Address on “Mission” as part of the Synodal Process – to be presented on 19/20th Feb

So now we come to the last of the addresses on the Synodal process and this one will focus on “Mission”.

A quick recap – In the first address about “Communion” we were reminded of Jesus’ words towards the end of his earthly life....

***Abide in me, and I in you.***

***I am the vine; you are the branches.***

***Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit,***

***for apart from me you can do nothing****.*

Jesus was telling his disciples that they are in total union with him: they are part of him in a state of communion so deep, so profound, that it is hard for us to really understand.

In the second address on “Participation” we heard the words of Pope Francis reminding us that “participating in the synod means placing ourselves on the same path as Christ, following his footsteps, listening to His word along with the word of others”

So why “Mission”?

The Church is missionary because that was the way of Christ. We are told in the Bible that ‘God so loved the world that he sent his only Son’ (John 3:16) - Jesus was sent into the world to reveal God’s love. In turn, Jesus said to his apostles, ‘As the Father has sent me, so I send you’ (John 20:21). ‘You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8). The mission of Jesus to proclaim the Kingdom of God to all people has been handed onto the Church and individual believers, guided by the Holy Spirit

Our mission therefore continues, it is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. We can never be centred on ourselves and the Church exists to share the message of the Gospel with the world, in our communities, through our words and our actions.

We are looking at where we stand now with regard to our parish mission and to come up with ways to try and better engage with the modern world. Mission involves spreading the Good News of the Gospel, reaching out to those on the edges of our society, those who have been hurt and disappointed or those who have parted company with us. (As we heard in the Gospel reading today – “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly”. )

In the light of this Gospel today – perhaps our listening has not always been humble and our speaking not always gracious. How have we judged one another?

To do this we are looking at what makes our Parish tick, gathering opinions and also aiming to harvest ideas.

What are the things that we do well, as well as considering other areas that we need to engage in to ensure that our church is capable of moving into future with hope.

By journeying together and reflecting on the journey that has been made, the church will be able to learn through her experience which processes can help her to live in communion, to achieve participation, to open herself to mission. And ultimately to better engage with all of our community in the future.

Everybody in our parish community has a vital role to play in the mission of the church. No one should be excluded from the joy of the Gospel. But we know that we aren’t used to this sort of process and it may feel a bit daunting. However everybody is being encouraged to take part, to respond with your comments on our Church’s mission if you feel able and/or to pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit.

There are postcards at the back of church for you to fill in with your comments/views. Please consider taking one away with you. They can be posted in the comments box at the back of church. There are also cards and a box in the St Theresa’s Centre if you would like to talk to others over coffee and write down some thoughts. All the contributions will be collated and form part of the Parish’s submission to Bishop Mark. Can I stress – this process is for all and every voice will count

In all this process we need to pray for guidance and so a special service will be held on Monday 21st Feb at 6.30pm in St Columba’s – “Prayers for the Synod” - to which you are all warmly invited. (Anybody needing a lift from St Theresa’s please contact Ann McCarthy). Phone number is in the newsletter.

You will have seen the official logo of the Synodal Path on much of the information that has been put out for you. There is an explanation of the symbolism of the logo on the insert in the newsletter but I think it is gives such an inspirational message I’d like to just share it again with you

* A large majestic tree full of wisdom and light, reaches for the sky – a sign of hope
* It carries the Eucharist which shines like the sun
* The horizontal branches opened like hands or wings suggest the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide us
* Sheltering under the tree are the people of God – not static but on the move journeying together. The 15 silhouettes represent the diversity of our church from the very young to the elderly, from religious to laity, from able-bodied to those with disabilities.

We are all making our way together united in Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. As we say in the Synodal Prayer

“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”

Conclusion.

We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not, as Pope Francis has said, to produce documents, but “to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will warm our hearts and give strength to our hands.

Let us say the Synodal Prayer together

Thank you for listening