

Pastoral Letter to be read at all Masses in the Archdiocese of Liverpool on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 November 2021

Dear Friends,

The opening prayer of Mass today, the first Sunday of Advent, invites us to “run forth to meet Christ”. It is with this spirit of hope and joy that today I present to you the Pastoral Plan for the archdiocese.

This is the first of the fruits of Synod 2020; of your prayer, listening, discerning and planning. The Synod journey gave us an experience of being what Pope Francis calls 'the Synodal Church' – a Church that listens carefully to how the Holy Spirit speaks through the lives, wisdom and concerns of all its members.

The four years of the Synod invited us all to ask ourselves: what kind of Church is God calling us to become here in the archdiocese? What is the Holy Spirit saying to us at this critical point in history?

I put before you today a vision for the future of the Church in this archdiocese which has arisen from the way the Synod members voted in June 2021.

The Synod considered nineteen recommendations. The three that received the most votes were concerning evangelisation, lay ministry and young people. You will see how the Pastoral Plan tries to respond to these. But all nineteen were clearly endorsed by the people of the archdiocese.

If we are to truly embrace these and all that we have learned from our journey over these years, then Christ must be our starting point. The first Sunday of Advent is the right time for us to reflect on this as we once again prepare ourselves to welcome Christ.

In the writing of the Pastoral Plan, guided by the Synod, four issues have been highlighted that will underpin every part of our planning and thinking for the years ahead.

We must be immersed in the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of humanity today;

We need to be brave and creative in renewing local structures;

We will develop leadership to attend to changing needs;

And finally we must make sure that synodality is embedded in every aspect of archdiocesan life.

Thinking carefully about these issues, alongside all that the Synod has given us, has led me to place before you six action areas that will be our focus in the years to come.

1. Becoming a Church that accompanies people through life.
2. Becoming a Church that honours the vocation of all the baptised.
3. Becoming a Church where synodality is embedded.
4. Becoming a Church that renews its organisational structures and administers its property to serve its mission.
5. Becoming a Church where young people and young adults flourish.
6. Becoming a Church that cares for its priests.

I have used the word “becoming” not because we haven’t already been doing many of these things and often doing them very well, but because we are going to develop and strengthen our Catholic life, decision making and action in these areas.

The call of Pope Francis, and of popes and ecumenical councils before him, to be a Church which accompanies people, walks with people, is the key change in attitude and approach that I want to place before you. Walking with others, accompanying others, will influence the way we live and work as Catholic Christians in the archdiocese. It will help us re-think our approach to Catholic life.

Being together on the road has led us to this plan. It will serve as the way forward for us in the archdiocese in the years to come. I commend it to your prayers and your action.

I wish you and your families a blessed season of Advent as we, together, become more and more the Church that God is calling us to be.

May God bless you,

Most Rev Malcolm McMahan OP

Archbishop of Liverpool

Archbishop’s House

Liverpool L19 0PH