



*In the
Diocese
of
Nottingham*



Adapting the Timeline for your Parish / School / Chaplaincy

Primary Principle

The most important thing about this process is the opportunity for the Community to pray, share and listen to the Holy Spirit. This is more important than gathering data for the diocese / Bishops' Conference / Holy See! Of course it's important to understand what has been discussed and prayed about, but your primary focus is to think about how to engage the most people you can, particularly those at the margin and often overlooked. This is not just the responsibility of the parish priest, headteacher or chaplain, but for all in the community to reach out and engage. The first principle therefore is not how can we report this but how can we as a community engage with others.

Ways of living the synod

Prayer

We cannot hear the Holy Spirit if our hearts are closed to prayer. Pray about who you can ask to help you lead this in your community, then keep the whole process surrounded in prayer. There are different ways to do this:

- Regularly pray the Synod prayer, at the end of the intercessions at Sunday Mass, after the Gospel or homily at weekday Masses, during Collective Worship, or at the start or end of the day in school, together as a family in the home;
- Have it as a regular intention in other prayer groups such as the Rosary, parish prayer groups, Eucharistic Adoration, during the Divine Office;
- Have it as a prayer intention in the bulletin;
- Have a large-print version written up on a school noticeboard, maybe different paragraphs written by different classes.

Listening and Discussing

The timeline suggests three parish meetings with two questions per meeting, or three questions in schools. There are many ways that you could do this. Firstly don't feel you have to have three meetings, you could have one, two or more than three. Consider how this would best work for your community and encourage the widest participation. Here are some suggestions in the parish setting:

- The homily is about the topics and ask people to discuss it after Mass;
- The questions are set out on tables during tea and coffee after Mass;
- Set meetings at different times to encourage different target groups;
- Questions are given to existing meetings – social groups, bible studies, catechetical meetings, SPANNED, SVP, Justice and Peace, etc.
- People are asked to host discussion groups in their homes, inviting parishioners who live near-by to attend;
- Meetings happen at different churches within parishes that are joined or have multiple church buildings;
- Meetings happen online
- Questionnaires are given out to parishioners to have discussions with people who aren't regular members of the parish;
- EMHCs discuss the questions with the people to whom they bring Holy Communion;
- Publish the questions in the parish bulletin, asking for replies by a certain date

Here are some suggestions within the school setting:

- Ask the priest to talk about the Synod during a school Mass, and then have a discussion with pupils afterwards;
- Use a Collection Worship to present the Synod, and then use some time during that day to discuss questions in class;
- Ask the school's Lay Chaplaincy Team to consider the questions;
- Ask some of the older pupils to canvass thoughts about the questions with younger members of the school community;
- Publish the questions in a school letter asking pupils to discuss them with their families, and bring some answers into school;
- Consider the questions in the context of dreaming the future of the Church, and illustrate the answers with artwork, song, or poetry;
- Challenge each class to create a piece of artwork for their prayer space, illustrating their answers to the questions, and then allowing classes to visit each other's artwork;
- Use some time on World Youth Sunday to consider the questions in each class; further resources are available at www.worldyouthsunday.com;
- Consider a different question during each of the three (school) weeks of Advent, recognising that in the Synod process we try to come closer to God, just as He comes close to us in the person of Jesus, at Christmas;
- Write some answers to the questions from your school and share them (virtually perhaps) with another school in your Trust, listening to their answers too, so that you can hear what other people are saying.

Sharing the feedback

Not everyone within a community will be able to attend meetings, or participate in group discussions in school, etc, but it is important that each person hears what has been discussed. If you plan to hold multiple meetings it may encourage people to come when they see what was discussed at a previous meeting, and how people were listened to and acknowledged. The final submission in particular should be shared with the whole parish, school or chaplaincy so that everyone in the community knows what is being said. It may be helpful to have a team to do this so it isn't a large burden for one person. The information could be shared via the newsletter, website, notice board, email, post, etc, and with all those connected with the community, and the groups which are part of the community (such as housebound parishioners in a parish, or a nursery which feeds a primary school).

Final Thoughts

Pope Francis is asking us to dream what the Church could be, and to walk together into God's future, where that Church becomes a reality. This Synod isn't about changing the Church's doctrine, nor about finding the 'right' answers to questions. Let us pray that we can dream with, listen to, and journey together with as many of our communities as possible, so that together we help to build up the Church in our diocese, and pass that message, loud and clear, to the bishops of England and Wales, and then to the Pope himself.

For more information please contact either of the two Diocesan Synod Representatives:

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