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10 December 2021

To: The Faithful of the Diocese of London

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Sunday, 10 October 2021, at the Vatican Basilica of St. Peter, Pope Francis proclaimed the “Opening of the Synodal Path”. Originally scheduled for 2022, the Holy Father chose to postpone the Synod of Bishops for one year to allow time for a worldwide consultation. His intention is to invite Catholics around the world to participate on the local level in the preparations for the Synod which will now take place in 2023.

In the gospel reading that day, a rich man approached Jesus as he was setting out on a journey, to ask an important question about discipleship. The Holy Father pointed out in his homily that Jesus is frequently portrayed in the gospels as being on a journey. “He walks alongside people and listens to the questions and concerns lurking in their hearts. He shows that God is not found in neat and orderly places, distant from reality, but walks ever at our side.”

The following Sunday, at a Mass in our own Basilica of St. Peter in London, I solemnly opened the synodal process for the Diocese. I pointed out in my homily that we are invited to engage in dialogue, pray with, and listen to one another as we consider the Synod’s theme, Being a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission. What Pope Francis is saying in this process is that the Church cares about what you think. Pope Francis’ hope is that the Synod will bring about a whole new way of being Church. The Church, he says, does not stand aloof from life, but immerses herself in the real lives of people and the issues of the day, bandaging the wounded and healing those with broken hearts.

In that homily, I also reiterated my vision for the Diocese, to be a missionary Church making disciples of Jesus. Entering the synodal process will help us here in our own Diocese to understand this vision in new ways. The Synod invites us to come together in our parishes, to reach out to Catholics not coming to church regularly, to reach out to our young people, to listen prayerfully to God’s word and to listen to God speaking through one another. We are called to open our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit who enables our Church to break out of our routine, to discern the times in which we live, in solidarity with the struggles and aspirations of all our sisters and brothers.

To carry out this work of synodal consultation, I am very pleased to announce the names of the team of people who will reach out to our parishes and institutions, to the Religious women and men in the Diocese, to those who infrequently come to church, and in a special way to our young people. This committee will be co-chaired by Ms Linda Staudt (Windsor, former Director of Education for the London District Catholic School Board) and Father Paul Baillargeon (Chancellor of the Diocese). The committee includes Dr. Carolyn Chau (King’s University College), Dr. John Dool (St. Peter’s Seminary), Mrs. Betty Hompoth (Pastoral Minister, Windsor-Lake St. Clair Catholic Family of Parishes), Deacon Len Hughes (St. Peter Cathedral Basilica), Mr. Mark Adkinson (parishioner, St. Michael Parish, London), and Mr. Julian Paparella (formerly of London and a special advisor to the Synod of Bishops in Rome). Support will be given by the diocesan staff through Mrs. Chrisandra Skipper (Pastoral Services Coordinator) and Mr. Matthew Clarke (Director of Communications).

Diocese of London: Being a mission-oriented Church that forms disciples of Jesus

We have named our local synodal consultation “Together on the Road: Conversations for a Listening Church in the Diocese of London”. The name suggests the root meaning of the word “synod” [from the Greek *syn* (together) + *hodos* (road)] and makes clear that we will engage in conversations about the questions and concerns lurking in our hearts, as Jesus would.

Over the next few months, the Committee will engage in three phases:

1. To educate us on the nature of synods and our role in this consultation;
2. To provide ways and means for the conversations to take place on the local level; and
3. To gather and synthesize all of our contributions to the consultation.

Our contributions will be gathered with those from across the country and then forwarded to the office of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican.

The Church cares about what you think! I encourage you to enter into this process as it is announced and promoted in your parish or institution. Let us all join together in prayer that our experience in this consultation will not only provide local contributions but strengthen us in our desire to be missionary disciples of Jesus.

May our heavenly patrons, the Blessed Mother who is Mother of the Church, and Saint Patrick, the great missionary, intercede for us as we walk together on the road of communion, participation and mission.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Ronald Fabbro, CSB". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, CSB
Bishop of London