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DIOCESE OF ARGYLL AND THE ISLES

Pastoral Letter from Bishop Brian regarding the Synodal Process

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have started the Synodal process!

The word 'Synod' means 'Journeying Together'. We are to journey together to God. In 2023 a representative group of bishops will meet in Rome for the Synod of Bishops. Pope Francis has chosen the theme - 'For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission'. When the bishops gather, in an atmosphere of prayer, they will strive to discern the Spirit's promptings across the world.

However, Pope Francis has decided that long before the bishops gather in Rome, the first stage of the Synod will be held in every diocese throughout the world. During this first stage we are all, clergy, lay faithful and religious, asked to listen to each other. Where do I see the Spirit at work? How are we called to be more authentic disciples? What direction is the Lord guiding the Church? Furthermore, we are not to listen just to regular Mass attenders but also to other Christians, the lapsed, the marginalised. The Pope hopes that this listening will become normal practice in the Church.

I have appointed Fr Danny Convery and Marianne Lucchesi as our Diocesan Contact Persons for the Synodal Process. I thank Fr Danny and Marianne for taking on this important task.

Preparation will be essential: prayer, information, establishing a core group and training leaders. Within Argyll and the Isles there will be many opportunities to

meet in parishes, in deaneries, at diocesan level, of clergy and of various other groups. Since becoming your bishop I have increasingly realised that it is essential I listen to people. I very much want to learn from the insights of parishioners, clergy and others.

A synthesis of what is expressed within our diocese will be collated and passed on to the Bishops' Conference for further reflection, which in turn will feed into a wider European reflection. Perhaps we can now see the Pope's intention that when the bishops meet in Rome in 2023 they will have heard from countless Temples of the Spirit.

Reflective prayer is essential. Before we speak let us first listen to God! If we are to avoid conclusions based only on our 'own wisdom' but rather authentically learn from the Spirit then we must prayerfully read the Scriptures, reflect on our lives and the world, be humble and strive to live as Jesus asks. I implore that throughout Argyll and the Isles we all commit ourselves to deeper and more reflective prayer.

I am excited at the prospect of us growing in God's wisdom. How enriching that would be for our families, our parishes, our diocese, the Church Universal and the entire world. You are a Temple of the Spirit and you can both contribute to the Church better discerning God's Will as well as learning from her. I commend the Synodal process to you.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "+ Brian McGee". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bishop Brian McGee

Bishop of Argyll and the Isles