

# **Our Lady of the Portal and St Piran Catholic Church, Truro**

## **Walking Together-Synodal Journey**

### **Dream**

#### **Summary notes from a zoom session on Tuesday evening, 21.12.21 and a Wednesday morning face-to-face session 22.12.2021**

##### **What is God's dream for me?**

This question stimulated a lot of thought in both groups and it was strongly recognised that God had made us for a clear set of purposes: to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him forever in the next. Many remembered this as being the answer that they had learnt from the "penny catechism" when they were very young and that it had stayed with them throughout their lives. A significant number of examples were shared of what this meant in the daily lives of people. How best to serve God? People felt that they did this in their encounters with others and through sharing their faith, hope and joy with those they met, openly. Others felt that they didn't do this enough and often lacked confidence in sharing their faith and bringing God into the conversation. Trusting God was felt to be a key to living out our faith.

A few people in the groups weren't sure they knew what God's dream was for them. There was comment about the difference between a dream and a vision. One conclusion was that a vision suggested an element of action. Could His dream also be thought of as His will? It was also mentioned that "dreams and visions" should be the norm and we should be alert to that which has been revealed- the inner eyes and inner ears. Thoughts mentioned included being the best you can be, being alert to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, being more tolerant, more outward looking and giving enough time to the Lord. One person thought God's dream was for us to be the ideal version of ourselves but, at the same time we are meant to be "me" and not anyone else. God had a plan for each of us as unique individuals.

Using our individual talents or charisms and being Jesus' eyes, feet, and hands in the service of others, guided by the Holy Spirit, was frequently mentioned. One participant described how they prayed each day that God would show them what he wanted them to do that day so that they lived through the Divine Will.

## **What is God's dream for our Parish?**

Thoughts in this section reflected and expanded on those for us as individuals, particularly in relation to the Pope's statement that we shun being an "exclusive club". In spiritually opening the doors and windows of our hearts, we should become a more outward facing Parish, reaching out to marginalised groups and individuals in Truro. A higher local profile through engagement with ecumenical activities was frequently suggested. It was felt that greater confidence was required, and this might be assisted by further learning/education. We need to listen, without judgement, to the wider community as we have been doing in this Synodal process. There was a strong feeling that this synodal process was showing the importance of listening to others, without judgement and that we should become more accepting and welcoming of those "at the edges". It was felt that the pandemic and this synodal journey had created an opportunity to take a step back, reflect and rebuild. There was a strong feeling of not wanting to go back or return to a "normal" pre-Covid19 situation.

People wanted a much closer working relationship between the laity and the hierarchy of the Church. This should be encouraged so that people in positions of responsibility can be nurtured, with more parishioners encouraged to participate in various roles and take on responsibility for aspects of the mission. It is important to make the parish a friendly, happy place where there is unity, hope and joy; this applies equally to the Diocese.

Strengthening links with young families, perhaps following Baptism or First Holy Communion were suggested. Other ways to engage with the "lapsed" were described with a view to building up a sense of community. It was suggested that current committed parishioners could take a lead in bringing Christ to other people. Examples were given of small house groups, neighbourhood prayer groups, social events which included food and drink, catechetical film shows with opportunities to talk afterwards, the Alpha course, Men's groups and Parish fundraising projects which built a sense of belonging.

How to attract the young to church was a recurring theme. Young children will clearly only attend if their parents do. The increased secularisation of society and the many alternative distractions which compete with attending Sunday Mass (such as sports training and fixtures) were highlighted. We wondered whether it was possible to influence the influencers and the role models of young people. Some felt that the sacred element of coming to Mass was sometimes missing along with appropriate behaviour. In Cornwall, children do not benefit from specific Catholic education. This was felt to be an urgent issue to address as the young were the future of the Church.

As a background to all the comments there was a clear recognition that the current pandemic circumstances restrict our activities, but it is hoped that change might be achieved in the future. The recent setting up of a Pastoral Council was felt to be a useful vehicle for carrying forward the ideas and translating dreams into action.

### **What is God's dream for the church/world?**

Some found this a difficult question to answer. There was a feeling that unity and getting rid of polarisation in the church was to be hoped for. Again, the notion of opening windows and doors to other denominations, and indeed all mankind, was well supported. This meant working together in communion with all and included thinking beyond our usual mindset and not limiting ourselves to entrenched points of view. Removing barriers was felt to be crucial to growth.

In one group, this wider thinking on the future of pastoral care in the Church, sparked questions about why women do not play a more significant role in Church leadership. It was felt, by one participant, that women should be allowed to become Deacons, if God was calling them to that ministry. A few also felt that the Church should consider the possibility that women may be being called to the Priesthood. That this was a complex and possibly divisive issue was clearly recognised. It was pointed out that in the readings accompanying this session, of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, that the whole of God's plan rested on those two women being inspired by the Holy Spirit and saying "Yes". It was also mentioned that at most of the significant moments of Our Lord's life on Earth, women had played significant roles even when this was counter cultural.

It was also felt, by some, that celibacy should not be regarded as an essential requirement of ordination to the Priesthood and that married men ought to be considered as possibly having a vocation to the Priesthood. The ordination of married ex-Anglican Priests was seen as a positive direction of travel and provided strong evidence that a married priesthood was possible. It was felt, by some, that celibacy should be an option rather than a requirement. Some felt that the customs of the Eastern Orthodox Church should be considered. It was acknowledged that these are not new topics for the church and clearly remain active in people's consciousness. It was felt that such significant changes should not simply be motivated by the current low numbers of vocations to the priesthood but because God was calling a more diverse group of people to serve in these roles.

There was a clear call, from one or two, for the Church to reflect again on its moral teaching about: sex before marriage, the indissolubility of marriage, marriage being only between a man and a woman for the procreation of children and the whole area of contraception. It was felt, by some, that the Church was being naive in thinking that all Catholics only practiced natural family planning. This had proved to be a significant issue in some relationships and had really tested some.

### **Closing question**

Some elements were reiterated from previous sections, namely, the past 18 months have been an occasion for reflection on the gift of faith, a looking beyond our parish to the wider world, often courtesy of Zoom (though not available to all) and a greater acceptance and tolerance of difference.

Participants would like to see the parish and diocese act on the themes emerging from the Walking Together process and expected that the Diocese would publish the progress being made. This process has been valued and there now needs to be a sense of travel and arrival. Those who have taken part have valued the opportunity to speak freely and have felt significant benefit from the sharing process. There is a wish for a continuation of this type of encounter, perhaps looking at some of the other questions, posed by the Vatican. Some worried whether the church would be able to come back to how it had been pre-pandemic, but most saw opportunities to rebuild and develop using individuals' strengths and gifts. These could be enhanced by further catechesis and a better understanding of available resources. Leadership was felt to be important in moving forward.

In summary, it was felt that the dream for our Church should include:

- a greater involvement of the laity as the "People of God" in ministerial and other leadership roles
- a greater acceptance of difference and a more inclusive spirit
- a more significant presence in the Community
- the continued use and development of communications technology
- a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Catholic and a greater appreciation of our Faith
- removing barriers for people to return to full communion and the Church becoming more welcoming, more joyful, and full of hope
- the Synodal process continuing at local, diocesan, and universal level to create a more listening, more open, and broader Church
- a much greater sense of co-responsibility for the mission