



Diocese of Derry

Advent homily notes 2021

Moltaí do'n Liotúirge

An Aidbhint 2021

November 2021

Advent is a time of expectation, awaiting the Lord's revelation in our midst.

This year we start our synodal journey. The Lord is inviting us through Isaiah, John the Baptist and Mary to prepare the way for the Lord in the wilderness. Our theme of 'walking together in hope' provides every parish with an opportunity to reflect, pray and catechise as we prepare for the initial phase of the synodal process, the listening stage.

We can begin renewal only from where we are, not from where we would like to think we are.

On the opening Advent Sunday, I ask priests to look at why a synodal process and why now.

On the following three Sundays, I suggest the themes of the 2023 Synod

- Communion
- Participation
- Mission.

When the four weeks of Advent are over, I trust that those who come to Mass will understand better what is involved as we face into this change of time together, united as God's people and open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I have included some possible Prayers of the Faithful, based on the themes of the parish consultations.

This is not a time to be afraid or negative. This is a time to put out into the deep. The Lord will help us bear fruit in his own good time.

+Donal
Bishop of Derry

Prayer for the Synod

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

Paidir an tSionaid

Seasaimid i Do láthairse, a Spioraid Naoimh,
agus muid ag teacht le chéile i D'ainm.

Agus Tusa amháin mar threoraí againn
socraigh Tú féin síos inár gcroíthe;

Múin dúinn an tslí a chaithfimid dul
agus conas is féidir linn leanúint di.

Táimid lag agus claonta chun peaca;
ná lig dúinn ainriail a chur chun cinn.

Ná lig don aineolas sinn a chur amú,
ná don chlaonpháirtíocht ár ngníomhartha a mhúnlú.

Lig dúinn teacht Ort inár n-aontacht
chun go dtriallfaimid le chéile chun na beatha síoraí
gan dul ar strae ó bhealach na fírinne ná ón cheart.

Iarraimid é seo uile Ort,
Tusa a bhíonn ag obair de shíor agus i ngach uile áit,
i gcomaoin an Athar agus an Mhic,
trí shaol na saol.
Amen.

Week 1. November 27/28: What is a synod and why now a synod on synodality?

If you ask people to draw an image of the church, many will draw a building or an institution. A much more biblical image is that of the pilgrim people, led by God.

Today's Gospel calls us to read the signs of the times that we face as Church
In recent decades many things have changed

- The church as institution has lost much of its prestige and power.
- The number of ordained clergy has diminished in this part of the world.
- While we have baptised almost as many people as ever, we have not been encouraging lots of new committed disciples for Christ.
- New communication methods have enabled many to be in touch in different ways.
- There is a rediscovery of
 - The universal call to holiness
 - The church as mission-focused
- We have to discover the grace that lies in being weak – and letting God be in charge.

This is not just a time of change but a change of time. Pope Francis proposes that we develop ways of discovering together God's way forward in a new time and place.

We are asked to rediscover that we are a pilgrim people, following the voice of God who calls us one step at a time. We are moving beyond a Church where everything depends on 'Father'.

The Advent liturgy is an invitation to journey in hope, allowing ourselves to be led by the Spirit of God. The key scriptural figures are Isaiah, John the Baptist, Mary and Joseph. These walked in trust

Pope Francis has asked us to rediscover the Advent spirit of leaving our secure base and trusting that the Lord will guide our feet into the way of peace.

We aim to have a time of local listening to one another in January/February, building towards a diocesan submission to an Irish national response.

All national responses will be considered by the Vatican and a Working Document sent back for local reflection and comment in late 2022 – building towards the Synod of Bishops' meeting in October 2023, and beyond.

This is the beginning of a new way of being Church. It is not just a passing initiative. It is facing the future together, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Advent is not just a season of the year. It is a permanent part of our identity as Church.

Week 2. December 4/5. Communion

How does God lead His people?

John the Baptist gathers people in the wilderness

- To offer them hope.
With a call to conversion
- Showing that the wilderness may be a challenging environment, but is also where great things can happen
- That is where we prepare a way for the Lord.

Difficulties can be seen as a time of distress, abandonment, loss.

John the Baptist invites us to see the here and now as an opportunity.

What sort of Communion?

A faith community, such as a parish, is not just pleasant group of nice people

- It is part of the context of how we live and grow as church
- It is part of the content of our belief in church.

Communion is building community between all those diverse people who have come to know Jesus

- Not just a friendship group
- Not just with 'people like us'

Communion will involve conversion

- *The Church today is undergoing a process of conversion that begins "from below, as an expression of the active participation of the People of God in the journey of personal and community conversion,"* (Pope Francis. Nov 4th 2021)

John the Baptist was not afraid to speak out the uncomfortable truths – which the religious leaders of his time did not want to hear. Have we ears to hear?

Synodality is about building community in parish for the mission of our day

- Where faith conversations can take place
- Where people can listen to honestly shared opinions
- Where prayerful discernment can be learned
- Where there is room for people of all ages (remember that John the Baptist and Jesus were young adults!)
- Where parishioners take seriously co-responsibility for the life of the parish.

The synodal pathway wants to ask all church members where we can better be a community, journeying together in hope, open to God's surprising agenda. This stage is an attempt to hear where people are. It is stage 1 of a **See**, Judge, Act process

Week 3. December 11/12: Participation

We have grown up with an emphasis on Church as institution to be promoted and preserved and where questions were often seen as criticism. If we are called into Communion, there is a role for everybody in that community, the Body of Christ.

Synodality is based on the belief that the uncomfortable outsider can often be the most authentic voice of God - like Isaiah, John the Baptist and many great saints. Are we too attached to security? Can we be open to finding God in the wilderness?

Can we learn something from the urgency of **John the Baptist**?

- What is holding our parish back from enabling others to become involved?

Can we develop an understanding of how we have all been baptised with the Holy Spirit?

- And gifted to contribute.

Synodality means enabling people to participate in the faith journey

- In designing the parish approach to conversations
- In enabling all to take part
- *Our “journeying together” is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.* (Synodal Preparatory document, para 1) [English Version of the Preparatory Document \(synod.va\)](#)

Is every parish community re-starting the work of its Parish Pastoral Council in planning to relaunch its mission in the new post-pandemic future together?

How do we prepare to have conversations in early 2022 – as a first of many stages on the Synodal journey?

Week 4. December 18/19: Mission

Pope Francis has often said that we are people with a mission. There is an urgency to renew the sense of mission that we have.

An excessive emphasis on promoting church as institution has dulled our awareness of the purpose of the church, namely, to reach out to others and make disciples for Jesus.

Mary is on a mission

- She is bearing the Christ child
- But she rushes to visit Elizabeth.

Synodality aims to develop our ability to be 21st century missionaries in this parish and diocese.

Our structures are intended to serve the mission

- They need to be examined to see how effective they are at the levels of
 - o Parish
 - o Diocese
 - o Church throughout Ireland
 - o Universal church (Cf *Evangelii Gaudium* 27-33)
- Here are the main objectives, which manifest synodality as the form, the style, and the structure of the Church:
 - o recalling how the Spirit has guided the Church's journey through history and, today, calls us to be, together, witnesses of God's love;
 - o living a participative and inclusive ecclesial process that offers everyone—especially those who for various reasons find themselves on the margins—the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard in order to contribute to the edification of the People of God;
 - o recognizing and appreciating the wealth and the variety of the gifts and charisms that the Spirit liberally bestows for the good of the community and the benefit of the entire human family;
 - o exploring participatory ways of exercising responsibility in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the effort to build a more beautiful and habitable world;
 - o examining how responsibility and power are lived in the Church as well as the structures by which they are managed, bringing to light and trying to convert prejudices and distorted practices that are not rooted in the Gospel;
 - o accrediting the Christian community as a credible subject and reliable partner in paths of social dialogue, healing, reconciliation, inclusion and participation, the reconstruction of democracy, the promotion of fraternity and social friendship;

- regenerating relationships among members of Christian communities as well as between communities and other social groups, e.g., communities of believers of other denominations and religions, civil society organizations, popular movements, etc.;
- fostering the appreciation and appropriation of the fruits of recent synodal experiences on the universal, regional, national, and local levels. (Synodal Preparatory document, para 2) [English Version of the Preparatory Document \(synod.va\)](#)

In the diocese of Derry, we plan to have our local conversations between mid-January and mid-February. These will be collected and feed into the Irish national report to the Vatican. Both documents will be published so that people can know what is being heard in the Irish Church. This can be an exciting, Spirit-led journey of becoming the Church that God wants us to be in this century. I hope everyone will free to take part and to be honest – and seek to discover together what God is calling us to do and to be.

Prayers of the Faithful

The following Prayers of the Faithful were developed by the Synod of Bishops and can be used during Mass to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit during this Synodal process.

For the Church.

That we may journey as companions, side by side with one another on the same road. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For listening ears.

That our hearts and minds be open to listening to others without prejudice. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For the gift of speaking out.

That we be encouraged in this Synod journey to speak with courage and parrhesia, integrating freedom, truth, and love. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For a Church that celebrates.

That our journey together in the coming months will be based on listening together to the Word of God and the celebration on the Eucharist in the communion of the People of God. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For our participation in the Mission of Christ.

That through our Synodal journey together, we may grow in our shared responsibility of the mission that is entrusted to us. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For true dialogue in the Church and in Society.

That through a path of perseverance, patience, and mutual understanding, we may be attentive to the experience of persons and peoples. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For the unity of Christians.

That dialogue between Christians of different denominations, united by one Baptism, may radiate with new brightness on this Synodal journey. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For the exercise of authority and participation in the People of God.

That the Synodal roots of the Church will bear fruit in new ways of being at the service of one another at all levels of the Body of Christ. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For our discernment to be led by the Holy Spirit.

That all decisions made on this Synodal path may be discerned through a consensus that flows from our common obedience to the Holy Spirit. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For a spirituality of journeying together.

That we may be formed as disciples of Christ, as families, as communities, and as human beings, through our experience of this Synodal journey. We pray to the Lord. R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

As Gaeilge:

Réamhrá an tSagairt:

A phobal na páirte, agus sinn ag súil lenár mianta go léir,
le teacht ár dTiarna, Íosa Críost,
impímis a thrócaire le breis díograise
ionas, faoi mar a tháinig sé ar an saol
chun an Soiscéal a fhógairt do na boicht
agus chun lucht an chroíbharrú a leigheas,
go dtoileoidh sé, lenár linne chomh maith,
slánú a sholáthar don mhuintir dhearóil go léir.¹

Guí an Phobail

1. D'Eaglais naofa Dé:

Go raibh sí ina solas do na náisiúin agus ina sacraimint slánaithe uilíoch, ag siúl
le gach pobal chuig Ríocht Dé.²

¹ Féach *Missale Romanum*, Aguisín V, n.3.

² Féach *Collecta Formulario 'A' Pro Ecclesia*

2. Do Phroinsias ár bPápa, dár nEaspag N., agus do Phobal naofa dílis Dé i nDeoise Dhoire.:
Go gcuidí ceiliúradh an tSionaid seo linn toil Dé a aithint agus í a chur i ngníomh go misniúil.³
3. Ar son an uile údaráis shibhialta agus phoiblí:
Go n-iarra siad an leas coiteann i gcónaí, ag gníomhú dóibh go cóir agus go hionraic.
4. Ar son na n-easlán agus na ndaoine atá uaigneach, faoi leatrom nó ag fulaingt:
Nár dhéantar neamart iontu choíche ach, ina ionad sin, go ndéantar iad a aithint mar aghaidh Chríost i ndomhan atá ag fulaingt, agus go ndéantar cúram dá réir díobh.
5. Dúinn féin, atá i láthair anseo:
Go dtuga an Próiseas Sionadach seo sinn/muid i gcaidreamh níos dlúithe fós leis an Eaglais, go gcuire sé lenár rannpháirtíocht inti, agus go gcóirí sé sinn/muid le dul amach ar misean.⁴

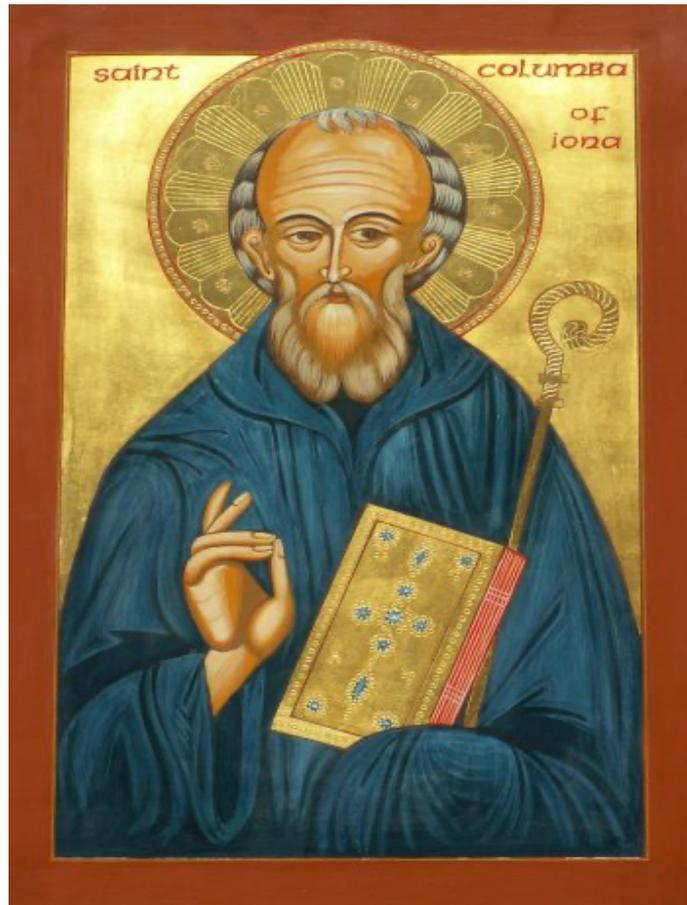
Urnaí an tSagairt

A Dhia, ár dtearmann agus ár neart,
tabhair cluas do phaidreacha deabhóideacha d'Eaglaise,
ós tú féin údar na deabhóide, agus deonaigh
go bhfaighimid go héachtach
a n-iarraimid go muiníneach.
Trí Chríost ár dTiarna.⁵

³ Féach *Super oblata Pro Concilio vel Synodo*

⁴ Féach *Titolo del processo sinodale*.

⁵ Féach *Missale Romanum*, Aguisín V, n.1.



I dtreo Eaglais shionadach
comaoin | rannpháirtíocht | misean