

DUBLIN AND GLENDALOUGH DIOCESAN SYNOD ADDRESS 2017

... *Jesus asked his disciples: Who do people say I am?...*

Address by the Archbishop

INTRODUCTION

The stated purpose of a synod could hardly be either simpler or clearer. It is expressed in the Collect for use in the Church of Ireland for the opening of a synod and it is as follows: *Keep us steadfast in faith and united in love, that we may manifest your glory and prepare the way of your kingdom.*

The invitation is like this: faith and love move us towards glory and kingdom; they are expressions not merely of earthly but of fully heavenly virtues. This, I suggest, may come as a shock to some. We need to ask ourselves if we in the Church of Ireland and indeed in these United Dioceses have come to hold a somewhat mechanical view of *what* a synod is; in fact we should be asking *who* a synod is, not *what*. A synod is not an Annual General Meeting; it is not parliament in exile; it is not even a place of political pressure internal or external to the church. It is, rather, to be a people, a place in which we, the members, show the glory of the body of Christ and in which we, the members, prepare the way of the kingdom of God. People and place combine in our meeting to disclose more and more of the Kingdom of God to those who have eyes to see. We remain the individual and the delightful people we are but we become the people of the Spirit of The Triune God in this act of coming together, this meeting of the roads, this synod. We come together to be transformed in and by the Holy Spirit. The body of Christ and the kingdom of God have a connected and a connecting role; it is to look inwards and outwards at the same time, church and world/world and church, allowing both perspectives to inform each other within the unfathomable and unending love of God.

OUR SPIRITUAL HOPE

It is, therefore, entirely suitable that in the Church of Ireland we should make the best effort we can to give voice to such a spiritual hope. It is for this reason that we gather intentionally with the Holy Spirit to do so. Discernment is one of the primary gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is to this immediate end that we are here: to listen and to learn, to hear and to discern, and to be equipped for service and for action in the church within the world and in the world beyond the church. We are here to *review* and to *preview* our corporate (that is bodily and therefore tangible and active) response as disciples of Jesus Christ to this call. It is within this framework and this context that I want to thank and to congratulate all those who have served God, their community, their parish, their home and their workplace in the year past with joy and with energy. You have been pushing out the boundaries unstintingly and unselfishly, you have been expressing and witnessing to the ways of God's kingdom and you have been the place where the glory of God shines and is

seen. You may indeed have been doing all of this in the spirit manifested in St Matthew 25 where the righteous are unaware of the good things they have done in their lives and therefore wondering what all the fuss is about. Yet it is the unassuming righteous who hear the words of the Risen Jesus offering to them the joined-up thinking of salvation: *Truly I tell you: anything you did for one of my brothers (and sisters) here, however insignificant, you did for me.* (St Matthew 25.40) Openness to others, however instinctive and however insignificant, is the key to discipleship.

COMMUNICATION AND VERSATILITY

In a diocese as broad-ranging as ours, it is a positive challenge of athletic proportions to keep abreast of the many ways in which all of this discipleship happens. In my experience over more than seven years, people react well and respond generously to structured initiatives. This has been particularly true in relation to something as straightforward as The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion. We have been the first diocese in the Church of Ireland formally and coherently to adopt them into our spiritual life. Their simplicity is such that they have been embraced by all generations; they have found their way into service in the community, initiatives in schools, baptism and Messy Church as well as being discerned and disclosed in an explanation of the shape of the Holy Communion Service itself and in personal and corporate pilgrimage. Their versatility and their impact go together; their appeal lies in the fact that they are unforced and, as with everything we do in this diocese, nobody is compelled and, at the same time, nobody is excluded from participating at the outset or from joining in at any other time later. This is a very positive feature of our United Dioceses. The sustained level and quality of the information we receive and enjoy would be impossible were it not for the work of both Ms Lynn Glanville and the Reverend Nigel Waugh through the Diocesan Website and the Diocesan Review. In a very efficient, effective and fair-minded way, they regularly bring to our notice and attention and enjoyment who we are and what we do; and in an era of international communications which is here to stay – and it is, like many other things, as good as we make use of it – they bring it also to the attention of the whole world. Both of them, together with all those who work with them, deserve our thanks and appreciation for the pivotal roles they play in sustained quality information.

BELONGING TO THE BODY

We have a clear choice: *either* we confine ourselves to the relatively, or should I say comparatively, small number of people who are members, that is officially members, of the Church of Ireland (we are a church that has no agreed or coherent definition of membership *per se*; this also means that exclusivity cannot logically or theologically be part of our spiritual DNA) *or* we take the maxim of John Wesley, Anglican priest and subsequently Methodist minister, that the whole world is our parish. If we take the latter view, then our calling is to embrace a duty of care and a ministry of service to what is now a conurbation of at least 1.3 million people and a sprawling workplace into and out of

which people from at least eleven nearby counties commute daily. It is a geographical area where new towns and new housing are planned and under way within the boundaries of historically existing parishes and I appeal to people in those parishes, as our response develops, to help with initiatives of response. It is also now a place where people who were promised housing two years ago can expect to die on the street in increasing numbers - and we were told two years ago that what happened to Jonathan Corrie would never happen again. This is a scandal of local and national proportions and a matter also of international scandal.

Our involvement as Anglicans in civic life is not a matter of media soundbytes nor again is it a matter of generalised public pronouncements about issues of the day; and again it is not a continuing conviction or delusion that through some sort of inherited entitlement or continuing Establishmentarianism we ‘punch above our weight.’ It is something else and something far more exciting: it is the discovery once again, in co-operation with others and in our generation, of the principles and practices of Anglicanism in our local context; and Anglicanism because it tunnels down to be an expression of Christianity at its simplest and most vital. And this ultimately is why there is no exclusive definition of membership: precisely because Anglicanism is a theological method of living with an ecclesial expression in churches and with other churches rather than its being a confessional church as such. We are in specific ways perpetually open to transformation.

As we embark on this task year by year, we are fortunate that already we have a range of good ecumenical relations right across these United Dioceses; that Dublin has a progressive and innovative Inter Faith Charter, thanks to the recently outgone Lord Mayor Brendan Carr, and is the first city in Europe to develop and to implement this; that within our dioceses we have a well-established Come&C programme of discipleship centred on The Five Marks of Mission and already taken up in a broad range of parishes in the dioceses in all of its local diversity. It has also been taken in to the Dioceses of Spain and Portugal and to the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East. International mission – perhaps still the most obvious understanding of mission and surely none the worse for that – is there as a gift to every one of us through the Jerusalem Link forged and sustained by The Diocesan Council for Mission.

There is also the rather newer Gateway Project, with which the archdeacon of Glendalough has been intimately associated from the outset along with other progressive lay people and clergy in the dioceses. The project is in association with two cognate dioceses: Tuam and Connor. We shall hear more of it later in our Synods but it seeks to build positively on the bedrock of community and parochial life through expanding the range of worship and activity that we offer in ways that speak directly of God to the people of today and to their expectations and in a pioneering idiom. And such pioneering is now essential both in established parishes and in the new housing areas if we are to be true to the presence of the Kingdom of God already in our midst. It is timely that such an opportunity has been presented to us by The House of Bishops and that we have an

energetic and high quality team from within the dioceses willing to develop these insights into practicalities and policies for all of us for the future. Come&C is the bedrock of The Gateway project because it has drawn out, and continues to draw out, the voices of the people of the dioceses from the first day we met in The High School Dublin under the skilled guidance of Canon David Tuohy. From this have flowed a wide range of discipleship and community-based initiatives rooted in The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion; the Dublin and Glendalough Diocesan Link with Jerusalem; the D&G800 which is here to stay; the rediscovery of the Camino of Glendalough along with the exciting possibility of linking it directly with Dublin and with Compostela. All of these are things that you, the people of the dioceses, have done and continue to do day by day.

As we embark more specifically this evening on the work set out for us: manifesting the glory of God and preparing the way of God's kingdom, I bring us back to the Scripture with which we opened:

Jesus and his disciples set out for Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples: Who do people say I am?

If you have ever had the chance to be in Caesarea Philippi, you will never forget the experience. It is a place with a sheer rock face; it is a place with niches in the same rock face for statues of the Graeco-Roman deities worshipped by the colonisers and it is the place where there are pools of water and trees to represent nature deities. It is, therefore, if you are a Jew and a member of a new community clustered around Jesus of Nazareth, a place where your back is literally against the wall in a number of ways. Physically your back is against the wall because there is a sheer rock face behind you. Spiritually your back is against the wall because you are surrounded by expressions of religion that run against all your instincts of one God of whom Exodus 3.13 says: *I am that I am*. All you can do is to turn and move forward, to go to Jerusalem in order to engage directly with Cross and Resurrection. This is a profound moment of decision and of identity. If you think all of this is simply a fanciful Bible Story, it is the reality faced by countless Christians in our companion Diocese of Jerusalem and The Middle East and in that whole Middle Eastern region: that of taking a stand with Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ. They face annihilation daily, as many people closer to home sit and weigh up whether or not they will bother to go to church this Sunday and in a church such as ours where an averaged out regular church attendance has come to mean once a month or once in every six weeks. The moment at Caesarea Philippi is a moment that defines identity in a very tangible way. No wonder it was so explosive!

IDENTITY AND WHO WE ARE

In today's world and in today's diocese, we also need to focus attention on identity, on who we are, on what we do and on why we do what we do. This is not, as many people might imagine, primarily about ourselves; identity is not nor should it be. Identity is about responsive and responsible relationship. The Come&C initiative has assisted greatly in

this regard, not least in the more easily and instantly accessible ways in which we express

The Five Marks:

TELL: Proclaim God's Kingdom

TEACH: Teach, baptise and nurture

TEND: Respond to human need

TRANSFORM: Transform unjust structures

TREASURE: safeguard creation.

In fact, it could hardly be simpler, to be honest to take a lead in following Jesus Christ.

IDENTITY AND THREE AREAS

Identity in the context of our discernment of the Spirit of God this evening can perhaps be broken down into three areas and they are equally simple:

Please show me who you are ...

Please tell me what you do ...

Please ask me who I am ...

At this point, it is clear that a number of question areas has come together to help us to move forward. Were you to go back into your parish and community from this diocesan synod and decide that you were going to meet *entirely new people*, people you had not met before, I would suggest that you would learn a great deal about three pairs of words which I will go on to outline. I would go further and invite you to do so. I would further suggest that they will help us all move in to further engagements and interactions we might have with people who are new to us. These ways of engaging are already part of how we live our diocesan life. My intention is to do no more than to highlight them and to develop them. My only remaining encouragement therefore is that you take them to heart as you enter the synod and again as you leave the synod.

HOSPITALITY AND CURIOSITY: are the first pair of words. For both of these to work together, we need to develop a genuine interest in The Other as someone other to us and we to them. The distinction remains pivotal to the relationship. Someone who is other to us is someone from whom we can learn, with whom we can share our identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ and as a fellow human being. The Other is not someone whom we are automatically entitled to correct or to contradict around the principles that matter most to them. During the summer past, as part of my work, I had the opportunity to lead an Inter Faith Consultation on Disability Issues in Nagpur, India. Worldwide and not least in the complicated religious and social contexts of India, the scope for multiple exclusions in the area of disability engagement is clear to everyone. After three days of fascinating exploration and true sharing with people from across eight World Faiths and their internal denominations, we were adamant that the following be included in the document we wrote to take things forward in India itself: *It is the role of the human person to seek God and the self in the heart of the other*. Now that I am long back in Ireland and reunited with the rest of my daily work, this insight seems to me to be equally pertinent as we seek to move forward organically as a community and as a country in transition. Like most of the rest of

Europe, coalition has become our democracy of normalcy both South and North. In whatever complicated ways coalition in fact functions, it seems here to stay and inevitably it has its own in-built trade-offs. Brexit is now a reality, even if still an undisclosed reality and a well-kept secret, with tangible yet totally unclear consequences for Ireland North and South and for Europe more generally. The one thing that seems clear to me is that we will inevitably need more neighbours than ever before, so hospitality and curiosity will come into their own in a new way.

The: Who, then, is my neighbour? question is one that we associate with the interchange between Jesus and the rich lawyer. The answer is: The Good Samaritan, but the very interesting thing for us is where the person of Jesus Christ is to be found in this part-parable, part-wake-up-call. Jesus is seen and known in the wounded and beaten traveller; in the good Samaritan (let us never forget that nobody in those days thought a Samaritan could be good) who risks himself without counting the cost; in the innkeeper who makes heavy professional concessions to facilitate two people quite unknown to him, one of them profoundly disturbed and undoubtedly very demanding. This parable is our challenge: to seek and to find God by putting God and the other at the heart of the self. We are already doing this inside the diocese: through the Housing Initiative with The Irish Refugee Council and through Dublin City University being the first Irish University of Sanctuary; through the appointment of a new Diocesan Youth Officer with some years now of experience in university chaplaincy which will prove invaluable as a significant contribution to the support we all want to offer to our young people as they seek to carve out a future and are faced with the issues around competing for university places in an Ireland where finally the number-crunching Points System is being reviewed. Ms Susie Keegan has recently been commissioned for service and work in the diocese in Christ Church Cathedral and we wish her well for the future. We are also doing this outside the diocese by the strong connection we have built with one of the most fascinating and resilient Anglican Diocese I know: The Diocese of Jerusalem and The Middle East: war-torn, living under unthinkable social and political pressure yet rejoicing to be Children of Pentecost and to dialogue with The Other as neighbour.

HUMAN INTEREST AND COMMITMENT TO LISTEN: are the second pair of words. Like the first pair, these look simple and seem obvious. But let me say the following: those of us who are accustomed to preaching are realistic enough to accept that the people who hear probably retain 3% of what we say. Listening is quite different from hearing. Neighbourliness, if it is to be deepened into understanding, needs the sort of engagement and activity and practicality that happen at their best when combined with interest and commitment to listening. It is here in particular that we see: Tell me what you do, in action because the need on both sides to know and to understand is present in such attentive listening. Again it was through The Jerusalem Link in particular that we saw this in action in our own diocese. There was a meeting in Glencree Reconciliation Centre in November of last year at which Faith Leaders from across Ireland met with the Archbishop of Jerusalem and with those who had come through The Troubles in Ireland

and in England and everyone signed a Pledge for Peace – the first of its kind and the first time Glencree had done this specifically for Faiths.

Attentive listening has benefits beyond the obvious understanding of this phrase. It brings with it something at which we are not at all good: the confidence to fail. I feel that we need to examine this chink in our armour: the confidence to fail. We need to be very careful that we do not lose the passion to be experimental in a fast-moving world. Conservatism is not the same as custodianship. The confidence to fail, however, is not an irresponsibility; were it otherwise, I would not be recommending it, and it would be playing right into the hands of uncritical and unreflective conservatism. The confidence to fail well and the building support mechanisms in advance of all that in any case is going to happen is The Way of the Cross and it is The Way of the Apostle Peter. If we can accept it with humility and grace, we can transform our sense of caution, failure and superiority combined - a dangerous cocktail to be tinkling, if ever there were one. Addressing caution, failure and a sense of superiority can be and can become our individual and corporate turning from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem and being led to Calvary and Emmaus.

VULNERABILITY AND CONNECTION: are the third pair. Opening ourselves to vulnerability is probably the hardest invitation and gift of The Holy Spirit either to seek or, having found it, to accept. It goes against all of our instincts for self-sufficiency, for parochialism, for individualism, for clericalism. Contrary to the perception of many people, vulnerability is not an expression of weakness or inability. Vulnerability is an expression of the need to give and to receive and an expression of openness to receiving and accepting a response as part of a developing relationship. Because identity is bound up with personality, relationship and interaction with others, such openness is the salvation of all of us in a world of change and of brutality. We need to be vigilant. The past is not sufficient for us, not because it is defective but because it is what it is – the past. Our duty is to put it to work in the present. In the local church, we have a wonderful opportunity to do this. This is the dynamic of tradition as tradition comes to meet us from living and lived situations. The delightful thing is that our communication systems in the dioceses show that we are doing this on a daily and a weekly basis. We need to continue and to do more with new people. We need to make new and fresh connections – all of us.

Two of the areas in which this has become structurally embedded in a new way in our dioceses is in hospital and university chaplaincy. A secular society has standards of objectivity – rightly. Co-operation and compliance with such expectations is good for us as we seek to offer a genuinely public service as part of our Christian presence and Christian contribution to the society of which we are citizens - rightly. The significant review that people of commitment and competence have brought about in regard to university and hospital chaplaincy over the past two years in these dioceses is quite remarkable. It has been done without any fuss whatsoever and it has left us in a much better place for a life of discipleship where vulnerability is needed in order to be effective in ministry; in chaplaincy, vulnerability simply is not an option; it is a necessity. I should

like to thank all who have undertaken this work. I should like also to say that we now have an extremely healthy and life-giving combination of lay and ordained ministry in both of these sectors. Both forms of chaplaincy – teaching and healing – are Biblical imperatives. Both of them are complex and exhausting. They need vulnerability and restoration; the connection required in that regularly forgotten commodity: self-care encapsulated in the instruction well-known to those of you who frequent the airport on a regular basis: In case of an emergency, remember to put on your own mask first ... For the Christian, lay or ordained, prayer, Scripture and friendship are at the heart of self-care. Self-care brings you and me face to face inescapably with our relationship with God.

The values and the characteristics I have outlined above are not exclusive to Christianity. They are applicable right across the spectrum of humanity. And still all of them have an expression and a voice in the person of Christ and in the person of Christ reflected in our person. It is to this expression and voice that we are called and invited. All of the initiatives I have sought to outline and all of the initiatives you will hear about this evening are wide open to members of these dioceses to accept and enjoy or to set aside and do something else. My simple request is that you do some thing and some things for others and for yourselves. All of our initiatives are in accordance with and in compliance with The Five Marks of Mission of The Anglican Communion. And they are genuinely precious and important to us all because they have come from within the lay people of the dioceses.

We are delighted this evening to share our Synod with two visitors in particular from the Church of Denmark. Denmark is important to us for a number of reasons. The first is the genuinely ancient link between Roskilde and Glendalough through trade and interchange of culture and ideas and people. This is typified by The Stallion of Glendalough, the vessel that plied the seas between Denmark and Ireland and that has been constructed anew and sailed from there to here in the Millennium Year 2000. The second is that The Church of Denmark is a co-signatory of Porvoo as is The Church of Ireland. These links become more important and more to be nurtured as the future of Europe and the impact of inherited European values, such that until now many of us have taken for granted and many others did nothing to appreciate or to develop, becomes harder to read and to sustain. The deadening hand of hard secularization and the insecurities around economics and politics inevitably erode the softer values of compassion and altruism. The third is that we mark and celebrate Five Hundred Years of The Reformation ushered in by Martin Luther. It is therefore delightful to have with us the dean of Copenhagen and the dean of Roskilde and we hope that they will enjoy the programme that has been put in place for them during their time in Dublin over the next few days. You are both very welcome and we look forward to hearing from you later in the Synod.

THANKS, CONGRATULATIONS, ENCOURAGEMENT

My thanks go to all of you for who you are. My congratulations go to all of you for what you have done. My encouragement goes to all of you for what you will yet do and for the people you are yet to become. So, what was the reply that the disciples gave to Jesus at Caesarea Philippi?

They answered, Some say John the Baptizer, others Elijah, others one of the prophets. And you, he asked, who do you say I am? Peter replied, You are the Messiah. (St Mark 8.29)

And finally I say to you: You are the spiritual children of the same Messiah.