



Pastoral letter
to all the faithful of our Archdiocese

Edinburgh, 26 October 2021

My dear friends,

Renewing the Bonds of Communion

Synod 2021-23

A Synod of Bishops takes place in 2023 on the subject of *Synodality*. Pope Francis has asked each diocese across the world to prepare for that Synod through a period of discussion and discernment.

Our Archdiocese

We now begin that synodal process here in our Archdiocese. There are three themes to discuss and discern in the coming months: *communion, participation and mission*. This comes at a time when we face several important considerations in the Church and in the world:

- A growing hostility to the message of Christ in all its richness;
- The problem of the present pandemic, which touches the life of all;
- The threat to God's good earth caused by human economic activity.

Communion

Against this backdrop, we have been asked by the Holy Father first to consider *what brings us together* as a community, and as Catholics, as a *communion*. Christians believe that what binds us together as human beings, and as daughters and sons in the Son (cf. Gal 3:25-28), is far greater and far more important than what keeps us apart. In the last years, however, this sense of community has weakened. The Catholic reply to this dilemma is a more profound and meaningful communion that is a sharing of faith, life and love in the knowledge of the risen and redeeming Christ.

Participation

The second theme is *participation*. No one who is familiar with the history of our land can fail to recall how Catholics were excluded from the political, social and economic life until comparatively recently. In our lifetimes, a great deal has changed for the better in this regard, but we can learn from that experience as a community, that was once on the margins, to see

afresh what that means for others now, and to learn again to be true Christian neighbours to all with whom we share our towns and villages.

Mission

Thirdly, the Holy Father has asked us to consider the theme of *mission*. The meaning of mission is essentially the task of *being sent out* by one in authority. The risen Lord sent the Apostles to preach the good news to all creation (cf. Mk 16:15), baptising in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 28:19). We too must live our faith as authentic witnesses in union with the local church. Placing ourselves humbly before God, and through formation, prayer and penance, let us rediscover how to make our lives and actions speak more eloquently than any words of the reasons for our hope in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

Your parish

In the light of the above, I invite you to get involved in any discussions that take place in your parish community. A guide for parishes on how to host meetings has been sent to all the clergy.

Sister Anna Marie McGuan RSM and Fr John Deighan will help to lead discussion at various levels in the diocese and will be in touch with parishes and deaneries shortly. Details will also be available on the Archdiocesan website at archedinburgh.org/news-events and on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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A local church that walks the synodal path together, will surely embrace Jesus, who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Lord is always calling us to be His disciples and to invite others along that same path. Our personal conversion will become an invitation to others to that same path of self-renunciation for the sake of communion with God and others.

As Catholic Christians, we are already heirs to a profound communion with Christ, with the Successor of Peter, with our bishop and with each other. This communion in Christ is a treasure beyond price (cf. *Matthew 13:46*), and **it is one I invite you all to rediscover and to renew** in our exchanges with each other over the coming months.

I hope and pray that we will use the opportunity to realise what we hold in common, to appreciate it afresh and to propose it to others. In this way, we will build and renew our communion in Christ, to the greater glory of God.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



+Leo Cushley
Archbishop of St Andrews & Edinburgh