

Submission from: Archdiocese of Dublin – Section 2

Following an open invitation through diocesan communications, the consultations in Dublin took the form of synodal *Conversations in the Spirit* with representatives of pastoral councils, parish synodal animators, pastoral workers, clergy and religious present. Prior to the *Conversations in the Spirit* participants were invited to prepare by prayerfully reflecting on two questions. First, where do you notice your parish is growing in co-responsibility? Second, what steps could be taken now to grow in co-responsibility? They were also invited to reflect on an address of Pope Benedict on co-responsibility (10th August 2012.) The gatherings were structured around 5 moments of prayerful engagement where participants were arranged in small groups in circles using the method of listening to understand. In the first part of the gathering participants practised listening to understand in a synodal manner. This led to a fuller sharing of insights, naming practical ways ahead as well as noticing further development needs.

Experiences Lived

Most parishes in Dublin have now experienced the *Conversations in the Spirit* method, sharing about the joys and sorrows of our reality and the hopes and fears for the future. Pastoral Councils are encouraged to be discerning about decisions, making use of the *Conversations in the Spirit* method in their regular meetings. Now in training and formation opportunities small group sharing is always utilised. The Synodal Pathway also helped to steer the course of our diocesan strategic planning. Our *Building Hope* diocesan renewal process has identified a strong consensus about the need to grow voluntary ministries, to develop further our understanding and practice of co-responsibility, adult faith formation and servant leadership. This is deeply rooted in the ways we are living our *Diocesan Statement of Mission* and the synodal principles that inform it. In keeping the diocesan family informed about the Synodal Pathway, Archbishop Dermot Farrell issued a Pastoral letter marking the opening of the First Assembly of the Synod on Synodality (Rome, October 2023.) On subsequent Sundays, *Synod Newsletters* accompanying the Synod as it progressed, were published online and distributed throughout the diocese. As well as a renewed focus on Pastoral Councils, we are intentionally developing the ministry of catechist, and offering Servant Leadership training with sessions on baptism as the gateway to ministries, leading small groups and exploring co-responsibility in practice. There are also pilot projects modelling the difference between decision-making and discernment in parish partnerships.

Emerging Good Practice

In the responses submitted from this recent consultation there was a very strong consensus around the need to grow voluntary ministries and more fully embrace issues of formation for service and the promotion of lay leadership. However, there are also emerging pastoral practices in the diocese influenced by the synodal journey. These practices include:

- seeing the value of small groups to enable listening and sharing
- clergy taking part in small group sharing alongside laity
- taking time to prayerfully consider issues and directions
- encouraging the growth of an adult faith and prioritising adult faith formation
- building new capacities for leading and team ministries
- more lay people coming forward for training
- building pathways for young adults to share their faith
- a new emphasis on accompanying families for sacramental preparation

Growing in co-responsibility

There is awareness that we have not always managed to reach out to those beyond the gates of the parish. However, there are signs of growing in co-responsibility evident by the establishment of the Parish Partnership Pastoral Councils who engaged with the question: What can you do together that does not need to be done separately? There is also a new awareness of how our understanding of ministries rests on how we affirm and embrace the importance of baptism. This is a change from the model where only those ordained need be concerned with the tasks of ministry, to one where all feel called and responsible. This brings with it a sense of ownership for all which, in turn, encourages everyone to take the call to participation, and the need to invite others, more seriously. As we grow in responsibility, we grow in awareness of the gifts of all the baptised and what we lose when these are not acknowledged or utilised. The Synodal Pathway is enabling us to recognise the gifts in the People of God and promote them for the good of the community. (*Synodal Pathway Synthesis*, p.9 Archdiocese of Dublin).