



## A RESPONSE TO THE RCDOW SYNODAL PROCESS - FEBRUARY 2024

### INTRODUCTION

Thirty-five people from a variety of parishes in both Westminster & Southwark Archdioceses took part in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Synodal Conversation hosted by Farm Street Jesuit Church. The Programme for the day is also attached as an Appendix.

Using the themes proposed in the RCDOW's Consultation Leaflet, *Towards October 2024*, those present considered the following themes: **shared responsibility, structures, organisation, and practical steps**, relating to the Leaflet's questions.

### RESPONSES

**Shared Responsibility & Mission** – There can be no co-responsibility without self-responsibility, therefore committing to mission crucially means **being** mission before **doing** mission. The personal witness of actions speaking louder than words means living and leading by example, both personally and as diverse communities. Such witnessing can be in small things, for example, the 'Little Way' of Therese of Lisieux, rather than being overwhelmed by the bigger context. The change/conversion we need is not for its own sake but to nurture and strengthen our faith and its purpose, its principle and its practice - *'by this shall all know that you are my disciples – that you have love one for another.'*

In practice, this means turning away from condemnation to filling our lives with love for others. Being 'salt of the earth' is not to leave a bitter taste, but ensuring that our shared responsibility and sense of mission is characterised by respectful listening, openness and encouragement rather than a narrow vision, disempowering or infantilising; non-judgmental acceptance, beyond 'tolerance' of others, especially of those who have been marginalised by the Church, or who feel alienated, those who have been or feel hurt, those with little voice whether in the Church or society.

It means being open to the Spirit who 'blows where she will', sometimes blowing away all that prevents God's love being channelled to all. Fundamental to this is being rooted in prayer, allowing our biblical origins and stories as the Word of God, to dwell deeply in us, and for us to inhabit that same Word which gives life. It requires a trustful abandonment to God who in Christ says that nothing will prevail against the rock which is the Church.

Part of our shared responsibility is to respond to 'the joy and hope, the grief and anxiety' of the people of our time' by re-interpreting the Scriptures and the Church's dynamic tradition in our diverse, contemporary contexts, of class, race, gender, sexuality, or ability. In much of this, the Church, in its people and its institutions, needs to be bolder, echoing Pope Francis' encouragement to frankness, courage, to 'make a mess!' At the same time, we have to journey with those, and not only the clergy, whose faith is shaken by the thought that the Church can change - the Church is always to be reformed, *'ecclesia semper reformanda.'*

We are the only Bible that many non-believers will ever read, so it is fundamental that we are living Bibles, being an open book to others, both personally and institutionally in various ways of servant-leadership. This involves showing the unity of love and truth in the Church, bringing hope and liberating community spaces of welcome in the face of so much religious and social division. This means ensuring that each baptised person is able to exercise their baptismal rights and responsibilities within the Church, without prejudice. If all are welcomed, then all are able to welcome others. Our participation in shared responsibility, mission, and ministry means that no one can be automatically excluded on grounds of class, race, gender, sexuality, or ability.

Being missionary disciples involves finding the balance between '*working for justice as a constitutive element of preaching the Gospel,*' and creating the spaces where people can be fed by the Word of God, where faith and belief can be nurtured, renewed, and re-examined so that they become more authentic, relating to human experience as much as to the realm of ideas. The Synodal Process and its spiritual conversation and continuing discernment have been important new tools for many who have never been asked to consider their baptismal challenge to share responsibility in the whole People of God.

## **STRUCTURES**

The structures of the Church at parish, diocesan, and national level need to embody and express more clearly a Synodal character. For example, why was the RCDO letter about this current process only sent to clergy and not addressed to all the people in Westminster Diocese, as are Pastoral Letters? Such a top-down approach enables the efforts of groups of committed parishioners to be blocked by those clergy who see becoming a Synodal Church, or not, is their responsibility alone.

There needs to be a re-visioning of the structures of the Church in England & Wales, including this Diocese, to be seen to be more Synodal - for example, no mention on the CBCEW website of the current Synodal Process, no CBCEW or RCDO on-line guidance re *Fiducia Supplicans* on blessing couples in 'irregular relationships'. Again, Bishops' statements on the latter have been mostly restricted to clergy and not to those affected. A principle for all Church structures should be 'no speaking/acting about us, without us.'

We need to ask basic questions about the Church's structures in the context of a secularising culture and their strongly patriarchal expression. The Church's structures, at all levels, are not ends in themselves but ways in which they can express fidelity to Christ's mission to spread the Good News to the ends of the earth. The Church is not in a removed sphere from the world but rather engaged with all of life, and all of life's rich diversity is to be found within it. Therefore the Church is enriched by its positive relationship with the world which is Spirit-led, showing a self-effacing and empowering authority of service rather than power or domination.

The Synodal Process has given the People of God a sense of being empowered to act or contribute autonomously from within their own skills and experiences, rather than being 'allowed/permitted' to do so. The model for the Church's structures should be those we find in the early experiences outlined in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Letters. These show communities able to manage difference, ways of developing gathering spaces where people can meet the God of Jesus Christ, and where people of various languages and cultures can be part of one, holy, catholic, apostolic, and synodal Church.

This calls for a decentralisation of much decision-making, and a commitment to subsidiarity where action is more rightly taken at the lowest level and not arbitrarily imposed from a hierarchical position. We need to move from a rigidly vertical model, where the pinnacle is barely seen, to a much more horizontal approach where there is greater transparency and clarity.

Hot-button issues about the readmission of married or civilly-partnered, resigned priests, ordination of women to the permanent diaconate, the inclusion of LGBT+ Catholics, occasional Eucharistic-sharing in ecumenical partnerships or in family situations, lay animation and official administration of the parish community, could all be discerned at national, diocesan, or parish levels, as appropriate. This then shows a more equitable and dynamic approach to what being Church is about, rather than being tied to outmoded ways of doing things which are no longer fit for purpose.

The previous RCDOE Area system, forced by Rome to be disbanded, was a more Synodal approach to creating a responsive and inclusive diocesan community. This enabled people in Central & Eastern, North, West, and Hertfordshire areas to develop a real sense of identity and fellowship with each other and, not least, with the Bishops of the Diocese, including the Cardinal Archbishop. It also appeared to enable the Bishops to 'get the smell of the sheep' and hear the real concerns of those – people, religious, priests and deacons - in their Areas.

The geographical parish system is often seen as an end in itself, developed in a very different sociological context, more reminiscent of the medieval Church. We need to recognise social mobility and other factors such as work-location or family ties to worshipping communities and nurture these, rather than have people feel guilty if they don't attend their local geographical parish. The parish as a worshipping and evangelising community should be seen as a hub for a communion of communities where the hallmark is mission not maintenance.

There are serious questions and concerns about the recruitment of priests from other countries in order to maintain a parochial status-quo. In many situations they are not used to working in a co-responsible way, having very different approaches to leadership and authority, often continuing their own cultural biases, particularly with regard to women's roles in the Church.

We should not just 're-invent the wheel', however, in times past Allen Hall Seminary formation was much more inclusive than it appears to be of late. Running alongside the Pastoral Theology Diploma for lay-people, including many women, the seminary course enabled its students to be learning alongside lay-women and men, as well as living out in many parishes on pastoral placements. Allen Hall should be seen as a resource for the whole diocese and not simply a place to perpetuate a clerical identity, with the risk of maintaining clericalism.

There are now many people in our parishes who are often more qualified in theology, spirituality, pastoral planning, etc, than the clergy; this is a rich resource which is not used. It would be good for parishes to hold a list of its parishioners' skills in these, as well as in other supportive areas. We need structures in which the offers of such talents can be discerned. We need a creative and imaginative approach to the financing of more lay pastoral-workers, community theologians, and spiritual accompaniers.

The position of women in the Church is not a side-issue. It reflects a negative dualism in our structures where the charisms, experience, voice of women is at best ignored, at worst silenced. Women constitute the majority in our parish populations and are often the first to respond to any need. The Diocese should establish a Commission to hear women's voices and how they can be more integrally involved in both decision-making and ministry within the Diocese. This is not to clericalise women, but to enable to enrich the Church's evangelisation and formation structures.

## **ORGANISATION**

We should enlist the expertise of those professionally qualified in the human and social sciences to review whether our current organisational systems are fit for purpose. Much of the Church's organisation depends on the maintenance of hierarchical and clerical power in the Church, and various, independent inquiries have highlighted the ways in which the abuse of power has led to the Church's crisis of physical and sexual abuse. Learning from these investigations is not just about addressing or resolving those particular issues but how our systemic organisation risks continuing such abuses.

Many feel that smaller parish communities are required, perhaps ministered to by teams of clergy living at a central location and not necessarily resident in every small community. There is concern that the isolation of many priests, living alone, fuels their fears and feelings of being overwhelmed by any new initiative that comes along, such as the Synodal Journey. We hear of priests saying, 'I'm too busy to deal with this,' afraid to let go, when committed lay-people are willing to take on a shared responsibility, particularly in the current Process.

We suggest that an RCDOE Synodal Core-group of laity, religious, clergy and episcopal representatives be convened to review the outcomes of the October 2024 Synodal Assembly in Rome, and to consider their implications for the Diocese. We welcome Cardinal Vincent's desire to convene another Diocesan Gathering during this coming Eastertide and echo how powerful the initial Synodal Gathering was at the

Cathedral in February 2022. Here, we were Synodal!

We urge that the Diocese pre-empts the 2023 Synodal Synthesis recommendation that Parish Pastoral Councils be mandatory, under Canon Law, along with Parish Finance Committees and encourages this throughout the Diocese. We also ask for the reinstatement of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, or a similar, regular Synodal Gathering as a visible sign of our striving to be a Synodal Church in Westminster. Recognising the need for respectful ministerial supervision, we ask that clearer systems of support be created for parish clergy along the line of previous 'Ministry to Priests' programmes with clergy being mandated to engage with relevant peer-support.

Westminster Diocese has been courageous in developing its pastoral ministry with LGBT+ Catholics, parents and families. We suggest that this now be supported by a Diocesan conversation on the theology of gender and sexuality, the nature of pastoral care, and the radical inclusion of LGBT+ Catholics within the Church. We recommend that such a conversation includes LGBT+ Catholics, parents and/or other family members, theologians, and those engaged in this specific pastoral ministry. We also ask that a similar conversation take place under the auspices of the CBCEW.

While the 2021-2022 Diocesan Synodal Phase engaged a vast number of young people in Catholic schools and colleges, we question how they are engaged with the current process, and whether their parents, especially where they are non-practising, can be reached out to? Can we learn from the Diocesan Youth Ministry's experience more explicitly and apply this to other groups? We encourage a greater working together of the Diocesan Education Commission, Schools Representatives, and the Youth Ministry and to develop a Listening Process to engage with young people and younger adults in the Church's life.

In seeking to reach out to those considered to be on the periphery of Church and society, or who are marginalised in any way, how do we hear respond to them rather than presume our awareness of their needs. How do we identify those within minority ethnic communities, refugee and asylum-seeking groups, who can be agents of change in meeting their needs. How can the Ethnic Chaplaincies be more engaged with the Synodal Process and bring their experiences of small communities in Latin America, Africa, the Philippines and other places to the Diocesan picture?

For there to be an organisational transformation in Westminster Diocese there needs to be a commitment to mutual formation of people and clergy, not least in becoming a more Synodal Church. Such formation is not about education in a narrow sense, or learning new skills, but better understood as growing in maturity, and a process that never ends.

Ongoing formation then is a necessity, yet so much that is preached in homilies rests on antiquated theologies which ignore developments in biblical and theological reflection, as well as in official doctrinal statements. This is not simply an issue of clergy responsibility, but also points to the ways in which parishioners can adopt a passive approach to their own mature growth in faith-formation, by assuming that 'what Father says, goes.' There is a particular concern about many more recently-ordained clergy who hanker after uncritical positions whether it relates to Church teachings, or liturgical practice.

Such a formation for all God's people will enable us to recognise that the gift of faith is not something to be buried, but to be shared, and to bring everyone round the common table. Faith is also not the magic cure for all life's challenges and we need to have better awareness of resources to help people in different stages of their lives, or if they experience the challenges of illness, disability, or ageing. Formation is not just for the fit and healthy, nor for those who are deemed to be weak, but for everyone!

In considering organisational challenges as a Diocese, we need to consider whether all our current rules and regulations are really necessary. Are they enabling us to 'worship in spirit and in truth' or are they burdens around our necks - 'woe to those who lay burdens and do not help to lift them.'

While the Synodal Process tasks us with enabling a culture-change in the Church, we should be careful not to be solely inward-looking, oblivious to our blind-spots. We must avoid anything which reinforces a privatised view of faith, so that self-evangelising naturally leads to other-evangelising. The latter means bringing everyone along, across cultural differences and without violence, not enforcing false agreement, or preventing conscientious dissent.

## PRACTICAL STEPS

Some concrete steps have already been identified in previous sections of this Response. We offer a number of other suggestions in no particular order:

- With the falling numbers of clergy, could empty diocesan properties be sold to fund new initiatives in becoming a more Synodal Church?
- Programmes of theological and spiritual formation be promoted, funded, subsidised by RCDOW.
- Initiate a transparent nominations process for various Diocesan Commissions and institutions and encourage similar in Parish Pastoral Councils.
- Use and promote the artistic heritage, art & architecture, music, etc, in many of our churches to attract people.
- Support a radical view of Canon Law to make it more local-Church-friendly, rather than a one-size-fits-all Roman model.
- Better promoting of the Diocesan commitment to 'care for our common home', environmental justice and energy conservation.
- Develop post-Confirmation programmes for younger people.
- Consider moving seminarians out of Allen Hall for periods of pastoral placement, housing them in parish houses or with families.
- Re-vision how we offer reflection days, retreats etc.
- Greater participation in who is appointed as priest in a parish, as well as bishop/Archbishop.
- Mandate every parish to have an annual, reviewable Parish Pastoral Plan.
- Establish official ministries of Lector, Catechist, etc including both genders, and allow qualified lay-people to preach.
- Allow Liturgy of the Word & Communion in the absence of a priest.
- Better and more active use of social media.
- Create Talents & Skills Inventories at parish and diocesan levels.
- Develop a commitment to support small, neighbourhood groups or similar grassroots Christian communities as envisaged by the 1980 Liverpool National Pastoral Congress so that we become 'a communion of communities'.
- Set up Diocesan frameworks to approach these categories: *Those who have never heard of Christ; Those who have ceased walking with Christ; Those with whom we worship Christ.*
- Encourage greater creativity and quality in our Sunday liturgies, including music, and seek a review of the translations now being used to bring us in line with other mainstream Christian Churches.
- Promote liturgical and ministerial training for lay-people.

## APPENDIX - SYNODAL DAY LEAFLET

### WELCOME !

The journey of the Catholic Church around the world in the renewal of our mission, centred on the work of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality, continues apace. Please make use of this moment for a reflection and renewal in the mission entrusted to us by our Blessed Lord.' (Cardinal Vincent Nichols)

### PROGRAMME - SATURDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2024

- 10.00 Registration & refreshments - The Cana Lounge
- 10.30 Welcome, Opening Prayer & Introductions - Aula Magna
- 10.50 Towards Synod 2024
- 11.00 Table-groups
- 12.00 Feedback
- 12.30 Lunch Break

**PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO BROWSE OVER THE POST-ITS FROM THE EARLIER TABLE-GROUPS**

- 13.15 Table-groups
- 14.15 Feedback
- 14.45 Break

**PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO BROWSE OVER THE POST-ITS FROM THE EARLIER TABLE-GROUPS**

- 15.00 Where do we go from here ?
- 15.30 Closing Evening Prayer
- 16.00 Depart



## Opening Prayer - *Adsumus* - based on the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Prayer of St. Isadore :

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 disrupt ways of justice.  
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.

### Taize Chant:

Ad - su - mus San - cte Spi - ri - tus. Ad - su - mus San - cte Spi - ri - tus. Fine

Ve - ni ad nos, ad - es - to no - bis. Ve - ni ad nos, ad - es - to no - bis.

### Welcoming the Word:

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were... Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20: 19 – 22)

*Pause for reflection ...*

### Table-groups 1 - 11.00

#### Co-Responsibility

Two dominant themes of the Synthesis Report from the First Session of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023 were Co-responsibility and Formation. We would like to offer a few thoughts as to how what was said about these themes informs our discussion of how we might better organize ourselves for mission.

*From the October 2023 Synodal Synthesis Report :*

"Each Christian is a mission on this earth." (8b) That statement best captures the meaning of Co-responsibility. It means every member of the Body of Christ has a unique mission to proclaim Christ. It is in this sense that we understand that all - lay and consecrated women and men, deacons, priests and bishops - share a responsibility for the Church's mission. They have each received different charisms and vocations, and exercise different roles and functions. But each has a unique mission. And "pastoral structures need to be reorganized so they can readily recognize, call forth and animate lay charisms and ministries, inserting them into the missionary dynamism of the ... Church." (8l)

We need, therefore, to deepen relationships within communities, foster "a communion of loving, non-competitive relationships in Christ"; call one another "to a co-responsibility to be expressed at every level of the Church." (9b) The challenge is to reorganize the way we relate and structure ourselves so as to enable "the participation and contribution of all." (9g) We are called to reorganize ourselves so as to communicate that we are, as Pope Francis puts it, indeed "a people convened and called with the strength of the Beatitudes." (9g) - *Take a moment now to reflect on these words from the Synod .....*

#### Conversation in the Spirit

In this 1<sup>st</sup> Table-groups' session we would like to reflect on shared responsibility in the Church.



The method we will use in both Table-group sessions is called "Conversation in the Spirit".

- ▷ This first speaker should take the stone and share their thoughts on the theme
- ▷ They should speak for no more than 3 minutes
- ▷ The facilitator will give notice once they are approaching 3 minutes then ask them to end
- ▷ The first speaker then passes the stone to the person on their left, who does the same
- ▷ Once everybody has spoken, we sit still for 3 minutes' silent reflection

**Q.1:** How do we witness as Dioceses, Parishes, and other communities and proclaim our faith to:

- ▷ those who have never heard of Christ;
- ▷ those who have ceased walking with Christ;
- ▷ those with whom we worship Christ (those who go to church)?

**Q.2:** How should we organise ourselves as Dioceses, Parishes, and other communities to do this more effectively?

All participants are invited to offer their short comments on the post-its - IN CLEAR WRITING !

## **AFTERNOON PROGRAMME**

### **Welcoming the Word:**

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. (1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 7)

*Pause for reflection .....*

### **Table-groups 2 - 13.15**

In this 2<sup>nd</sup> Table-groups' session we would like to reflect on Formation

When Pope Francis writes about Evangelization, he is clear that we all need formation at every stage of life. The Synod was equally clear that it is the responsibility of each Catholic to make sure they receive adequate formation. "Every baptized person," the Synthesis says, "is called to take care of their own formation as a response to the gifts of the Lord, making use of the talents they have received in order that they bear fruit and put them at the service of all ... it is decisive for mission." (14a)

It listed a great number of possibilities: "The areas in which the formation of the People of God takes places are many. In addition to theological formation, the Assembly requested training in specific skills: the exercise of co-responsibility, listening, and discernment; conducting ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, service to the poorest and care for our common home; engagement as "digital missionaries", facilitation of discernment processes, Conversation in the Spirit, consensus building and conflict resolution." (14e) But formation is not just about skills: it is about conversion, about turning back to Christ in order to proclaim his merciful love.

The Synthesis even describes a Synodal approach to formation. By this it means we need to be formed not just as individuals but as a body. "Formation for a synodal Church needs to be undertaken synodally: the entire People of God being formed together as they journey together ... Formation in a synodal key is meant to enable the People of God to live out their baptismal vocation fully. *Take a moment now to reflect on these words of the Synthesis Report from the October 2023 Synod*

**Q.3:** What concrete steps/formation opportunities would help us begin to witness and proclaim our faith more effectively?

**Q.4:** What structures may need to change? How might we need to develop the way we are organised currently?

All participants are invited to offer their short comments on the post-its - IN CLEAR WRITING !

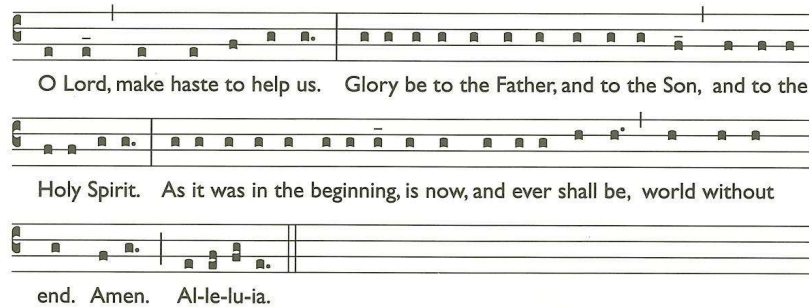
# Closing Evening Prayer 1 for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Celebrant sings:



God, ☩ come to our aid.

All respond:



O Lord, make haste to help us. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Al-le-lu-ia.

## **HYMN:** Blest be the Lord our God (Tune Diademata)



1. Blest be the Lord our God! With joy let hea - ven ring;  
be - fore his pre - sence let all the earth its songs of ho - mage bring!  
His migh - ty deeds be told; his ma - jes - ty be praised;  
to God en - throned in heav'n - ly light let ev - ery voice be raised.

2. All that has life and breath  
give thanks with heartfelt songs  
to him let all creation sing  
to whom all praise belongs!

Acclaim the Father's love,  
who gave us Christ his Son;  
praise too, the Spirit giv'n by both,  
with both forever one.

*Psalm 150, versified by James Quinn SJ (1919-2010)*

**Antiphon:** Your word is a lamp for my steps, Lord, alleluia.  
Ps. 118 (119)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, and a light for my path.  
I have sworn an oath and affirmed it, to obey your just judgments.

I am deeply afflicted, O God; by your word, give me life.  
Accept, God, my freely offered homage, and teach me your decrees.  
My life is in my hands at all times; I do not forget your law.  
For me the wicked have set a snare; yet I do not stray from your precepts.

Your decrees are my heritage forever, the joy of my heart.  
incline my heart to carry out your statutes forever, to the end.

I

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

**Antiphon:** Your word is a lamp for my steps, Lord, alleluia.

**Antiphon:** Let every creature, in heaven and on earth, bend the knee at the name of Jesus, alleluia.

**Canticle** (Phil. 2: 6-11)



Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.

Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness;

And found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

**Antiphon:** Let every creature, in heaven and on earth, bend the knee at the name of Jesus, alleluia.

### Scripture Reading (Col. 1: 3-6)

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love for all God's people. When the true message, the Good News, first came to you, you heard of the hope it offers. So your faith and love are based on what you hope for, which is kept safe for you in heaven. The gospel is bringing blessings and spreading through the whole world, just as it has among you.

### Short Responsory

From the rising of the sun to its setting, great is the name of the Lord.

**From the rising of the sun to its setting, great is the name of the Lord.**

High above the heavens is his glory.

**From the rising of the sun to its setting, great is the name of the Lord.**

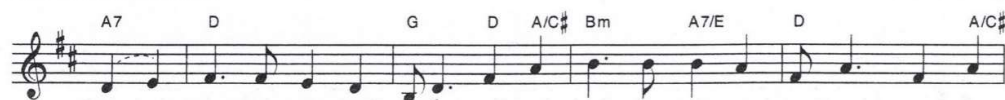
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**From the rising of the sun to its setting, great is the name of the Lord.**

**Magnificat Antiphon :** If you are offering your gifts at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with them first, and then come and present your offering, alleluia.

WILD MOUNTAIN THYME

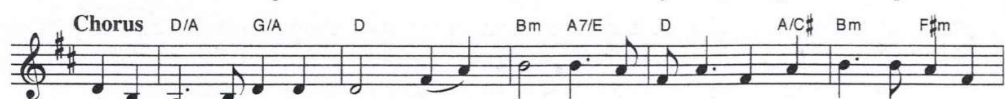
Irish melody



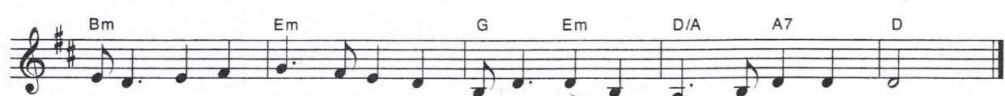
1. My — soul is filled with joy — as I sing to God my Sa-viour: he has  
2. I am low - ly as a child, — but I know from this day for - ward that my  
3. I pro - claim the power of God! — He does mar - vels for his ser - vants; though he



looked u - pon his ser - vant, he has vi - si - ted his peo - ple.  
name will be re - mem - bered, for all men will call me bles - sed.  
scat - ters the proud - hear - ted and des - troys the might of prin - ces.



And — ho - ly is his name through — all ge - ne - ra-tions! e - ver - las - ting is his



mercy to the peo - ple he has cho - sen, and — ho - ly is his name!

4 To the hungry he gives food,  
sends the rich away empty.  
In his mercy he is mindful  
of the people he has chosen.

5 In his love he now fulfills  
what he promised to our fathers.  
I will praise the Lord, my saviour.  
Everlasting is his mercy.

Anonymous

**Magnificat Antiphon** : If you are offering your gifts at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with them first, and then come and present your offering, alleluia.

## **Intercessions**

God our Creator leads us forward with great love towards the joyful day when we enter his rest:

**Our hope is all in you, O God.**

We pray for Francis, our Pope, and our Bishops: guide them and bless them in their ministry. May all the People of God be open to the Synodal Spirit of renewal and reform, and so we pray: **Our hope is all in you, O God.**

Help the sick to share their sufferings with Christ: may they know in him the fulness of life and love, and so we pray: **Our hope is all in you, O God.**

Lord, you found nowhere to lay your head: make us aware of the needs of the homeless, the poor in our midst, refugees and asylum seekers, today, and so we pray: **Our hope is all in you, O God.**

Bless those who work on the land: may we receive the fruits of the earth with thankfulness, and so we pray: **Our hope is all in you, O God.**

Have mercy on those who have died in the peace of Christ: receive them into the home you have prepared for them, and so we pray: **Our hope is all in you, O God.**

Let us now pray in the words our Saviour gave us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen

## **Concluding Prayer**

To those who love you, O God, you promise to come with your Son and make your home within them. Come then with your purifying grace and make our hearts a place where you can dwell. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **The Blessing**

*The Lord be with you. And with your spirit.*

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

**HYMN**: Sing a new Church (Tune: Ode to Joy)

1. Summoned by the God who made us, rich in our diversity,  
gathered in the name of Jesus, richer still in unity.

**Refrain**: Let us bring the gifts that differ and, in splendid, varied ways,  
sing a new Church into being, one in faith and love and praise.

2. Radiant risen from the water, robed in holiness and light,  
male and female in God's image, male and female, God's delight.

**Refrain ...**

3. Trust the goodness of creation; trust the Spirit strong within.  
Dare to dream the vision promised, sprung from seed of what has been.

**Refrain ...**

4. Bring the hopes of every nation; bring the art of every race.  
Weave a song of peace and justice; let it sound through time and space.

**Refrain ...**

5. Draw together at one table, all the human family;  
shape a circle ever wider and a people ever free.

**Refrain ...**

**SOME SYNODAL RESOURCES:**

**October 2023 Synthesis Report**

[https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report\\_IMP.pdf](https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report_IMP.pdf)

**The Synod Office** - [www.synod.va](http://www.synod.va)

[https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2023-12-12\\_towards-2024/ENG\\_Document\\_TOWARDS-OCTOBER-2024\\_XVI\\_II-Session.pdf](https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2023-12-12_towards-2024/ENG_Document_TOWARDS-OCTOBER-2024_XVI_II-Session.pdf)

[https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2023-12-12\\_towards-2024/ENG-Worksheet.pdf](https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2023-12-12_towards-2024/ENG-Worksheet.pdf)

**The School for Synodality** : <http://www.schoolforsynodality.org.uk/>

**Boston College** Programme includes a number of theologians and is available in various languages, dubbed in English, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, German, and Polish.

<https://formaciononline.bc.edu/en/lessons/form-and-reform-in-a-synodal-church-rafael-luciani/>

**Farm Street Jesuit Church has a useful Synod Page on its website:**

<https://www.farmstreet.org.uk/synod-on-synodality>

**LGBT+ Catholics & Friends' Synodal Webinar Series**, 17 February-27 April 2024

**REGISTER** - <https://forms.gle/f6XhQtwGwhqYkk9n6>