

*Beginning a process of prayer in all parishes around the Diocese, with the launch of a monthly Holy Hour in Carnhill for the synodal journey the Church is setting out on, Bishop Donal asked that we...*

## Pray for a spirit of hopefulness and the grace not to be afraid as we put out into the deep

THE diocesan phase of the synodal process in the Derry Diocese was launched by Bishop Donal on the Eve of Halloween, during a special time of prayer in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill.

With St Brigid the Patron Saint of Travellers, as well as one of Ireland's Patron Saints, it was a fitting setting for the launch of a journey of discovery as to the pathway God wishes His Church to take, that both clergy and laity in parishes and dioceses around the world are invited by Pope Francis to set out on together, led by the Holy Spirit.

It was also very fitting that St Brigid's is within the Parish of the Three Patrons...the other two being St Patrick, another Patron Saint of Ireland, and St Joseph, the Guardian of the Church. And it is well known in the Diocese that the third Patron Saint of Ireland, St Columba, happens to be the Patron Saint of Derry, where events are taking place this year to mark the 1,500th anniversary of his birth.

The launch of what is hoped to be a great time of prayer, discussion and listening as part of the synodal process in the Derry Diocese, coincided with the launch of a special monthly time of prayer with members of the Abraham (Abramo) Community in St Brigid's Church for this process in the Three Patrons' Parish.

While Bishop Donal led the Holy Hour, following the celebration of the vigil weekend Mass in St Brigid's, on Saturday, October 30, Abraham Community members, Luca and Seanan Zaltron, and Dylan and Cecilia Creagan, provided

the music ministry for what was a very beautiful and prayerful experience in front of the Blessed Sacrament for the many who stayed on after Mass.

Noting that the most common phrase in the Bible is 'Do not be afraid', Bishop Donal spoke of how, after the Ascension, the apostles had hid in the upper room until the Holy Spirit came to 'kick them out' and they went on to make converts amongst the Samaritans and the pagans.

"The history of the Early Church was always of people tempted to be frightened," said Bishop Donal, adding that the message of the New Testament is that "God is in control and we are His instruments. There is no need to be afraid. He may ask us to do crazy things, like Moses, Mary and the Apostles, but do not be afraid. He will use us as He wants to".

Highlighting another phrase that Jesus used to the Apostles after they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing, "Put out into the deep", he went on to say: "Jesus tells Peter and His Church in every generation - put out into the deep, do not be afraid".

Bishop Donal continued: "We are facing a lot of fear and anger in the Church. Some want to stay as we are, others say no, we must change. We have to ask ourselves in this generation whether we have been doing things as best we could to make disciples for Jesus. I think the answer is 'no'. We have not been making disciples for Jesus. That is the only mission Jesus asks His Apostles to take on.

"This synodal process is recognising that the world is

changing rapidly. Pope Francis says that it is not a time for change, but a change of time. How do we bring the love and mercy of God to those lying on the Strand Road, to those in mental hospitals, in homeless shelters, in women's aid hostels, in the Simon Community? If we are not bringing the love and mercy of Jesus to them, then we are not walking in the footsteps of Our Saviour.

"This process is about us asking the Lord, 'How do you want us to go forward?' Pope Francis says if we are going to discern God's Way forward, the main protagonist is not the Pope, the clergy or the laity; it is the Holy Spirit.

"The synodal journey is an interior journey to see what the Lord wants for His Church in 2021. It is not our ideas, as they are usually far wide of the mark. I propose that we begin a regular campaign of prayer with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, so that we can hear where He wants us to go. How we can bring His love and mercy? How can we listen for the voice of God in others?"

"The whole process is based on the assumption that we all have to be converted to God's ways. If we fail in this, we will fail to be Jesus' disciples and fail to make Jesus' disciples."

"Beginning with this parish," said Bishop Donal, "I want to begin a process of prayer in all parishes around our Diocese. Can we bring the Lord all the needs of our parishes and Diocese, and, with trust, say 'Lord, show us Your way...not the full journey, but the next step. Help us not to be afraid to put out into the deep because you, Jesus, are there at our side'.

"We pray for a spirit of hopefulness and the grace not to be afraid as we put out into the deep, as that is where the Church has always been at its best."

Thanking Bishop Donal and the Abraham Community for leading the time of prayer and blessing, Fr Gerard Mongan extended an invitation for more to come along and join in the next Holy Hour after the vigil Mass on the last Saturday of November.

### 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.*

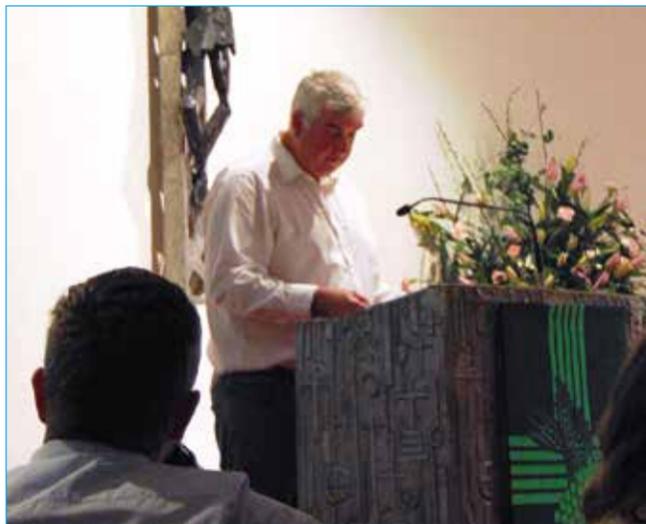
*Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.*

*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.*



## Synodal pathway in Diocese of Derry

*by Bishop Donal*

POPE Francis famously said that this is not a time of change so much as a change of time.

At every level in society, we face a range of changes and challenges - economic problems, the environment, a world of instantaneous communications and widespread political instability.

The Church has always to be asking itself a basic question, and that question is not 'how do we keep our system going'. There is a more fundamental issue - how effective are we in bringing God's mercy and healing to the people and situations of our day?

And the answer is quite clearly... 'Could do an awful lot better!'

Pope Francis has invited Catholic communities all over the world to begin a prayerful conversation to see how we can understand what the way forward is.

And the Pope is clear that this is not a parliamentary process, where parties vie to get their policies and views to win victories. The early Christian Church believed that, if they prayed together and listened, they would discern where God was leading the Church.

That is the process that Pope Francis has asked Derry Diocese - and every other diocese in the world - to start. It is based on the belief that leaders have to lead - but that we all have to listen to hear where God is leading.

In preparation for a major month-long Synod of Bishops on the theme 'Communion, Participation and Mission' in October 2023, we are beginning a diocesan process which will lead to an Irish national listening process, feeding into the Vatican, which will then come back with a further document for local discussion.

And, the Synod in 2023 will just be one more stage on a journey of listening to God and to one another - a different way of being Church.

In the conversations, we will hear many things - some inspiring and some uncomfortable. But only the truth will set us free. My hope is that we will be able to be silent and

listen with our hearts and not just with our ears. In history, God has spoken in many unexpected little people!

There is much need for grace, forgiveness and healing in our society. Jesus found ways of reaching the people of His day. We are beginning a way of being Church that will. Resources will be uploaded to [www.derrydiocese.org](http://www.derrydiocese.org) and can be viewed there.

This is a new way of facing the future with trust rather than in fear. I have every confidence that future generations will look back on this time and be grateful for people of courage, honesty and hope, who were not afraid to set out on a new missionary path.

