

St Fiacre's Church Kilkenny
Praying for the Synod on Synodality

Reflection of Ms Gemma Mulligan (Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator)
Mass for the Feast of St Francis of Assisi - Wednesday October 4th 2023

About 800 years ago, Jesus asked someone to go rebuild the Church – That person was St. Francis of Assisi who's feast day we celebrate today. We are told that one day, while praying Francis heard Jesus speak to him from the crucifix: "Go, rebuild my church which is falling down." Francis thought God wanted him to physically rebuild the collapsing church building, so he started making repairs to the structure. Over time, Francis realised that God wanted him to rebuild the entire Church around the world through prayer, poverty, and peace.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis chose the name Francis, so that in prayer, poverty, and peace he might lead us in rebuilding God's Church.

Today 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church begins in Rome. The Synod on Synodality. It is a hugely significant moment in the life of our church some say the most significant since the second Vatican council. It is significant for many reasons. At this Synod for the first time women will have a vote in fact there are 70 non bishops women and men who will have a vote. It is also significant as the journey that led to today began 2 years ago when Pope Francis invited everyone to come on this synodal journey this synodal pathway. Every diocese in the universal Church on every continent in the world has contributed to this synod through the different stages which happened along the way. Gatherings were held in parishes and dioceses and many other groups were invited to send submissions.

Francis wants to hear every voice ,even, maybe especially the still small voice. Here in Ossory we have been on this journey in parishes since October 2021 and are part of the national synodal gatherings and in these past days have gathered in unity with the people of God across the world to pray for the synod and to pray for unity. Francis tells us that the synod is a journey, and we like the disciples of Emmaus are on this journey listening to the Lord who always comes to meet us. The Lord is the 'Lord of Surprises' and through our prayer and discernment the Holy Spirit helps us to carry out what he calls the 'apostolate of the ear.' That is listening with God's ears in order to speak with the Word of God.

There are some people who expect that nothing will happen from this Synod, others think there will be great changes and have great expectations.

And while we are hoping that nothing will happen or hoping that everything will change we must continue to pray for those who are gathered in Rome during this time and again next year. We pray that the Holy Spirit will lead the church to where it ought to be.

Together we pray the 'Adsumus' Synod Prayer:

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.