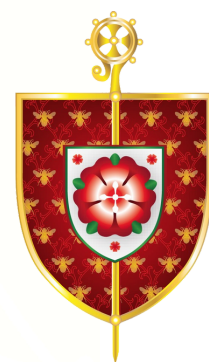


Give Us, O Lord, a Listening Ear

The synodal submission of the People of God in Salford Diocese to the Bishop's Conference of England and Wales, as part of the Universal Synod convoked by Pope Francis, received by +John Arnold, Bishop of Salford

(title taken from a submission received)



DIOCESE OF SALFORD

INTRODUCTION: Synod Data Analysis – Quantitative Data and General Methodology

Given the constraints on time for this diocesan stage of the Universal Synod, and given that the possibility of a Diocesan Synod was being explored by the Bishop and his advisors, it was decided to use a questionnaire as the main way of gathering responses. Guidance was given as to using this as the basis for a group meeting, which several parishes and other groupings did, but it also could be completed online or on paper. This proved important because, sadly, there were some parishes in which the Synod was not mentioned. The questions would be a somewhat simplified version of the themes sent by the Vatican Office. The questions were further simplified and made more accessible for consultations for school-aged children and vulnerable groups.

Once this data was collected, it was distilled into several main themes. These themes each contained a full spectrum of quotations, from negative to positive. The themes and quotations were decided upon by the principal analyst in conjunction with the Synod Moderators. The Moderators are a married mother and parishioner (working for Caritas), a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and a diocesan priest.

Maintaining a synodal perspective while also identifying overarching themes has been difficult throughout the process. The themes decided on were chosen as they represent the vast majority of viewpoints (from across the spectrum) expressed in the consultations. It would be impossible to include every single answer given in our diocesan synthesis and would have made the work of discernment very difficult. A great effort has been made to balance data as much as possible - as such no numbers were used in the process of discernment. Quotations were left to stand on their own without the context of popularity/ unpopularity. Any decisions as to certain perspectives being given more weight have come through the process of discernment, carried out by the moderation team. We have kept all responses received, and plan to initiate our own Diocesan Synod in the coming months. This will be informed by the data collected during the Universal Synod.

Quantitative data collected tells us about the age, gender and religion/ denomination of participants. This was necessary for the discernment process, as in the interest of synodality, these factors must be accounted for. Responses from marginalized groups, as well as children and young people, were to be given special consideration – we therefore needed to understand what demographics were taking part. You can find this data below.

1202 individuals took part. 16% of these were men, 27% of these were women, the rest chose not to fill out their details. 0.75% preferred not to give their gender. The remaining number is made up of participants in group discussions; the gender details of the whole group was not given. In addition 390 school pupils ranged from 3-14 and 16-18 took part. 1592 people took part in total. Given that participants were encouraged to speak to others before compiling their responses, the number of people touched in some way will be more.

Age groups are as follows:

Under 11: 4 (not counting school responses) 11-16: 2 17-25: 12
26-39: 36 40-65: 185 65+: 222
Prefer not to say: 14

The religion of participants is as follows:

Catholic: attend church regularly: 55 Catholic: attend church occasionally: 32
Catholic: Don't go to church: 10 Other denominations: 17
Other faiths: 1 No religion: 4

The compilation of this report would not have been possible without the support of the Diocese of Salford Communications Team.

THE HOPE: By praying for guidance that we may be open to the way Our Lord wants us to progress. By praying that Our Lord gives us a listening heart, open to the needs of others, and by bearing in mind that Our Lord may use others to speak to us.

THE BACKDROP: As parents of a large family, all now adults, (all of whom have received the sacraments of initiation, have attended catholic schools and who are still very exposed to catholic teaching), when we question them about their lack of regular church attendance, the principal issue is the abuse scandal in the church (though personally they have had many positive experiences with priests).

The opinions mentioned in the above response occur often in the synod responses. The point is frequently made that the acts of abuse and the church authorities' responses to them (or lack of responses) have deeply scarred the Church and wounded its ability to minister. Some respondents put it as strongly as saying that the Church last 'lost all credibility' especially in much of its teaching on sexuality.

Quotations are given in italics.

Pandemic and the response to it in people's parish

Responses were fairly evenly divided between those who felt parishes had handled matters well and those who felt strongly otherwise.

Excellent, through zoom masses and virtual gatherings afterwards. Also zoom lectures. It has increased appreciation of others' thoughts and feelings and is leading to an inclusivity that wasn't apparent before.

Much appreciation was given to parish priests. One parishioner wrote: *I am sure as a parish we thank him for being a true shepherd, keeping us hopeful and helping us through dark days. As a community we are well blessed.*

Many felt that their local church had done very well in the face of the pandemic. People were complementary of volunteer stewards and other parishioners who had organized online meet ups. Many praised their parish priests for transferring quickly and effectively over to Zoom for Mass and other services and activities, although concern was expressed for those, not necessarily the elderly, who were unable to access activities online. People were happy with social distancing in church.

However I lost touch with my Parish during the pandemic. But I connected with Catholics across the globe via zoom meetings hosted by different religious orders and Catholic groups. This was amazing and helped me to feel connected to Catholics from all different walks of life and hear how they are coping through the pandemic. It was good to mix with Catholics outside my own area and realise that it is a universal Church. I enjoyed book clubs on 'let us dream' and hearing other peoples' thoughts and views on this. It helped me to see how the Holy Spirit is working in other peoples' lives.

A large number of people expressed disappointment in how their parish had handled covid. Several respondents felt that access to the sacraments was more important than following government rules. Some disappointment was expressed by priests at their inability to visit the housebound in their own homes. It was recognized that the age of clergy was an issue in this regard.

There was also concern about those digitally excluded: *Have felt isolated - little sense of communication and direct concern.*

Very disappointing. Everything is predicated on digital communication unfortunately.

Personal Faith and our lives of prayer

A word conspicuously absent from the questions and from my responses is "prayer". I fear we're not very good at it, and "teach us how to pray" is more a need than ever.

Respondents placed prayer at the heart of their lives of faith although several expressed their need for more help in deepening their lives of prayer and giving this the priority needed.

One of the sadder responses was from the person who wrote: *I feel I am hanging onto my Catholicism by my fingertips at the moment. I have never felt this about my faith until the last few years and it's only my own prayer life which keeps me going.*

A sixth-form group sought A church that is more focused on mysticism; experiences such as feeling loved by God, rather than in ideologies which there are enough of and only create divisions.

Mysticism is all about experiencing, in which stands out the experience of feeling loved by God. When someone feels loved by God, their life gains meaning.

In one of his writings, Theologian Karl Rahner SJ who was a member of the Vatican Council II, pointed out that in the XXI century if Catholic was not a mystic, she or he was destined to disappear.

Young People

Please reach out to young people. Tap into their enthusiasm and honesty. Give them a chance to lead.

The above response gives an insight into the urgency of the need to work with young people to help them develop in spirituality and in faith and in taking their proper place in the life of our parishes.

We received significant responses from three schools; a primary school, a secondary school and a school Sixth Form.

Some of the key points made by the Primary School Years 5 and 6 were:

- First we must listen to God, so that he is our friend. Then take an interest in the local parish community and keep an eye on what is happening in the wider world.*
- Mass and prayer makes us mentally and spiritually strong. We always enjoy time to talk with Jesus (the children pray the "examen" at school everyday). You can tell him what is in your heart. You can gather your thoughts and it makes you feel warm inside. God is always there.*
- Jesus walks with us on our journey, and so does our priest and our bishop, John. In lockdown, everyone was marginalised. Now it is young people, ethnic minorities and key workers (who did not get enough recognition), disabled people and people without access to technology.*
- We enjoy doing charity work: raising money for Mary's Meals etc. Some local reps came to talk to us and explained how the money is used to help others. With more goals like this, we could be even more generous.*
- We learn about other faiths in school, but because of Covid we have not been out into the wider world to mix with people of other faiths. We would enjoy a visit to another faith school or other churches.*
- We feel that Mass could be more child friendly. We feel that we belong when we have a school Mass. Could Sunday Mass be more like this?*

The High School responded to four questions:

My faith has increased during the pandemic

221 thought that their faith had increased during the pandemic, 106 thought that it had not and 160 were unsure. Just under 50% therefore felt that their faith increased during the pandemic.

I feel prayer helps me in my daily life

270 agreed or strongly agreed while 98 disagreed or strongly disagreed, with 93 unsure. 60% therefore felt that prayer helps in their daily life.

I feel the celebration of Mass brings me closer to God

243, over 50% of respondents felt that the celebration of Mass brings them closer to God while 114 disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I feel I have the confidence and knowledge to tell other people about the good news of Jesus.

227 agreed or strongly agreed whereas 127 disagreed or strongly disagreed. 97 were unsure. Thus approx. 50% agreed or strongly agreed that they have the confidence and knowledge to tell other people about the good news of Jesus.

Among the points made by the Sixth Form were: A more human Church in accordance with the signs of time, and nearer to its people.

The church needs to take even greater care in listening to the young, as we are the future of the church. The more opportunities to provide for this the better. The church needs to get up to speed on social media as this is the way in which many young people express themselves these days.

All people should feel welcome in the church as it is Jesus' home and he would welcome everyone. The Mass needs to have moments of silence so that we can listen to God. We can walk with our families, our friends and parishioners. But we need to journey with God. Teachers have an important role too.

Acceptance is the key, even when we disagree. Sometimes the church seems to be frozen in time. The Pope is a breath of fresh air in our church.

Inter-generational conversations are difficult as older people don't listen to the young. Active participation in church activities is important for young people, but sometimes the older generation don't like to share their responsibilities. We need to overcome resistance to change.

Treating others as equals. Being open to people of different sexual orientations. We need to continue the synod process.

A more human Church in accordance with the signs of time, and nearer to its people.

Children of families with whom Caritas works responded, amongst other comments:

God helps me and Jesus helps me. The Church represents Jesus so that helps. This might make me more holy. It would be good to have more help with prayers to learn more stuff about Jesus. (aged 10)

Claire and you help me, not Church (aged 7)

And from a 10 year old child: Going to church is helpful when stressed. The church is a peaceful and relaxing place that makes me feel safe. Supporting people like my family who struggle because we have little money. Things like food banks really help. Having someone to talk to (like my Caritas worker) helps me with my needs. The church is there for me and others to help people with their emotions.

From the main synod responses we hear:

A challenging perspective was voiced: There is a genuine sadness and deep concern at the absence of youth and young people walking with us on our Synodal journey. How can we seek to reverse that trend to ensure we do not become a Church with a lot of past but no future? The cause does not seem to be a lack of religious faith and belief amongst them but rather a lack of inspiration from/a disconnect with the Church as an Institution.

Are the problems inherent in their perception of the Church as being that of an aged, all male, celibate clergy out of touch with the society of today making it difficult for most young people to see role models to identify with? The reasons given for this, however, differed widely.

Some many believed that the Church must modernize, bringing itself in line with current public attitudes towards issues like LGBTQ+ issues, women's issues, celibate clergy, social justice etc. Commonly people said that visible social action would draw young people in.

I have noticed that my school setting is still marginalising LGBTQ+ children. It is still a topic that is very much swept under the rug and kids are not being allowed the chance to express themselves. Kids are not being given the chance to question themselves and learn empowering language as we are being told they are too young and don't know who they are yet. These children are made to feel like they are wrong and something about them is not ok and I feel that takes away God loving all. They don't see enough colour, enough different relationships in stories and books, they don't see a variety of people all unique and loved. We are not allowed to encourage talk about their feelings of being a part of the LGBTQ+ community and children are still going around using 'gay' as a slur.

Another common thread was a stronger link between Catholic schools and faith, as many felt this link had faded into secularity over the years.

Women

I am a Catholic married woman, a teacher and a mother. One of my sons is autistic. I feel that in the Catholic church, women have so much to offer, yet aren't requested or needed so therefore our voices are heard less.

How many women have had their voices heard?

Women have been marginalised. They have no voice nor power in the Church despite being in the majority.

Some parishes do not allow altar servers to be girls. What is this saying about the role of girls in the parish.? The Holy Spirit walks with us.

This was a particularly popular theme, one of the dominating themes (along with Youth). Every respondent, female and male, felt strongly that the Church is not hearing adequately the voices of women.

Women are generally ignored or pilloried when they speak out . This discrimination has to be ended by the Church as it cannot listen carefully when so many voices are ignored.

Many of the respondents would echo the comments made by a priest: *I think more and more that the Holy Spirit might be leading us to the ordination of women and also to having married clergy. I say this not in response to a shortage of priests, but simply because I feel it as a conviction from reflection and prayer.*

People were also unhappy with the gendered language still found in liturgy.

Listening/ Communication/ Collaboration (Synodality)

We communicate in a social way but the authoritarian structure of the church also known as clericalism puts power before talent and so hinders communication.

A majority of respondents felt that, although they were cared about and cared for, they were not listened to. This lack of listening, it was suggested, is found on all levels of church life, parish, diocese and the universal Church centered on Rome. The reasons for this were hugely varied, from marginalized groups not having as strong a voice, to Church structure, to parish politics.

It's important to remember that the majority of people who filled out this survey were over 65, and almost all were over 40. These will be, in the main, established parishioners who have enough interest in the Church to take 40 minutes to fill out a form. Many of them are already involved in parish volunteering or have been, and may have more prominent voices within the Church anyway. This begs the question: if elderly, white parishioners don't feel listened to, how must more marginalized groups feel?

The need to listen to each other and to the Lord, and indeed to the Lord through the voices of others, came across strongly. We have to again help to instil a sense of value in listening to others no matter how small their voices are. The key to listening to each other is to focus on hearing the cries of the poor, the marginalised, the downtrodden and those that society ignores or deems to have no voice as per our Catholic Social teaching. A continued sense of dialogue within the Church has to be promoted and encouraged so that we can all learn from the various parts of the wider Body of Christ. Discernment has to become an ongoing process of the Church if we are to remain attentive to the spontaneous Spirit of God and where it is leading us.

I feel it's easy to talk if your actually known to the parish, if not you go as a stranger and normally walk out as a stranger.

We also need to listen to the secular world in which we live: the Holy Spirit speaks through it and often shows us the way through it. An outstanding example of this in our own time is the issue of the environment: Catholics lagged behind until we got a Pope capable of listening to what the wonderful young (mostly non-Christian) idealists have been saying for years.

Hierarchy/ Clergy

I think we are still being asked to unfold the treasures of Vatican II. That might sound a bit grandiose but, after 38 years as a priest, I still find a lot of people (and quite a few fellow priests) who don't really seem to have that Vatican II vision – they don't really know why things changed in the 1970's, they don't know how we should relate to other Christians or people of other faiths. Pope Francis asking us all to contribute to this Synod is in the spirit of Vatican II – but many laypeople are sceptical about it because their experience over these past 60 years has not been one of being listened to or being invited to be actively involved.

This was also a popular topic. Many expressed their sadness at an 'inaction' in implementing the Second Vatican Council. Many believed that laypeople should have more say and more authority in the running of their parishes and should have more say at a diocesan level.

A priest offered this thought: *There is a big problem with new clericalism especially in the seminaries. Priests should be trained with and close to the people. Priests should not dress differently from lay-people nor insist on titles. Maybe even some priests in secular employment. This might mean a less visible Church but a more solid one. Priests should have to earn respect, not get it by right.*

The Catholic church offers a wealth of tradition, teaching and spirituality, with many wonderful priests in parishes. However, many lay Catholics feel infantilised by a top-down and clericalised approach to handing on the faith. We have a wealth of life experience, not necessarily shared by our clergy, and feel strongly that, as we are all People of God, we should be encouraged, empowered and trusted to listen to and follow the call of the Holy Spirit ourselves.

From the responses submitted by priests:

As a priest, I am often overwhelmed by administration and premises issues and spend so much time on things which I do not think are proper or essential to a priest. I struggle to develop the parish and move it forward because of this. If I could live in a simple functional flat and not have to manage four large buildings and their repairs, I would be free to do what I was ordained to do.

We (laity and clergy) need to look at ourselves: are we the Joy of the Gospel or are we the sourpusses whom Pope Francis laments? When we radiate the Joy of the Gospel, when we prioritise being over doing, that is when we will make a difference. At an Oscott day of recollection some years ago a speaker made the really challenging observation: 'We are encouraged to see the face of Christ in others, especially the suffering. But do we equally strive to ensure that others see the face of Christ in us?' Food for thought. For clergy, in particular, we need to radiate joy in our calling - not angst, resentment, cold efficiency, managerialism or slick performance. What difference are we currently making? The answer ranges across the whole spectrum from joyfully accompanying people on the path of conversion to barely getting by in providing a spiritually bereft 'Catholic customer service'.

Work-life balance and mental health of priests needs to be addressed.

Priests can get lonely. It is not good for them to live alone.

Marginalisation

I have no thoughts about the future or what I want it to look like. I only live in the moment. (Five people supported by Caritas in our diocese)

A group of young mums, supported by Caritas, was very practical in their need for support. They mentioned Practical Support. Resettlement support. Help in setting up and managing a home. Budgeting and managing finances. Furniture. Reassurance. Childcare.

The most common groups that people felt were marginalized were: women, youth, LGBTQ+ people, migrants, divorced people. Their voices need to be heard. Concern was expressed that the list above is never an exhaustive list.

Pope Francis reminds us that, before we reach out to bring those on the margins into the centre, we must first ourselves journey out to the margins, the peripheries, in order to listen and learn from people's own lived experience To look at better ways of hearing from the poor, the disaffected, the doubters, non believers, people of differing sexual orientations

Many felt that this is a large contributing factor in the Church's decline in attendance.

One respondent was a Catholic for many years but never again, describing the Church as *A despicable and corrupt organisation which could not be described as Christian.*

Sometimes I feel marginalised in my own town and country. To be a Catholic in this country is sometimes difficult.

Some also felt that the Church was marginalized in a secular society, and others felt that celebrants of the Tridentine Mass were marginalized within the Church. This was a fairly common opinion.

Liturgy and Worship

Prayer and Mass are great sources of nourishment, wisdom, courage and formation.

Responses were once again varied.

Many felt that the Latin Mass has been unjustly excised and people who wish to attend it are being marginalized. Many also felt that Mass should be made simpler and more accessible to all, some suggested in the vein of more evangelical churches. This was a common perception.

From a priest: *It is incumbent on clergy to ensure that the celebration of Mass is conducted in a way that allows worshippers to encounter Jesus without the distractions of the secular world. 'Father's stage show' (whether with Limericks or Latin), 'Father's platform' (whether social justice warrior or scriptural exegete) and 'Community gathering / Team briefing' all place impediments in the way of a spiritual encounter with Jesus in Mass.*

From a parishioner: *Simplify the Mass and make it more appealing to young people, lapsed Catholics and people of other denominations. They are put off by archaic language, outdated practices, long & boring homilies and dreary hymns. We are driving people away when we should be trying to attract them.*

From members of the Deaf Community: *In all seminaries, learning basic sign language and Deaf Awareness should be an important requisite. It is about communicating with people when they leave seminaries and are ordained. We do not expect them to become expert signers but they should at least have a good understanding of the Deaf community and be aware of their language and culture.*

Members of the Deaf Community also commented that Parishioners do not have far to travel to their local parish church but Deaf people often have to travel for more than half an hour by car; those relying on public transport often need two or three different buses to get to their signed Mass. Others can't even manage to get to our signed Masses because the public transport on Sunday mornings is not good.

Regarding taking practical steps to enable participation, the report from St. Joseph's Mission to the Deaf wrote: *The loop systems in the Church is very important for people using hearing aids but they are often not working properly, or working poorly or not even switched off. Priests are also poorly informed in that they do not use the microphone properly or do not articulate properly and have eye-contact with the congregation. What about using PowerPoint presentation on a large screen in the Church?*

It was felt that there has to be a way of celebrating reverent, prayerful liturgies that offer a real sense of an encounter with the Real Presence of Jesus in a way that is welcoming and engaging for people of every age including children and young people.

Some wanted people to be quieter and more reflective during Mass, some were incensed that many no longer believe in the Real Presence. Some wanted children to be more welcome in Church, and suggested opportunities for Children's Liturgy, or "Messy Church" as a way of engaging young people. One commented that we need to be allowed to explore more with liturgy: *The gospel choirs and the African dance can lift us all up and enhance our worship.*

What do I discern the Holy Spirit asking of the Church?

The Holy Spirit is asking us to be more synodal towards each other, to share our lives more fully with each other, the joys and the sorrows.

I am a retired Salford Priest. I believe that the Holy Spirit is calling us to greater maturity in the faith. Our stress on child catechesis is failing, because there is little maturity of faith in the home. In this part of the world we need to start again by moving the emphasis from child faith learning to adult faith learning. The whole renewal of the Church must begin with prayer. That is how we fall in love with God, and all else follows: catechesis, parish community building, service of the wider world etc. It is those in whom the fire of the Holy Spirit has been enkindled who will renew the face of the earth. Much of what we do in our parishes today is not working, because we do not put holiness and adult faith maturity at the top of our priorities.

One respondent had been 'converted' to the synodal way: I have had a conversion about the synod. At first I just thought it was ANOTHER survey (I have completed many over the years without much obvious fruit). When I listened to Sr Nathalie I realised it was about living in a synodal way- being open with one another, not being afraid of different opinions or perspectives, because the Holy Spirit is the glue between us.

Several respondents expressed a real concern that this process might lead to the Church changing or 'watering-down' some of its teachings:

I sense him asking us not to stray from the commandments and values we should live our lives by, but to urgently reflect upon how we act as messengers for God in our modern community. If we don't change who we include and show love towards in today's society, we will lose them. However, this does not mean we need to change our values. Just show love and tolerance and welcome people from all lifestyles and backgrounds.

To return to the word of God and stop accommodating liberal views please!!! Stop compromising !! Start seeing the signs of the end of times ! They are everywhere!! The holy spirit is asking the church to be true to Jesus' own words and teachings. To speak up and out against gay marriage, euthanasia, abortion, divorce. Our voice is weak. It has become emasculated in the name of political correctness. Our message has weakened.

Working with other denominations/faiths

Getting involved does not "water down" who we are; indeed, the first tenet of entering into dialogue is to be strong in your own position.

My view is that we should be more involved with Ecumenical and Other Faith partnerships, not simply to avoid the "Catholic ghetto" mentality but also because Vatican II describes these denominations as part of the Church. Sadly, many priests and lay people have either not heard that or don't accept it.

This was a common theme – the vast majority of people agreed that it was good to reach out to other faiths. Some qualified this by saying that Catholic teaching shouldn't be watered down.

There was a sense of regret that Catholic enthusiasm for ecumenical activity (not always very prominent) had dipped in recent years and that this was a lost opportunity: *We have a "Churches Together" group in our area and my parish church does not join in.*

Pope John Paul II had said that 'Ecumenism is not an option but a necessity.' With this in mind it would be a good thing for Catholics to attend occasionally on a Sunday, with the blessing of the Bishop, the services of other Christian Denominations and thus fulfilling their 'Sunday Obligation.'

Some respondents asked for there to be greater generosity in allowing members of other Christian denominations to receive Holy Communion at Mass.

Some belonging to a particular parish where Catholics and Methodists share a church building, spoke of the positive community impact and solidarity this can build.

Faith in Action

The church is physically visible as an impressive building in the midst of the community; we need also to be visible as a "people", by our witness; show that we are happy – smile!; be seen in action – foodbanks; social care; live in the public square – local/national political issues; be relevant to the daily lives of people.

Catholic Social Teaching was discussed a lot as a method of connecting faith with community work, showing the best of the Catholic Church at a grassroots level. Some saw it as being secondary to the more spiritual business of the Church: *In my view, parishes seem to be spending far too much time and energy towards external charitable works. Given the current situation of The Church, a spiritual awakening and growth of The Church is far more important than external works. Once Spiritually awakened, The Church will be able to speak and serve others, both internally and within the wider society, with deeper Godly conviction and love.*

However, other responses sought to make the link between faith and action often at parish level: *There is scope for many of our parishes to become more of a voice and focal point for social action and justice in their locality. An increased understanding of mission and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching which call us to action may be helpful. Involvement in grass roots community organising groups eg, GM Citizens could be helpful to some parishes*

With food-banks and other similar establishments, many run by community Faith groups from mixed denominations, we are clearly making a difference, although the correlation between these good deeds and the Churches is not always appreciated as such. It is by understanding and addressing the issues explored throughout this questionnaire we can project and develop our beliefs through example, by making our way of life attractive through deeds and compassion.

There was some mention of Climate Change but surprisingly not much. Those who did mention it were split between those who felt it was not something the Church should be involved in and those who felt it important for the Church to take a stand.

And finally! Parting thoughts:

- 1) We have to do our best, without seeking the satisfaction of knowing the outcome. As T S Eliot wrote, "For us there is only the trying, the rest is not our business."*
- 2) Pope Francis exudes a Joy in his face and in his writings. I really don't see that Joy in the faces of (many of) my fellow parishioners at Sunday mass. Joy is (and should be) the sign of those who have met the Lord and are followers of Jesus. Joy must be the predominant message of this Synodal process. Alleluia!*

The grace of this, for us, has been not just in hearing the voices of those who have been involved but also becoming aware of those from whom we have yet to hear which gives us the impetus to continue this synodal path.

*'If Hope in the Future is going to work,
and I believe it is going to work,
we have to make sure that it is built
on the foundation of prayer.
That wonderful little prayer that you
have adopted so well in this Diocese,
'Stay with us Lord on our Journey',
it's more important than ever that we
entrust ourselves in prayer so that we can
be all that God is asking us to be.'*

Bishop John Arnold

