

Diocese of Limerick – Synthesis Report on Universal Synod

Introduction:

The diocese of Limerick is made up of 60 parishes spread across three counties in the Mid-West with a Catholic population of approximately 155,000 out of a total population of 177,000. In April 2016, the diocese held a diocesan Synod, the first since 1937 – the fruits of this Synod found expression in a Diocesan Pastoral Plan (which is still current) and in a set of Diocesan Statutes. This is significant in terms of the diocesan engagement with the Universal Synod. It provides a great deal of data that is still relevant and can speak into the current process.

In the two years leading up to 2016 a very significant listening process was conducted whereby all sixty parishes engaged in listening and discernment along with a further twenty-five other groups including educational facilities, migrants, members of the Travelling community, people with disabilities, youth ministry groups and social workers.

More than 4,000 people responded to questionnaires and a further 1,500 people participated in large gatherings and small group discussions. Emphasis was placed on trying to reach people on the margins and those who have lost connection with or become disenfranchised from the Church. Pope Francis has urged us to do likewise in this Universal Synod. As stated, the Diocesan Synod of 2016 has yielded a great deal of data which was further coded into twelve themes – six of which were brought forward to the Synod itself.

This data and these themes can now be integrated in to the listening which has been recently engaged in throughout the diocese. It is interesting to note congruence and divergence between what has emerged from the two processes.¹ It must also be acknowledged that, having come through such an extensive, and at times, demanding process there was a certain weariness when it came to engaging in another synodal process. Many felt we have done this before, others wondered what has happened since (*‘nothing really has changed since the Synod of 2016’*) and, as will be outlined later, Covid further exacerbated this feeling.

On the other hand, submissions were also received in which it was clear that much thought had been given to the process and many ideas were offered as a means of rebuilding the faith of people – *‘the present negative view of the Church is not accurate or fair and we should not accept it’*.

38 parishes engaged with the recent Listening Process and this data formed the greater bulk of the data for analysis. Group Synodal conversations were also held at various locations, with a

¹ See Appendix A
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number of parish groups and a varied selection of other ecclesial and social groups - 29 such groups were interviewed from a wide range of backgrounds and 28 online submissions were received through the Diocesan website questionnaire alongside a number of individual submissions received.²

All data returned was copied and given to a group of 10 readers, comprising of men and women, of all ages, lay and religious, rural and urban. Each reader, through a process of discernment and prayer, read the data individually and then compiled a report of their observations and comments. The reading group next met as a large group and all reports were discussed, with six clear themes emerging. These six themes were then further explored, in a deeper manner, by a core group of three (two themes each) where each reader re-examined the data extracting examples, quotations and thinking on these specific themes. This draft report was then assembled from the expansion of these six themes and the work done by the core group.

At the Diocesan pre-synodal meeting a draft synthesis was presented to the diocesan delegates. In general, those present affirmed and acknowledged the honesty and truth of the Report as an accurate reflection of synodality in the diocese. However, it was also pointed out that a sense of Gospel joy was absent and since this is part of the experience of those present we do need to acknowledge the positive aspects of Church life. The response at this meeting has also given further depth to the themes and informed the conclusion to the synthesis.

In the reading of the Synod submissions, and from the consideration of the reading Group responses, a number of themes emerged, which we have grouped under six headings; Experience of Covid, Faith, Liturgy, Exclusion, Complexity and Pace of Life, Discordant & Prophetic voices.

1. Experience of Covid

The personal and social impact of Covid 19 provided a specific context for the Synodal conversations. What the Covid experience highlighted was the longing for connection, belonging and relationship along with the recognition of how much we need each other and are inter-dependent. *'Covid slowed the world, allowing for renewal of relationships with self, others and nature.'* Covid made us *'pause.'*

In embracing technology in a new way as a means of participation and mission, people were able to access liturgies and other ecclesial events. The wider Church community was brought into the home. While embracing technology was experienced as positive in keeping

² See Appendix B
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communion with one another alive during Covid, it was clear that “*the internet is no substitute for human contact*”. Some also commented that the limited physical participation in the actual liturgies during the lockdowns highlighted for those watching on-line a hierarchical and male image of Church.

In terms of working together as a parish to ensure implementation of safety guidelines, Covid aroused an awakening of co-responsibility and ‘ownership’, the importance of being involved in parish being experienced.

Covid exposed new levels of domestic abuse and mental health issues. Drugs, lone drinking, and gambling increased. These social issues struck the Domestic Church.

Though the decline in Church attendance had begun before Covid, it could be that Covid moved the Church further away from the centre in people’s lives, putting it now more on the edge of life.

2. Faith

This theme was evident across the data. Faith is experienced primarily in terms of communion with God. *‘Faith gives comfort in knowing there is always a ‘higher being’, someone you can talk and pray to’, ‘faith is integral and second nature and gives meaning to my life’* and Faith is *‘a strong relationship with God. Prayers relate to everyday life and help us through life’s journey’*. Religious sisters said that *‘faith is deeply embedded in the culture but the lack of catechesis is inhibiting that from being nurtured’*

‘The power of prayer is paramount...’ The vast majority of responses indicate that faith is valued. This is true across parish responses, religious groupings and social groups including the responses from schools. Many responses associate faith with hope. Faith is considered by some as a gift, as a source of strength, and a coping mechanism during Covid 19 and war. The hope and support of faith is mentioned by many people.

From the data one can conclude that personal faith is far from dead. Most people surveyed agreed that faith in God and being a member of the Church can bring hope and meaning. Faith is a determining influence on our interaction with others generating a sense of an implicit missionary dimension. Faith provides our moral compass. Some people said that whilst they currently were not believers they valued the influence that faith has on the lives of others.

One group said how it was a ‘privilege to have faith’. An observation was made about how the elderly people *‘have great faith, are committed to good spiritual and liturgical activity, and have core spiritual beliefs’*. The *‘middle generation, down to the young, are struggling to*

understand their faith, and are selective about what to accept in their faith = confusion'. Our teenagers and children seem completely lost and do not know their faith at all... it doesn't make sense to them any more (going to church etc...)'. We have major challenges around levels of participation in the life of the Church, particularly in the formal practice of the faith.

The global pandemic provided the opportunity for the Church to truly 'be a field-hospital' and while it was this for some, somewhat paradoxically it seems that Covid accelerated an already evident trend whereby the Church is no longer at the centre of Irish society. This is particularly true in levels of practice - the many empty seats in our churches in relation to Mass attendance indicates *'gaps and absences'*. We heard about the *'God-fearing people in the parish'* who *'don't go to Mass'* and we also heard that the *'Church needs to be less forceful, you can still be a Catholic and not go to Mass'*.

What comes across from a number of respondents is the need for a vision for parish that is wider than going to Mass. Mass attendance, it is said, is not a measure of faith. The current focus of many respondents relates to mass attendance and young people not going to church - *'empty churches and the fear of no return to the churches'*. The question raised by some: do we need to move on from measuring the health of a faith community from church attendance at one particular sacrament?

So, we have a situation that there continues to be evidence of faith and spirituality (communion with God) but often a rejection of the Church as a means of giving expression to this (participation and mission). The data suggests a variety of reasons for this. There is a strong critique (and often rejection of) of the Church's moral teachings. Again and again, you could see a reaction against *'narrow views'*, *'not being open'*, *'mind already made up'*. Church is *'out of touch'*. There is a lack of trust in the Church as institution and a sense that the Church is overly identified with morality, particularly sexual morality. In some places there is scepticism around this Synodal pathway expressed in such declarations as *'nothing will change'*. Indeed, some people feel that nothing has changed since the Limerick Diocesan Synod of 2016, that people are not properly listened to and no concrete action emerged from it. These people believe the listening process is more an academic exercise than any real attempt to bring about the change that is required to save the Church in secular Ireland.

On the other hand, there are pockets of small faith groups in existence. *'There journeying together is happening and is good, there is lots of joy there, it is life-giving and growing, and is rooted in sacramental practice.'* Another person spoke of *'the lasting treasure of the past that is the gospel and the challenge to live in its simplicity, inclusiveness and openness and to own and claim it in response to the needs of today'*.

Those involved in reading the data from this process and who were also involved in the 2016 Synod noticed a shift in terms of participation and involvement; there seems to be a decline but this may partly be accounted for by the Covid restrictions which precluded so much engagement and interaction. Faith is still valued by people, however people's understanding of their faith is in greater decline, the lack of good catechesis is still an issue as it was back in 2016.

The pre-synodal meeting noted that faith is now more of a personal endeavour than a community experience. How we define faith and understand it needs further discernment. If faith is differentiated from practice how is it then nurtured or even measured? There is an ongoing challenge to support and connect life and faith.

3. Liturgy

There is broad consensus around the need for rituals and in particular those related to death, grief and supporting the bereaved - Sacraments are also highlighted - the rituals themselves are considered important and valued. For those with strong faith, Mass attendance is crucial and life giving. The centrality of the Eucharist is of importance and this could be enhanced by making the "Last Supper" more central by incorporating the Eucharist into social gatherings in different settings.

In the data there is a strong critique of how liturgy is celebrated. Some suggested they are jaded by the current format of the Mass, which they find tedious and monotonous. Some feel that the laity should be far more active in the liturgical celebrations and not just passive observers. A number of people described the Eucharist as being too repetitive; one respondent submitted that a Mass with music, food and song was what was longed for. *'Mass needs to be made more interesting and needs more variety as everyone seems to be jaded with existing format'*. Mass is often seen as a *'private devotion between me and God'* without an active parish life. Mass is often the only service available at parish level and this is an impoverishment. Many liturgies were described as being poor. Church language is not connecting with the laity; a new language is required. Homilies were described as being flat, boring and not speaking to where people were at.

Masses could indeed be more relatable. If we consider a funeral Mass, because it is 'personal' people usually comment positively. There is a greater sense of participation. At a community level, locality-specific input could similarly make people feel more connected... Masses with a theme/specific occasion equally would be *'outreach-friendly'* if some innovative thought was

put into the liturgy; not to take away from the central mystery but rather to gather around it with a common desire/theme...one heart. The language used is not connecting.

In the meetings with young people – secondary and third level students – it was remarked that we need to ‘*make Mass more attractive to young people*’. Indeed, many respondents of all ages suggested making the liturgy more meaningful and relatable to younger people. Some people spoke about the language of liturgies and traditions and these should be explained and made more relevant to people today. Youth groups, youth masses and family masses need to be put in place. These Masses could be linked with celebrations such as a picnic and play. This would encourage people and make it more family friendly. Some have said that the low numbers of young people practising their faith throughout the diocese demonstrates that the Church needs to make its celebration of the Eucharist more alive, communities should feel more actively involved in liturgical celebrations and hospitality groups should be in place to provide refreshments after Mass where people can spend time talking to each other in a positive environment.

A good place to start to attract people into churches again is alternative liturgies with creative formats. On the other hand, a submission mentioned the importance of adhering to an approved translation of texts and the correct liturgical rubric. In relation to church buildings the importance of preserving a sacred space with quiet, calm and dignified rituals was highlighted.

In the 2016 Synod process, this area was the fifth most common theme but it was noted back then that it should be termed ‘*Liturgy and Life*’ as the dominant need expressed was to create a greater connection between liturgical celebration and daily life. A similar call is evident in the current data. It seems that the conversion that the Church needs today will not come from liturgical reforms as a deeper prior moment of evangelisation is now necessary.

4. Exclusion

One of the strongest points raised in the responses from parishes and social groups is that the Church is often not as inclusive and relevant as it should be. The *Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches* (the *Vademecum*) encouraged us to make ‘every effort to involve those who feel excluded or marginalised’, ‘including people who have left the practice of the faith’. (Vad. 1.5, 2.1) A clear call for the Church leadership to be inclusive of the LGBT community, women, single parents and other marginalised groups was made. The following statements give a sense of the strong feelings expressed: ‘*the Church needs to be a place where all feel a sense of belonging and community.*’ ‘*The Holy Spirit is sifting, shaking and moving things.*’ ‘*No one is to be excluded from our churches, irrespective of their status –*

married, divorced, separated or cohabiting... they need special pastoral care or else they will walk away'. The acid test of parishes is *'how they connect with people on the margins.'* Broken people need to be included, not judged. The Church needs to become more accepting of difference.

How to give lay people a voice and how to empower them is an issue of concern. Our present structures are seen as too hierarchical and since we are all called by virtue of our baptism... we are co responsible and this needs to be enabled.

The issue that voices of women are not heard in Church present structures was raised time and time again; there is a sense that little thought has been given to the role of women in the Church. It was submitted that the Church leadership is overtly patriarchal, and that the hierarchy do not adequately value, appreciate or meaningfully listen to the voice of its female members (either lay or religious). Within the responses from some members of religious congregations/communities, there was a feeling of living on the fringes or being silent, stifled and alienated, along with a sense that the channels through which their voices can be heard are now gone.

One religious respondent described the lack of women's 'public voice' and how it is men's voices that we hear in our liturgies, homilies, interpreting scripture. *'This is difficult and very challenging to move beyond patriarchal and hierarchical restrictions imposed on our lives'*. New ways are necessary to enable women to have meaningful and real involvement in the life of the Church leadership structures.

Members of the LGBT community shared their reality: *'The message of the Gospel...you are loved exactly as you are, that God has created you, formed you in the womb and knows you through and through'*. However, the lived experience of one member saw the Church as *'essentially a misogynist and patriarchal organisation. There is no real equality, and it is not a place that welcomes everybody.'*

A transgender woman spoke about her experience of lay people of faith and priests being accepting and kind towards her privately, but remain silent about this acceptance in public; *'The welcome and acceptance of people on the ground of the organisation is wonderful but it doesn't permeate the higher levels...'*. The Church seems reserved for *'holy people'*.

Amongst these marginal voices, there is an acknowledgement that Pope Francis is a 'good' leader but is having *'to deal with a lot of the conservative elements within the Church. That is where the problem lies.'*

People from other religions shared their challenges re integrating into Ireland. One couple of another religion commented on how, for example, in England they could go to church for meditation, but in Ireland they are not made feel welcome. The point was made that neighbourliness needs to be more visible and outreach greater. Some children have difficulty getting into Catholic schools. The divisions between branches of Christianity was noted by members of other faith communities.

In terms of relations among Christians, it was acknowledged that relations with Catholics have improved positively in recent times, compared to the past. There are many forms of simple neighbourliness and participation in events together, although the matter of the reception of Holy Communion in Catholic Churches is an issue for them.

Racism is a big issue in the lives of those who come to Ireland. There was a strong suggestion that the Catholic Church and Catholic priests as well as lay people of faith are well placed to spearhead a more generous, hospitable Church that might lead the way in welcoming the stranger, identifying people of diverse ethnicity as our neighbours and actively link faith to our relationships with newcomer neighbours in our local communities.

People opined that if the Church is going to survive, then it needs to communicate to the wider society the hope, strength and peace it has to offer. It was proposed that this can be done by Church leaders really engaging with people, by Church leaders and members of the faithful giving proper witness to the love, mercy and compassion that the Church is meant to offer the world, by the Church being a place of warmth and welcome for all people, especially the marginalised and excluded members of society, and by the female members of the Church being given their rightful voice and agency.

The main focus of the hurts named in Synod 2016 was on the clerical abuse cases in the Church. Now the hurts named are more focused on exclusion and the sense of being silenced, stifled and alienated, particularly amongst women and the LGBT community.

Some delegates at the pre-synodal meeting remarked that they do not share the experience and perspectives regarding exclusion; however, once again the place of women in the Church resonated strongly.

In terms of exclusion it was also mentioned that people of faith themselves can now feel marginalised and excluded in society. Indeed, it was said, in our efforts to be all-inclusive we have to ensure that Jesus is not excluded.

5. Complexity and Pace of Life:

The Limerick Diocese exists within a western consumerist, capitalistic society often at odds with a contemplative, Gospel way of life. Life is very busy for most people and they are juggling many balls, with faith being one of them. This truism surfaced frequently in the Synod returns, with references to being *'busy'*, *'time poverty'*, the difficulty of *'finding time'*, the challenging *'pace of daily life'*. All of this is significant for the faith community in terms of the Synod themes of Communion, Participation and Mission.

And whilst it was clear from the data returns that there is a strong faith in the Limerick Diocese, it was also clear that church attendance is not a priority for many. Responses from one group of young adults indicated that some young people are too busy with their everyday lives to give much time or consideration to the Church or spirituality.

There is also, in addition to full and busy lives, a recognition of the impact of *'the endless tyranny of noise and chatter'* on faith practice. One response spoke of the importance of preparation, silence and prayer in relation to the celebration of the Eucharist, so as to invoke a *'holy place of silent wonderment'*. The writer speaks of the importance of a *"powerful silence"* and the necessity for silence in order to engage in listening is highlighted. Being too busy and too judgemental can inhibit our listening capacity and our communion with one another. Other respondents spoke of the *'importance of keeping the story alive'* and of *'keeping [a] contemplative aspect of life alive'*.

One of the positives from the period of the pandemic was that it *'slowed the world, allowing for renewal of relationships with self, others and nature.'* Covid made us *'pause.'* Also in relation to technology, and modern communication methods, there were many mentions of the positive impact the streaming of church services had for the faithful during Covid 19. While technology was identified by some groups as a barrier to listening, others identified the potential of technology to help people. Young people called for relevant websites where they could find out information and ask questions.

6. Discordant voices / Prophetic voices:

The Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops published *Suggestions for Dioceses and Episcopal Conferences on the Preparation of the Synthesis* and therein, encouraged us to pay attention to *'discordant points of view and voices that are "out of tune" or marginal'* as they may later be recognized *'as prophetic voices that indicate what the Spirit is asking of the Church.'* To this end we include here some of those discordant voices. In the future Church, people will not be reached primarily through liturgy. This was a common theme from the returned responses. A

prior step is required in relation to encountering Jesus on a personal level – *‘the ordinary Christian needs to be evangelized...to meet with Jesus Christ’*. Our faith tradition is intermixed with our culture and history and *‘faith practice for cultural/traditional reason misses the last jigsaw piece – a relationship with Jesus’*.

A gap is evident in people’s faith education demonstrating the need for quality teaching, that has not been silenced or watered down, to reach the faithful (young people in particular), who express a hunger for the truth; it is not that they know what they want but they know when it is missing. The church needs *‘to teach and not just listen’* - *‘faith is deeply embedded in the culture but the lack of catechesis is inhibiting that from being nurtured’* whilst being aware of a disconnect between the church in its institutional aspect and the everyday life of the lay faithful - *‘the language used is not connecting with the laity.’* *‘How will the uneducated be heard,’* wondered one respondent. A new language is required. This point was strongly endorsed at the pre-synodal meeting which further emphasised the need for a parental partnership in sacramental preparation.

The need for witnessing came up, the need for the faithful to demonstrate their faith more publicly, the need for leaders to be brave, for prophetic voices in the hierarchy. Many dissenting voices came from people who care deeply about their faith and are looking for *“a miracle”* to help reinvigorate the church.

There is a loud and strong desire for belonging, inclusion, change; with at the same time, the vast majority of responses from parishes, religious groups, individuals, social groups school etc indicating that faith is valued, with many responses associating faith with hope. This counter narrative, of *‘giving witness to hope’*, ran through much of the responses.

There was a view that even though the church is no longer at the centre of Irish society but is located at the periphery, this should not necessarily lead to low morale but that the Church should accept this reality and become a vibrant minority which is capable of giving people hope. Some of the respondents are living at the periphery of society and their responses spoke to the themes of the Synodal process – one submitted in response to the question of how participation can be further encouraged by advocating all to *‘join it at a small local level – in [your] corridor, [your] building, [your] street’*.

Conclusion:

There are many realistic voices re the difficulties that face up moving on as Church. It is recognised that terrible mistakes were made. But comments from respondents are less about whether apologies were sincere and more about bearing the burden of the wrongdoing, *‘the weight of history’* – while always *‘straining forward to what lies ahead.’*

The abuse scandals were mentioned by respondents and one person suggested that all within the church should accept full responsibility for what has happened. ‘We cannot depend on “Church people” to take responsibility. It will take the ordinary, everyday Catholic to get the ball rolling.’ In the second review of Safeguarding practice carried out by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board) and published in April 2020, reviewers engaged with complainants who were willing to share their experiences. Two complainants and three family members of complainants described sensitive, caring and supportive responses by Limerick diocese, sustained over a medium to long-term period. The reviewers found a lot of evidence of positive complainant care by the Diocese. However, there were three others for whom engagement with the diocese was less positive, and for whom issues involved remain unresolved. What emerged is how complainants are different, as are their subjective experiences of similar interventions. This highlights the importance of active listening to ensure that the particular concerns of each individual are being addressed in a way that they experience as helpful and respectful. Historical failures to ensure the welfare of young and vulnerable people places a permanent responsibility on all of us to learn and act on our learning.

On a more general level to do with the Church today, one person touched on the reality of a spiritual warfare, a very real battle that is, at core, about far more than strategy or management, in a hostile/apathetic climate. It echoes Pope Francis who reminds us that synodal discernment is “a means of spiritual combat for helping us to follow the Lord more faithfully” (*Gaudete e Exsultate*, n. 169). Another respondent remarked that *‘a lot will be asked of those who stay’* while someone else said *‘we have to begin again with the weight of history on our shoulders’*. *‘We have to develop the trust of the people again.’*

Moving forward

How, then, do we plot a path forward in terms of communion, participation and mission? It may be helpful to use a concept of ‘readiness’, taken from the educational system, in relation to the entrance of a student to a school. The child is queried if they are ready for school; similarly, the school is asked if it is ready for the child. As a people of faith, we could now ask

– is our Church ready for the person? Is our Church ready, able and willing to receive and walk with the person who is seeking to belong?

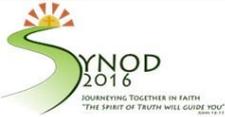
To do so, respondents have offered their views that we must offer an alternative story to a prevailing public narrative that often overly focuses on doom and gloom; respond imaginatively to the spiritual needs of the young; be inclusive; and create a vibrant minority. Moving forward, we need to focus on becoming more welcoming, showing we care, listening, helping and celebrating as communities. One respondent mentioned the development of '*basic Christian communities*'. Others noted the need for faith spaces for hospitality/prayer/learning/spirituality and responses proceeding out of 'wellbeing' initiatives but with a Gospel understanding.

Hope was a theme that emerged from the reading of the Synodal submissions, and from that positive foundation stone the future church of greater communion, participation and mission can be rebuilt.

Appendix A: Synod 2016 listening findings in dialogue with the Universal Synod listening findings in Limerick

The Synod 2016 listening process involved engagement with over 5,000 people across the Diocese using a variety of listening methods as illustrated in the diagram below.

Synod Listening & Discernment Process



Who participated?

- All **60 parishes**
- **25 other groups** including, primary, secondary and third level education, traveller community, healthcare, Polish community, Irish speaking community, Fair Trade, People with Disabilities, social workers, Lourdes groups, Muintearas and several faith related and religious groups

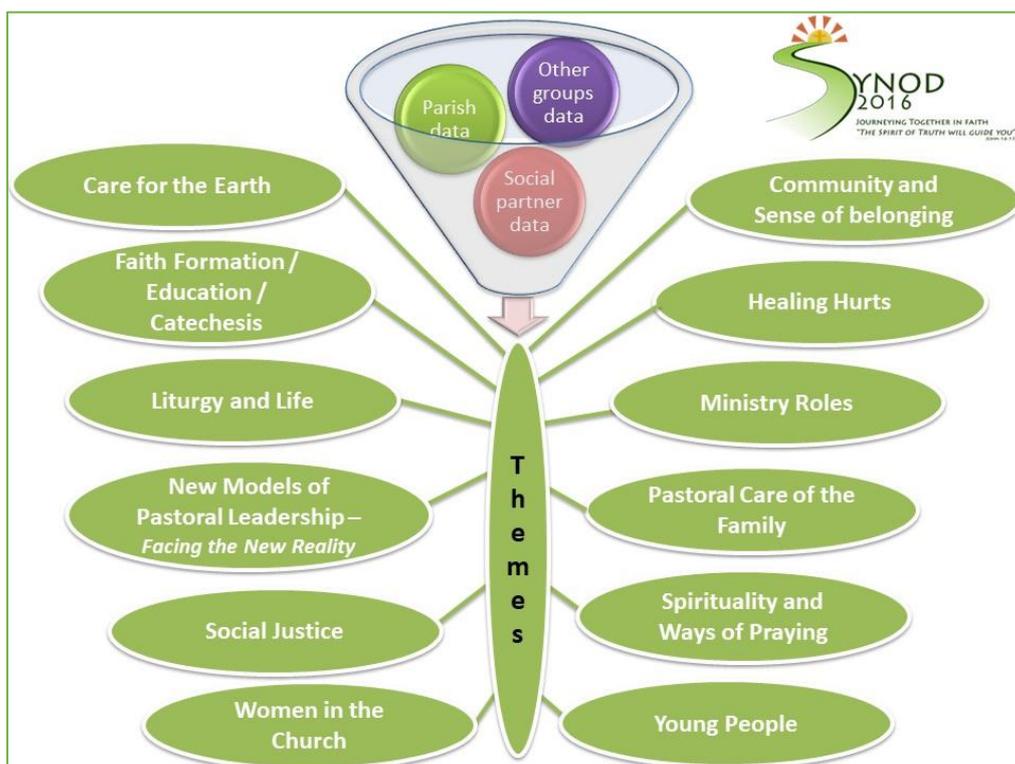
>4,000 filled in questionnaires



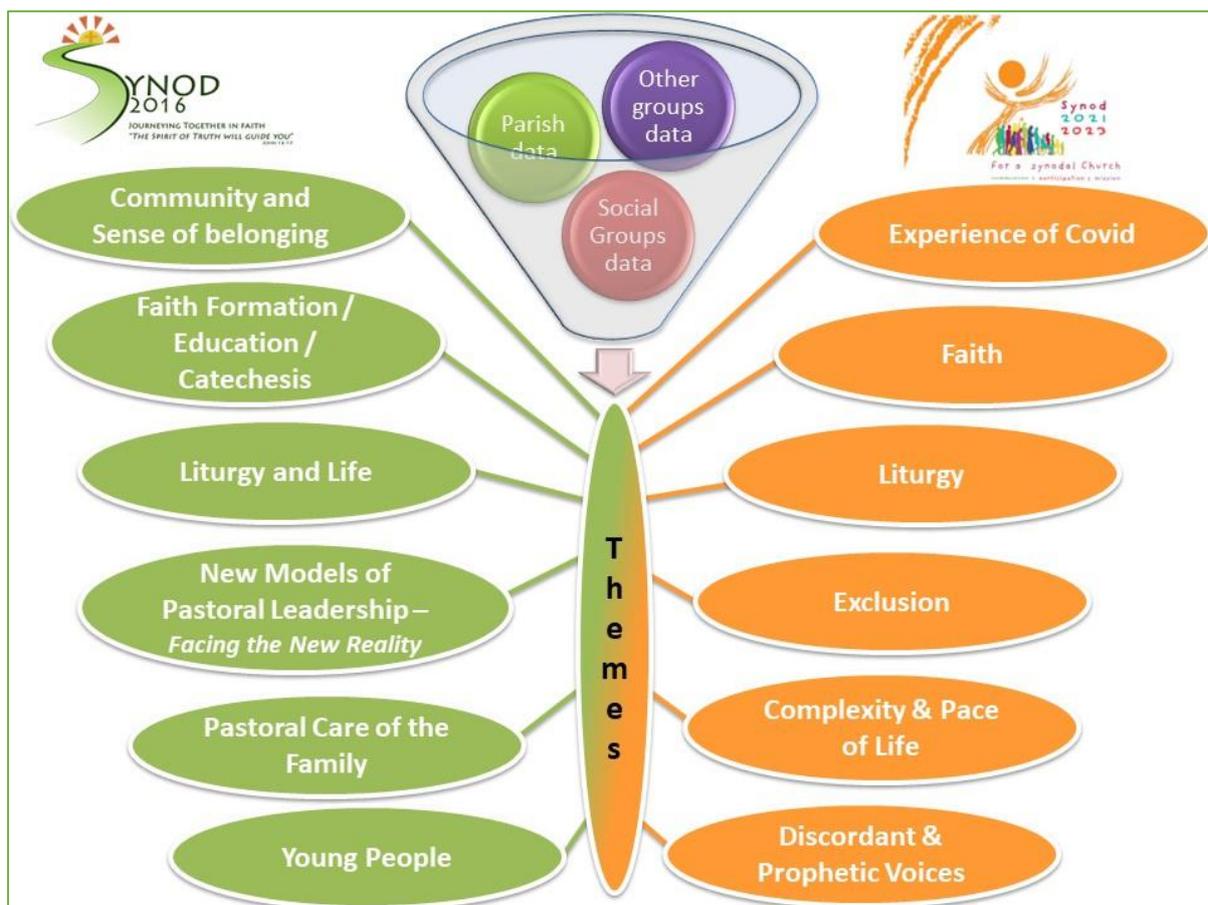
>1,500 participated in large gatherings and small group discussions



The discernment and analysis phase identified 12 themes that formed the agenda of the Limerick Synod. The twelve themes are illustrated below:



The figure below lists the themes from the 2016 Synod and the current Universal Synod:



Observations on movement from the time of Synod 2016 to the current time

- The **Church has moved further from the centre** of life for people to the margins.
- **Faith is still valued** by people; however, people’s understanding of their faith is in greater decline, the **lack of good catechesis** is still an issue.
- The **need for good, engaging liturgies** remains an issue.
- People are even more **time poor**, finding room for faith is an issue, Mass attendance is not a priority.
- People are **less likely to be reached through liturgy**, people are **searching for a personal relationship with Jesus**, the Church needs to **teach**, not just listen, it needs to **bear public witness**.
- The main focus of the **hurts** named in 2015 were on the **clerical abuse** cases in the Church, **now hurts are more focused on exclusion** and the sense of being silenced, stifled and alienated, particularly amongst women and the LGBT community.

Appendix B

The Diocese had the following returns:

38 parishes returned the questionnaire

24 engagements with focus groups (a ‘↑’ symbol indicates more than once interviewed):

1. An Addiction Recovery Centre – conversations with both men and women’s groups
2. Focus groups drawn from members of the farming community aged 19 – 70 ↑ ↑
3. Focus groups made up of women ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
4. Community Volunteers ↑ ↑ ↑
5. Pastoral Councils & Parish Leadership Groups ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
6. Frontline workers – medical & educational
7. Health care workers
8. Migrants
9. Eucharistic Ministers
10. John Paul II Award participants
11. Focus groups comprising entirely of Older people
12. Focus groups comprising People in sports
13. Focus groups comprising Teachers
14. Focus groups comprising Young parents
15. Focus groups comprising Travellers
16. Secondary schools - Ard Scoil Ris, Laurel Hill, St Munchin’s & Coláiste Chiaráin, Croom
17. Members of the LGBT community ↑ ↑
18. 3rd level students ↑ ↑
19. Religious (male & female) - group meeting
20. Members of the other churches present in the Diocese
21. Members of the Mid-West Interfaith Forum
22. Members of the Muslim Community
23. Parents of children with Autism
24. Prisoners

6 focus groups interviewed by Diocesan Synod worker:

1. Parish small group conversation - ↑ ↑ ↑
2. African priests
3. American Dominican sisters

4. American friars
5. Neocatechumenate Community
6. Diocesan staff from LDC

28 individual submissions through diocesan website

8 individual submissions received:

- Hostel user
- Members of religious orders ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
- General population ↑ ↑ (one from USA)

38 parishes

30 focus groups, totalling 46 separate groups met

36 individual submissions