



diocese
of limerick
our catholic community

Letter to be read out at Masses the weekend of March 12th and 13th, 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We're moving into the second week of Lent with the tragic images of war vividly reaching us daily. Our hearts cannot but be moved by the vulnerability, suffering, and desperate need we are witnessing. We are all shocked by the situation and I know young people and children can be quite disturbed by the news.

At the Bishops Conference this week, we spoke about Ukraine. On the one hand, it's clear that at this time of trial, we want to stand in prayerful and practical solidarity with the Ukrainian community here in Ireland. We also want to acknowledge the many Russians in our midst who bear no responsibility for this tragic situation. We have joined our voice to all those who are appealing for diplomacy and dialogue – to work for a genuine human fraternity - as the only way to resolve differences and conflicts.

In our sharing together at the Bishops Conference, it was a source of inspiration to hear of how people all over Ireland are responding with customary generosity to supporting humanitarian efforts in this crisis. Many parish communities have already established links with charitable projects to support refugees and those remaining in Ukraine. Recognising the many urgent needs, we will be asking that a special collection be taken up at all Masses in two weeks time, the weekend of Sunday 27 March. We are also encouraging those who want, to support the charitable initiatives of Aid to the Church in Need, the Jesuit Refugee Service, and Trócaire.

Looking to the future, we all need to consider that as tens of thousands of refugees arrive in Ireland, there is no doubt the Gospel is calling on us to open our hearts and our homes.

Apart from reflecting on Ukraine, there is one further important theme that I want to put before you this Lent.

As you may know, this time last year, the Bishops of Ireland launched a five-year Synodal pathway. Around the same time Pope Francis launched a Synodal pathway for the whole Church. These two processes are running together in Ireland. I'm glad to report that the Synodal pathway is gaining momentum in parishes. The word "Synod" means "journeying together". A network of local listening sessions is underway in our own Diocese and across Ireland. Since the social restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic have now been lifted, I believe Lent is an ideal timeframe for individuals, families and parishes, religious orders, ecclesial

movements and others groups to focus on the Synodal Pathway. Indeed, it is a good time to reach out also in creative ways to hear the stories and views of those who might not normally be in Church circles.

Ideally, to have conversations in small groups in parishes and other informal settings is best. It can be done formally at the parish level and I know many pastoral councils or groups have already met. But it's also possible for you to arrange such conversations informally. You can send in the feedback from these listening sessions through a local priest or post it in directly to me in the Diocesan Centre. It is possible for those who want, to send in written submissions on our Limerick Diocesan website.

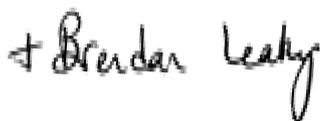
Remember, it's a five-year process so we don't have to say everything this year. But it is important to offer your views this year in response to the first basic set of questions that we are looking at this year: what does our faith mean to us today? what's our experience of journeying together in our parishes, in our diocese, across the Church more widely? And how are we doing in reaching out to others who don't normally come to Church?

After Easter, on the basis of the Synodal conversations, each diocese will be preparing a ten-page synthesis Report that will then contribute to the national Irish Report that will be sent to Rome.

Please spread the word about the Synodal Pathway as there might be many who have not heard of it. Pope Francis really wants us to spread the word about this. I'm pleased that Veritas, the publishing Company of the Bishops Conference, has just recently published a book about our own Limerick Synod held in 2016.

Finally, let's remember each other in prayer this Lent. Our Diocesan pastoral team has put together a lovely programme of Lenten thoughts and video conversations to help us. They are available on the Diocesan Facebook. Lent is about getting in touch again with how our faith calls us to "transfigure" our broken world into a world that is more beautiful and good, a world of peace, sharing and hope. Each of us has a unique contribution to make.

With kind regards and gratitude for your example of faith,



✠ Brendan Leahy
Bishop of Limerick

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"Come and see the works of God tremendous his deeds among us" - Ps. 66 (65)