

First ever universal Synod reflects the critical crossroads the Church is at – Bishop Leahy

Synod cannot be a talking shop and will fail if it fails to listen to people

Synod is greatest Church event since Second Vatican Council

Sunday 17 October 2021: Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy has said that the first ever truly universal Synod of the Catholic Church will fail unless it begins with a “true listening to people”.

Speaking today at the commencement of the Diocesan phase of the worldwide Synod, Bishop Leahy said that the Synod is taking place at a critical time for the Church and must not be a talk-shop.

Dioceses across the world begin their Synod journey, with the objective of this phase being the ‘consultation of the People of God’. Each diocese will be asked to consult with the people, with the contributions being sent to their own Episcopal Conference before a synthesis is sent to the General secretariat of the Synod in Rome.

“This is the first time the Catholic Church has engaged in a worldwide listening process and this reflects the seriousness of the moment we are in,” said Bishop Leahy. “Pope Francis has launched what is a truly worldwide Synod that he hopes will involve everyone in the Church. This worldwide Synod has been called the greatest event in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. And today, throughout the world, each Diocese is officially celebrating the start of this process that will reach out to everyone.”

In the coming weeks and months, each parish will offer possibilities for consultation. Representatives of the Diocese will make contact with groups and associations throughout the Diocese. There will be opportunities for submissions on the Diocesan website as well, said Bishop Leahy, who will himself engage in focus groups that will reach people across the diocese.

Critically, Bishop Leahy said, the Synod cannot become a talking shop. “The process that is beginning today depends very much on the Holy Spirit. It’s not meant just to be a talk shop. As Pope Francis keeps repeating, a Synod is not a parliament. It’s not a survey of opinions. It’s not a political convention. It’s very much a spiritual time of sharing, deep listening and faith conversations.”

Bishop Leahy said that the worldwide Synod is about “how are we journeying together”. The Pope is, he said, “inviting us all to take another step and be part of this worldwide Synod focussing on a basic question: how does ‘journeying together’ take place today on the different levels of our Church community – from the parish to the Diocese to the worldwide Church?”

“We are being asked to consider how are we getting on together in the Church, in our own parish, in relating to other parishes and across the Diocese and beyond? How are we communicating with each other, how are we making sure as many as possible

feel they are participating in the life of the Church, how are we in contact with those who no longer come to Church?"

Also speaking at today's launch of the Diocesan element of the Synod, Limerick Diocese Pastoral Implementation Manager Rose O'Connor said that there are many issues to be addressed by the Synod but for all those issues, the message remains the same.

"For a lot of people, they have become disconnected with Church. And I would also have to say the Church has become disconnected with them. And there's a whole host of reasons for that. People have very busy lives, there is a lot going on, there's a lot of competing commitments, but also there's been a lot of hurt. We all know about the crisis in the Church. So, I think there's a real need for healing.

"As human beings, the things that are very important to all of us in our lives every day are love, kindness and hope. And for all the problems that the Church has had, these characteristics are fundamentally at the core of God's message always."

Fr. Chris O'Donnell, Limerick Diocesan Episcopal Vicar said that this Synod must listen to the people. "It's a universal synod and it is incredible to be part of something worldwide and we'd hate to miss that opportunity for people to actually be really heard and not in a token way. This is where we really need listen to people, not just those who come to Church for Mass because the Church isn't a building, the Church is people.

"They say, 'if you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together'. As a Church, we can't go it alone. We have to go together and this is an opportunity for everybody to play their part in that and walk with us."

Ends

Kind Regards

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Teneo