

Let us walk together towards Church renewal on this “grace-filled event”

BISHOP Robert Byrne joined Pope Francis to invite all Catholics in the diocese to embark on a universal exercise in listening, self-examination and enlightenment – the 2021-2023 Synod.

In a video created to mark the launch the Year of the Eucharist and the Synod, Bishop Robert stressed that “the whole world had been asked to reflect together and to discern together”.

Everyone from clergy to laity and churchgoers – including those who attend Mass infrequently and the baptised who do not attend Mass or have walked away from the Universal Church – are invited by the pope to walk together.

Bishop Robert said: “We’re having a Year of the Eucharist, linked with the synodal process that the Holy Father has asked us to engage with. It’s an opportunity for all of us to reflect on how we listen to the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

“We need to consider how we emerge from the pandemic.

“What kind of Church do we want to be? A listening Church? An active Church? A Church that’s ready to go to the margins? A Church that is always focused on Christ and can only be fed on Christ?”

“It’s only Christ that adequately feeds us, and we only really get to know Him through the Eucharist.”

Pope Francis has placed special emphasis on hearing the views of those who feel discarded and excluded, and “binding wounds”.

He has called on us to examine and develop relationships, and to focus on communion, participation and mission after the COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted our vulnerabilities and strengths, and helped many people to refocus their concern for the plight of the poor and ongoing social injustice.

The pope has asked Catholics to reflect on the question: “A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, journeys together. How is this journeying together happening today in your par-

ticular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?”

The answers are to be explored in a series of discussions – in parishes, partnerships, schools and on an individual basis between now and the end of January – on how we can encourage hope to flourish.

At a national level the next discernment will take place in 2022 with the Bishops’ Conference, then at an international level with a bishops’ assembly in Rome in 2023.

At the official launch at a Mass in St Peter’s on October 10, Pope Francis declared in his opening homily to a congregation of cardinals, bishops and diplomats the need to build bridges and not to create a document, or study group, but to journey on “a grace-filled event” that could become “a process of healing guided by the Holy Spirit.”

In our diocese, Mgr Andrew Faley, episcopal vicar for the Vicariate for Faith and Mission, and Amy Cameron,

co-ordinator for the Vicariate for Faith and Mission, recommended parishioners could begin by gathering in partnership meetings – face-to-face if it was safe to do so in light of rising COVID-19 cases, or online – to share local discernment and reflection.

The diocesan board of trustees, vicariates, curial departments and other diocesan bodies would simultaneously perform prayerful discernment.

Each partnership dean and lay chair, plus with two lay partnership representatives, would then meet for a partnership reflection morning held in the north and south of our diocese – at St Cuthbert’s High School, Newcastle, on November 6, 2021 and January 15, 2022 and at Carmel College, Darlington, on November 13, 2021 and January 8, 2022, supported by the Diocesan Pastoral Forum.

Mgr Faley and Amy explained: “These reflections would then feed into the diocesan discernment process.

“The various strands of prayerful re-

flection and discernment between October and January will be brought together in three assemblies presided over by the bishop as the chief discernment... and will help participants to recall our post-pandemic experiences, re-read those experiences in greater depth open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and gather the fruits to share.”

You can find out more about forthcoming meetings in your local parish bulletin or by visiting the diocesan website at rcdhn.org.uk, where you can also read about the synod and view other helpful resources.

All are invited to take part. Those who cannot attend Church and have no internet access can contribute their thoughts by telephone or in writing – through their parish or partnership, by writing to the diocese or to Northern Cross at the address listed on page 4.

The Vicariate for Faith and Mission can be contacted for guidance by emailing synod@diocesehn.org.uk or by calling 0191 2433316.



BERWICK St Cuthbert's RC First School Mini Vinnies joined pilgrims who had walked from across Europe on their way to COP26 in Glasgow, writes head teacher Clare McGregor.

Our school joined in CAFOD's Go Green and Eyes of the World campaigns this year, with our Mini Vinnies looking more closely at how they link to COP26. They decided to make posters of support



A warm welcome for the European pilgrimage to COP26

for the pilgrims, which were then presented to them at a prayer service in Berwick Baptist church.

The pilgrims were delighted to see the children and thanked them for their support.

The children then joined the pilgrims as they journeyed through the town en route to the town walls, before leaving them to continue to the border and onwards to their final destination.

by Dorothy Fahey

ON OCTOBER 12, the pilgrims who were walking from Sweden and Poland to COP26 arrived at North Shields on the morning ferry and were met by CAFOD volunteers Chris and Clare Myers as they journeyed along the Northumberland coast on their way to Glasgow.

They were raising awareness of the climate crisis and aimed to call for climate justice at the conference. They also wanted to highlight individual changes we can make to live sustainably in harmony with the whole of creation.

Their day began with a wonderful warm welcome at St Cuthbert's First School, where the children told stories, showed them paintings and sang songs.

Many then walked with the pilgrims to a stirring

service of prayer and thought provoking poetry led by Fr Chris Hughes at St Cuthbert's Church, North Shields.

From there the pilgrims headed northwards, stopping at Whitley Bay Baptist Church for an excellent lunch and great Christian fellowship.

They proceeded along the coastal path to Blyth, where they were greeted by a splendid group of volunteers who provided a delicious meal. This was followed by a beautiful evening service of reflection led by Fr Quinn, then they spent their first night in the UK at Our Lady and St Wilfrid's Church.

We would like to invite you to support the pilgrimage by praying for the pilgrims – that their climate justice calls will be heard and COP26 will be decisive in tackling climate change.

Visit klimapilgern.de/en/#



□ The pilgrims stop for a welcome tea break.