



The Synod is Only Beginning

Patrick Claffey

In our times we have become accustomed to various important world events that take place over a few days, weeks, or even years. Participants hold discussions of varying quality, produce documents that are often the results of political compromise, and then depart until they gather to meet again, often several years later, to review whatever results they may have achieved, and, then, have another meeting. It is painstakingly slow but often the only way it can be done, especially on the big issues such as climate change, combatting poverty, or coming to peace. There are often underling interests, tensions and issues. It's never easy but it's the only way it can be done.

In some ways the Synod on Synodality can be said to resemble this model, as have many previous ecclesial events, including many previous synods. Like many large institutions the Church works over *the long term*, moving slowly in bringing change, often to the frustration of its more idealistic, change-driven members and to the irritation or overt opposition of its traditionalists.

The present Synod on Synodality has hardly reached the middle stage, and it is likely to go on for many more years. Like Vatican II, its decisions will reverberate far into the future, before it achieves many of the reforms the Church needs and its members desire. This present Synod is a three year process that began officially in Rome on October 9 & 10 2021, and a week later in individual dioceses throughout the world. This led to a year long process of consultation and preparation for the *First Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, as it was titled, which was held in Rome last October.

Whatever its shortcomings, this meeting was of great significance if only for the fact that it had significant participation of lay women and men, for the first time granting them a right to be appointed as full voting members of the Catholic Church's primary consultative body. The lay members were chosen from the seven global regional bishops conferences, with the request that young people be included and that 50% of those named be women.

It is clear that the Synod, with the clear encouragement of Pope Francis, opened up discussion, however gingerly, some of the long-burning and controversial issues expressed in the pre-Synod consultative process, notably the place of women in the Church, the pastoral care of various groups and notably those in LGBTQ relationships.

The sessions were conducted in small groups, allowing for open discussion. This was not without its tensions and challenges but it is clear from reports that it broke down many barriers, creating a strong spirit of *being Church together* and *thinking with the Church* in developing the *sensus fidelium*. It gave us a lot to build upon.

The Synod is far from over and in many ways it is just beginning. The Second Session, with the same participants will take place next October, also in Rome. This will take up the issues that have emerged and require much reflection, prayer, and simple unpacking. It will be part of the *long durée* thinking that is so essential to the way our faith community functions as it seeks to build *communion* in a body with 1.2 billion members, to increase participation in its life, its governance by women and men, and a real sense of evangelical mission and engagement with the world

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Fr. Timothy Radcliffe OP is a well-known theologian and spiritual author who writes about the practical questions that many Christians ask in living out the faith. He is the author of many books and articles in the popular field of practical Christianity, the most recent being *Why Go To Church* (2009), *Alive in God* (2019) and *Questioning God* (with Lukasz Popko, 2023).

At the request of Pope Francis he led the three day preparatory retreat for participants in the Synod on Synodality in Rome, as well as delivering weekly spiritual reflections for the sessions last October. We are fortunate to be able to welcome him to St. Mary's **Thursday 1 February**, 7pm, to share with us on the Synod thus far and where it might be going in its next session and into the future.

This will offer us the opportunity to engage more reflectively both with the process and the life of our Church. We need to prepare for a Church that will be asking more of the laity as we face into the future. We are seeking to move on from the traditional system that was often characterised as 'pray, pay, and obey' to one where people will partake more fully in the whole life of the Church. One of the concepts the Synod will have to examine and develop more fully is that of the *sensus fidelium* or the *sensus fidei*, that sense which, as the Catechism tells us, leads us to adhere to the faith, 'to penetrate it more deeply with right judgement, and to apply it more fully in daily life. In this the growth of the faith and the life of the Church continues and the Synod is far from over.

Mass Intentions.

Recently deceased

Nicole Byrne

11am Evelyn Anod Rosales

21 January

11am Ita & Larry Connaughton, their daughter Kit & grandson John

5pm Jack Connor

Masses Times

Sundays: 9.30am, 11am, 5pm

Weekdays: 10am

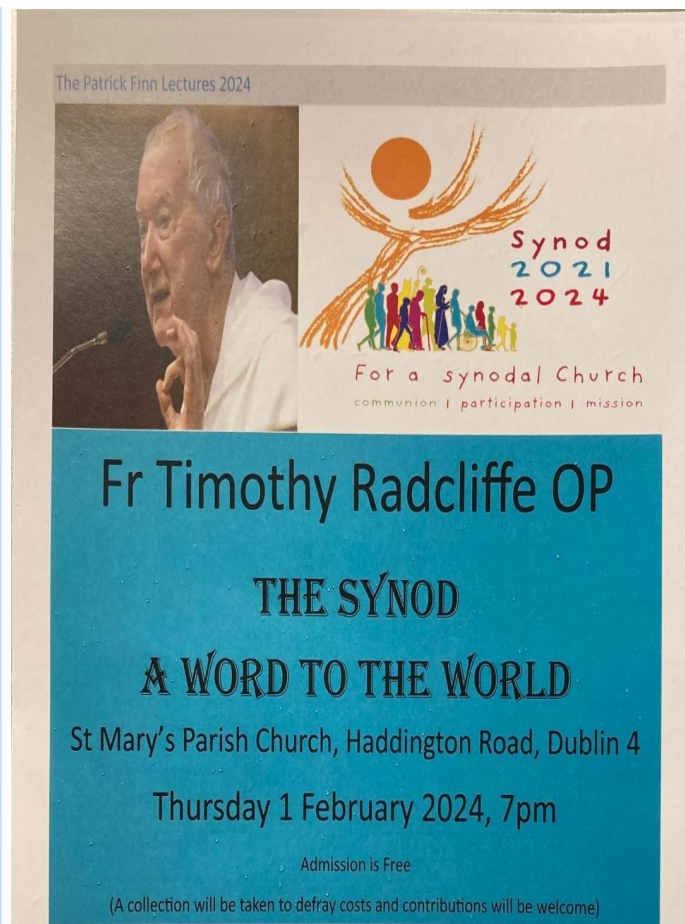
Rosary following 10am mass

French Mass 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month

Collections Last Sunday

1st Collection €725; Share €535

THANKS YOU



The Patrick Finn Lectures 2024

Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP

THE SYNOD

A WORD TO THE WORLD

St Mary's Parish Church, Haddington Road, Dublin 4

Thursday 1 February 2024, 7pm

Admission is Free

(A collection will be taken to defray costs and contributions will be welcome)

Timothy Radcliffe is a well-known theologian and spiritual author who looks at the questions that many Christians ask in living out the faith. At the request of Pope Francis he led the three day preparatory retreat for participants in the Synod on Synodality in Rome, as well as delivering weekly spiritual reflections, last October.

He is the author of many books and articles in the popular field of practical Christianity, the most recent being *Why Go To Church* (2009), *Alive in God* (2019) and *Questioning God* (with Lukasz Popko, 2023).

He was ordained a priest in the Dominican Order (OP) in 1971, and subsequently was based at the west London Catholic Chaplaincy. He taught scripture at Oxford, and was elected provincial of the Order of Preachers in England in 1988. In 1992 he was elected master [Superior General] of the Dominican Order, holding that office up to 2001."

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