



Pastoral Council of the Diocese of Leeds

27th November 2024, 6.45pm, John Wesley Room, Hinsley Hall

Minutes:

Present: Bishop Marcus Stock, Kieron Flood, Carol Hill, Kevin Collins (Knights of St Columba). Jessica Wilkinson, Dcn Joe Cortis, Rowan Morton-Gledhill, Carol Burns, Ann Anderson, Nigel Kilgour, John Tweddle, Mgr Paul Fisher.

Apologies: Jason Aldiss, KSC represented by Kevin Collins, Greg Mulholland represented by Carol Burns, Mgr Andrew Summersgill, Deacon David Arblaster, represented by Deacon Joe Cortis, Margaret Chambers, Anne Cooke

1. Opening Prayer and Note from the Bishop

After the opening prayer, the Bishop gave an update on the Second Session of the Synod – Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Wed, 4 October – Sun, 27, October, 2024.

Item 3. Update on Synod.

Context

Bishop Marcus gave a brief update on the Synod and reemphasised that the purpose and focus was on the ‘how?’ of participation in mission. The enabling of ‘participation’ of the laity in particular is an important consideration for the continuation of the mission of the Church in the world but also at local level.

There are aspects of Canon Law that stipulate and permit the involvement and participation of the community of believers in the ‘instruments of Synodality’. These are often not utilised to their full potential or at all, in some cases, and where they are, the structure, focus and outcomes are at times deemed to be unsatisfactory.

Consequently, in principle, they remain a potential fruitful 'instrument' that the Church can use to enable participation in the Church mission of many within the Body of Christ. However, the 'way' in which this takes place needs to be carefully planned out to ensure maximum benefit, effectiveness, impact and service to the Church and the local Diocese in particular.

A question was presented by the Bishop to the Pastoral Council for consideration, consultation and comment by everyone present at the meeting. The question was as follows:

To celebrate and commemorate the 150th year of the Diocese of Leeds, should the Bishop open up a Diocesan Synod or Assembly to agree and enable the members of the Diocese of Leeds to suggest some guiding principles to steer the strategic work of the Diocese for subsequent years?

For context and deeper understanding, the Bishop outlined the distinction in Canon Law between a Synod and an Assembly. It was felt that the Assembly had greater flexibility about its membership than the Synod but that, if the latter were successful, it would potentially pave the way for a Synod to take place at a later stage and with a deeper understanding of it as an 'instrument of synodality.' It was also explained to members that although both Diocesan Synods and Assemblies were canonically permitted, the guidance on 'how?' they take place and their structure is left to the local Bishop to determine as per his designated magisterial authority within the Diocese.

A key aspect to remember is that these instruments within Canon law (if they are to be used) are both 'canon law deliberative' (through the Bishop) and 'canon law consultative' through the membership of the Synod or Assembly.

In short, therefore, a Synod/ Assembly within a Diocese can make proposals to the Bishop which he can then accept or reject. Examples of where this has worked were cited. All of these instruments are in keeping with Pope Francis' encouragement to the Bishops at the Second Synod to enhance the existing structures within the Church to enable lay participation in mission.

Suggestions from the membership of the Pastoral Council included:

- Exploring the Deanery Pastoral Council as a possibility.
- Assembly would give greater flexibility and wider membership for consultation, including young people and schools.
- Assembly would be more democratic in relation to making suggestions of guiding principles to the Bishop for consideration.
- Being 'loud and proud' about being Catholic.
- Enabling participation in pilgrimages and processions to evangelise.
- Moving away from unnecessary 'top-down' bureaucratic directives to a moral vision of the local Church.
- Involving Catholic schools where many have faith but may not attend Mass.
- Enabling the moral tradition of the Church to speak more positively to young people's priorities – such as climate – and to 'meet them where they are at.'
- Greater focus on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to 'invite' more lay leadership into promoting the moral vision of the Church in a way that avoids creating an imbalance regarding authoritative teachings or a 'canon within the canon' for the moral tradition.

Action: Bishop Marcus will reflect and consult with others regarding the formal structure of an Assembly and report back to the membership of the Pastoral Council as appropriate.

Item 4: Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life Bill) 2024.

Discussion and comments offered by the membership.

Action for all:

1. Write to local MP.
2. Reminder to note the 'economics of caring' (Pope John XXII) and Fratelli Tutti's (Pope Francis) teaching on the need to find ways of moving beyond a 'throw away culture' and to embrace again the centrality of the dignity of the human person.

Item 6: Bishop Marcus Proposed Deacon Simon Akhirebhu, African and Caribbean Chaplaincy as a member of the Council.

Proposal endorsed and accepted by all.

Item 7:

- a. Members agreed to partake in the consultation led by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Faith and Belief Toolkit. Ann Marie Mealey given permission to contact all members of the Pastoral Council to arrange consultation.
- b. Bishop Marcus thanked Carol Hill for her service to Catholic Care. Members to find a way to express gratitude to Carol at the informal get together/community event for Pastoral Council groups. John Battle proposed this and will take forward.
- c. Dates of next meeting noted: 12th March & 29th October, 2025.

Thanks and closing prayer.

28/11/2024: Minutes taken by AM Mealey.