and international level. This is something that might be incorporated into the diocesan Lenten (or other) programme(s).
- How do we teach synodality? Can you teach synodality or is something that needs to be experienced? Where do we see synodality already in action in the Church?
- Many people were unsure of the different aspects and wording of the synodal process. We agree that communicating and clearly explaining all that is unfolding in the synodal process is a priority.
- We will arrange fora to invite those who have participated, and those from whom we have not already heard, to have a conversation so there is not simply one-way messaging. For those unable to participate in a personal way we will develop

materials that will communicate a summary of the Diocesan Synthesis (video or presentation) which can prompt practical local actions.

- The next step is to engage the parish communities of the diocese in conversation on the pastoral priorities that have arisen as a result of the Diocesan Stage of the synodal process.
- Education and formation for synodality, finding ways of communicating what exactly synodality is.
- Promote 'fraternal gatherings'. The Church as a tent of meeting place. Create moments of 'encounter' where listening becomes welcome, becomes invitation.
- Promote a synodal way of being, at every level and in every way keep before us the question 'Are we being truly synodal?'
- Continuing engagement with the synodal process at local level, sustained by prayer, is seen as essential for moving towards greater collaboration.
- Actively promote an understanding of synodality among priests and parishioners.
- Another question of how do we keep the idea of Synod and synodality alive in the parishes needs to be looked at.
- Desire expressed to continue with synodal model in the future.
- To continue our work in creating awareness of synodality and engagement with the process.
- Provide the opportunity to participate in further discussions in the synodal process which is pivotal to the future of the Church in Ireland and globally.

Understanding of Church

- Building a shared vision for our diocese – reconfiguring the Church in our diocese. A radical rethink of what it means to be Church and what Eucharist actually means.
- Being Eucharistic and being Church does not always entail attending Mass inside a Church building – we need a focus on Liturgy and Mission.

Witness

- Promote the idea of Christian hospitality as a practical witness to the Gospel.

Women

- Women though involved and committed in many ways, feel they are marginalised and have little say in the decisions that are made. The diocese is called to affirm and champion the role of women.
- We must become conscious of the role of the laity, and in particular, women, in the Church we dream of. The desire is there for a genuine reform and renewal of our Church and we are aware of the importance our faith witness is going to have in the consumerist society in which we live.
- To promote the equality of women in the Church.
- A greater role for women in liturgical and leadership roles in the Church is called for but without admittance to the ordained priesthood stated by some.
- Supporting women's and girls' protection, voice, and leadership: Improving the safety, well-being, participation, and leadership of women and girls.

Youth

- Young people feel that there was little done to make them feel part of the faith community. Create spaces where young people feel welcome.
- Activities for 13/14-year-olds.
- Outreach to young people. Many of them are still people of faith even though they may not be engaged with the local Church community.
- Further ongoing focus and strategy for accompanying young people.
- A more effective means of engaging with and accompanying young people, outside the context of school, needs to be identified and resourced.
- Given their importance for both the present and the future of the Church, we identified the need to make progress on the suggestions made by teenagers regarding their own role and involvement in the life of the Church – e.g. by looking at the establishment of youth councils at diocesan and local level to provide opportunities for young people to develop their faith through peer ministry, liturgies and pilgrimages.
- 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.
- Our new Director of Pastoral Renewal will research and find the best ways of building on existing outreach to young people.

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Abuse Crisis

- The open wound of the abuse crisis, the issue of trust, questions of restorative justice, and how we might move towards collective healing as a Church in Ireland.
- The hurt experienced by those who were abused is a continuing feature of the life of the Church. Those who were abused must be continually involved in any process of moving on.
- Clerical abuse in the Church has turned many people away — this still needs to be dealt with. We must not be afraid of the sins and shadows of the past. Those abused by the Church must be listened to and hurts must be healed.
- The legacy and hurt from abuse remains.
- Continue the on-going support for survivors of all forms of abuse and progression of best practice in safeguarding throughout the Catholic Church in Ireland.
- Continuing and improving our ongoing response to abuse within the Local Church.
- The legacy of abuse within the Church is one of broken trust. We must continue to address this issue as a Church. While apologies form part of this response, apologies on their own are not enough. A deep and wide-reaching investigative process of the structures and culture, which allowed this to happen, is needed.
- To conduct our own review of the abuse scandals and their cover-up as a step towards recovering credibility
- It must be a priority for the Catholic Church in Ireland to meaningfully address the legacy of abuse. Perhaps places could be designated at diocesan and national levels offering spiritual accompaniment for those affected.
- The Child abuse crisis is an ongoing call to the Church. It calls us ever more deeply to: Penance, Atonement, Healing. This is a call to the whole Church in Ireland. We must find ways to respond to this call. The whole Church needs healing; firstly those who suffered abuse and their families, then the families of abusers and the communities in which the abuse occurred and the clergy and religious who carry a particular stigma because of the actions of others.
- The Church needs to find a way forward with healing and acknowledgement of the past history of abuse within the Church – atonement is needed.
- To urgently address and respond to the continuing revelations of abuse and concealment. To publish widely the Appendix of the Irish National Synthesis, which was submitted by the group of survivors and victims of abuse.
- Listening to survivors of abuse and finding ways together of atonement so that we can move forward together. Be open to survivors speaking to us as Church, this is

how we can learn. The need to reach out to the wider community who are affected by the abuse crisis in the Church in Ireland.

- Atone publically for sexual clergy abuse.
- There is recognition that we are a Church in need of healing at every level and, as a survivor of abuse who engaged in the process remarked, “we need to find a forum in which we can all heal together.”

Catechesis / Faith Formation / Adult Faith Formation / Evangelisation

- There is a growing need for a whole new approach to the teaching of the faith locally and this needs a coordinated strategy. The advent of Catechists is welcome. Adult faith formation is a critical area. Too many people in Ireland still have a primary-school-level of faith formation and this leaves development very challenged.
- There needs to be a focus on adult faith formation so that the laity feel equipped and confident to participate and assume important roles with the Church.
- Has *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis* been implemented?
- Ireland has an extraordinary level of sacramental initiation through Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation. Serious questions arise about the pastoral effectiveness of these sacraments. New avenues need to be explored to facilitate initial proclamation of the Gospel and the reawakening of the call to discipleship. The partnership between home, parish and school needs to be reimagined.
- Developing models of catechesis that build upon people’s insights and experiences rather than relying too much on external authority.
- Learning how faith formation can be more fruitful for the ongoing life of the Local Church.
- A national initiative on faith development with a focus on adult faith formation and lay ministry with the provision of resources and processes to enable this to happen.
- Faith formation is a clear priority. There is a historical legacy of prioritising the preparation of children for the sacraments of initiation and an over-dependence on the school system. This system is no longer fit for purpose. The Church in Ireland must meaningfully address the issue of preparation of children for the Sacraments, and the on-going faith formation of the laity through adolescence into adulthood. The goal of faith formation must be a true encounter with Christ leading to discipleship, leading to mission.
- Clearly proclaim the teaching of the Church.
- Need to foster formation in spirituality and liturgy for all the baptised.

Catholic Schools

- Catholic Schools - their changing role and if they are not going to be part of sacramental preparation who will be taking this forward?
- Remove sacramental preparation from schools

Clergy / Priesthood

- Care and support for our aging priests/religious, coupled with a new model of parish where everyone is using the gifts given to them by God.
- Women to participate in the formation process for clergy.
- Training for priests should include developing skills in leadership that is synodal.
- Create a cohesive and strategic response to the changes brought about by shortage of clergy across all dioceses.
- Carry out a root and branch review of the seminary formation of new clergy to assist the development of new pastoral leadership skills.
- Support and encourage priests more.

Collaborative Structures

- The Irish Church is a small reality. It is important that we develop supportive relationships between dioceses at provincial and national level. This will be particularly important in the development of pastoral, catechetical and evangelistic programmes and initiatives.

Communications

- Promote good news stories at local and national level, which demonstrate baptismal mission in action.
- A national communications plan is needed.
- Social Media: how to handle the balance between keeping people informed and the void of information, which can lead to conspiracies, trolls etc.
- Find a way to proactively communicate the message of the Gospel through secular media platforms.

Culture and Society

- Fostering a shared understanding and appreciation of the changes in Irish culture and society.

- Addressing the privatisation of faith in people's lives and the reluctance to speak of God in the public space.

Ecumenism and Inter-religious dialogue

- What can we learn from other churches?
- The fact that ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue were not strong issues in both the local and National Syntheses needs to be named and reflected upon.
- Ecumenical outreach is essential.
- Value other cultures and faiths and encouraging those who wish to live and work and witness or share faith there. We have both a long missionary tradition and more recent experiences of being enriched by people arriving from other countries, to build upon.

Encounter / Faith / God / Holy Spirit / Trinity/ Relationship with Christ

- Building encounters that help us to hear the voice of the Spirit and join with the powerless especially when the Spirit speaks to us through voices of suffering.

Episcopal Conference

- Lay involvement in the Episcopal Conference – it should be representative of the Church in Ireland.
- Bishops Conference to act in a synodal way and develop synodal practices.
- There is a recognition that men do not participate in the life of the church, liturgically or socially, and yet they are the decision makers. Therefore, the challenge exists – how to increase the participation of men and also to enable women to participate in the decision making. Example could be set by adding a group of lay men and women to Episcopal Conferences.
- Invite the Irish Episcopal Conference—in groups or individually--to dialogue with the People of God who are deeply concerned about synodal issues. This interface would already be an exercise in synodality and enable people and clergy to look in the same direction and prayerfully discuss what the Spirit is saying to us about our common concerns. While written reports have their value, they are to be seen as only the raw material of the synodal process which is direct and interpersonal (see Lk 24:13-37). Models of such dialogue and of apostolic discernment in common are easily available.

Family

- More appreciation of families as communities of faith and faith development.
- To review current practice and explore new avenues of approaching sacramental preparation with families – for all the sacraments.
- Support families and the domestic church.
- Recognise the changing realities of families, as a result of secularisation and assist families to transmit faith and live as a domestic Church.

Finances

- Financial repercussions to the problem of a diminishing number of clergy, reduced collections across all churches in Ireland, the current cost of living crisis and how all this can be addressed and supported by the laity.

Governance / Accountability

- Accountability at every level!
- Introduce the separation of powers, Legislative, Judicial and Executive, with lay participation at every level.

Language

- Seek ways to introduce and adopt inclusive language in liturgies and all Church documents (e.g. early adoption of new lectionary).
- Addressing language and communication specifically in an Irish context and incorporating aspects of culture into ongoing catechesis.

Lay Involvement and New Ministries in the Church

- For the Church to function in a truly synodal way, structures need to be inhabited by well-formed people in terms of vision and skills. A coordinated plan from national level is required.
- Support for adult faith formation, sharing of resources and the provision of training in lay pastoral ministry.
- Lay ministry and lay leadership should become part of the life of parish and diocese. Those who belong to the Church should be nurtured and empowered in various roles in the Church.
- Progressing lay ministry – role of catechist etc.

- The formation and training of lay ministers to take up leadership roles in parishes need to be addressed, facilitating an effective delivery of a common mission.
- Accelerate the involvement of laity in every aspect of the Church's mission.
- Develop and invest in ministry of catechist.

Lay Men

- There is a recognition that men do not participate in the life of the Church, liturgically or socially, and yet they are the decision makers. Therefore, the challenge exists – how to increase the participation of men and also to enable women to participate in the decision making. Example could be set by adding a group of lay men and women to Episcopal Conferences (Also included in Episcopal Conference Section).
- The Church must find ways to attract men to a more active Church membership and to enable women to participate more fully at all levels of Church life.

Laudato Si / Climate Justice

- There is need for greater emphasis in Ireland on the social and climate justice ministries of the Church. It would seem from the Irish submission that, in Ireland, we see social justice issues as separate from our faith. There is therefore a call to move from being an institutional/sacramental Church to being a missionary Church – embracing fully the call of the Gospel.
- In a very practical way we strongly urge the leadership of the Irish Church to embrace Pope Francis' invitation to achieve the seven *Laudato Si'* Goals by 2030. This invitation is made to parishes, dioceses, all educational institutions, families and individuals, businesses and health care facilities.
- A way to enrich the Church, locally and nationally, and to really listen to the signs of the times would be to create spaces for the people of God to experience God's creation as the first word of God to God's people. What is the Book of Nature saying to us now? How can we, as custodians of creation, live out the first commandment to "keep the garden of the Lord" (Gen 2:15)? Only through a deep-rooted ecological spirituality can we address these issues and offer hope, inspiration and relationship with God to the generations who are coming after us.
- *Laudato Si'* states that our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is an essential aspect of Christian experience (see LS, 217); and since the synodal pathway is about our discerning together the promptings of the Holy Spirit today, the

challenges both of climate change and loss of biodiversity must be front and centre in the synodal process.

- We would like to see the Irish Synod engaging and advocating at the parish/community/diocesan/national and international levels so communities respond to all the principles outlined in Laudato Si'. Such engagement and advocacy will ensure that people will act at personal, community, and political levels and will embrace the Laudato Si' Goals and the Laudato Si' action platform.

Leadership

- Formation in leadership is needed.
- Find a way in which there can be authentic and responsible leadership, both on the part of clergy and members of the faithful, which is synodal while also being decisive.
- The Church in Ireland at national level must form, guide, and resource the Church at local level in developing new forms of co-responsible leadership. This must include formation in synodality.

LGBTQI+ people

- There is a clear, overwhelming call for the full inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in the Church, expressed by all ages and particularly by the young and by members of the LGBTQI+ community themselves.
- Find ways of repairing the damage done by the language of rejection of the LGBTQI+ community.

Liturgy

- Liturgical formation based on Vatican II is another priority.
- Creative liturgies that embrace the talents and gifts of Church communities can be refreshing and engaging for young and old. Involvement in liturgy will help develop community spirit. Training of people involved with liturgical preparation and lay led liturgies is essential.
- While there are many instances of good liturgy in certain places it is generally accepted that work needs to be done to improve the quality of liturgy across the country. Some priests need to put more work into their preaching and congregations must be helped to a new and deeper appreciation of the liturgy. Irish people seem to lack confidence when it comes to partaking properly in the liturgy, especially in relation to communal singing.

- Provision will have to be made for alternative liturgies for situations where there is no resident priest. Lay people will have to be given the necessary training to lead liturgies, conduct funeral services etc.
- Look at structure of Mass, could we have more lay involvement? Greater appreciation and encouragement of lay-led liturgies, this seems to have diminished compared to 15 or 20 years ago.

Prayer and Discernment

- In Athlone, at the national gathering we heard a very important voice from outside the room, saying; ‘Tell them to go deeper’! The Church in Ireland must choose very deliberately to put the Word of God, the Sacraments and the Teaching of the Church back at the centre.
- Pray for a spiritual and evangelical renewal.
- Training in communal processes of listening and discernment, for both priests and laity.

Polarisation

- Overcoming traditional versus liberal polarisations by developing a deeper understanding of the progress of orthodoxy and promoting life in the Spirit as a Christ-centred way of navigating oppositional forces.

Mission / Missionary Outreach

- Our faith is built on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That has to be our central proclamation in all we seek to do. We are called to live and share that mission of the Church through our baptism. Renewing the Church in Ireland means renewal of the faith – evangelisation. In order to do that we must have leaders locally who are well formed in terms of faith, vision and skills. This needs to be coordinated from national level.
- Asking how we can successfully carry out our mission in Ireland today.
- The insularity of the Church in Ireland is contributing to the lack of joy and low morale in parish communities. An openness to the joy and vibrancy of the Church in other parts of the world is necessary for a renewal of the life of the Church in Ireland.
- What is surprising in the Diocesan and National Syntheses is the lack of commitment to missionary outreach given the extraordinary history of the Church in Ireland. Yet young people volunteer to work with NGOs and give great support to charitable

causes. There is a disconnect between the Irish Church's concern for the poor over many years as demonstrated through missionary endeavour and people's commitment to the poor in recent times.

- Open up spaces. Look at opportunities of bringing faith experiences to the people, (pop-up library of religious book and liturgy on a campsite given as an example).

Sense of Belonging / Inclusion

- Dreaming of a Church where everyone IS welcome, we have to be aware of the LGBTQIA+ community, those separated/divorced, divorced and remarried, those with disabilities, travellers, migrants, the elderly, those disillusioned or disenfranchised from the Church for whatever reason. There must be a genuine focus on our youth.
- Full inclusion of all people at all levels.
- Developing models of inclusion that are true to the Gospels and cognisant of the needs of all through non-discriminatory pastoral activities.
- Asking why we find it so hard to foster community within the Church.
- Be an institution for all the people...and a refuge for those who feel wounded and broken.

Sexuality and Human Relationships

- Update the Church's teaching on relationships and sexuality taking into account developments in understanding of human sexuality.
- Pastoral care for those who are divorced and remarried and those who identify as
- LGBT+

Social Justice

- The Church must continue to work out a space for itself in the conversations around social justice (including climate change) in Ireland. It also needs to have a communications strategy to allow its voice to be heard in articulating Catholic Social Teaching. This is something young people will engage with. The rise of secularism and a consumerist society calls us to live in a way in which the spiritual and ethical values of our faith are more manifest, despite the challenges.
- Highlight Catholic Social Teaching.
- Greater formation on the social teachings of the Church to help us to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth.

Strategies / Structures / Planning

- We need a national plan, a national strategy as to how we move on from here. This should be resourced and devised so that each diocese is not left to go it alone. This will involve real collegiality and synodality.
- National Initiative – 1600th anniversary since the arrival of St. Patrick in Ireland – Can we have a 10-year plan, which will take us to 2032?
- Create a national pastoral plan based on the National Synthesis to ensure pastoral unity and accountability across dioceses. Offer resources and training to support the plan
- Conduct a high-level review and planning exercise addressing youth faith formation, sacramental preparation, teaching of religious education and the trusteeship of Catholic schools.
- Developing practical structures where all voices can be heard through a broader conception of faith.
- To mandate and provide formation for effective parish, diocesan and national pastoral councils.
- There is a feeling that Jesus has been put back in the tabernacle and lay people are being kept at a distance. Invest in structure and people.
- Invest in people, not structures.
- Parish councils to be confirmed as important links in the synodal chain.

Synod and Synodality

- Structures and processes for synodality are not in place; while structures in themselves are not enough, there is a need for ongoing formation to support a synodal culture.
- The synodal process is broad and progress is likely to be slow. In the meantime the Church must continue to work on local issues; co-responsibility, lay participation, adult faith formation etc. The People of God struggle to believe, against and within an ever more secular background.
- The Church needs to encourage clergy and religious to really commit to the synodal process. It seems there has been a lack of interest on the part of many clergy and bishops to the process.
- Continue to listen to what has been said throughout this synodal journey. How will we continue to do this and provide an assurance to those who responded that their voice did matter?

- To visibly model synodality in all aspects of Church life in Ireland.
- Drawing out the richness of synodality as a spiritual resource in the daily lives of disciples.
- Supporting dioceses in their preparation for the Irish Church's own Synodal Pathway is a key priority for the Irish Church. Dioceses need concrete resources for learning synodal practices, as well as a clear and practical roadmap for what needs to happen locally in preparation for the synodal assemblies. Co-operation between dioceses was also identified as something that needs to be fostered within the Irish Church.
- This reflection needs to be genuinely synodal; in other words, led by the Spirit and listening to all voices, sustained by prayer, discernment and the Word of God.
- There is an 'urgent' need for education and formation programs for developing a shared understanding of synodality for clergy and laity, especially for all those in leadership roles.
- The Church in Ireland must promote and support further engagement in synodality as a future way of walking together and listening to each other, whilst all the time listening to the Holy Spirit. A significant way of engaging in this synodal way would be to hold assemblies like the one held in Athlone with specific invitation and engagement from those within and outside the Church structure including those who are on the margins of society. This assembly would consider how we are Church in action, engaging with the issues of society and culture around us. This would reflect on our call to be a Church, which stands alongside those who are poor and marginalised in our society.
- 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.
- The synodal journey is not a 100-meter sprint but a marathon with plenty of challenges and encounters along the way. The synodal journey will demand patience and tolerance as people in Ireland walk together on this listening pilgrimage.

Those on the Margins

- Those on the margins e.g. LGBTQ+, they are active Christians, involved in their community, take an active role in Church life and ministries but cannot marry in the Church or perhaps are welcomed in one parish but should they move to another

parish they will be excluded. Why within the Irish Catholic Church have we such inequality and division, how can this be explained? Where is the information that can be trusted and respected?

Women

- Women's participation in all aspects of decision-making is essential within co-responsibility. Co-responsibility must not be seen solely in terms of laity and those who are ordained working together but as women and men working together both within the Church in Ireland and the Universal Church.
- Enable women to participate more fully at all levels of Church life.
- The role of women within the Church and their exclusion from many roles, along with a broader understanding and support of different family types.
- Examination and taking proactive action in regard to the role of women.
- The role of women in ministry and decision making needs national attention.
- The role for women in ministry and leadership in the Church must be discussed and a path found to move forward in this issue.
- Promote the equality of women through recognition and appointment to Church institutions and bodies.
- Encourage the Irish Church to take advantage of Trócaire's expertise in the area of how best to listen to the voices of women and empower them in their participation.

Youth

- A more effective means of engaging with and accompanying young people, outside the context of school, needs to be identified and resourced.
- Carry out research on the alienation of young people from the Church to assist the formulation of programmes to listen to the young and to accompany them in their development.