



DIOCESE OF SALFORD
SYNOD 2023-2025

Theme Summary One:

Nurturing Faith for Tomorrow's World

This month, parishes within our Diocese will be reflecting on the first theme from the Diocesan Synod Big Listen report. This leaflet provides a summary of that theme and is designed to support your reflection, individually and as a parish. However, we do encourage you to read the full report to understand the findings more deeply.

What Happens Next?

1. You are invited to prayerfully discern and reflect on the findings presented in Theme One: Nurturing Faith for Tomorrow's World.
2. Your Parish Synod Member/s will provide you with information on when your parish will meet to reflect on the theme and decide on two proposals to submit for this theme.
3. The leaflet for Theme Two: Building connections will be available from Wednesday 2nd October on the [Diocese of Salford's website](#).

Through our Baptism, we all share in Christ's office of Priest, Prophet and King (Lumen Gentium,10) This means that, by our participation in the Eucharist and other sacraments, by a life of prayer and witness and by active charity; we share in his prophetic office. In serving the Church and each other, we follow Christ's Kingship as one who came not be served but to serve. Our service of others, our living out of the Good News by word and example and our life of prayer, all come from our Baptismal membership of Christ's Priesthood. This goes on daily within our families, schools, workplaces, even our social engagements.

The Priesthood

- People deeply value and respect clergy and acknowledge the important role clergy play in our parish communities. An acknowledgement is also made that there is a shortage of priests in the Diocese for the work that is required.
- Minimal concerns were raised around the tension between clergy and the laity in parishes. In some circumstances these have led to parishioners requesting oversight of priests and for the Parish Council to challenge the priest's decisions. It is worth noting these came from very few respondents ([Big Listen 1.1 - 1.2. You can find this on pages 9 & 10](#))

The Laity

- People want to 'work hand in hand with their parish priests'. Responses highlighted a desire for further clarification around roles of clergy and the laity in the diocese, as well as scope to develop ways for everyone - especially young people - to be involved in parish life.
- There are mixed feelings around the role of women in the Church today. Some feel that the exclusion of women from ministry and decision making is a sign of inequality, whilst others fear this is the influence of the outside world on our Church today. Please remember that our diocesan synod has no authority to make changes outside the teaching and practice of the Universal Church.
- Responses highlighted some tension between generations around the decline of young, active parishioners. There is agreement that there is a lapse in attendance after First Holy Communion and that young people are seeking new ways to connect with God and each other. Older generations are concerned there is a lack of interest in spirituality among younger Catholics, whilst younger generations are eager to be more active but feel there is a lack of opportunity to do so.
- Faith within schools is seen as a model to be enhanced 'gently' so that the incredible work of young people 'living out their faith' can be transferred into the life of the church community ([Big Listen 1.11. You can find this on p.17](#)).
- Peer pressure is highlighted by younger generations as a key barrier to faith, both within and outside the school setting. Young adults (18-35 years) also reported anti-Catholic prejudice and peer pressure within their workplaces ([Big Listen 1.9 - 1.11.1. You can find this on pages 15-18](#)).

Diocesan and Church Leadership

- Just as The Big Listen respondents speak warmly about their priests, they are also positive about diocesan leadership. The Bishop is seen as the person who will lead the way forward on this synodal path.
- People express a desire for more dialogue so they can better understand the need and reasons for major decisions e.g. Clergy movement, Church closures/amalgamations.
- There is an appreciation of regular communications, 'Pastoral Letters', but there is also a request for greater visibility of the diocesan leadership in parishes, schools, and colleges ([Big Listen 1.4. You can find this on p.12](#)).

The Teaching Office of The Church

- There is greater desire for speedy clarity on issues arising that concern Church teaching. An example presented points to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith's writing on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings, where some felt the Church was slow in clarifying misconceptions, leading many to think the Church is changing its teaching.
- Others fear that there is a barrier to Church Teaching and their understanding of it due to what they see as a failure on the part of the Church to speak out on contemporary issues. Teachers of the young and young people themselves highlight this as a major reason why young people are being driven away from the life of the Church. Contemporary issues, or what is perceived to be the Church's attitude to them, is a major cause of isolation from, and at times within, the Church. The Big Listen conveys a desire to have an open and honest conversation about contemporary issues, including but not limited to homelessness, gender, LGBTQ+ rights, priesthood celibacy and historical abuse.
- In times of social instability, people look to the Church for guidance but faced with silence find themselves unable to work out what the Church's position is. There is a strong desire for the Church to always take a stand on where there is conflict and suffering. The responses encourage the Church to speak 'Peace' ([Big Listen 1.5. You can find this on pages 12 & 13](#)).

Questions

In the light of what has come up from the Big Listen, how can we nurture our faith to meet the needs of the Church today and tomorrow here in the Diocese of Salford? Please note that the following questions are only designed to guide and prompt your reflection and do not seek in any way to limit your prayerful discernment.

How can we better care for both serving and retired clergy?

What needs to be done in the parish to enable clergy in our diocese to feel valued and appreciated?

What can be done in the parish and on a diocesan level to ensure that the gifts and talents of all people (young and old) are fully utilised?

How can the rich diversity visible in our parishes and in the diocese, be better utilised to enrich our missionary work of spreading the Gospel to all corners?

How can the diocesan leadership further implement synodality in its decision-making processes?

How can the parish, which is an extension of the Church, be at the heart of speaking up for 'Truth' and standing up for its teaching on issues facing our World?

How can the Church (laity & ordained, parish & diocese) stay true to its teaching while helping people to apply it to contemporary issues?

How can we as a diocese (excluding issues around ordination which are beyond the diocesan synod remit) continue to develop and maximise the role of women?

How can parishes and schools remove the barriers that are limiting children and young people's fuller participation in the life of the Church?