

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Last Sunday, Pope Francis opened the Universal Synodal Pathway. In doing this, he is calling the Church across the world to join in a two-year process of learning to be synodal – in other words, imitating the God who walks the path of life with us at our side and meeting us where we are.

The process started by Pope Francis has been called ‘the greatest consultation in the history of humanity’. It is much more than that. It is a process of spiritual and ecclesial discernment, a way of reflecting together, being in prayer together, in adoration together, listening to the Word of God together, so that guided by the Holy Spirit we can discern what God is saying to us at this time in our history.

The Church in Ireland and in the Diocese of Meath will play our part in this process. As with Jesus and the rich man in the Gospel reading last Sunday, we will encounter one another, listen to one another and discern together.

I invite all the baptised in the Diocese of Meath to be part of this process in their own parishes. To this end, it is my wish that every parish will soon have a Parish Pastoral Council as I am convinced that this is a visible, practical and local sign of synodality, of the people of God walking together on the path of the Gospel. Over the next two years other opportunities will also be offered in parishes for the prayerful discernment of God’s will for His Church at this time and those who long to see a new springtime for our Church will be invited to take part.

In the words of Pope Francis as he concluded his homily last Sunday: ‘Let us not miss out on the grace-filled opportunities born of encounter, listening and discernment’.

Please join with me in praying the prayer offered by Pope Francis:

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.

+ Tom Deenihan  
Bishop of Meath