



# Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin

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## **A Pastoral Message as the Synod on Synodality commences in Rome**

I am very conscious we are entering a very historic time in our Church with the Synod on Synodality commencing in Rome this weekend. It will run throughout the month of October, with the second part happening in October 2024. Synodality is very much a new language for our Church which in the past delivered decrees and promulgations *top down* so to speak, this process is very much seen as a *bottom up* approach. It leaves some uncomfortable, because some people prefer simply being told what has to be done and doing it.

Indeed the history of the Church would suggest that Synods can cause often fractious debate between those who see themselves as traditionalists and those who might feel they were progressives. This is a Synod on Ecclesiology, on how the Church, how our diocese, how our parishes operate.

Some see this Synod called by Pope Francis as the first proper reception of Vatican II. 'Synodality' is a word that captures so much of the teaching and preaching of the pontificate of Pope Francis and of those Vatican II documents sixty years earlier. We must become a listening Church. We must accompany people on their faith journey. We must walk with one another, keeping in step, not too quick and equally not too slow. This new way of doing things suggests the journey of synodality is as important as any final deliberations and decisions.

440 will gather in Rome and that number will include lay women and men, religious as well as Bishops, all with voting rights. The Irish Episcopal Conference will be represented by Bishop Brendan Leahy (Limerick) and Bishop Alan McGuckian S.J. (Raphoe). Also attending, by invitation of Pope Francis, are Fr. Eamonn Conway (Tuam Archdiocese) and Sr. Patricia Murray IBVM. It will be a very different gathering. The seating in the Pope Paul VI Hall where normally Papal Audiences are held will be removed to allow for round table discussions and conversations. Even the setting of the hall will give a message before conversations ever begin. It's a sacred time, where delegates and those they represent, all of us, are walking on holy ground. Pope Francis

desires that we at home are as much a part of the synod as those participating in the Pope Paul VI Auditorium.

Perhaps you engaged in the local conversations that led to our Diocesan Response or Synthesis? Maybe you didn't. I encourage you this week to reread that Synthesis on our [KandLe website](#). Also take a look at what is called the working document or the *Instrumentum Laboris* that guides the process in Rome. You see it doesn't all happen in Rome. There are things we can begin here locally in our diocese, in our parishes, in our faith communities. I'm very aware the 'Put Out into the Deep' process is but one response to this time we are living through, but there will be others and there are others if we take time to reread the different syntheses and the many reports.

During the month of October, I invite you to pray for all that is happening in our Church at the moment. And I accept for some it can be a little unsettling. But Pope Francis reassures us "*without prayer there will be no Synod*"<sup>1</sup>. I remind you the synod is not a parliament or an assembly, it's a place where we listen attentively to one another. A listening that is always guided by the Holy Spirit.

I invite the intention of the synodal process to be part of our prayer at daily Mass and on each Sunday across the diocese, in our homes, in our schools and in our religious communities. That prayer might be no more or less than reciting the 'Prayer for the Synod'. It might be offering an intention in our Prayers of Intercession or indeed dedicating the synodality process to our period of adoration.

And to those who didn't really engage in the synodal journey throughout the diocese, I encourage you all now to be part of this journey, like those working in the vineyard in last Sunday's gospel (Mt.20:1-16), even those who come late in the day are as well regarded as those who have been there since the very start.

May the Holy Spirit guide our Church which we all love and all of us who make up the Church, as together we walk on sacred ground, the sacred ground that is the synodal journey and may St. Brigid, St. Conleth and St. Laserian guide our feet on the road ahead.

✠Denis  
27 September 2023

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Prayer Intention for the Month of October 2022