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11th October 2021

Dear Parish Priest, dear Headteacher, dear Lay Chaplain,

As we prepare to celebrate the start of the Synodal Process in the coming days, I'm very pleased to commend to you these Synodal Prayercards for use in your parish, school or chaplaincy.

There are more prayercards than people; I know that! I'm hopeful that your parishioners, students or community will take a prayercard for themselves, and one for another person whom they know, but who has perhaps stopped coming to Mass, or who might appreciate some encouragement to recognise that he or she is a beloved member of God's family. Within the school context, pupils and students might put the prayer on their fridge door in the kitchen, and encourage family members to pray the prayer quietly each day. In chaplaincies it might be possible for copies of the card to be available for all-comers. In whatever ways we can let's make this prayer known far and wide, so that as many people as possible might join in the Synodal process of listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other, as we dream of the Church we want to make a reality.

The prayercard also has a QR code, and a web address, where thoughts and answers about the Synodal questions can be left. Please encourage all those who take a card to consider making a response to this opportunity to be heard, especially those whose voices can sometimes be forgotten or left out.

The prayer which the Holy Father, Pope Francis, has chosen to be our Synodal Prayer is that used at the opening of each session of the Second Vatican Council sixty years ago. Just as the Holy Spirit was heard then, so let us pray that we might listen to the Spirit now, in our own time and place.

So, please, pray this prayer daily, in Mass and in school, at home in the family, and in our praying communities around the diocese. In whatever ways we can let us join with the Pope, and people around the world, in asking the Spirit for his guidance once again.

With every good wish, and prayers for your ministry and your parishioners,

+ Patrick

Rt Rev Patrick McKinney
Bishop of Nottingham



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A Timeline for the First Phase of the Diocesan participation in the Synodal Process

Monday 11 th October	Council of Priests: distribution of Prayer cards, Adoration template, etc for parishes and chaplaincies.
Sunday 17 th October	<p>Diocesan Launch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Pastoral Letter to be read in all churches and chaplaincies, with the distribution of prayer resources; • The Bishop will preside at Saint Barnabas Cathedral, 11.15am Mass; • Parish Launch of prayerful discernment – afternoon Celebration of Adoration and Vespers (template to be provided).
Sunday 24 th October	World Mission Sunday – announcement of first parish meeting over the next fortnight to consider what a Synod is, and how my parish/chaplaincy can contribute to the Synodal Process. Suggested questions for each parish to consider: 1) What is my dream for the Church, for my parish/chaplaincy so that it can become more outward-looking, more missionary? 2) To achieve this dream, what do we need to stop doing? What are we doing that needs to be developed or done differently?
Monday 1 st November	In schools the process of listening to pupils and students begins, as well as outreach through the NDCYS for encounters with young people who are not in Catholic schools. The six parish questions are adapted to three questions for schools: 1) What is my dream for the Church and my school? How can we make this happen? 2) Who are the people who feel left out and excluded in the Church? How can we reach out, listen to, and love them? Think of two ideas, one for now and one for the future, to help include them. 3) What does the Holy Spirit inspire us to do in our Church and school? What do you think the Holy Spirit is calling us to do next?
Thursday 11 th November	Clergy Deanery Meetings to consider: 1) What’s been happening in parish meetings so far; what ideas are emerging? 2) Planning for the January Special Deanery Meeting: who will lead the Deanery discussion? Will it be in person or by zoom? Suitable venue if in person, number of parish delegates, etc?
Sunday 14 th November	Day of Prayer for the Poor, and Remembrance Sunday – announcement of second parish meeting this week to consider 1) As a parish/chaplaincy do we know who are the people who feel marginalised or separated from the parish/chaplaincy and society? 2) How best can our parish respond? Suggest at least two identifiable ways (an immediate action and a long-term change) in which, as a parish, we will reach out to, and listen to, the marginalised or separated.
Friday 19 th November	World Youth Funday – schools are invited to use this day as part of the listening process to celebrate their connectedness with schools and young people around the world, recognising that the Holy Spirit brings us all together in the Church as a single family of God.

Sunday 28th November

First Sunday of Advent – announcement of third parish meeting to consider this week what the Holy Spirit may be saying to us as individuals/ parishes & chaplaincies. In the light of God speaking to Mary, consider specifically: 1) **How do I hear and respond to the voice of God’s Holy Spirit, in my life; what signs of the Spirit at work do I see in the life of my parish/chaplaincy?** 2) **What steps may the Holy Spirit be calling us to take, as a parish/chaplaincy, on our journey together into God’s future?** Please retain your own parish notes for ongoing parish use but, in summary form (maximum two sides of A4), please highlight the two actions (on the basis of all the discussions) you wish to take forward in your parish planning, explaining why these have been chosen, to give a little context. This should be sent to your Dean by 15th December.

2022

Sunday 9th January

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord – announcement of a special deanery meeting to be held this month, open to delegates (lay, religious and clergy) from each of the deanery parishes. The shape of this Meeting will: 1) enable each parish / chaplaincy to share two actions it has decided upon; 2) this will be followed by a time of prayerful discernment; 3) then discussion and agreement on what as a deanery we can do better together, rather than separate, to enable more fruitful dialogue with the wider community (ecumenically, with other faiths, in charitable outreach and with civic bodies).

Wednesday 2nd February

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Each deanery should have sent its submission (maximum two sides of A4) by this date to either of the Diocesan Synod contacts: Father David Cain david.cain@dioceseofnottingham.uk or Joe Hopkins joe.hopkins@dioceseofnottingham.uk, so that, with the Bishop, they might collate the responses from all the deaneries, schools, chaplaincies, religious and any other submissions to help create our diocesan report (10 pages maximum). This will then be sent to the Synod team of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales who will then collate all the reports from the dioceses into a summary of the main themes. This, in turn, will then be sent to and discussed by the Conference of European Bishops’ Conferences.

Meanwhile our own diocesan discernment continues.

Tuesday 22nd February

Feast of Chair of Saint Peter – a special Diocesan Meeting is convoked, including Mass in Saint Barnabas Cathedral (with streaming facility), at which the fruits of the Diocesan phase of the Synod journey are presented to the clergy, laity and religious from parishes, schools, chaplaincies and any other groups. This event will provide an important opportunity to share and celebrate parish, school and deanery actions.

Lent – Pentecost

Each parish, school and chaplaincy is asked to make use of this period to begin implementing the two actions it decided to take forward; each deanery is asked to do the same.

Sunday 5th June

Solemnity of Pentecost – a time to celebrate the movement of God’s Holy Spirit within our diocese over these past months, and to begin to discern afresh where the Holy Spirit is leading us, the People of God, in this diocese of Nottingham.



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Adapting the Timeline for your Parish / School / Chaplaincy

Primary Principle

The most important thing about this process is the opportunity for the Community to pray, share and listen to the Holy Spirit. This is more important than gathering data for the diocese / Bishops' Conference / Holy See! Of course it's important to understand what has been discussed and prayed about, but your primary focus is to think about how to engage the most people you can, particularly those at the margin and often overlooked. This is not just the responsibility of the parish priest, headteacher or chaplain, but for all in the community to reach out and engage. The first principle therefore is not how can we report this but how can we as a community engage with others.

Ways of living the synod

Prayer

We cannot hear the Holy Spirit if our hearts are closed to prayer. Pray about who you can ask to help you lead this in your community, then keep the whole process surrounded in prayer. There are different ways to do this:

- Regularly pray the Synod prayer, at the end of the intercessions at Sunday Mass, after the Gospel or homily at weekday Masses, during Collective Worship, or at the start or end of the day in school, together as a family in the home;
- Have it as a regular intention in other prayer groups such as the Rosary, parish prayer groups, Eucharistic Adoration, during the Divine Office;
- Have it as a prayer intention in the bulletin;
- Have a large-print version written up on a school noticeboard, maybe different paragraphs written by different classes.

Listening and Discussing

The timeline suggests three parish meetings with two questions per meeting, or three questions in schools. There are many ways that you could do this. Firstly don't feel you have to have three meetings, you could have one, two or more than three. Consider how this would best work for your community and encourage the widest participation. Here are some suggestions in the parish setting:

- The homily is about the topics and ask people to discuss it after Mass;
- The questions are set out on tables during tea and coffee after Mass;
- Set meetings at different times to encourage different target groups;
- Questions are given to existing meetings – social groups, bible studies, catechetical meetings, SPANNED, SVP, Justice and Peace, etc.
- People are asked to host discussion groups in their homes, inviting parishioners who live near-by to attend;
- Meetings happen at different churches within parishes that are joined or have multiple church buildings;
- Meetings happen online
- Questionnaires are given out to parishioners to have discussions with people who aren't regular members of the parish;
- EMHCs discuss the questions with the people to whom they bring Holy Communion;
- Publish the questions in the parish bulletin, asking for replies by a certain date

Here are some suggestions within the school setting:

- Ask the priest to talk about the Synod during a school Mass, and then have a discussion with pupils afterwards;
- Use a Collection Worship to present the Synod, and then use some time during that day to discuss questions in class;
- Ask the school's Lay Chaplaincy Team to consider the questions;
- Ask some of the older pupils to canvass thoughts about the questions with younger members of the school community;
- Publish the questions in a school letter asking pupils to discuss them with their families, and bring some answers into school;
- Consider the questions in the context of dreaming the future of the Church, and illustrate the answers with artwork, song, or poetry;
- Challenge each class to create a piece of artwork for their prayer space, illustrating their answers to the questions, and then allowing classes to visit each other's artwork;
- Use some time on World Youth Sunday to consider the questions in each class; further resources are available at www.worldyouthsunday.com;
- Consider a different question during each of the three (school) weeks of Advent, recognising that in the Synod process we try to come closer to God, just as He comes close to us in the person of Jesus, at Christmas;
- Write some answers to the questions from your school and share them (virtually perhaps) with another school in your Trust, listening to their answers too, so that you can hear what other people are saying.

Sharing the feedback

Not everyone within a community will be able to attend meetings, or participate in group discussions in school, etc, but it is important that each person hears what has been discussed. If you plan to hold multiple meetings it may encourage people to come when they see what was discussed at a previous meeting, and how people were listened to and acknowledged. The final submission in particular should be shared with the whole parish, school or chaplaincy so that everyone in the community knows what is being said. It may be helpful to have a team to do this so it isn't a large burden for one person. The information could be shared via the newsletter, website, notice board, email, post, etc, and with all those connected with the community, and the groups which are part of the community (such as housebound parishioners in a parish, or a nursery which feeds a primary school).

Final Thoughts

Pope Francis is asking us to dream what the Church could be, and to walk together into God's future, where that Church becomes a reality. This Synod isn't about changing the Church's doctrine, nor about finding the 'right' answers to questions. Let us pray that we can dream with, listen to, and journey together with as many of our communities as possible, so that together we help to build up the Church in our diocese, and pass that message, loud and clear, to the bishops of England and Wales, and then to the Pope himself.

For more information please contact either of the two Diocesan Synod Representatives:

- Father David Cain – david.cain@dioceseofnottingham.uk
- Joe Hopkins – joe.hopkins@dioceseofnottingham.uk

Or any member of the Diocesan Synod Team:

- Tom Baptist
- Karen Foong
- Father Simon Gillespie
- Fran Hazel
- Canon Eddy Jarosz
- David Lawes
- Sister Susan Richert PBVM
- Madeleine Strezynski