**RE: An open letter to the Dublin Archdiocesan Synodal Pathway Committee**

To: The Chairperson of the Dublin Archdiocesan Synodal Committee,

Two Synodal Pathway meetings took place in Rathmines Parish Pastoral Centre on Sunday 20th March and Sunday 27th March open to parishioners from Rathmines and Rathgar Parishes.

Below is an extract of the core themes that arose under the four headings of **Fear, Hope, Sorrows, and Joys,** in relation to experiences and expectations of Church**.** A more comprehensive list of Convergent and Divergent themes is attached to this letter.

The top three themes which emerged under the title of ‘**Fears’** is as follows: 1. A ‘Deaf’ hierarchy/Abuse of power/Clericalism. 2. Male dominance/Lack of Gender balance/Ban on female ordination. 3.Vocation Crisis.

The top three themes which emerged under the title of ‘**Hope’** is as follows: 1. Sense of Community. 2. Involving the laity in the Synodal Process. 3. Youth involvement in the Church.

The top three themes which emerged under the title of ‘**Sorrow’** is as follows: 1. Clerical Child sex abuse scandals, 2. Lack of young people in the Church, 3. Inferior role of women.

The top three themes which emerged under the title of ‘**Joy’** is as follows: 1. Faith & Hope in God, 2. Sense of Community, 3. The Sacraments.

Yours in Christ,

 From: The Rathmines & Rathgar Parish Synodal Team

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| **Convergent Themes (4 and more)** | **Divergent Themes (3 and less)** |
| ‘Deaf’ hierarchy/abuse of power/clericalism x10 | Slow pace of change within Church x3 |
| Male dominance/gender balance/ban on female priests x10 | Conservatism x3 |
| Vocation crisis x8 | Lack of ecumenism/inter-faith dialogue x3 |
| Lack of lay involvement x7 | Lack of youth involvement x2  |
| Media censorship of Church/militant secularism x5 | Lack of Implementation of synod conclusions x2 |
| Closure of Churches/Decline of Church x4  | Child sex abuse scandal x2 |
| Catechesis crisis x4 | Irrelevance of liturgy/homilies x1 |
| Lack of openness/creativity x4 | Church teaching on Homosexuality x1 |
|  | Poor Church response to social issues x1 |
|  | Celibacy obligation for clergy x1 |
|  | Church teaching on scriptures x1 |
|  | Church involvement in politics x1 |

**Fears**

**Hopes**

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| **Convergent Themes (4 and more)**  | **Divergent Themes (3 or less)**  |
| Sense of **community** x9 | Presence/Love of God x3 |
| Involving the **laity** in the process/Synodality x8 | Personal prayer x3 |
| **Youth** involvement in the Church x6  | Music at liturgy x3 |
| **Social Justice** x6 | Truth/Church teaching x2  |
| **Pope** Francis x5 | Recognition of the need to reform/**Development of Doctrine** i.e expansion of priesthood requirements x2 |
| **Online** Catholic Media x4 | Good **Priests** – Local clergy x2 |
| Evangelisation x4 | Environmentalism in the Church x2 |
| Sacraments x4 | Church programmes ie. Kyrios retreat/ Pilgrimages x2 |
| Ecumenism x4 | Sacramental preparation of children x1 |

**Sorrows**

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| **Convergent Themes (4 or more)** | **Divergent Themes (3 or less)**  |
| Clerical Child sex abuse scandals x12 | Clericalism x3 |
| Lack of young people x7 | Vocation crisis x3  |
| Inferior role of women x7 | Abuse of power x3 |
| Exclusion of laity in decision making x5 | Conservativism |
| Lack of vibrancy/community in Parishes x5 | Personal testimonies/experiences within the Church x3 |
| Lack of catechesis x5 | Clerical Celibacy x3 |
| Falling Church attendance x4 | Divisions in the Church x3 |
|  | Church teaching on homosexuality x2 |
|  | Secularism in the media  |
|  | Historical abuses |
|  | Under emphasis on ecumenism |
|  | Over emphasis on ecumenism |
|  | Rationalism  |
|  | Marginalisation of Vatican II reforms |
|  | Use of money in the Church  |
|  | Judgementalism of Church |
|  | Slow to change rules |
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**Joys**

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| **Convergent Themes (4 or more)** | **Divergent Themes (3 or less)** |
| Faith & Hope in God x13 | Church Architecture x3 |
| Sense of Community x11 | Universality of Church x3 |
| The liturgy x13 | Heroic Church Figures – i.e. Pope Francis, The Saints, Peter McVerry x3 |
| The Sacraments x8 | Youth Involvement & Climate engagement x2 |
| Music at liturgy x6 | Evangelisation x1 |
| Social Justice/Church missions overseas x6 | International gatherings of Church – i.e. World Youth day x1 |
|  | Consecration of Russia/Ukraine to Our Lady x1 |