

Richard



Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

PASTORAL LETTER
for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On the 10th of October, Pope Francis will inaugurate the preparations for the 16th Synod of Bishops, taking place in Rome in 2023. This journey – the “Synod Path” – will begin in every Diocese on the 17th of October and will be marked at our own Cathedral during the Mass to mark the Feast of our Diocesan Patron, St. Philip Howard, on that day.

This is an important moment in the life of the Church, for Pope Francis is calling us all to reflect on the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” The Holy Father is inviting us to take this journey together. As the Preparatory Document for the Synod expresses, “This path of walking together is the most effective way of manifesting and putting into practice the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.”¹

The Holy Father’s invitation is to a path of prayer, discernment and openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in response to particular questions. The “Synod Path” is not a ‘parliamentary process’ but a call to listening, rooted in prayer and reflection on the Word of God, that our discernment will assist him and the bishops who will gather for the Synod in their deliberations for the good of the Mission of the whole Church.

The Holy Father has outlined the questions on which he seeks our reflection. These questions are wide ranging and significant for the life of both the Universal Church and for our own Diocesan family, since they invite us to deepen our understanding of our own Mission, our Formation for that Mission and the Prayer that must always be the foundation for our lives of Faith and Witness to the Gospel.

We are at a significant moment in the life of the whole Church and the world. The experience of the pandemic and the many challenges facing the global community are a spur to us to examine the best way forward for the effective proclamation of the Good News. This is a ‘golden moment’ for evangelisation and the “Synod Path” will assist us in the Diocese in sharpening our focus on the essential work to which we have been called.

¹ Preparatory Document, n.1.

Accordingly, I invite you to take part in discussions in parishes and deaneries during the course of Advent this year, ideally through gatherings in each week of that season. I also invite our school and university communities to engage with the “Synod Path” in the ways most appropriate for them. There will also be an opportunity to respond via an internet link that will be published for the Diocese in the weeks ahead. The Holy Father has given us an invitation to take this “Synod Path” and it will be wonderful for us all to take this journey with – and for – the good of the Universal Church.

Once the results of these discussions have been received and brought together, I shall be sharing our submission to the Synod with all in the Diocese through a webinar on the 16th of February next year. The reflections from our own Diocese will then be joined with those of the other Dioceses of England & Wales and contribute to discernment and discussion in the context of the Church in Europe, leading to the Synod itself.

Further and more detailed information will be available in the coming weeks in the News Section on the Diocesan website, E-news and through parish newsletters. The documentation from the Holy See can be accessed on www.synod.va

I do encourage you to join in the Novena of Prayer that will lead to the beginning of the “Synod Path” and to keep the work of the Synod in prayer, both in our own Diocese and in the Universal Church and to take a full part in our diocesan journey towards the time when the bishops gather with the Holy Father in Rome in 2023.

With every Blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.