

19th March 2024 Portsmouth diocese E news

Currently, the dioceses of England and Wales are sending in to the CBCEW Secretariat in London their submissions for the Synod. These submissions will be aggregated into one national submission to the Synod Secretariat in Rome and from the national submissions the Synod Secretariat will shape the Lineamenta that will guide the Synod. Here is the report we sent in. Our gratitude to Fr. John Chandler for guiding us expertly through this work.

We undertook a consultation of some of the main clergy bodies and groups: e.g. the Bishop's Council, the Council of Priests and the Deacons of the Diocese. We also invited further submissions from the laity from parishes and schools. A number of individuals responded, although they reiterated points that emerged in the previous consultation-process. The consultation was based on the Synthesis Report from October 2023, but rather than taking all the sections, we asked people to focus on three:

- ✚ **Part One Proposals M and K: Christian Initiation**. How can we better initiate children and adults into Christian discipleship?
- ✚ **Part Two Proposals N and Q: Church as Mission**. How as a Diocese can we be more missionary?
- ✚ **Part Three Proposals K and L: A synodal approach to Formation**. How might we form people more effectively in the Gospel and the Church's teaching?

These three questions structured our discussions (see below).

✚ **General Point: Communion, Participation and Mission**

Many found the theme of synod and synodality ambiguous and ill-defined. But the three headings of Communion, Participation and Mission continue to be a most fruitful area for reflection and development. These headings are reflected in the ten-year mission-strategy (*You Will be My Witnesses*) that the Diocese published at Christmas 2023, after four years of consultation. *You Will be My Witnesses* calls for:

- + a deeper, more personal renewal of faith,
- + a renewed formation of selves and parish communities for mission (proclamation of kerygma) and charitable service, and
- + the prudent stewardship of all our resources.

✚ **Part One Proposals M and K: Christian Initiation**

To work with the Liturgy team, the clergy and the parish communities to:







- + improve the quality of liturgy and to focus on sacramental rites so that every encounter with the Church is meaningful and attractive
- + Assist musicians and to offer liturgical formation at Deanery / Diocesan level.
- + To support the use of appropriate technology to enhance the liturgy and speak to the modern mind.
- + full engagement of the congregation makes it easier for visitors (especially non-Catholics) to 'join in' and follow the lead.
- + respond immediately to a person's interest to know more about the Catholic Faith, and to offer classes and groups that are ongoing for children and adults so there is not a long wait before commencing.
- + bring young Catholics together for prayer, formation and fellowship
- + offer age-appropriate involvement in the liturgy (e.g. altar servers)
- + ensure parishes have groups a person can join and find a welcome, with fellowship and opportunities to grow in prayer and knowledge of faith.
- + encourage parishes to pray the Divine Office, especially on feasts or at start of Lent and Advent, extending invitations to ecumenical groups, or hall hirers or immediate neighbours, to attend and participate.
- + erect Marian Shrines in the church grounds as a tool for evangelisation and also a focal point to process to on major feasts.

Part Two Proposals N and Q: Church as Mission

- + Build on '*Called and Gifted*': having identified the 'gifts' bestowed by the Holy Spirit we now need to move onto the 'calling' for them to be used.
- + If we are to be 'totally dependent on the Holy Spirit' we have to provide opportunities for the many unutilised gifts and talents in every parish to be fostered and developed.
- + With the merging of parishes, we have the opportunity to revisit the charisms identified and to deliberately provide the platform for them to be encouraged as part of the design.
- + To ensure our churches are open during daylight for private prayer
- + To send out short messages for each day
- + To seek out opportunities locally for service and charity.

We can organise for all those who have already participated in the programme to meet to discuss how their charisms can be used (and to listen to why they may not have been up to this point).

 **Part Three Proposals K and L: A synodal approach to Formation**

- + To form the heart, mind and soul of every believer and to see formation as the key to 'converting Catholics'.
- + to establish a team (either engaging the Dominican Sisters of St. Joseph or to draw together a team of professionals) to produce uniform catechetical material to be used across the Diocese and to provide high-quality programmes for lay catechists to be trained, qualified and mandated by the bishop to deliver.
- + To devise high-quality catechetical material that could be used in parishes and schools,
- + to enhance the relationship between parish and school
- + to ensure that everyone in the diocese receives appropriate, authentic, professional and meaningful formation.
- + To ensure that the Six Holy Habits are adopted by all the laity and clergy:
 -  attending Sunday Mass,
 -  spending five minutes a day in prayer,
 -  keeping Fridays as a day of penance,
 -  celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation once a month or so.
 -  paying a weekly private visit to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament,
 -  joining a small group for formation, prayer and fellowship.