

# DIOCESE OF HALLAM

## Pastoral Letter on the Synod.

In October 2018, I was privileged to be in Rome for the Synod on young people. It was the culmination of listening to young people in the Church from across the globe sharing their hopes and fears, joys and sorrow of being members of the Church. Their reflections formed the working document for the synod and a focus for further listening to the young people present during the synod itself. It was both an enriching and exhausting experience! A final document was drawn up reflecting all that we had heard during the days of the synod and a short while after the Holy Father responded to the young with an encouraging and challenging open letter, "*Christus Vivit.*"

Today, in Rome, the Holy Father will invite the whole Church to set out together on a new synodal journey. Once again, listening will be the method, discerning will be the aim, and participation will be the path.

The Holy Father asks that the theme of our shared journey be: Communion, Participation and Mission. The companion document for the journey (Vademecum) offers us these brief reflections to help us understand these key words for our journey.

**Communion:** "By his gracious will God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith through the covenant he offers his people..... Together we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church and grounded in the *sensus fidei* that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people."

**Participation:** "a call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God -laity, consecrated and ordained - to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. The listening creates the space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together guides our aspirations for the Church for the Third Millennium. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received through the Holy Spirit."

**Mission:** The Church exists to evangelise. We can never be centred on ourselves. Our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family.

The journey that we are about to set out on is not an exercise in gathering data and information or a series of meetings or debates. It is rather a prayerful process, rooted in a prayerful encounter with Jesus, reading of the scriptures, through the liturgical life of the Church and an openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit. At the heart of the process is the discernment of the way the Church is to be locally and worldwide at this moment in its history. Pope Francis makes this point about the synodal path in his book, "Let us Dream":

"What is under discussion at synodal gatherings are not traditional truths of Christian doctrine. The Synod is concerned mainly with how this teaching can be lived and applied in the changing context of our times" P 84/85

We are invited to do this, by, first of all, listening to each other, but also by listening to our faith tradition and to the signs of the times in order to discern what God is saying to us and what his dream is for us.

Our response to the call of the Holy Father to journey together along the synodal path begins here in the diocese with an Opening Liturgy in the Cathedral at 4.30pm next Sunday 17 October. Throughout the autumn there will be an opportunity to meet at parish, deanery and diocesan level and engage in the synodal process of respectful listening to one another to our faith tradition and to the signs of the times. The fruits of our listening to one another will be collated and forwarded to Bishops Conference for the next step along the synodal path. For further details visit our diocesan website. [www.hallam-diocese.com](http://www.hallam-diocese.com)

As we prepare to set out on our journey, Pope Francis offers us this word of encouragement:

"Time belongs to the Lord. Trusting in Him, we move forward with courage, building unity through discernment, to discover and implement God's dream for us and the paths of action ahead." P94

+ Ralph Heskett CSsR  
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