

Pope Francis

My heart aches greatly at the worsening situation in Ukraine. Despite the diplomatic efforts of the last few weeks, increasingly alarming scenarios are opening up. Like me, many people all over the world are feeling anguish and concern. Once again the peace of all is threatened by partisan interests. I would like to appeal to those with political responsibility to examine their consciences seriously before God, who is the God of peace and not of war; who is the Father of all, not just of some, who wants us to be brothers and not enemies. I pray that all the parties involved refrain from any action that would cause even more suffering to the people, destabilising coexistence between nations and bringing international law into disrepute.

And now I would like to appeal to everyone, believers and non-believers alike. Jesus taught us that the diabolical senselessness of violence is answered with God's weapons, with prayer and fasting. I invite everyone to make next 2 March, Ash Wednesday, a Day of Fasting for Peace. I encourage believers in a special way to dedicate themselves intensely to prayer and fasting on that day. May the Queen of Peace preserve the world from the madness of war.

Opening Prayer

O God, our teacher and judge, hear our prayer as we gather at the table of your word. Enrich our hearts with the goodness of your wisdom and renew us from within, that all our actions, all our words, may bear the fruit of your transforming grace. We make our prayer through your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Pro-Cathedral / Donnybrook

26/27 February 2022

Welcome

I would like to talk to you about the proposed synodal pathways, now about to be enacted in our diocese. Let me start with background. All along in our readings and prayers, we have been using English. For us, this is completely natural. For those of us with longer memories, it has been “natural” only since the 1960s. Before that, it was also natural for the Mass to be in Latin. The switch of languages was the result of a meeting of bishops in Rome from 1963 to 1965. The Second Vatican Council – a long time ago for most people – was a game-changer in the life of Catholic Church. It was not called to confront a specific question or heresy. Instead, Pope John XXIII called it to consult that whole church and to bring the church up to date. Until then, the church was defined hierarchically, from the Pope down. But Vatican II, in its reflections on the church, began not with the clergy but with the people of God, all the baptised. The proposed “synodal pathway” as a way forward for the church is a logical continuation of the Vatican II.

Topic

Why is this taking place? How can I take part? Will it make any difference?

Steps

Why is this taking place? There are negative and positive reasons. Negatively, the church has not found a way to offer the Good News of Jesus Christ effectively in our time. This is very evident in Ireland: handing on the faith is a real challenge, as every family knows. The church is also marked by a sinful history, as we also know too well. In our culture, our proclamation of the good news will always be hamstrung until we find a way to integrate women into the government and ministry of the Church. And so on. Positively, the Pope is convinced that a huge world-wide consultation will re-energise the whole project by listening to the experiences of every single Catholic. In one sense, Pope Francis stands within a long tradition: he’s calling a synod of bishops in 2023. So far, so traditional. In another sense, asking for the advice of every single Catholic in the world – 1.2 billion believers – is new and vast, radical and even revolutionary. We are all invited to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches by listening to each other.

How can I take part? This has practical and spiritual dimensions. On a practical level, every parish is holding two consultations to which everyone is invited. For once, our opinion is being asked: it is an opportunity not to be missed. A great deal of preparation has been done in the diocese – inspirational documents on the website and training of parish members to conduct the consultations. You can find out what’s happening in your area by going on the website.

On a spiritual level, we are being invited to listen deeply to each other, to our joys and sadnesses, to our hopes and fears, as we move forward as a community. We are invited to listen to each other with the greatest of respect. Today’s gospel is a direct help. Do not judge others; instead, look to yourself first of all. As we attend to each other

respectfully and prayerfully, the Spirit will be among us. A buzz-word for the consultation is "discernment." Discernment is a disciplined way of listening, especially listening to others. Again, today's Gospel is a help: first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.

Lastly, will it work? No one is quite sure. The experience of the church in South America says yes, this works. It depends a great deal on each one of us: to be present, to take part, to tell my story. If we care about the future of the faith community, the church, then we are being challenged to step to the plate – to make the extra effort to be there and, as appropriate, to speak our minds. This is our chance to be heard: let's not miss it!

Conclusion

A final comment. This vast listening process is not a once-of event. Nor is it primarily focused on a synod in Rome in 2023. Instead, it is meant to model new ways of being church, especially at the local parish level. It is a conscious continuation of Vatican II: the church is first of all the people of God.

It is both opportune and an opportunity. We need this now, as never before, so as to offer the word of life, the good news of Jesus Christ in our time. It is also an opportunity to let our voice be heard – the voice of the ordinary people of God, really for the very first time in long history of the Church.

Luke 6:39 Jesus also told them a parable: "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? **40** A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. **41** Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? **42** Or how can you say to your neighbour, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.

Tree and Its Fruit

Luke 6:43 "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; **44** for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. **45** The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

The Two Foundations

Luke 6:46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? **47** I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. **48** That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. **49** But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house."