

Some Reflections in Light of the Synod on Synodality - Summary

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

I returned recently from the month-long Synod on Synodality in Rome, convened by our Holy Father Pope Francis to reflect on communion, participation, and mission in the Church's life. It was a remarkable journey, both engaging and exhausting, that led us forward on the way together – the Way who is the Lord Jesus himself, our Truth and our Life. (cf. Jn 14:6) I share with you a summary of my reflection on the Synod on Synodality available at <https://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk> Please take a moment to read it in full.

Taking place against the backdrop of war, we prayed for peace in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, Sudan and elsewhere. We heard harrowing first-hand accounts of war from delegates. For me, meeting people from across the Universal Church, and hearing their experiences, was the most enriching and stimulating part of the Synod.

Our Archdiocese took part in the preparatory synodal process, demonstrating a deep love for the Lord Jesus and his Church, and a desire to be more hospitable and evangelising. This is something we do together, recognising both the distinctiveness and complementarity of those who share Christ's priesthood through baptism and those who share it through ordination. I took to the Synod the passion and energy the Archdiocese showed for enacting the evangelising mission entrusted to us by Christ.

Sincere sharing of human experiences, sometimes charged with emotion, highlighted a perceived tension between truth and love for those who may struggle to accept or live to the Church's teaching. How can we better include people who feel unwelcome? We need a patient openness to receiving people's experience. There is a caution, however, in setting human experience against divine revelation, received through Scripture and Tradition, as if it were somehow corrective of a now outdated deposit of faith. As Pope Francis reminded us, the Synod is not a parliament. Discernment is not a referendum on Church teaching, or a ballot where individuals vote according to what they believe the Holy Spirit is saying personally to them. Our faith is given to us through the Church in the Apostolic Tradition.

In his earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus was open to everyone. Through acts of healing and forgiveness, he never remained passive. He always offered a way forward. Not everyone could accept this – the rich young man (cf. Mk 10:17-22) left sorrowful. Others, like Zacchaeus (cf. Lk 19:1-10), transformed their lives. Christ never rejects us. He leaves us free to follow him or not.

We understand ourselves in the light of Christ's call to discipleship. The Gospel challenges us to accept Christ's invitation, finding in him a merciful and loving Saviour, especially as we face our own sinfulness. If we empty the Gospel of its challenge, adapting it to our own way of thinking, then we empty the Gospel of its power to save.

The Gospel teaches we cannot dislocate truth from love or love from truth. The Lord Jesus does, indeed, meet us where we are, but loves us too much to leave us there. The Church is called to welcome people with kindness and respect, sharing the truth and love of Christ and his Gospel. It is by encountering the Lord Jesus more deeply and personally that we grow in discipleship and service.

We continue to pray and discern what synodality means for our Archdiocese. I thank you all for your witness. We are one in faith, hope, and love, each of us with a unique part to play in loving Christ and serving him in others. May we share this responsibility passionately and joyfully in the harmony of the Holy Spirit. Be assured of my continued prayers and please pray for me.

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