

**Submission to  
The Irish Episcopal Conference  
(IEC)**

**on the Synodal Path Process  
from the Diocese of Cloyne.**

**26<sup>th</sup> May 2022.**



***"To live is to change and to be perfect is to change often" – St John Henry Newman***

*"One of St. John Henry Newman's gifts to the church was to remind us of the 'Sensus Fidelium' the sense of the voice of the faithful living the Gospel in the particular circumstances of their lives. With patient listening under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we together discern the call of the Lord to us individually and as a people of Christian faith".*

– Bishop William Crea.

## **1. INTRODUCTION.**

The Diocese of Cloyne launched its Synodal Path Process on 17th October 2021 with the above invitation to the people of the diocese to discern the Lord's Call. The Synodal Path Process has a dual function in our Diocese. Firstly, it facilitates dialogue amongst the faith community to develop a synodal way of being the church. Secondly, it reflects on the current and future needs of the people of God, which requires a pastoral response. The launch of the Synod began a process of shaping the path forward for the church in Cloyne. In the current context, it provided feedback to inform the preparation of this submission to the IEC (Irish Episcopal Conference) on the Synodal Path Process.

A Steering Committee was appointed by Bishop William Crea to coordinate a listening and consultation process across the diocese. The Bishop chaired the Steering Committee of five persons (female and male) with additional input for the analysis stage. This included laity and ordained persons involved in various church ministries. The members had backgrounds and experiences of family, youth services, school community, parish pastoral ministry, deacon and priest.

## **2. METHODOLOGY.**

The methodology comprised a survey and series of listening and consultation workshops. In total about 600 were involved in the process with people inputting from various socio-economic groups. The workshops included representatives of Pastoral Councils at Deanery level, whose membership is drawn from many

different walks of life. It also included workshops with teachers, farmers, youth and those experiencing social exclusion. These were in-person and face-to-face workshops. The workshops sought the participation and input of laity, religious and clergy on various issues.

There was also a web-based listening and consultation process. This comprised an online survey. Similarly, a paper-based version of the survey form was distributed. In total, about 250 survey forms were completed and returned online. A further 200 hardcopies of survey forms were received.

The workshops and the online opportunities for discussion and input were promoted digitally through the Cloyne Diocesan Website and social media platforms. There was promotion verbally at Masses and through church events. Paper-based promotion involved distribution of posters at church buildings and the public marketplace. These posters included a QR code to provide a link to access the online survey and to seek to address the difficulty in outreaching to some socio-economic groups.

Two thirds of the respondents to the online and hard copy survey were female. Interestingly in comparison to the online survey, the workshops /discussion groups had closer to a 50:50 gender balance. In the case of the Deanery Pastoral Councils there was a slightly greater number of males. This gender breakdown was reflected in all of the age categories who responded and inputted.

In terms of age profile, one third of the respondents were aged 41-60 years. Two thirds of respondents were aged 61 years and older. Apart from some specific focus groups with youth, all respondents were over 40 years of age. Youth input was listened to through separate focus groups involving Cloyne Diocesan Youth Service and Youth 2000. There was a noted diversity of opinion here. Thus, in presenting the data received, some sample quotations from the youth groups are presented separately to highlight this feedback and perspective from the future generation of our faith community. In some situations, this highlighted feedback serves to balance the perspective of the feedback of the over 40 age group and in other cases it serves to concur with it.

### **3. KEY QUESTIONS.**

The Diocese of Cloyne was kindly guided in the study of the various Vatican documents on Synodality and the Synodal Path Process by the Irish Synodal Pathway Task Group, whom we wish to thank and acknowledge. Based on these sources and guidance documents, a series of questions were developed by the Cloyne Steering Committee. Various combinations of the following questions were posed to participants at the workshops and through the online and paper-based survey forms:

Q. Is faith and spirituality, as distinct from church, part of your life?

Q. How has faith helped you in your life?

Q. When we say, "our Church", who is part of it – who is missing and why?

Q. To what extent do you feel welcomed, appreciated and valued for who you are in your parish or community?

Q. What areas of mission might we need to develop?

Q. What steps might the Holy Spirit be inviting the Church to take?

Q. What dreams for the church do you have?

#### **4. EMERGING THEMES.**

There was a high level of engagement from participants in the Synodal Path Process with the various questions posed.

It is important to acknowledge the differences in priorities between more and less engaged groups. For example, concerns about inclusion and diversity were very dominant amongst the online survey respondents and Diocesan youth groups. The Deanery Pastoral Groups, the Catholic Primary Teachers and Youth 2000 barely, if at all, mentioned issues of inclusion and diversity as understood in the broader culture. This range of views is considered to be an important distinction as the Synod Path Process is about ascertaining the 'sensus fidelium' as well as listening to the voices of the less engaged.

The following is an outline of themes emerging in our diocese from the dialogue, feedback and responses received. The question of "What response does this call for?" will be addressed in Section 5 below.

##### **4.1 Faith and spirituality as part of our lives.**

The question was posed: Are faith and spirituality, as distinct from church, part of your life?

The majority of respondents (75%) stated that faith and spirituality are part of their life. Others either did not respond or raised some doubts.

Many confirmed that they had grown up in a strong faith family and always have been very much part of the Catholic Church. Others stated that they attend Mass and described themselves as quietly spiritual. A lot of the contemporaries of those offering feedback have drifted away from practice of their faith. The point was made that the church assumes that faith is there in people and sometimes it is not.

People referred to finding God and peace in nature as a central force in times of anxiety and stress. There was an acknowledgement that faith has carried them through many a crisis and given great comfort and hope.

##### Examples of general quotations:

"My parents modelled the faith. As I grew older, I became more questioning of my faith and life experiences have given rise to doubts. Am I living a fallacy?"

"It is hard to separate faith and church, but lots of people my age have"

"I need the church to sustain my faith. A lot of my contemporaries have drifted away"

"Faith is bound up in attending mass"

"Mass was not the same online. It is refreshing to be back at Mass. Faith becomes more important during tough times, like during Covid"

##### Examples of Youth quotations:

"No – I don't really get the question"

"I think I am spiritual, but when I think of faith I think of the Church, and I am not sure about that"

"Spirituality? I have my own belief in God that helps me through"

"I don't believe in God, so I am not sure about spirituality. I believe in goodness and kindness"

"No – I don't have any faith – I wish I had though"

"Yes, faith and spirituality are very important to me and are often different from the Church"

"Faith is very important to me and being part of the Church nourishes that"

"Yes, it helps me out and gives me comfort"

"Yes, it is a personal thing"

#### **4.2 How our faith helps us.**

The question was posed: How has faith helped you in your life?

Some people described faith as a secure base on the journey through life. There was particular reference to dealing with times of stress, problems, bereavement and key decision-making moments. Faith was described as a positive experience that is a big part of people's lives and helps to keep families together. Also, that faith is key to inner peace, forgiveness and healing.

##### Examples of General quotations:

"Faith gives me perspective. It is an anchor for my life. It forms my outlook"

"When I felt upset, praying made me feel better"

"I believe that any plan God has for me is infinitely greater than anything I could ever dream up. Therefore, it is important for me to journey as close to God as I can on every step of the way because I believe He sees the bigger picture and has me ever in his care"

##### Examples of Youth quotations:

"Yes, it helps me out and gives me comfort"

"Yes, it is a personal thing"

"I have experienced through *Youth 2000* that faith is huge"

#### **4.2 "Our Church".**

The question was posed: When we say, "our Church", who is part of it – who is missing and why?

##### Our Church.

Some respondents felt very much part of the Church and described positive experiences of this sense of inclusion. However, many people expressed a clear sense of disconnection from the idea of 'our church'. A lot of respondents described their experience of the church as authoritative and one of a clear line between priests/bishop (hierarchy) and the voice and place of the laity. In particular, the role, voice and equality of women was repeatedly mentioned as a significant inhibitor to the idea of 'our church' and as a reason that many are missing. This tone was repeated regularly when reflecting on the Church as authoritative, lacking in diversity and often seen as judgmental.

##### Who is part of it?

Some people stated that they shared the understanding that all of the baptised are part of the Church while others listed groups such as clergy and laity as part of the church. Some commented that the Church felt like a place for the righteous and self-righteous. This in turn has led to some people not feeling part of the Church or that it is a place for the perfect and not the imperfect. Some felt that those who were not part of the

church chose themselves not to be part of it or needed more encouragement and faith instruction. Others emphasized the importance of highlighting the unique space that is the domestic church of family.

#### Who is missing and Why?

There was a long list that people felt were missing. These included victims of all types of abuse, people who chose to leave church, teenagers and young people, laity and lay ministries, separated, divorced Catholics, the LGBTQ+ community, same sex couples, families, young priests, sinners, single people, many baptised Catholics, other Christians, the poor and the oppressed. The feedback indicated that people are missing due to a lack of compassion and too much judgment (by laity and priests).

There was a noted focus on what was described as the lack of meaningful lay involvement in the parish /church community at various levels including ministries. The absence of young people and young adults was also mentioned on a significant number of occasions. It was also noted that for many people the 'Church' is only seen in terms of going to Mass. It was acknowledged by many respondents that it needs to be seen in much wider terms and this may help in changing perceptions that it is more inclusive and accessible.

#### Examples of general quotations:

"My son said: look around the church Dad, do you see anybody my age?"

"16- to 25-year-olds are not in church. There is a generation lost"

"I don't feel part of the Church or welcomed into the Church"

"Lots are missing, families are missing, I am missing"

"It is good to see Pope Francis ratifying formal Canonical Laws around lay people serving in the church as Lectors and Acolytes and this official recognition is very welcome. However, it does not mean any new role for women in the church as such. I feel it is time that women should be able to preach, perform Christenings and the other roles similar to the Permanent Diaconate. Obviously, the consecration is the pinnacle of the Mass, and I am not sure myself at this point about women Catholic Priests. But I find myself thinking it is time women should be able to preach and lead prayer"

#### Examples of Youth quotations:

"Young people are missing, LGBTQ+ are missing, people who aren't seen as respectable are missing"

"The missing are the rejected"

"People of faith who are searching, like me, are often missing"

### **4.3 Our experience of Parish**

The question was posed: To what extent do you feel welcomed, appreciated and valued for who you are in your parish or community?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1- feeling of not being welcomed, 5 being very welcomed), the average response was 3. Some described feeling very welcome and appreciated in their parish and referred to the kindness of priests. There was an appreciation of the priest taking the time to come to the back door outside Mass to meet people and an acknowledgement that well prepared homilies can communicate a welcome and appreciation.

Others referred to important moments in their lives where the pastoral ministry of the priest had touched them and, as a result, they felt welcomed. The social justice area of ministry was mentioned as a way for the church to engage with some people outside of liturgy.

Examples of General quotations:

"The Parish Priest knows my name"

"We feel very welcome in our parish community. We are lucky with the priests that we have in our parishes – all sound and non-judgmental"

"The sacraments are provided and we're very fortunate to have that, but absolutely no sense of parish community or structure for a Parish Family".

"Obviously not all Priests have leadership abilities, and without a Pastoral Council to provide any leadership, it's a vacuum"

"Then again there's nothing stopping anyone from looking outside of the parish for faith development if interested"

"I myself feel very blessed to be in the parish and diocese I am in. I find our Priests very approachable and welcoming. I am involved in a number of parish groups and ministries and have always felt very valued in my roles and ministries"

"I felt very welcome and cared for when my mother died. I wish that experience and feeling and comfort was available all the time"

"My parents are separated, and I often feel judged because I come from what is called a 'broken home' even though I don't think my family home is broken"

"Going to mass, it's always the same, same people, same set up – no room for imagination or for joy"

"I am involved in a lay Catholic movement nationally and as part of this I feel valued – It feels like I have a place. They have great zeal and I have great friends within the group. In my own parish, I feel appreciated but isolated"

"I feel very valued and appreciated as a Class Teacher (sacraments), School Principal and a member of my parish"

Examples of Youth quotations:

"Before Covid the Deacon in our parish got some of the youth involved in music, readings and making food parcels for poor families – that made me feel welcomed and valued"

"Lots of young people and especially LGBTQ people are absolutely not welcomed or valued. This makes me mad"

"I feel welcome, I don't know about valued – I never thought about it"

"Welcomed by the priest, yes. I don't think we really have a 'community'

"Don't go to parish at all, so I don't know. I don't think much about it"

"Be prepared to jump outside the box"

#### **4.4 Developing Our Mission.**

The question was posed: What areas of mission might we need to develop?

The responses reflected both on the Universal Church Mission and the local mission in Cloyne Diocese and Parishes. Overall, there is a sense that part of the fruit of the Synodal Path Process for us as a diocese is the

range of views, which we need to work on as our continued Synodal journey. This is key to unfolding our future mission.

The standout response on our future mission is the need for formation and catechesis for both laity and clergy. At this point on the journey, the view expressed is that this is the crucial next step. There is an appetite for a deeper knowledge of faith to nurture life's experience of faith. An interesting single quotation that "the bible needs to be re-written" illustrates the need for faith formation without making the case for it. The feedback clearly presented the theme that faith formation is surely where our church community in Cloyne needs to start to re-build. Related to this was a sense that faith formation will lead us to a better understanding of what is meant by inclusion and diversity.

The responses also proposed movement on other fronts to support this formation including freeing clergy from administration and offering new opportunities to laity (male and female) to contribute more. The feedback expressed that the church needs to become a more welcoming and visible community of faith rather than the "formal and haughty" one that some people perceive us to be. Evangelisation through new social media forms was proposed with many examples of good practice in this area referenced.

Respondents felt that the church mission needs to adjust to communicate more of a welcome towards all people, but especially the young, women, the poor, the divorced /separated and the LGBTQ+ community. Obstacles to a more open church included what some described as the church's "outdated" teaching in some aspects of society, parish cliques and an overly "formal" clergy. The need for faith formation for all groups and better homilies was emphasised: "A desperate need for better homilies". More reverent celebrations of liturgy by both priests and people are considered important for some respondents. The relevance of, and engagement with, current global challenges was a key concern for others. The need for laity "to have a proper say" in parish life was emphasised.

There was an awareness that major change is needed in the case of women's participation in all aspects of the church. In support of this aspect of Mission, it is appropriate here to cross-reference that the responses received to questions posed in the survey suggested that the faith community could find creative ways of bringing about this change. The involvement of younger children also in events such as faith-camps was proposed. It was acknowledged that it is more and more likely that the actual faith community will need to educate and lead our children in the faith. This was linked to the point that education in faith /sacraments may move out of school settings.

#### *Examples of General quotations.*

"Listen to Pope Francis more"

"There is a Mission amongst the established group we call 'church' to help stay alive, active and joyful in our faith"

"Bring Jesus into people's lives in a way they can understand and in a way that helps"

"We need young foreign missionaries"

"Church is male dominated. Women are walking away."

"Women for Permanent Diaconate"

"We need less worldly chatter in church".

"Mass shouldn't be celebrated in a robotic way"

"Church needs to be poor and humbler"

"The church does not respect the so-called lower classes"

" A need to go back to basics, to focus on the Ten Commandment, sin and the devil"

“Reach out to the people who are struggling and who are on the fringes and invite them /us into the Church”

*Examples of Youth quotations.*

“The main area of mission is to help people have a personal encounter with Christ. For example, Youth 2000”.

“Church mission needs to renew its focus on social concern, climate change and the environment.

#### **4.5 Invitation from the Holy Spirit – our next steps.**

The question was posed: What steps might the Holy Spirit be inviting the Church to take?

The respondents framed their response in terms of a call from the Holy Spirit to be hopeful, to be willing to question and not to be afraid to preach the good news to the world. Also, to be more faithful to the Gospel message. There was a sense of a call to be humble in the face of the Divine. There was a challenge expressed that as a faith community we need to put God at the centre and before all things, whether political institutions, education, the workplace, health. We need to acknowledge the power of God ever present.

*Prayer.*

People felt that the Holy Spirit is calling for more prayer. It was acknowledged that there are many forms of prayer in our faith-heritage ranging from more traditional forms of prayer to new and emerging forms of prayer and guided-prayer. There was a consensus that prayer is needed to guide the Church and that there needs to be a willingness to be submissive to the spirit of truth.

*Church.*

People sensed an invitation from the Holy Spirit to a smaller more dynamic Church with less maintenance and more mission. Many submissions suggested becoming more like the Church of the early Christians who were known for the love they showed each other and how they helped each other, especially in times of difficulty. Respondents expressed the need for us to be the Church Jesus wants us to be.

There was sense of a call to go back to basics with less of a hierarchical church and more lay involvement. Some felt that Church laws are man-made, rigid and forcing people out of the community of faith. Others shared a feeling that the Holy spirit is encouraging a more charismatic and ecumenical approach unlike the here and now where we seem to have “circled the wagons”.

A small number of voices expressed a preference that the Church “go back to the traditional teachings with a call to reverse many of the changes that have happened since the 1960’s”. In this context, a small number requested the Latin Mass and to abandon any attempt to be relevant or trendy.

*Inclusion*

The consensus from the listening process is that the Holy Spirit does not discriminate and exclude. Our mission is to welcome diversity, support the vulnerable, work to support immigrants and end racism, include LGBTQ+ people, those in second relationships, separated and divorced. It was felt that the church needs to speak out on issues where people are treated unfairly. Many spoke about the need to be more inclusive of women.



The Holy Spirit is trying to open the church doors to a refreshing attitude of inclusion and reform. Vatican II and other documents need to be kept in mind and hopefully the spirit will soften the hearts of those opposed to change.

There were references also to needs such as greater dialogue with other Christian faiths and for our church not to engage with an attitude as the one who thinks they are right.

#### *Priests and Deacons.*

There was a strong sense of the invitation from the Holy Spirit to support our priests, deacons and the new emerging ministries approved by the Church.

There were a number of written submissions that called for priests to be allowed to marry (optional celibacy) and other submissions that called for women Permanent Deacons. There were mixed views on the topic of women priests. It was acknowledged that these are not matters or decisions for our local diocese and that the only role is for our diocese to pass on the feedback received. The view was shared though that the Holy Spirit may be inviting the Vatican to facilitate a process for the Universal Church to discuss the diverse range of views on these matters.

In relation to the role of priest and the exercise of some aspects of this ministry in Ireland, there was a strong consensus on the special value people have in their very faithful priests, but an acknowledgement that the workload shouldered by priests is unsustainable. The discussion borrowed a phrase "to unburden the wagons for priests" meaning to release tasks that are not at the core of priesthood. There were proposals that priests let go of control over much of church administration and management and that clergy hand-over all administration to lay assistants and focus on leading people in prayer, the sacraments and pastoral ministry. The quotation from Pope Francis was used to emphasise the importance of forming pastoral relationships as key: "the shepherd should smell like his sheep". Views were shared that the Holy Spirit wants priests to have a better and ongoing formation to enable them to preach the gospel in all its fullness. Views were expressed that bishops and priests must stop trying to conform to the social norms of secular society and instead to take a courageous role in preaching what is right and wrong and standing up to the totally ignorant "opinion-formers".

#### *Catechesis*

Sacramental preparation for children was discussed and the feedback received recognised that parents need help to form children in their faith and not to solely rely on the schools for this role. There was an acknowledgement of the very good resources that are available for this task and a sense that the beauty of our faith will win people over. This point was developed further by questioning how religion is taught currently and an acceptance that it is not working. There was a consensus in discussions and feedback that it will be a sad day - in the sense of being a major change - when there will be a total separation of schools and parishes. However, the Holy Spirit seems to be prompting us to begin preparations for sacramental preparation outside of school.

Respondents stated that it is obvious that adult catechesis and adult formation is lacking in the Irish Church. There was a need identified for better scripture-based formation and prayer as part of adult faith formation programmes. The experience was shared that there is a need to explain the scriptures in a way that engages people and to equip them to discern the Word of God. This was developed further in relation to the Holy Spirit calling people to true evangelisation and education of the faithful in the Church's teachings.

The Holy Spirit is encouraging the use of modern media and information technology to spread the word of God to those who would not hear it in normal circumstances.

### Community

Respondents thought that the Holy Spirit may be inviting the church – laity and ordained together - to undertake work in developing a greater sense of community. Listening, as exemplified by the Synodal Path Process, and communication are viewed as integral to this. Practical suggestions such as the creation of spaces for people to develop community, such as a cup of tea after Mass, were mentioned. Others felt that there is a need for laity and ordained ministers to go out into the community and knock on the doors of people's homes with the purpose of informing neighbours in the wider community that the church is here to support them. This was developed further in terms of making the point that the church needs to be immersed more in the community rather than operating a base from church buildings only.

Specific feedback was given on the invitation of the Holy Spirit to continue to support and develop youth ministry in parishes. A practical suggestion was made regarding the opportunity to engage young people through involvement in charity work.

In terms of the invitation from the Holy Spirit to reflect on church structures in Cloyne Diocese, there was some discussion and feedback that sometimes working at diocesan level does not seem to work. It can be too big and broad, and that some inter-parish cooperation and pooling may be timely.

The discussion on the call of the Holy Spirit to help the most vulnerable people in the Church was expressed as a concern and that the church needs to carry them with love and practical care. The homeless were given a special mention. There was a sense of an invitation to listen anew and hear the cry of the poor.

### *Examples of General quotations:*

"Invite those who suffer to draft the plan. Let them write the story for a change."

"Don't be a church of buildings and power, be a church of people and love."

"We need a missionary Church to carry the mission of Christ to the highways and byways".

"An option for mercy - put an end to the strategy of refusing to let genuine people meet Jesus in Holy Communion because of unfortunate circumstances of their lives e.g., a broken marriage."

"There was a call to cast Canon Law aside and to be church with one submission"

"An end to expensive ceremonial garb for Cardinals and Bishops".

"Pray for courage and action to live the life of the Gospel message"

"We do not want a new world religion, a watered-down version of the truth that was there for 2,000 years. We cannot change God's laws"

"Accept people who are in same sex relationships"

"Reverse and apologise for the damning and dangerous statements made about the blessing of same sex unions"

"The Church needs to welcome the laity, especially women, in more than flower arranging and church-cleaning"

"A Married Priest would have the benefit of the lived experience to preach and be more accepted"

"We have Married Permanent Deacons in our diocese, and this is bearing fruit. We also need women as Permanent Deacons"

"No women priests, but the role of women should be acknowledged"

"We need to get down and dirty with the community. We need feet on the ground"

"Pool parishes"

"We need to have a world day of public atonement for the wrongs of the past or better publicise the day set aside in Lent for reflection on this issue"

"Personally, I think Synodality is very dangerous and probably a mistake. It seems to be moving in the direction of the Protestant churches in which majority rules. I do not think that this is what Jesus had in mind when he said, 'thou art Peter'. The Catholic Church can never be an inverted pyramid"

"Divest from all schools soon because they are only Catholic in name at this stage. Plan anew"

#### **4.6 Dreams for our church.**

The question was posed: What dreams for the Church do you have?

The responses to this question continued the themes emerging in previous questions discussed above. The emerging themes include the areas of faith formation, catechesis, evangelisation through ICT and social media, modernisation, inclusion, the role of women, priests, deacons and vocations, supporting the poor, improving relationships, prayer, faith and structures and process to lead and manage change. The following quotations best summarise the feedback received:

##### Examples of General quotations:

"To be recognised for the tremendous contribution the church makes to society and the environment as being part of the Church's mission".

"That our Church would be based on the Gospel of Jesus and not on a dying institution"

"Become more community-based and continue to encourage families to actively take part".

##### *Role of women*

"Some women to attend /present at the Irish Bishops' Conference"

"That it would include women in a real, meaningful and equal way"

"That women could officiate equally at mass."

"Consider female Deacons and Catechists, I'm not in favour of female Priests".

"That women could preach/give homilies and lead prayer. That women could stand more equally beside our priests and not to outdo them in any way but to support them and their work in a practical way, in a way that truly honours the full extent of the gifts, talents and skills women have to offer as fellow human beings (gender in the end of the day should not come into it!)"

##### *A renewed focus*

"I hope I see the churches full again as they were when I was growing up".

"An educated and well-formed laity, whose role was the most enduring gift of Vatican II"

"A poorer Church, with less focus on buildings and trappings, and more focus on service"

"A joyful Church, which preaches the love of God by the joy and love of its members"

##### *The signs of the times*

"Catch up with the rest of society in terms of norms and ways of living. I'm not saying change church values, but be open to other ways of viewing the world"

"I want it to be a Church that reflects all that is good about the 21st century. A church that is based on love, tolerance and equality. Less dogma, more humanity. This is what God wants."

### *Inclusivity*

"An open, inclusive, welcoming Church that is not afraid to speak up against what is wrong."

"A simpler, transparent structure, with lay, consecrated, and ordained women and men of all ages and backgrounds working together to build the Kingdom of God in our day."

"People who are gay being accepted, and their sincere and committed relationships and civil marriages recognised."

"That two men or two women who have faith could have their commitment acknowledged by the God they believe in. Inclusion for LGBTQ+"

"Become more accepting of different people and what they believe and identify as"

"Improved ministry to people who are Divorced in circumstances where it is clear that a marriage has irrevocably broken down for a considerable length of time"

### *Children and Sacraments*

"Honesty! The charade that is the First Holy Communion and Confirmation being rooted in practice rather than one great pantomime."

"That my children and grandchildren have been handed on the Faith"

### *Priests and Vocations.*

"Allow priests to marry or in relationships (while they get to know someone) if they so wish."

"I dream too especially of many more Priestly vocations and vocations to the Religious Life as I believe the prayers and offerings of Religious Sisters and Brothers all around the world do more for us than we will ever know"

### *Prayer and Reverence*

"That everyone could feel the support of prayer that I feel. I dream that the church could express this in a voice that would be welcomed by those who now feel alienated"

"Understanding why we're being reverent"

"We should encourage people to use their gifts for the church"

"That people would recognise Jesus in the Eucharist and appreciate the teachings of the church"

### *Examples of Youth quotations:*

"Young people aren't bad. At times we are seen as bad, and this is very hurtful"

"I would love to be able to go to Church with my nan and mam. My dream is that I could do that and share that faith – so a Church that accepts me and doesn't judge me"

"I don't have any dreams for the Church. I find it hard to understand and hard to believe in"

"I would love to see a humbler Church that welcomed young people and helped us understand and explore our faith or lack of faith"

"That more young people become on fire with their faith and want to serve their parish/church"

## **5. What response does this call for?**

An analysis of the listening process was undertaken by the Steering Committee. Overall, there is a strong sense of spirituality in the feedback received. The inputs drawn from people of various socio-economic groups presented a number of clear emerging themes as outlined at the beginning of Section 4.6. It is anticipated

that many of these themes will surface in discussions in the various Dioceses, Episcopal Conferences and in the Universal Church Synod itself.

The Synodal Way offers much to the future of the church. As a way of being it invites us to trust in the body of believers in whom the Holy Spirit speaks. This needs to be reflected in the assembly that articulates the message of faith. This process will need to consider how a longstanding definitive Church teaching speaks to a world where what was always firm is now questioned and that some people speak their own truth.

The above report reflects what the Cloyne Steering Committee for the Synodal Path Process have experienced and heard during the listening process. Our Diocese will have to work now with what we have heard and share it with a wider group in Cloyne. It is important that our Diocese applies the Synodal Practice to our own context. In this regard, the role of the Diocese of Cloyne is to continue to facilitate the input and experience of *Pobal Dé* (the People of God). There is a need for a forum to share this experience with others and plan pastorally for the future of our faith community in Cloyne. Our prayer is that our Cloyne faith community will be like the early Christians:

*"The community of believers was of one heart and mind."* (Acts 4: 32).