

Weekly Message from Fr William for First Sunday of Advent 2021

Dear People of St Mary's, we now have a date for our participation as a parish in Synod 2021-2023. This is the two year consultation exercise that Pope Francis has initiated, and wants to involve the whole Church, all billion or so of us. Our date is Wednesday 8th December at 7pm, and I've suggested to the facilitators that we meet here in church.

Although we only play a tiny part as a parish, this is I believe one of the most important worldwide events for the Catholic Church in our generation, maybe since the Second Vatican Council in 1962-65. So please come if you can, especially if you feel on the margins of church life.

There are three facilitators coming to guide us in our participation in the Synod on that evening: Alicia Player, Anne Pennock and Liz Bickerstaff. They will lead us in prayer, and then present the questions that Pope Francis would like us to give our views on. The facilitators will make a record of our responses.

I believe the questions have been published, and many parishes in this country and around the world have already met and listened to the questions and shared their responses. I've decided not to find out in advance what the questions are, but to hear them at the same time as everybody else in the parish, on the evening itself, in the context of that consecrated time we will be in Synod that evening, when we've prayed together to the Holy Spirit to guide us. The objective of the Synod, like every Synod and every Ecumenical Council, is to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in our listening to the questions, to guide us in our listening to each other, and in our own responses.

Whatever we contribute to the Synod on that evening, I don't think we can expect to see quick results, maybe not even in our own lifetime. The Catholic Church is like a gigantic ship in the sea, that turns only very slowly. But each little nudge from each member can make a difference even if it's imperceptible. And even if our own individual responses never reach Pope Francis, they will be heard by each other on that evening, and we may be changed by what we hear from others in the parish. And so the Church continues to navigate its way, because we are all part of this vast ship as much as is Pope Francis. We're not passengers, we're part of the ship. And we each influence its voyage, even if imperceptibly, because we influence each other.

So we need your voice. And if you know of anybody else that might not have read this message, might not have heard about this Synod, might have been out of touch for a while, please let them know and encourage them to come. We need their voice too, especially their voice.



First Sunday of Advent 28th November 2021