



Diocese of Argyll and the Isles
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Charity Registration No: SC002876

PASTORAL LETTER CONCERNING THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS AND LED BY THE SPIRIT

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I am writing to you about two important processes presently taking place in the Church: the first is the Synod of Bishops while the second is our own diocesan discernment process, *Led by the Spirit*. Although these two processes are not the one and the same there are obvious similarities and links; indeed *Led by the Spirit's* consultation method, beginning with parish open meetings before collation at diocesan level, was inspired by Pope Francis' methodology for the Synod.

1 The Synod of Bishops

After the Second Vatican Council Pope Paul VI instituted the Synod of Bishops to advise the Successor of Peter regarding significant issues. The Synods evolved under subsequent Popes, including Pope Francis.

The present Synod is the Sixteenth Ordinary General Synod and its topic is *synodality*: How can the Church be more synodal? However, what does 'synodality' actually mean? Our English word 'synodality' comes from the Greek meaning 'walking together'. When we speak of a synodal Church this reminds us that we are called to walk together towards God. Each baptised person has equal dignity and a personal responsibility to be missionary. The Synod asks how the Church can encourage every disciple to do this in an appropriate way.

The present Synod began in 2021. Since then consultation has taken place at parish, diocesan, national and continental levels before the Universal Church met during the First Session of the Assembly last October at the Vatican. I was privileged to represent Scotland at the Assembly and you may remember my frequent updates on our diocesan Facebook. Participating was intense, prayerful and inspiring. When the Assembly concluded a Synthesis Report was published and you are now being consulted on the Report in advance of the Second and final Assembly in Rome this coming October.

Argyll and Isles is asked to reflect on which issues raised through this process most affect our diocese and what practical steps we can accordingly take. We will then share our thoughts with the Church nationally which, in turn, will help shape the Working Document of the Second Session in Rome next October. This Second Session will make formal proposals for Pope Francis to consider.

Therefore, this present consultation period is very important. I encourage you to participate. The Clergy have their own structures for consultation. On Wednesday 13th March at 6.30pm I invite the laity to meet online with me and the Diocesan Core Team. Registration is in advance of this meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAofumvpjkrHtz0pWqchLIXMw6LorEQi0E3>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Relevant materials will also shortly appear on our diocesan and parish media.

2 Led by the Spirit

Led by the Spirit, our diocesan discernment process, began in the Advent of 2022. *Led by the Spirit* reflects our common conviction that God guides the Church and that each baptised person is a temple of the Spirit. It is an expression of trust and hope.

For our diocese to grow and become more missionary we must listen to the Holy Spirit. We have already finished two consultation phases – ‘What is God asking of us today?’ and ‘What are our Resources?’ The third phase will ask ‘How can we best fulfil God’s Will in the reality we are living today?’ The emphasis will be on mission.

However, this third phase will be postponed until after Easter and the completion of the Synod’s consultation. This will avoid confusion between the two processes. Nevertheless, you will appreciate the similarity between them because through *Led by the Spirit* we are striving as a diocese to walk together towards God. To find out more please visit ledbythespirit.rcdai.org.uk

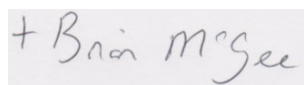
3 Conclusion: Let us Walk Together in Hope

We are journeying together through Lent. By our prayer, fasting and charitable deeds we hope to open ourselves to inner conversion, totally reliant on God’s grace. We hope to share more deeply in the life of the Risen Lord.

Synodality and desiring to be led by the Holy Spirit are natural to the Church and for each Christian. I am grateful to you, our clergy and parishioners, for participating in both these processes and I encourage everyone to become involved in them.

I entrust us all to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and St Columba.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Brian McGee". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Right Reverend Brian McGee

Bishop of Argyll and the Isles

21st February 2024