

## What is Our Paisley Synod?

The word *Synod* comes from Greek where it means 'to travel together'. The purpose of any diocesan Synod is to help the bishop govern the diocese through listening to his flock. So a diocesan Synod is an assembly, a gathering of people, called together by the Bishop of that diocese for the purpose of discussing particular themes chosen by the Bishop.

Our Paisley Synod will be opened by Bishop John Keenan during Eastertime of 2016 with the purpose of studying one major theme: "*Evangelisation with emphasis on the Laity's role*". Synod sessions will take place concerning this topic, covering the period between Easter and Summer of 2016. The Synod delegates, around 200 people, will consist of priests, religious, representatives of diocesan organisations, people of our diocese and the invitation to take part will be open to all. The general aim is for those gathered to offer assistance to the Bishop for the good of the whole diocesan community. (Canon 460 )

Before the actual Synod begins Bishop John will offer preparatory sessions or catechesis in diocesan deanery groups regarding Laity and Evangelisation, when there will be time to listen and ask questions. The Bishop's input on the Laity will begin in August this year with Evangelisation in the Autumn. A document on this catechesis will be circulated widely in the diocese for group discussion in homes, schools, house groups and parish groups. Outcomes from all these sessions will be gathered and studied, so that questions can be chosen for the work of the Synod proper.

From this exercise the work of the Synod should foster long term spiritual and pastoral renewal of the diocese as we work together to meet the challenges we face in our time. It will herald a new chapter of life of the diocese to bear fruit to the honour and glory of Our Lord and deepen our love and service to one another. We will be on a journey together as we pray, listen, discuss and search for answers to the questions posed as well as appropriate actions that will lead us and others deeper in our faith.

Each individual layperson has an obligation to be a witness before the world to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus, and as a sign of the living God. All of them together and each for his part has an obligation to feed the world on the fruits of the Spirit and to spread in the world the Spirit which is the life of the poor, the patient, the peacemakers, whom the Lord declared blessed in the gospel. In a word, 'Christians must be in the world what the soul is in the body'. (Lumen Gentium p63:38)

In spiritual preparation for the Synod the beautiful icon of Our Lady of Paisley begun a journey round the diocese the week after Pentecost, and will visit each parish for one week. A leaflet with seven reflections, one for each day of the Ion's stay, will give prayerful support while we travel towards the starting date of our Synod at Easter of 2016. In this way we are both asking for Our Lady's intercession and reviving the devotion to Our Lady of Paisley. Prayer will ensure the success of the Synod. Along the way there will be prayerful opportunities and events arranged for the formation of the faithful, before and during the Synod.

A preparatory commission was set up in February 2015 in order to prepare and organise matters pertaining to the Synod. One of those tasks is to help the Bishop to draw up the synodal Directory, to help in determining those questions to be proposed for synodal deliberation and to designate the delegates of the Synod. A synodal secretariat will also be established to take care of documents, logistical matters, minutes and accounting.

The discussion sessions of the Synod proper, no more than five sessions, are likely to take place in one of the secondary schools in the diocese, so as to provide the space required for all participants to both come together and to work in groups. The Synod sessions will take place at arranged times between Easter and Summer of 2016. The Synod will begin and end with a solemn liturgy at St.Mirin's Cathedral and this will be open for everyone in the diocese to attend.

After June 2016, once the Paisley Synod sessions are concluded, the Bishop, considering what he has heard from the diocese, will proceed to write the synodal Decrees and Declarations. This will go to the Archbishop of Glasgow and the Bishop's Conference of Scotland as well as to Rome. Once approved, plans will be considered for the implementation of the new vision within our diocese, to aid the growth and renewal of our whole community.

*Unless the eye catch fire,  
The God will not be seen.  
Unless the ear catch fire,  
The God will not be heard.  
Unless the tongue catch fire  
This God will not be named.  
Unless the heart catch fire,  
The God will not be loved.  
Unless the mind catch fire,  
The God will not be known.*

William Blake ( 1757 - 1827 ) from "Pentecost"