
‘Towards a Synodal Church in Mission’, a contribution of the Catholic Church of England and Wales to the October Synod

The document, entitled "[Towards a Synodal Church in Mission. Submission for the Second Plenary Assembly of Bishops October 2024](#)," was presented by the [Catholic Church of England and Wales](#) in preparation for the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2024. It represents a culmination and synthesis of the Synodal process within the Catholic Church of England and Wales. Delegates representing this Church, which includes bishops, priests and members of the laity, will participate in the assembly in person and thus have the opportunity to make a further contribution of their own. The process in question has been ongoing for a long time; indeed, it began when the 22 dioceses of England and Wales submitted their respective reports to the Bishops' Conference seat in London before Easter 2022 as a result of a six-month listening process with the faithful. The 700-page report delineated the manner in which the Synod extended its reach to parishes and Catholic associations and movements, which subsequently merged into a national summary document submitted to Rome in July 2022. The two phases, May 2024 and July 2022, provide an indication of the current status of the Synodal process in England and Wales. A significant finding that emerged two years ago was the disparate approach of the dioceses to the Synod. In fact, while some dioceses conducted online surveys to collect the opinion of the faithful, others organised in-person meetings at the diocesan level. Indeed, the initial document revealed that those who had participated in the Synodal Process had found it an enriching experience and expressed their intention to continue. Moreover, on 1 June 2022, during the National Synod Day celebrations held at St George's Cathedral in Southwark, South London, several parishioners reported feeling valued as a result of the first-person approach and the direct invitation to express their opinions on the mission of the Church and the tools required to proclaim the Gospel today. Furthermore, in the initial phase, the faithful expressed requests for time to be set aside to accompany divorced and remarried Catholics, same-sex couples, and anyone who feels they are being excluded. The faithful highlighted the issue of women's roles in the Church, advocating for greater involvement of the laity in decision-making processes and expressing a desire for faith formation. The role of the laity is a major focus of the latest report submitted to Rome by the Bishops of England and Wales and discussed at their recent plenary meeting in April this year. The chapters covering the latest phase of the synod process in England and Wales underline the need for cooperation between the laity and the clergy. "Here is the heart of our synodal journey thus far, a call to the co-responsibility of the priesthood of all the faithful with the ministerial priesthood, supporting each other in the work of the mission of the Church", reads the document. It points out that "Growing in communion with each other in a common baptismal faith leads to a desire to participate more fully in the Church's life and ministry. This, in turn gives a heart for mission, not as something to be done, but with a realisation that the Church is mission." The document continues: "Enhancing the relationship between priests and the lay faithful can improve and empower all those who contribute to the life of the Church of England and Wales." According to this latest Synodal document released. By the English bishops, it is important that the faithful assume full responsibility for the faith they received through Baptism, to a greater extent than they have done far. "Ways need to be found in which the gifts and talents of all can be used for the good of Christ's mission", reads the document. The bishops likewise offered their "gratitude and esteem to all the faithful women and men across the country who give of their time and talents to support the life of the Church; for the witness of our young people and those who work in our schools."

Silvia Guzzetti