



Rome listens

The Catholic Church is not a democracy!’, we have been told. So how is the Church, one of the largest global organisations, governed?

The image we use is a pyramid with the Pope at the top, then the clergy and finally ordinary Catholics. In 2019 there were around 5,600 bishops, 414,969 priests and 1.3 billion lay Catholics worldwide. The priestly court is small, exclusively male and powerful.

There is no denying the strengths of the 2,000-year-old structure with its clear lines of authority. However, Pope Francis, elected in 2013, laid down a challenge. He refers to the church of his dreams as a ‘field hospital’ serving the poor and the marginalised. An example was his action washing the feet of female prisoners on Maundy Thursday. Yet his greatest move, in my opinion, was to call a Worldwide Synod.

The first session took place last October and the second is due this October. This doesn’t sound very novel – the Church has had many councils and synods – however, the shift is that all members of the Church, clergy and laity – male and female – have been encouraged to contribute. In 2021 we were invited to give our ideas on the church of the future. We started at parish level, contributing to diocesan, national and continental reports.

The report that emerged from the 2023 Synod session describes a synodal church as a church that ‘prays, listens, speaks and discerns’ together. Not easy to achieve.

In 2021 many questioned how their voices could be heard when their views were filtered through diocesan and national structures. Beyond that, the global nature of the Church with stark cultural, economic and educational differences presents challenges. Yet even my feminist self realised the genie was out of the bottle. Lay people talked in a way they had never talked before.



Through social media and meeting online and face to face, the world became smaller and people spoke freely and honestly. At Christ the King we had a good response. People spoke confidently and listened carefully with respect.

Making a difference

We quickly realised that while we could raise issues of importance to the Church globally, we could make a difference locally. We identified three areas – outreach to our local community, catering for families and young people, and communications.

We now run a monthly free Sustainable Clothes and Books Market and a weekly Welcome Space offering companionship and activities for older members of the community.

Our offering to families includes a monthly Family Mass and it is uplifting to see the response. Our young people are being encouraged and supported financially to attend diocesan youth events. Our communication channels, which showed significant shortcomings during the pandemic, have been renewed and we are better able to keep in touch with each other and to reach out – some of you may have received the leaflet describing the activities of our three churches.

A recent development is the establishment of a council for Cardiff parishes enabling us to share and

Church services

6pm, Saturday: Vigil Mass of Sunday

9.30am: Sunday Mass – with children’s liturgy in term time;
16 June: Family Mass

9.30am: Tuesday Mass

9.30am: Thursday Mass

Activities (in the parish centre)

- Monday, 9.30 – 11am: Baby and Toddler Group
- Wednesday, 11am – 1.30pm: Welcome Space
- Friday, 6.30pm: Junior Club in term time (School Years 3–6)
- Thursday 6 June, 7pm for 7.30pm start: Quiz Night
- Saturday 15 June, 1 – 5pm: Free Sustainable Clothes and Books Market

For further information, contact Christ the King’s parish office (phone 2075 3945, email llanishen@rcadc.org) or Canon Matthew Jones (phone 2075 2389, email matthew.jones@rcadc.org) or visit the website at www.3churches.org

Services are streamed live at www.3churches.org

learn from one another – both key to becoming a Synodal Church based on communion, mission and participation.

At the 2023 Synod session, seated at round tables, bishops, priests and lay women and men prayed, listened and discussed the direction the church should take under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. An immensely significant development marking the beginning of the long overdue shift away from the clergy running the show and ushering in a challenge to us all to engage.

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