



Pastoral Letter
to be read at all Masses
in the Archdiocese of Liverpool
on the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
26 and 27 June 2021

Dear Friends,

Last weekend our synodal process, Synod 2020 - Together on the Road, reached its climax in a great gathering of synod members which took place online because of the pandemic. It was a truly amazing event with contributions from the papal nuncio, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, and Cardinal Mario Grech, the secretary general of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, Dr Jessie Rogers from St Patrick's College, Maynooth in Ireland, and, most importantly, from the synod members themselves. In a truly wonderful way, all this took place online using Zoom which brought together over 400 members, observers, and contributors.

It has been a long journey since we began our year of prayer with the National Eucharistic Congress in September 2018. You will remember that this was followed by an extended period of listening: learning to listen to the Spirit speaking in our hearts and in our parish and school communities which resulted in over 25,000 comments and suggestions. During the period of discernment these were grouped into four themes which resulted in 19 recommendations which were considered and voted on at our Synod Day last Saturday. On Sunday the synod members with ecumenical observers met to celebrate Holy Mass in the Metropolitan Cathedral to give thanks to almighty God for sending his Spirit

to accompany us on our journey together. We had so much to be thankful for - not only the clear recommendations but also the whole experience of being Together on the Road which has strengthened us as an archdiocese. It was very striking that Cardinal Grech emphasised the role of the Holy Spirit in leading us through our synod process.

Among the recommendations which were considered a priority by the synod members are young people, evangelisation, inclusivity, the role of women, lay ministry and love of neighbour. You might say that there are no surprises there, but what they express is a genuine desire among our people to reach out to others and not to be an inward looking and closed community. How we do this in practice will be made clear when our archdiocesan pastoral plan is launched on the First Sunday of Advent later this year. Each of these headings when considered in detail will open for us a more committed and sometimes different way of being a disciple of Jesus. All the recommendations will give shape to how we act as good stewards of our resources and how we focus our energies.

There is still much work to be done analysing the full experience of the Synod Day, but I would like to share with you my immediate reaction to the outcomes of our journey so far. In the first place, we care about our children and young people, whether it is in our schools or later as they make their journeys through life as young adults. We have heard a great deal about the challenges they face; and that we should place their Christian formation, care, and education among our list of priorities is good, and natural.

My second reaction is that the priorities which have been identified suggest that being an outward-looking church is essential – evangelisation, love of neighbour and inclusivity all go together. Indeed, our journey through time as God's pilgrim people is undertaken in the midst of humanity, and you have

reminded us of the need to be alert to the joys and hopes, the griefs and sorrows of all humanity, and to be, each in our own lives, ministers of God's mercy, love and healing.

I was also impressed by something else of which Cardinal Grech reminded us, namely, that synodality is not just a one-off event but is part of the DNA of the church. The synod members asked that we continue to journey together and embrace the rich gifts of ministry that the Holy Spirit has poured out upon all the baptised – some to ordination as bishops, priests and deacons, some to consecrated life, but also to all the lay faithful who have an important part to play.

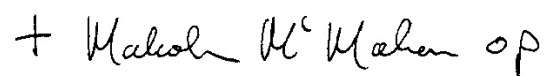
By prioritising our aims for a future direction, we are by no means playing down the many other dimensions of life in the church that emerged across the synod process. As a Catholic community, the celebration of the sacraments and the ministry of the ordained remain at the heart of our life of worship. From my visits to your parishes, I am aware of the great emphasis which is placed on liturgy, especially Sunday Mass, which is always celebrated in a dignified and prayerful way throughout the archdiocese. We must not take that for granted, as it is the outcome of much effort by priests and people collaborating to worship God so fittingly.

Another aspect of diocesan life which is embedded in our common practice is ecumenism. So much of what we do as Christians in the archdiocese we do with members of other Christian traditions and our way forward is one that we take joyfully alongside them. Archbishop Worlock and Bishop David Shepherd left us a living ecumenical heritage which is a vibrant witness to God's love for his people.

We cannot heed Pope Francis's call to synodality, which he says is the way for the church of the third millennium, without also hearing his environmental challenges, and his call to a greater fraternity between communities and nations. He has set an agenda which takes us beyond the boundaries of our archdiocese. Pope Francis's challenges can seem daunting as we take our archdiocesan synod proposals forward. We will need courage and a sense of daring, and I ask you to keep the archdiocese in your prayers. The discernment goes on and challenges lie ahead but we have confidence that the Holy Spirit will be our guide and helper.

Finally, many people contributed to Synod 2020, and they are deserving of our gratitude, but above all I want to thank you, the people of the archdiocese, from the bottom of my heart for your prayerful support for Synod 2020.

May God bless you and your families.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Malcolm McMahon OP". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev Malcolm McMahon OP
Archbishop of Liverpool

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