



**As we continue this journey of listening and discernment we are inviting the whole parish to be involved. Below are the readings, reflections and questions for weeks 2 & 3 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 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 Iturea 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.

## 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

### **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?

Initial Parish response week 2

#### **Q1 - What is our mission?**

Is there a difference between our natural life and religious life? 2 - fold, physical/spiritual often conflict, but called to Church and related activities. - Some of us questioning what mission might be – a calling to live life thoughtfully, prayerfully, responding to Holy Spirit in each situation. Unsure of Mission in own life – perhaps living life as best you can, with guidance of the Holy Spirit. Be authentic and be the same person with everyone. To go out to people who are different; people on the margins - doing the best for self and others. - Mission is difficult because of perception of constraints. Identifying what is necessary is not easy here due to established organisation covering many areas already. Most of the time, I don't achieve to live life in accordance with gospel and share the gospel either verbally or otherwise. - Sustenance - need to be around others who can give mutual support. Being part of an Ignatian group in the parish. Conversation about religion in social settings is often experienced by people in group. - Formation – appreciate when things are offered by the parish. Reading is also important. Maintain faith. Mission stages e.g. children (small) encourage them to pray, later on through work, bringing children closer to God, help children to encounter the faith (x2). Having ecumenical children's liturgy, dealing with other parishes has been valuable in the past. To encourage others to become Catholics. Religion and life not separate for some – but basically mission to show love and care as best as possible.- Knowing our gift and using it for God's glory.- Bringing Jesus to people that we know. Finding an acceptable way. Be at the feet of Jesus and listen to his Word. "I came that you might have life to the full". Prayer changes the world. Being part of a missionary order. - Writing to prisoners – marginalised and those on death row. Overt evangelisation more difficult at times. - to use my gifts, pray my way through life, bringing Holy Spirit to others in whatever mundane situation I might be in.- Active participation? Role as disciple in mission? - Mission in my own life. Mass sends us out, give us direction, preach, use words if necessary. - responding to calling.- Our mission can be known if we know the word of God and are prepared to notice the people around us.- Sacramental preparation – Our confirmation age people are not being instructed. No continuity between First Communion and Confirmation. **Administration** - enabling others to use their gifts - putting people in right place - giving

people access to what they need in the church and further - listening - Bringing as many people to church as possible – talking to people, discussing. - Ambassador of the Gospel – be a credible witness. Belonging to our Lord completely and be used by him. Took a vow to labour for the salvation of souls. God works in extraordinary ways. Tell the good news in different ways. Be ready and adaptable and open to the Holy Spirit.

**Q2** – What is the mission of our parish community?

We are parish as individuals – hard to speak for parish – how well do we know each another to say? We can't answer the question of what does our parish understand by mission because there's no collective vehicle to discuss or implement a mission. We are atomised into small groups or individuals. Needs to be a vehicle for parishes to be more democratic. Parish Council groups can be 'talking shops' or sources of division. We need to keep in touch with our society, we need to respond to changing needs. Change can make us feel uncertain, unsafe. Find ways to encourage adaptability and liturgy. Discern ways to encourage change. It was really difficult when bidding prayers were suspended. We should never feel hampered by the limitations we feel. The Holy Spirit creates opportunities all the time. We shouldn't feel disheartened. Down to us to effect change and not wait – don't blame – give it a go. **Impact Parish is making in local area** – e.g. SVP, Living with Loss group, Apostleship of the Sea, CAFOD, Pro-life. We have an Intentional Disciples group. The ways in which we are missionaries are often ways in which we are not aware. - call to pray together as a parish to draw people together spiritually. The need to celebrate what we do well and notice what is effective and build on that, e.g. table tennis. This has attracted youngsters by having fun and building community, drawing students to come to Mass for continued fellowship. How does our parish identify goals to be pursued etc? - usually by individuals approaching Fr Brian and making suggestions. Example from previous parish, meeting where individuals were invited by Pastoral Council to look at missing areas of mission. - All of us knowing what the local needs are, identifying gifts we have individually and using them in response to the need. How can we identify peoples' gifts and go on to build on them and offer more encouragement to use them? - should we be verbalising any gifts we see in others to them? Could we run 'Called and Gifted course? Example: one member of the group was approached and asked if she would like further training (summer school), so that she might build a choir to assist celebration of Confirmation. The parish can be an environment where outside projects can be championed. - It would be good for the parish to have more involvement with Churches Together. - Each year, a previous parish used to adopt a Lent project to do together. - Loads of people in our parish have done great things in the community and are loved.

**Q3** – What is the Mission of the whole Church?

Pope leads courageously, speaking up on issues e.g. climate change, migrants (x2). He's on the side of the poor. Promoting several women to important roles. How does this filter down to parish level? Praying with Pope's intentions. By having a synod! Asking opinion of laity, more listening to laity. Things beginning to change. Micro (individual) – parish – world vision coalesces. Mission is broad, complex and encompasses more than sharing the gospel overtly but is much more subtle and all pervasive throughout our lives as Christians. We need to be more engaged with the activities of the Church globally -We are not well informed of what's happening in the global church, - How we adapt to the world can come back to bite us, e.g. livestream Masses have made it easier for people to stay at home.

## **ADVENT WEEK 3: CELEBRATE**

*“The Synod offers us the opportunity to become a listening Church, to break out of our routine and pause from our pastoral concerns in order to stop and listen.” Pope Francis*

### **Opening Prayer**

*Lord we pray,*

*May our synodal preparations inspire people to dream about the church we are called to be,  
to make hopes flourish, stimulate trust,*

*to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships,*

*to learn from one another, to build bridges,*

*to enlighten minds and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.*

*We trust in your Spirit who journeys with us.*

## **Philippians 4: 4-7**

I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone; the Lord is very near. There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

## **Psalms 119:105**

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

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

### **Reflection**

*“The Lord walks with us! How often we forget this fundamental truth of being a disciple. The Lord does not stand aloof. He is completely present to them. He is open to encounter. Nothing leaves Jesus indifferent; everything is of concern to him. Encountering faces, meeting eyes, sharing each person’s history. That is the closeness that Jesus embodies. He knows that someone’s life can be changed by a single encounter. Jesus did not hurry along or keep looking at his watch to get things over. He was always at the service of the person he was with, listening to what he or she had to say. We too are called to take time to encounter the Lord and one another.”* Bishop Mark O’Toole

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### **How do I celebrate the presence of God in His Word and in the Sacraments?**

How do the Word and the Sacraments inspire my most important decisions?

Does the liturgy of the Church inspire a deeper encounter with the risen Lord?

### **How does our parish celebrate the Word?**

How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and direct our parish “journeying together”?

How does our parish support a full Catholic life and Mission – evangelization, catechesis, formation, liturgy and social action?

### **How does the Church celebrate journeying together?**

How does the wider Church promote everyone’s active participation?

We are very aware that we need to hear the voices of those who no longer attend Mass and so we have a letter from the Diocese together with a feedback sheet available and we would be grateful if you could take these home to share with anyone you can. There is also a helpful sheet giving guidance on how to approach these sometimes tricky conversations.

This Synodal Walking Together is not a one-off exercise but part of a new way of listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other. You might wish to reflect on what you will do differently in your faith life and family relationships after going through this conversation.