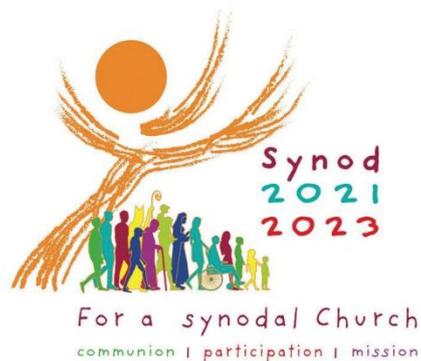


On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022, The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales published the National Synthesis Document, which describes the diocesan phase of the synod on synodality, seeking to capture the essence of what emerged from the unprecedented participation by the People of God in England and Wales in a world-wide synod process. It is drawn from over 700 pages of reports from the dioceses and other church organisations, associations and movements that were sent to the national synthesis team. I recognise much in the document, which reflects what we, as a parish community, shared in terms of our hopes and dreams.



The National Synthesis concludes:

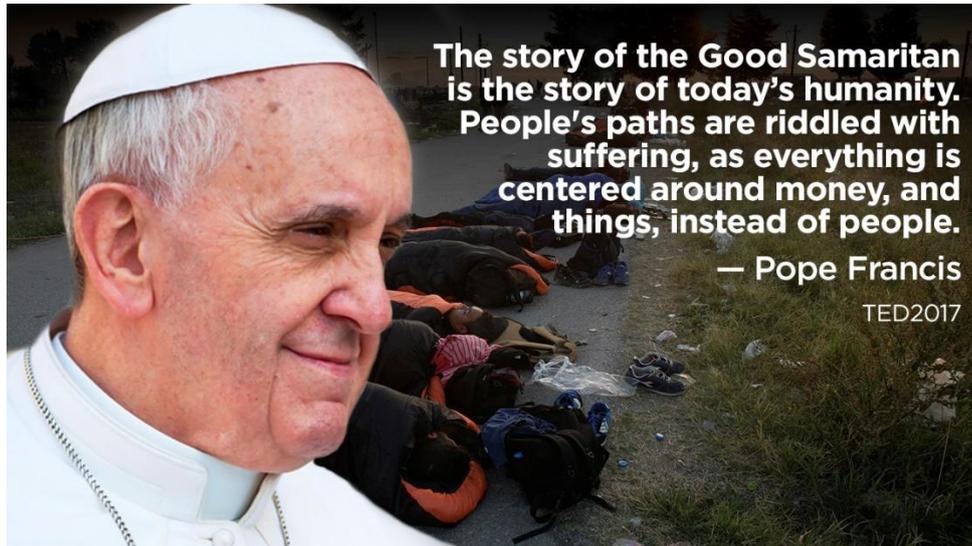
*“If we have heard the Spirit prompt us in this synod, it is here: that responsibility for conversion cannot be delegated to particular groups or authorities, but must be assumed by all in response to the gifts the Spirit has already poured out on all the faithful. The Church is the body of all those who are baptised in Christ and have encountered Him; His mission is ours. Now the synod asks us to make good that truth. The journey calls us out into the deep, into a more active faith stirred by an attentive listening to the Spirit in and through all of the baptised. It asks us to hear and respond without waiting for this or that change or new structure, confident that, in awakening to our co-responsibility, the reforms will follow—indeed, will become the reform itself. This is the new consciousness that the Spirit has awoken in the People of God in these islands which, if embraced, will lead to the growth in holiness both here and across the world. This is the light that has been lit here; with joy we pass it onto the universal Church, and set it above our own path.”*

**Our readings this Sunday are pertinent to this Synodal journey.**

In the first Reading, Moses says to the people: *“the Word is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart.”* When we listen to the National Synthesis, we hear the voices of the wounded Church, the marginalised Church, the Church on a journey...in other words, we hear the Word of God spoken in the mouths and hearts of the People of God.

St Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, reminds us that the Church is the body of Christ. The synthesis document says:

*“Entry into the People of God is by faith and Baptism which confers on all members the anointing with the Holy Spirit and a participation in the “offices of Christ” as priest, prophet and king. In the teaching of Lumen Gentium, this includes all the baptised, no matter their state or vocation within the Church. Bishops, priests, deacons, those consecrated to God through vows and all the lay faithful constitute the one People of God called into the living Church, animated by the Holy Spirit, united together in the Body of Christ, with Christ as its head.”*



Our Gospel is Jesus’ response to the question: “Who is my neighbour?” Each generation has to look anew and ask who is my neighbour? The synod synthesis document speaks of Marginalised Groups within the Church as Women; LGBTQ+; Young People; Divorced and Remarried; The Traveller Community; those with Additional Needs; People of Colour; Traditionalists. These are our neighbours in the Church and in the world. In these times of economic hardship, conflict and violence, we do not have to look far to find other neighbours in our world. Jesus calls us to love God and love neighbour.

Jesus has demolished all boundary expectations. It is not social definitions such as class, religion, gender, or ethnicity that determines who is our neighbour. The Jewish word is *hesed*. *Hesed* is not just compassion, it’s mercy. A neighbour is a person who acts with compassion and mercy towards another. We should be neighbours and servants of one another in the community of Dockhead.

