



As we begin this journey of listening and discernment we are inviting the whole parish to be involved. Below are the readings, reflections and questions for weeks 1 & 2 and we would urge you to read, reflect and answer and then pass on your thoughts to one of the facilitators (anonymously if you wish), if you are unable to attend one of the meetings.

ADVENT WEEK 1 - LISTENING

“The Synod offers us the opportunity to become a Church of closeness, that does not stand aloof from life, but immerses herself in today’s problems and needs, bandaging wounds and healing broken hearts with the balm of God.” Pope Francis

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, “Come Lord Jesus!”

Amen.

Henri J.M. Nouwen

Jeremiah 33:14-16

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I am going to fulfil the promise I made to the House of Israel and the House of Judah:

‘In those days and at that time, I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David, who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land.

In those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell in confidence.

And this is the name the city will be called: The-Lord-our-integrity.’

Luke 21:25-28

Jesus said to his disciples *“There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand”*.

Psalm 24: 4-5

Lord, make me know your ways. Lord, teach me your paths. Make me walk in your truth, and teach me: for you are God my saviour.

Time for prayer and silent meditation (you may wish to light a candle)

Reflection

'The gift of being a compassionate listener, a gift which requires constant practice, is perhaps the most healing gift anyone can possess, for it allows the other to be, enfolds them in a safe space, does not judge or advise them, accepts them as they are without desiring to change them, and communicates support at a level deeper than words.'

Gerard W. Hughes SJ in "Cry of Wonder"

THEMES FOR REFLECTION

In exploring the themes below participants are invited to:

- Listen actively and without judgment to the Holy Spirit and to others
- Pay attention not only to the words, but also to the tone and feelings of the speaker
- Listen actively to yourself, mindful of your own thoughts and feelings as you speak

Opening question - What has your faith meant to you these past 18 months living with Covid?

How do I listen to God? How do I listen to others?

Who do I listen to?

Do I listen to minorities, the discarded, and the excluded?

How do I foster a culture of encounter?

How does our parish listen to others? How does our Parish listen to God?

To whom should our parish be listening? Are there groups we don't listen to?

How is everybody in our parish listened to?

Does our parish talk to believers of other religions and with non-believers? What is their perception of how we listen and worship?

How do we as a Church listen to others? How do we as a Church listen to those outside the church?

How do we promote a free and authentic style of communication in the global church?

Initial Parish response

How does the wider Church relate to the society of which we are a part?

On Wednesday evening the parish held the first of the planned sessions in our listening journey. The topic of the session was "Listening" and we had four questions which each group was asked to consider and respond to. The four questions were:-

1. What has your faith meant to you in these past 18 months living with Covid? The response to this was unanimous in that Christ/the church became a support, strengthened our faith and gave additional time for reflection. Our faith helped to sustain us.
2. How do I listen to God? How do I listen to others? How does our parish listen to God? There were several responses to the first part of this question which included listening to prayers on the radio, listening to religious music and seeing God in the world around us. Answers to the second part included. Shared prayers were a way of listening to others but making time to just be with people was also important. Collectively our parish listens to God through services in the church.
3. How does our parish listen to others? How do we as a church listen to God? It was generally agreed that there were many groups that the parish should be listening to but that it was difficult to recognise those groups and to make contact with them. The specific question of how does our parish listen to others was

not really answered. The question of how does the church listen to God was also not really answered as we in our parish do not have the knowledge to answer on behalf of the whole church.

4. How do we as a church listen to others? How do we as a church listen to those outside the church? There was a lot of response saying what we should be doing to listen to others but little espouse as to what we actually do. Again there was a strong feeling that as a small parish we were not well placed to answer a question as to what the whole church does.

There are still three more listening sessions, each of which is held twice, once on a Wednesday evening at 7pm and also on a Friday morning at 11am. We encourage you to attend if you possibly can so that the views expressed by our parish areas representative as possible.



ADVENT WEEK 2: MISSION

“There is so much richness in our diocese which we need to be open to encountering and receiving, such diversity but all united together in the power of the Spirit of the Risen Jesus.” Bishop Mark O’Toole

Prayer

God of hope,
we cling to you,
for you renew the face of the earth.
Through the gift of your Son,
our Lord Jesus,
we follow you on the path of dawn.
Enlightened by your love and wisdom,
help us to lead each other
and all creatures
back to your open arms.
Amen.

Rachel McCarthy/CAFOD

Luke 3: 1-6

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar’s reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip, tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a

baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

'A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord,

make his paths straight.'

Time for prayer and silent meditation (you may wish to light a candle)

Reflection

In his letter, 'The Joy of the Gospel', Pope Francis wrote: I dream of a "missionary option", that is a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. We need to regain our missionary spirit so that the call to holiness we heard in our baptism is expressed by a change of direction.

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What is our mission?

What do I understand by mission in my own life?

How am I called to be an active participant in the mission of the Church? What is my role as a disciple in mission?

What spiritual sustenance and formation do I need to be more committed to the mission of the Church?

What is the mission of our parish community?

What does our parish understand by 'mission'?

How does our parish support its members committed to service in society (social and political commitment, scientific research and teaching, the promotion of social justice, the protection of human rights, caring for the Common home, etc.)?

How does our parish identify the goals to be pursued, the way to achieve them, and the steps to be taken?

How does what our parish is doing relate to the Great Commission of Jesus: "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Matt 28:18-20)?

What impact is our local parish making in the area? Do we make a difference?

What is the mission of the whole Church?

How are we the church as a whole adapting to the changing world and Missionary needs in our society?