

A group of people are walking away from the camera on a paved path. In the foreground, three individuals are prominent: a man in a blue t-shirt and grey cargo shorts with a blue backpack, a man in a blue long-sleeved shirt and black pants with a black backpack, and a woman in a dark jacket and dark pants with a black backpack. They are walking towards a dense line of green trees. The text "Diocese of Meath" and "Synthesis of Synod Submissions" is overlaid in the upper right, and "2022" is overlaid at the bottom center.

# Diocese of Meath

## Synthesis of Synod Submissions

2022

## **Synthesis of the submissions received in the Diocese of Meath, May 2022**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Diocese of Meath, in union with the universal Church, formally launched its synodal journey on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Bishop Deenihan, in a message read at all Masses, invited all the baptised to join in this process of “prayerful discernment of God’s will for his Church at this time”. Lent 2022 was identified as the most favourable time for synodal conversations.

The eight deaneries of the Diocese of Meath were asked to conduct four synodal conversations on the first four Tuesdays of Lent, and to celebrate a liturgy of thanksgiving on the fifth Tuesday of Lent. Facilitators were chosen from each deanery to assist in conducting the meetings and received training for that purpose. Each meeting was to be open to all, but it was also considered helpful to invite certain “focus groups” to each meeting:

- meeting 1: those involved in the liturgical life of the Parish
- meeting 2: those involved in the administration of parish life
- meeting 3: members of prayer and apostolic groups
- meeting 4: school communities

It was recognised that communicating the invitation beyond the Sunday congregation would be challenging. The outreach to the school communities would help, but it was recognised that a greater effort to reach the margins would be required. As a minimum, it would be important to offer online opportunities for people to engage in the process. It would also be important to reach young people and others who would not be attracted to a “meeting”. It emerged that a crucial element of the synodal process would be the empowerment of those who took part in the conversations to have the same conversation with others.

Much consideration was given to the structure of the deanery meetings to ensure that our process was faithful to the idea of synodality communicated in the documents from the Synod of Bishops. It became clear that it was necessary to explain the idea of spiritual discernment, and to help those participating to understand that this process was much more than a consultation process or survey. A locally produced video assisted in this. The place of the scriptural text was emphasised. The deaneries were encouraged to integrate prayer in the

meetings, and to offer the possibility of prayer or preferably Eucharistic Adoration after each meeting. Critically, the meetings were to be devoted to conversation and listening, and the questionnaire was to be completed subsequently to the meeting so that it would be the fruit of prayer and listening.

The questionnaire was modelled on the theme of the Universal Synod: “Communion, Participation, Mission”. Participants were invited, in the first instance, to reflect on their experience of communion, participation, and mission, and in the second instance to suggest ways in which the experience of communion, participation, and mission might be improved in the life of the Church.

Over 1,600 people participated in synodal meetings. 276 completed questionnaires were returned by people who participated in a meeting in their deanery. 166 completed questionnaires were returned by people who had not participated in an organised meeting. This latter group includes people who had a synodal conversation with someone who had attended a meeting, and also people acting on their own initiative through the availability of the questionnaire online or in their local parish. In addition to the completed questionnaires, syntheses of synodal conversations were received from a meeting of young people in the 18-25 years age bracket, from three prayer and apostolic groups, and from one parish.

The diocesan delegates have been heartened by the positive engagement by so many people in the process, and by the generosity and calibre of those who came forward in each of the deaneries to organise and conduct the process. Those who participated in the meetings seemed to find joy in so doing. Some commented that it was the first time that they had been asked for their opinion in the Church and hoped that similar opportunities would be offered in the future. Others remarked that it was heartening to share their faith experience with others and were humbled by the faith experience shared by others. The lack of engagement by some parishes is disappointing (some participants noted that the synodal meetings were not advertised in their parish). Also disappointing is the extremely small number of people who participated when taken in the context of the overall population of the Diocese. However, when the synodal process is understood as a discernment of the voice of the Spirit rather than a survey of opinions, it is the voice rather than the number of those who participate that is valued. In this regard, the delegates have been greatly encouraged by how the truth emerges from the process and are confirmed in the conviction that an authentic process of spiritual discernment can yield a pathway towards a new springtime for the Church in Ireland.

## **I. COMMUNION: Experiencing shared faith, companionship, and togetherness**

The celebration of the Mass is at the heart of how many experience a high level of togetherness, shared faith, companionship, and friendship in their parish. However, many also commented that a close sense of belonging was missing in the Church at present. Many respondents do not experience a sense of communion at all. They go to Mass occasionally and leave without speaking to others, and are unaware of any outreach structures. Some have experienced a poor sense of welcome. Others do not accept the services available in their own local parish and seem prepared to travel to other parishes to find a context/service that suits them. Mass is seen as a primary opportunity to connect, but overwhelmingly a desire was expressed for other opportunities to enable people to connect on a human and spiritual level. Many expressed a desire for opportunities to discuss their faith such as the opportunity afforded by the synodal process which allows for meeting others *“where they are at”*.

It was expressed that a lack of joy and active participation was often missing at Mass with language often too highbrow and no opportunity to join in the liturgical music. *“Look at people’s faces at Mass, do they look as if they are celebrating? What’s wrong?”* A desire for greater congregational singing was expressed. *“Put up the words of hymns on a projector or on sheets so people can join in”*.

For a lot of respondents being participants in activities within the church gave them a strong sense of communion thus making the areas of communion and participation inextricably linked. Participation brought a sense of communion and practical faith-sharing like nothing else. Many respondents want to encourage more involvement of lay people in the Church, expressing the view that an authentic partnership between lay people and clergy is needed for a true synodal process to emerge. Effective Parish Pastoral Councils are seen as key to this authentic partnership. The creation of stronger links with Polish, African, and other Christian communities was advocated. The inclusion and acceptance of divorcees, those in second relationships, LGBTQ+ people and women for all roles in the parish is desired by many people. *“We need to demonstrate more effectively that we are an inclusive supportive community living the Gospel of love”*.

Positive practical suggestions for inclusion were:

- Create a welcome leaflet with contact information for new parishioners. *“There is so much good to be tapped into. The Church’s greatest resource is its people”*.
- Hospitality ministry to be considered equally as important as Ministry of the Word etc.
- Calling people by name to become involved. The personal approach is important.
- Be creative to encourage younger people and parents, e.g. trips, drama, and music in a faith-based context.
- Facilitate parents of children receiving sacraments to come together and develop their own faith parallel to their children’s faith journey.
- Visitation of homes by priests supported by lay people.
- Use of inclusive language in the liturgy and alternative languages (Irish and Polish were specifically mentioned)
- Reform of liturgical music and encouragement of greater participation.

The central role of the priest in the parish was a recurring theme. His friendliness, communicativeness, openness, visibility, and approachability cannot be underestimated. His perceived leadership role is still very prevalent and the behaviours he models are very important. A welcoming ministry rather than one that is seen as autocratic and dictatorial is seen as vital.

Overwhelmingly the participants called for alternative opportunities and platforms to facilitate coming together. They want the church building and/or parish spaces to be used for more than the celebration of Mass and the sacraments. The Church is still alive but struggling to find its place in our world. *“People want the Good News”*. They want to be together, to experience God’s love together not only through the celebration of the Mass but in other large and small gatherings and settings. *“I feel my faith is plateauing, I am not being nurtured”*.

## **II. PARTICIPATION: One’s Voice in the Life of the Church**

Many respondents voiced positive experiences of participating in various parish groups and ministries and suggested that there are ample opportunities to participate for those who want to avail of them. However, there were also many respondents who didn’t feel they could participate or speak freely in their parish. Responses aggregated along the themes listed below.

## II.i. Faith-Discussion and Church Teaching

Some experience the parish as a service dispenser of spiritual goods much like a shopping centre is for material provisions. In this view parishioners are passive recipients. There is very little opportunity for lay people to engage in parish-based forums that provide the opportunity to freely and without fear ask questions and engage in discussion on topics of Faith or raise issues of concern to the parish. Many proposed the introduction of a suggestion box where potential discussion topics could be flagged for later discussion. Others felt such a suggestion box could also be used to highlight Scripture readings or liturgical practices that might need further explanation in a teaching/discussion forum as already described.

The perceived lack of engagement by Catholic leadership coupled with lack of clarity regarding the Church's teaching is experienced acutely in the area of sexual ethics. This suggests a perceived failure of the Church to communicate its vision of the human person. A number of respondents raised questions regarding the availability of the Sacraments to divorced spouses in second relationships, calling for clarity on the Church's position on same-sex unions. There were calls for the ordination of women, married clergy, and the word "disordered" to be removed from the Catechism of the Catholic Church in relation to the inclination that gives rise to same-sex attraction. There were also comments that the Church seems to be fixated on matters of sexual ethics to the exclusion of other areas of ethics. One person asked if cheating on tax returns was not just as serious an offence in the eyes of God as being a divorced person in a second relationship when the divorce resulted through no fault of that person? There was also the call to give women more meaningful roles in leadership and move away from "*an outdated and male-dominated model of Church, where women's roles are confined to flower arranging and cleaning the Church.*" "*The Church needs the aptitudes and skills of women, just as any family needs the feminine gifts.*"

There was a strong sense in the feedback that preparation for the Sacraments should be removed from schools. Despite the good work done by many teachers in parish schools, there is a need to support parents in passing on faith, and faith formation should be tailored to both parents and children, involving both in Sacramental preparation. "*We need to get back to the Shema*", i.e. the transmission of the faith in the domestic context (Deut 6:4-9).

## II.ii. Youth

Very many respondents, as parents and grandparents lamented the inability of our Church to engage young people, particularly teenagers and young adults. Many feel they did their best to pass on the Faith to their children yet see little or no fruit for their efforts. This was highlighted as a huge challenge for the future. Some young people felt they had no platform to express their views at parish level and suggested the appointment of fulltime Youth Ministers in the Diocese. Finally, many felt that the issues highlighted above (II.i.) greatly contribute to the lack of youth involvement in our Church.

### **II.iii. Pastoral Councils**

There were mixed views on the potential of parish councils to contribute to the renewal of our parishes. Comments varied from, “*parish councils are a rubber stamp for the PP, to give the appearance of parishioner participation*” to views of a parish council as an effective body, co-responsible for the parish with the priest. Many expressed the importance of developing a long-term plan for the parish, the implementation of which should not depend on the current parish priest, and would include “*built-in implementation, review-and-improve cycles, and building blocks visible to parishioners so they can see where their skills may be required.*”

Other responses called for the membership of parish councils to be published, reports of meetings to be made available, and the chairperson of the council to address the parish on an annual basis to report on the ongoing work of the council. Parish councils should be representative of the parish and not just selected by the parish priest. “*It is essential that PPC's are directed towards Evangelisation and not just administration. This will focus the community on the nature and function of parish and Church.*” “*Parishes should be more courageous in evangelisation initiatives even if they fail.*” It would be important to note that many respondents were very appreciative of the trojan work and faithfulness of their parish priest to his parish ministry, and there were many positive comments about the generous and faithful pastoral ministry of priests during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **II.iv. Perceived Clericalism**

The feedback indicated a strong sense that there is a long way to go to undo the mistakes of the past and move away from a perceived clericalism. The delegates were moved by the testimonies of some respondents who described painful experiences of abuse, betrayal, and exploitation. “*The Catholic Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century engaged in a form of totalitarian social control.*” Many commented on authoritarianism, referencing the stereotypical image

of a bishop with mitre and staff, and “*the priest [who] asks for suggestions but then does his own thing anyway.*” One respondent spoke from a sense of helplessness – “*The priest is not addressing issues but he's not enabling us to help. No parish council.*”

On a more positive note, many highlighted the need to build on the religious sense that is expressed by people. More attention needs to be given to the leadings of the Holy Spirit and less on the desire to control every outcome. For example, because the Mass is the centre of the Christian life, we often measure the quality of parish participation by Mass attendance. But other Church-based events and celebrations such as Cemetery Sunday have enormous appeal, suggesting that the Church could identify what is working and build on that.

Other suggestions included the idea of setting up a prayer corner/board in churches where people could ask for prayer and intercede for others by writing their request and attaching it to the board. Parish leadership could actively identify and approach parishioners who possess obvious gifts and talents that would be of service in the parish; a purely volunteering method often doesn't attract the best suited people.

## **II.v. The Synodal Process**

Many respondents expressed disappointment that the synodal deanery meetings were only attended by the committed, but a large number were also grateful for the process and expressly remarked how the meetings represented the first time that their views and experience of Church were canvassed.

## **III. MISSION: Growing in Faith**

Many respondents wrote warmly and gratefully about how their faith has been nurtured and sustained through their participation in the liturgical/sacramental life of their parish. Some mentioned their participation in prayer groups, apostolic groups, faith development courses, retreats, Eucharistic Adoration, etc., as playing an important part in their growth in faith. As many of the respondents are active in their parishes, their involvement in ministry and other areas of parish life has also been a significant contributor to their growth in faith.

However, many of the respondents lamented the fact that apart from attendance at Mass, there was little or no opportunity to develop one's faith in the parish context. While this was expressed in negative terms by many of the respondents, it must be noted that many of those

who responded positively about how attendance at Mass had helped them to grow in faith were in effect saying the same thing: apart from Mass, there is very little else at parish level. Some who responded negatively went on to reference the value of faith-based experiences outside of the parish, e.g. membership of a faith movement, personal study, use of online resources, etc. Nevertheless, there was a strong trend in the responses indicating a severe lack of opportunity for faith development at parish level, with some saying that there is no opportunity at all and that faith development at parish level is “*stagnant*”. Some commented that their growth in faith had effectively ceased following their reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in primary school (aged 12/13 years). Respondents who identified as non-practising, while admitting their lack of interest in faith development, expressed their unawareness of opportunities for faith development because of a lack of communication or never having been offered such an opportunity.

Another significant trend in the responses, expressed in different ways, is the depiction of the individual journey of faith. For some, it is the story of a personal conversion that has led the respondents to putting their Christian faith and their relationship with God in Jesus Christ at the heart of their lives, and living this transformation in the context of a parish community, albeit with supports from outside the parish. For others, growth in faith is a personal choice to seek out and accept the opportunities that are available, to invest oneself in that search, and be transformed by it. On the other hand, for some of the respondents it is a lonely journey which is made without the support of spouse/family/friends and – crucially – without the support of the parish community. This lack of support on the part of the parish community is expressed in terms of the absence of a group/structure/place where one can share one’s faith journey, receive spiritual guidance, and learn about one’s faith.

When asked how the parish community might form people of faith who desire to be involved in the life of their parish community, it is noteworthy that a significant number of respondents wrote “*I don’t know*”, while others did not respond at all – suggesting that many are at a loss to know how to address this challenge currently facing the Church. A small but significant number of responses indicated a lack of awareness of the specific identity of the parish community as a faith community in contrast to other forms of local community, and a lack of understanding of the primary mission of the parish community to form its members in faith.

On the other hand, there is a wonderful diversity in the responses to this question, and these respondents obviously gave significant consideration to the question. A strong trend in the responses is the conviction that people must be personally invited/encouraged to take part in the life of the parish. This reflects the experience of the respondents whose own experience of being involved in the liturgical/sacramental and pastoral life of the parish is enriching, and their desire to see this experience made available to others, especially children, teenagers, and young adults. Another strong trend is the opinion that prayer groups, faith movements, apostolic groups, etc. should be more visible and more widely available at parish level. In this regard, some evoked with nostalgia the experience of sodalities and confraternities in the past, and while there was an acceptance that such parish activities now belong to the past, they nevertheless offered opportunities at parish level outside of Mass to experience communion, participation, and growth in faith, and have not been replaced. Many respondents called for bishops, priests, and those in leadership positions at parish and diocesan level to give courageous witness to the radicality of the Gospel message and thereby attract our contemporaries to the truth of our message. Equally, many respondents urged the Church to harness the talents and abilities in every parish community to advance the mission of the Church. In this regard, many pointed to the exclusion of women from many areas of the life of the church, and the failure to involve young people at any level in the life of the Church. Some respondents referenced the need to focus on and resource the faith life of the family home. Some respondents availed of the opportunity to urge the Church to embrace technology and harness the power of communications technology. Others spoke from their experience of the synodal process to express their desire to see this form of shared discernment become a part of the life of the parish/diocesan community. Finally, there were some calls for “situation-appropriate” outreaches on the part of the parish, i.e. to the elderly, the young, families, divorced, unmarried, etc.

However, it is abundantly clear from the submissions received that the great majority of respondents identify a need to provide opportunities at all levels of the life of the Church in the Diocese of Meath for adult faith development. For some, there is a desire for a catechetical approach so that people of faith can acquire a deeper understanding of the Church’s doctrine and teaching, and the need to form parishioners as articulate communicators of the faith to others. Many of these respondents intimated an intellectual/catechetical/doctrinal poverty in presenting the Christian faith to others, thereby suggesting difficulty and powerlessness when challenged on the faith. For others, the need

for adult faith formation is Bible-centred. This appears to come from a desire to understand better the scriptural readings at Mass, and to feel empowered to read the Bible individually or with others. Growth in knowledge of the faith was seen as essential for authentic discipleship.

## CONCLUSION AND ORIENTATIONS

Believing that the Holy Spirit has spoken in this process, and expressing our hope in the same Spirit who guides the Church in all times and places, we wish to offer the following discernment of the fundamental question posed by Pope Francis: What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

- Our parishes are struggling and becoming stagnant as places of “communion, participation, and mission”. People are calling for a greater sense of communion, to be invited to participate more actively in the life of the parish, and for a more dynamic liturgical life that is faith-nourishing.
- There is a call for a renewal of the leadership model in the Church. The investment of authority in the ordained ministry is seen as preventing initiative and impeding the faithful in assuming their responsibility for the Church.
- Linked to the issue of leadership is a strong awareness of the lack of involvement of women, young people, and LGBTQ+ people in key areas of the life of the Church. This is experienced as exclusion by such people, and as contrary to the Gospel by those who love the Church.
- There is a sorrowful and painful lament coming from parents and grandparents for the loss of faith among their children and grandchildren. The traditional cooperative faith-transmission model of Parish-Home-School is no longer working. Responses indicated a need for faith development at parish level, and a new evangelisation that offers the Christian vision of the human person, leading to interior conversion and intentional discipleship.
- The synodal conversations gave participants a glimpse of what a genuine process of spiritual discernment could be, and there is a clear desire for this kind of approach to be at the heart of the life of the Church.

***Holy Spirit, teach us the way we must go, and how we are to pursue it!***

# **APPENDIX I**

**Questionnaire used in the Diocese of Meath**

**Lent 2022**

## Diocese of Meath - Synodal Pathway ONLINE Questionnaire 2022

Parish of residence (optional):



Are you completing this questionnaire after attending a Lenten Synodal Meeting in your local area (delete as appropriate)?

YES

NO

If "YES", please give date of meeting:



Are you completing this questionnaire after conducting a synodal conversation with someone else at home, at work, in neighbourhood, etc. (delete as appropriate)?

YES

NO

Are you completing this questionnaire after conducting a synodal conversation with a group (delete as appropriate)?

YES

NO

If "yes", how would you describe the group?



How many were in the group (approx.)?



**Please begin by making this prayer to invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit:**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.  
 With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
 teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.  
 We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.  
 Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
 nor partiality influence our actions.  
 Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life  
 and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.  
 All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,  
 in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. AMEN.

### The Synodal Questions

The questions below invite reflection on the theme of the Universal Synod 2023 which is "**Communion, Participation, Mission**".

**Communion** implies a sense of belonging to the Church, and an experience of unity. **Participation** explores how you feel part of the life of the Church, how you feel valued in the Church, and your voice in the Church. **Mission** seeks to understand your experience of growing in your faith. The first question of each pair, i.e. (a), asks about your current experience. The second question, i.e. (b), asks how your current experience could be improved in the future.



## I. COMMUNION

(a) To what extent do you experience shared faith, companionship, togetherness, and friendship in your parish?



(b) How can we, as Catholics, create a real sense of welcome, belonging, and inclusion in our parish community?



## II. PARTICIPATION

(a) What opportunities are there within your parish and/or diocese for you to speak freely, to be listened to, and to be heard?



(b) How might new opportunities be developed for the voice of all people to be heard in your parish?



## III. MISSION

(a) What is your experience of growing in your faith and active sharing in the life of your parish and/or diocese?



(b) How can the parish community form people of faith who desire to be involved in and responsible for the life of their parish community?



**Once completed, you can return a printed copy of this  
questionnaire to your local parish, OR email it to  
[meathsynodalpathway@gmail.com](mailto:meathsynodalpathway@gmail.com)**

# **APPENDIX II**

**Script of promotional video  
used in the Diocese of Meath**

**Lent 2022**

## Script for Video introducing the Synodal Pathway in the Diocese of Meath

### **You are part of the Church!**

This is the belief of the universal Church. By Baptism, we are incorporated into the Body of Christ that is the Church of God. And it is this belief that is bringing us together at this time.

Did you know, that in October 2021, the entire Church entered into a synod? Pope Francis opened a synod in Rome, and every diocese across the world was called to celebrate the opening of the synod at local level. In our own Diocese of Meath, Bishop Deenihan issued a message inviting all the baptised to be part of the synod in their own parishes.

### **The theme of this synod is: “For a synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”.**

This synod is going to be unlike any other.

From 2021 to 2023, across all levels of the entire Church throughout the world, this will be a journey of listening to each other, sharing experiences, praying together, discerning what God’s Spirit is saying to the Church at this time.

### **But first things first! What is a synod?**

A synod is a gathering, usually of Bishops.

The word “synod” comes from the Greek *syn-hodos*, meaning “the same way” or “together on the way”.

The Church has held synods from its earliest days. They have been moments when Bishops, as leaders of the local churches, come together to discuss matters of importance for the life of the Church and to discern the path that God asks them to follow as they lead the People of God.

Following the Second Vatican Council, Pope Saint Paul VI established the Institution of the Synod of Bishops to maintain the collegial spirit fostered by the Council. Since then, synods have been organised every two or three years, bringing together Bishops, experts, and various delegates from all around the world to discuss different topics. At each synod, the Bishops vote on a final document, and the Pope writes his own text, called an Apostolic Exhortation, to open new pathways and to shed new light on what was discussed at the synod, so that it can enter into the life of the entire Church.

### **And what is synodality?**

Synodality is journeying together by listening to God’s Word and by listening to one another in order to discern what God is saying to us. It is acknowledging that the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of all the Baptised and can speak through the members of the Church, as we walk together as the People of God. By calling us to synodality, or by calling for a synodal Church, Pope Francis is asking us to rediscover this way of being Church. Or as he said when he opened the synod: “as we begin this synodal process, let us begin by asking ourselves – all of us, Pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity – whether we, the Christian community, embody this ‘style’ of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity”.

### **What is special about the synod on synodality?**

This synod that will be held in Rome in 2023 is unprecedented for a number of reasons.

- it is not only a one-month meeting of Bishops but rather a two-year synodal process for the entire People of God.
- it is a synod that aims to give the entire Church an experience of synodality; it is not just about filling in a questionnaire but about gathering the fruits of what the Holy Spirit is saying through the members of the Church, here and now.
- It is also a synod that aims not just to talk about synodality but to put synodality into practice, starting now, in every diocese across the world.

**All of us, through Baptism, are called to be responsible for the Church. So not only do we have a right to take part in this synodal process – we also have a responsibility. Here is how you can participate in this process in the Diocese of Meath.**

During the Holy Season of Lent 2022, you are invited to attend a meeting in your local Deanery on one of the Tuesdays of Lent. The venue and times of the meetings in your Deanery will be advertised in your Parish.

At the meeting, you will be asked to reflect on the Word of God, to listen to the voice of God who calls us to follow him. We will make our words the words of the prophet Samuel: “speak, Lord, your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10).

Then we will consider together three pairs of questions that are inspired by the theme of the synod: communion, participation, and mission.

The first question of each pair invites us to reflect on our experience – how we have experienced communion, participation, and mission in the life of the Church.

The second question of each pair invites us to reflect on how our experience of communion, participation, and mission could be enhanced, transformed, made more accessible to others, and renew the life of the Church.

**At the meeting, you will also be asked to choose someone in your life with whom you will consider the same questions.** Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in choosing the person whose voice the Spirit wants heard in this process! Don’t be afraid to have this conversation with someone who is on the margins of the life of the Church – to be synodal means that their voice matters and that we are called to listen and discern what the Spirit is saying through them.

**After Easter, the responses to the questions will be collated and this will form the response of the Diocese of Meath to this stage of the synodal process.** This will be forwarded to the National Steering Committee who will collate the responses from all the dioceses of Ireland. The national response, together with the individual response of each diocese, will be forwarded to Rome and will inform the discussions at the Synod in 2023.

**There is one other thing!** The Irish Bishops have decided that the Church in Ireland will continue on this synodal pathway beyond 2023 towards a National Synod of the Church in Ireland in 2025. Over the next few years, we will continue this journey of listening and discerning together as we ask the question, “What is God asking of the Church at this time?” We pray that this journey will bring about a new springtime for the Church in Ireland.

**Pope Francis has asked us to invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit on this process. I invite you to pray with me:**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path

nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

**For more information on the synod, visit [www.synod.ie](http://www.synod.ie) or [www.dioceseofmeath.ie](http://www.dioceseofmeath.ie)**

# APPENDIX III

**Promotional poster  
used in the Diocese of Meath**

**Lent 2022**

