Irish Synodal Pathway – Working Group Submission

Working Group Priority Area: Formation & Catechesis
Date of Submission: Tuesday 9th June

1. Group Overview

Member:	**Background:**	**Synodal Responsibilities:**	**Membership:**
Hannah Evans	Co-ordinator for Council for Evangelisation, Catechetics and Pastoral Renewal	Convenor	
Patricia Carroll	Director for Office for Mission & Ministry	National Synodal Team Member	
Bishop Michael Duignan	Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Apostolic Administrator of Kilfenora & Bishop of Clonfert	Working Group Member	
Jane Mellett	Church Manager, Trócaire	Working Group Member	
Rev Dr. Dermot Ryan	Fr Dermot Ryan Administrator of St Mary's Cathedral Kilkenny and Director of Ossory Faith Development	Working Group Member	
Maureen Kelly	Pastoral Programmes Co-Ordinator, SPCM	Working Group Member	
Fr Michael Long SPS	Kiltegan priest and custodian of Cabragh Wetlands Centre, Co. Tipperary	Working Group Member	
Hilda Campbell	Diocesan Advisor for Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin	Working Group Member	
Dr. Jessie Rogers	Director of the Centre for Mission and Ministries	Working Group Member	Ceased working on the project on 29th May
Dr. Elaine Mahon	Primary School Teacher & co-author of Grow in Love		Declined invitation to take part
Dr. Tony Hanna	Founder of 'The Family of God' New Ecclesial Movement		Declined invitation to take part

2. Statement of Discernment and Vision

Vision of this Group:

The vision that has shaped the work of this group is rooted firstly in the priorities outlined in *Baptised and Sent* and secondly, in the lifelong commitment of the members of this group to serve the Church in Ireland in many ways, including lay and ordained ministries, professionally and voluntarily.

This working group drew not only upon the findings of the National Synodal Pathway, but also upon their own personal and professional experiences of many years spent working in the areas of pastoral ministry, education, mission, catechesis, evangelisation, service and leadership within the Church in both Ireland and overseas. This variety of experiences formed a common desire amongst group members to contribute to the renewal of the Church and to support its mission within the context of the Synodal Pathway, in a rapidly changing cultural and religious landscape in Ireland.

The central theme of this groups process of discernment was that of faith formation as a lifelong journey and as something requiring a more elevated status, thoughtful consideration and considerable investment for all.

The Church must walk alongside people at every stage of life, providing opportunities for encounter, learning, reflection, belonging and mission. It is recognised that this vision must come about through a variety of avenues, rather than on an overreliance upon the current school-based catechetical model that this group recognises as not sufficient on its own to support faith development.

Ways of Working:

The Formation and Catechesis Synodal Working Group looked to work in an authentically synodal manner throughout this process. Every meeting began and ended with prayer and was grounded in a genuine sense of mission and faith that was open to creating space for attentive listening to the Holy Spirit.

The synodal scaffolding put in place to support this process included prayer, dialogue, listening, reflection and discernment. At our first meeting, the group engaged in a Conversation in the Spirit and continued to draw upon synodal practices, including affirmational enquiry, throughout the process.

Group members were encouraged to speak from their own lived experiences within ministry. There was a genuine sense of respectful listening and of an openness seek areas of unification where differences lay.

A variety of methodologies were applied throughout this process. Some of these included

open group discussions, paired work, small group work and individual writing and reflection. A sizeable proportion of work was undertaken between meetings through reading, research, drafting, consultation with others (phone calls) and prayerful reflection.

Members regularly referred to the working document *Baptised and Sent* and ensured, in an extremely diligent manner, that the emerging priorities and proposals remained true to the process in place and were rooted in the findings of the national Synodal process.

Throughout the process there was a shared commitment to co-responsibility, and an openness to everyone's participation, with all members invited to contribute to the development of the final submission. This working group are confident that the enclosed proposals have emerged out of this diligent process and are the fruits of work that consisted of much prayer, reading, experience, dialogue, collaborative writing and communal discernment.

Timeline:

- 27th March – All members were welcomed (via email) to the Formation & Catechesis Working Group, and a poll was circulated to establish members availability of dates for future meeting.
- 22nd April – First Meeting (Zoom). A Conversation in the Spirit focused on Formation and Catechesis within Baptised and Sent. Members named priorities that they found emerging from the document.
- 14th May – Second Meeting (Zoom). The Working Group reflected on emerging priorities that included adult faith formation, catechist formation, sacramental preparation and missionary discipleship. Participants were asked to, in their own time, reflect on Baptised and Sent to submit no more than five practical pastoral actions.
- 18th May – Individual practical actions and proposals were sent to the convenor by email for collation.
- 19th May – A synthesis of the proposed practical actions that highlighted common threads or themes between individuals' submissions was circulated to all members of the group.
- 20th May – Third Meeting (Zoom). Members spoke to their individual proposals first and the group then worked in pairs within zoom breakout rooms to show how emerging priority practical actions were grounded in Baptised and Sent.
- 25th May – Fourth Meeting (In-person in Maynooth). Seven members attended. (date determined via poll). Pairings presented their findings (from previous meeting) and the wider group engaged in intensive discussion and collaborative drafting of proposals one and two which were completed on the day. A sixth proposal emerged:

that the Irish Church should work towards making the parish the primary locus of faith development and formation. Additional practical actions from Maureen Kelly and Bishop Duignan were also considered. Members agreed to form smaller working groups to complete Proposals 3–6 in the coming weeks.

- 27th – 29th May – Smaller working groups met through various Zoom calls and email correspondence to refine and draft the remaining proposals. Participation remained open to all members.
- 29th May – A draft submission was circulated to all members. All were encouraged to read, reflect, pray with and discern the document in advance of the final meeting.
- 5th June – Fifth and Final Meeting (Zoom). Members reviewed the completed document, discussed and refined the six proposals, and ensured that they were satisfied that the final submission accurately reflected the work and discernment of the group before agreeing to submit it for consideration.

Conclusion:

The Formation & Catechesis Synodal Working Group envisages a Church that is missionary in its outlook. One where its members are confident in proclaiming the Gospel and committed, by virtue of their baptism, to extend an invitation to others to engage in a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is the desire of this group that this vision is brought about through creative pathways of encounter, accompaniment and formation for all age groups, so that people of faith can continue to grow in their relationship with Christ as informed, committed and active disciples.

The group has worked collaboratively to identify, discern and eventually settle upon the following six emerging priorities that they feel need immediate action by the Irish Church.

Proposal 1

Title:

Priority of Adult Faith Formation

Description:

The urgent need to prioritise adult faith formation at parish/faith community, diocesan and national level appears in baptised and sent. There is a consistent emphasis towards moving beyond and building upon child-centred catechesis and sacramental preparation, towards lifelong faith formation, intentional discipleship and helping adults connect their faith with everyday life.

Rationale:

Unless this is addressed, all other aspects cannot flourish.

Intended Impact:

Adults will have a life-giving and grown-up faith. With faith formation, people will have a mature faith where people will be able to see the connection between their faith and everyday life and have the confidence to share in their faith.

Implementation Pathway:

- A national dedicated office for life-long formation and adult faith that is fully resourced and implemented.
- A national framework is set-up to support this, informed by the principles of the RCIA.
- This needs intentional leadership.

Referenced in Baptised and Sent:

- *(Pg. 24, #79) - "What impact does the growing number of people in Ireland who are initiated as adults make on parish life?"*
- *(Pg. 1) - "We have heard the call to support families and young people, to empower women and lay people in leadership, to renew our liturgy, and to strengthen faith formation so that our communities may radiate the joy of the Gospel".*

- *(Pg. 6) - "Laity must feel empowered and supported, with investment needed in faith formation and training for all – clergy and laity." Adult faith formation, alongside catechesis and religious education was identified as one of the most dominant themes.*

- *"Faith formation, catechesis, and religious education emerged as another pressing theme, revealing a hunger for deeper understanding of the faith and authentic living of the Gospel. Participants emphasised adult faith formation for all, as well as innovative youth catechesis rooted in lived discipleship.*

- *Schools, parishes, and families were all seen as crucial contexts though some tension existed regarding their respective roles. Formation was seen as foundational for renewing the Church. "Faith formation brings us into personal contact with Jesus and is essential because the Church is the community of faith." Many stressed it must be ongoing to nourish the faithful at all stages and that "faith formation is a top priority because it is foundational for enabling people to share their faith with joy."*
- *Others noted that "faith formation was…a key element in preventing disengagement from the Church" and that "unless there is faith formation, all other aspects cannot be addressed."*

- *(Pg. 6, #13) - There was a strong call for formation equipping people for public witness, "vital to adult confidence in talking about their faith in public." Several pointed to the importance of teaching, calling "for improved education, particularly for teachers, to ensure effective faith formation" and that "better-trained educators can empower parishioners with a clearer understanding of their beliefs."*

- *(Pg.11, #31) "Deepening faith formation was described as essential to move "from inherited faith to intentional discipleship." Catechesis should be anchored in "authentic, lived faith, not just doctrine," and ensure both laity and clergy are well-formed for ministry. Several groups linked adult catechesis, teacher training, and lay formation directly to mission, evangelisation, and meaningful liturgy.*

- *(Pg. 12. # 36) - A lack of formation in the social teaching of the church, particularly ecological justice and spirituality was noted in B&S and were identified as key areas for faith formation programmes to engage with going forward. "Ecological and Social Justice were identified as underrepresented but vital.*

- *(Pg. 16) - Baptism is noted as the entry point for faith formation and offers an opportunity to deepen adult faith formation. "Baptism provides the framework within which these priorities are to be explored and lived, reminding each one of us that every initiative, ministry, and encounter of welcome, formation, and service is rooted in the grace and calling received at baptism" (Pg. 17).*

- *(Pg.18) - "Faith Formation and Catechesis: deepening faith through lifelong formation that is Christ-centred, experiential, and equips the baptised for discipleship in today's world. Rooted not only in learning but also in liturgy and sacramental life, so that prayer and worship become living sources of faith, understanding, and mission."*

Proposal 2

Title:

Cultivating Communities of Accompaniment, Discipleship and Belonging.

Description:

The renewal of faith formation in Ireland calls not simply for new programmes, but for a culture of accompaniment where people can encounter Christ and grow together in faith.

Rationale:

The Church in Ireland is called to accompany not only those already engaged in parish and faith life, but also the many individuals and families who continue to approach the Church at significant moments of life's journey. In the Gospel, Jesus accompanies his disciples while remaining attentive to the wider community. In the same way, faith communities must be enabled to accompany the faithful whilst also walking alongside others in their search for meaning and hope.

Intended Impact:

Training for all forms of ministry must have an emphasis on pastoral accompaniment. More specifically, the ministries of catechist, ordained ministries, and/or lay ministries. This enables people to feel supported in their ongoing encounter with Christ.

Implementation Pathway:

- Accompaniment needs to be part of every process of formation in Ireland.
- Training in accompaniment skills needs to be resourced and skilled.
- For those already in existing ministries, ongoing formation in accompaniment skills need to be developed.

Referenced in Baptised & Sent:

- *(Pg. 4, #8) - The Church's core mission as forming "vibrant communities of faith" marked by "invitation, accompaniment and welcome," rooted in discipleship and co-responsibility.*
- *(Pg. 11, #31) - Deepening faith formation is described as essential to moving "from inherited faith to intentional discipleship" and it is noted that catechesis should be rooted in "authentic, lived faith."*
- *(Pg. 11, 12, #29; #36–37) - Across the discernment process, participants repeatedly emphasised the importance of relational ministry rooted in listening, welcome, healing, dialogue, and community as essential to the Church's future mission. This suggests that the processes of faith formation and ministry training should themselves embody these same relational and synodal values, forming people not only through instruction, but through accompaniment, encounter, belonging, and shared discipleship.*
- *(Pg. 7, #14) - There was a recognition that families need a deeper accompaniment and support. There were calls for parish structures to prioritise a nourishment of diverse families.*
- *(Pg. 21, #67) - In recognising the priestly, prophetic and kingly role of all the baptised, the document in states: "participation in the threefold messianic mission of Jesus Christ calls for a Spirit-filled community that listens, prays, meditates, dialogues, accompanies, discerns, decides and acts as all the baptised journey in Christ to God the Father (FSC, 29)."*
- *(Pg. 12, #35) - on youth ministry: "connecting spiritual formation with social and ecological justice".*

Proposal 3

Title:

A fundamental review of catechetical provision, sacramental preparation, and the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Description:

A major concern emerging is the divorce between sacramental celebrations and ongoing faith practices for youth, especially those in recent receipt of Confirmation. Contributors call for parish-based preparation, stronger family engagement, national sacramental programmes and a serious review of the current Confirmation age and current school-centric model.

Rationale:

An urgent need to review the current practice based on a consensus that the current model of sacramental preparation is not fulfilling the needs of young people and their sense of belonging within the church.

Intended Impact:

- A deeper sense of belonging to the Christian faith community for young people who have received the sacrament of Confirmation via a structured pathway of accompaniment and participation, before and after the celebration of the sacrament.
- A more fulfilling understanding of its role as a sacrament of initiation.
- To help these celebrations become fruitful in the life of young people.
- Creating a genuine sense of home, school, and parish as collaborative partners in the journey towards receiving the sacraments.
- Young people receiving the sacraments do so in a more informed, mature, and intentional way.
- That families, teachers and faith communities feel supported in their own faith journey and in their understanding of the sacraments through a ministry of accompaniment, rooted in welcome, listening, prayer, hospitality and faith sharing.

Implementation Pathway:

- Beginning with the sacrament of Confirmation, an urgent review of the current practices and all models of sacramental preparation within the Irish Church would be undertaken.

- An immediate revised national process for catechesis and sacramental preparation.

- The development of a structured pathway of accompaniment for young people following the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Referenced in Baptised & Sent:

- *(Pg. 1) - A call to "strengthen faith formation so that our communities may radiate the joy of the Gospel".*

- *(Pg. 11, #31) - "Deepening faith formation was described as essential to move 'from inherited faith to intentional discipleship.' Catechesis should be anchored in 'authentic, lived faith, not just doctrine,' and ensure both laity and clergy are well-formed for ministry. Several groups linked adult catechesis, teacher training, and lay formation directly to mission, evangelisation, and meaningful liturgy."*

- *(Pg. 6, #13) - "Schools, parishes, and families are recognised as crucial contexts, but "some tension existed regarding their respective roles".*

- *(Pg. 10, #25) - "For faith formation and education, differences arose regarding the role of schools vis-à-vis parishes and families. Some suggested 'removing sacramental preparation from schools entirely so that parents and parishes take full responsibility,' while others preferred 'a shared approach between school, parish, and home.' These reflected generational and philosophical divides, with some favouring 'experiential and relational faith formation' and others emphasising 'a structured, doctrinal approach to teaching the faith."*

- *(Pg. 14, #41) - "For some, the role of schools in faith formation and sacramental preparation was seen as invaluable and a core responsibility of schools under Catholic patronage. For others, the problematic nature of current practice, with wide variations in capacity and performance, pointed to a need for greater responsibility on parish communities in support of parents in this regard."*

- *(Pg. 12, #32) - The document identifies the family as "the first educator of the faith" and calls for stronger pastoral support for families as the seedbed of belonging and faith transmission.*

- *(Pg. 18, #3) - "Family: supporting the domestic Church as the primary place of faith transmission and belonging and strengthening its connection with parishes and schools."*

- *(Pg. 21, #66) - "All baptised members of the Church participate together in the prophetic or teaching office, in the priestly or sanctifying office, and in the kingly or governing office of Christ. This participation in the threefold mission of Christ is not delegated from the ordained ministry but 'finds its source in the anointing of baptism, its further development in confirmation and its realization and dynamic sustenance in the Holy Eucharist' (Christifideles Laici 14)."*

- *(Pg. 12, #35) - "Youth engagement was repeatedly named as critical… One submission warned, 'If we do not engage young people meaningfully now, we risk losing an entire generation."*

Proposal 4

Title:

Formation of All (Ordained and Lay) for Co-responsible Ministry.

Description:

That a review of formation and ongoing formation of all the baptised, coupled with episcopal and priestly formation and ongoing formation, takes place. This should include an integrated catechetical, theological and pastoral component addressing the theory and practice of dialogue, co-responsibility and synodality within the changing vision and reality of Parish.

Rationale:

So that all can live their baptismal calling. Current realities on the ground in parishes underlines the urgent need for co-responsible leadership in the local church. A local church that reflects a variety of ministries in a supportive, creative, experiential, and relational way.

Intended Impact:

- Conversion to a synodal way of being church.
- Recognising baptism as the primary sacrament that implies a call to serve.
- People see ministry as a living out of their baptism.
- That ministry is accessible to all and that their gifts talents are recognised, nourished and needed.
- That the local church community can identify with others in ministry who are 'Just like me'.
- Trusting in the newness that the spirit brings. Attracting people into ministry who are creative, visionary and exude enthusiasm and positivity towards ministry and the active faith life.
- A church that is connected to the reality of everyday life for people on the ground and more able to speak to the signs of the times.

Implementation Pathway:

- An expansion of the remit of current third level Catholic Colleges, Universities and Seminaries and confirmation of their role in the formation and training of collaborative leaders (lay and ordained) for ministry.

- Resourcing of new and current initiatives to build capacity for the formation and ongoing formation of lay and ordained for collaborative ministry.

- Action for all the baptised to discern their gifts and are invited to assume co-responsible roles within their local communities of faith.

- Establishing centres for theological, pastoral, educational and spiritual formation.

Referenced in Baptised & Sent:

- *(Pg. 6, #12) – "Calls for shared responsibility were matched by recognition that laity must feel empowered and supported, with investment needed in faith formation and training for all – clergy and laity."*

- *(Pg. 7, #15) – "Co-responsibility was closely linked with lay ministry, particularly the need for meaningful training, support, and recognition of lay leaders. Especially women and adults." "Lay ministry is essential for parish life."*

- *(Pg. 7, #16) – Liturgy and Worship: "Renewal was linked with lay participation: people expressed a desire for more active involvement in liturgy, especially in music and lay ministries."*

- *(Pg .8, #18) – Women's Participation and Leadership*

- *(Pg. 8, #19) – Strong calls emerged for creative outreach and meaningful involvement in liturgies, mission, and leadership."*

- *(Pg. 6, #13) – Faith formation, Catechesis and Religious Education – needs to nourish the faithful at all ages.*

- *(Pg. 7, #14) – Family as the seedbed of faith*

- *(Pg. 21, #66) - "All baptised members of the Church participate together in the prophetic or teaching office, in the priestly or sanctifying office, and in the kingly or governing office of Christ.*

Proposal 5

Title:
Development of the Ministry of Catechist, both instituted and commissioned at every level.

Description:
This proposal calls for the appointment of dedicated catechists at local faith community and diocesan level, with a specific remit for accompaniment.

Rationale:
Baptised and Sent signals a clear longing and hunger for investment in catechetical formation. The Ministry of the Catechist offers a rich theological and ecclesial foundation. The role of the catechist is not simply a deliverer of content but a minister of accompaniment and missionary discipleship, someone called, formed, and missioned by the Church to walk with others in faith.

Without national coordination and a strategic plan to support its implementation, even the best local efforts will remain fragmented and unevenly resourced.

Appointing dedicated catechists at regional and diocesan level, rooted in this ministry, would resource, and accompany the many teachers, parish catechists, chaplains, youth leaders, clergy, religious, bishops, and families who are already doing this work but often without adequate support.

Intended Impact:

- A Church in Ireland in which the work of catechesis and formation is genuinely resourced, coordinated and sustained at every level.
- That people at all stages of life (Adults, families, and children), experience an ongoing invitation to grow in faith within their local communities of faith and thereby experience a real sense of belonging.

Implementation Pathway:

- The establishment of a National Director for Formation for Ministries is co-ordinated in a way that those emerging from programmes are formed for collaborative ministry fit for a modern Irish Church.

- A Church in Ireland in which the work of catechesis and formation is resourced and implemented at all levels including national (National Director for Formation), Diocesan (Instituted Catechist) and local (Commissioned Catechist).

- A national structure and strategic plan (in consultation with diocese, catholic schools, lay movements, and associations) to provide the coherence and direction needed to ensure that what is proposed here does not remain aspiration but becomes action.

- Those working in leadership (Teachers, Chaplains (lay and clerical), Pastoral Workers, Religious and Ordained Ministries) feel supported in their roles by the Ministry of the Catechist.

Referenced in Baptised and Sent:

National Director for Formation

- *(Pg. 11, # 31) – "Catechesis should be anchored in 'authentic, lived faith, not just doctrine,' and ensure both laity and clergy are well-formed for ministry."*
- *(Pg. 10, #25) – "With clericalism and co-responsibility, tensions arose in practice. Participants observed that 'while many clergy spoke positively about co-responsibility, others expressed reservations or concerns, leading to little practical change in some parishes'."*

Appointment of a Dedicated Catechist at Regional and Local Level

"Meaningful training, support and recognition of lay leaders"

- *(Pg. 7, #15) – "The active role of the laity in ministry is vital for parish life," …while another one called for" training and commissioning lay ministers to serve in pastoral care, catechesis and liturgy."*
  A dedicated catechist at regional/ diocesan level is precisely the structural response to this. The document also notes that parishes need support "to meet parish needs" and that lay ministry exists not only because of declining clergy numbers but to enable the baptised to live out their calling.

Strategic plan and National Body

Baptised and sent calls for a structural change and cultural shift...

- *(Pg 7, #30) – "There was a strong call for co-responsibility as a structural and cultural shift…participants stressed that new leadership models, parish support structures, and inclusive decision-making are needed for this to be realised."*

… (inclusive of a formation programme for families and 5–12-year-olds)

- *(Pg 6, #14) - Baptised and Sent refers to the family as "the primary context for faith transmission and as a pastoral space needing greater support" that "families are the first educators of faith yet feel unequipped or unsupported." …. A parish-based formation programme that meets this age group and their parents where they are at is a concrete structural response to the rift highlighted in Baptised and Sent, connecting both the parish community with the domestic church.*

... (inclusive of an Evangelisation and Catechesis pathway)

- *(Pg. 6, #13) – Formation was seen as foundational for renewing the Church…. Many stressed it must be ongoing to nourish the faithful at all stages of faith."*

Those working in leadership feel supported in their roles by the Ministry of the Catechist.

- *(Pg. 6, #13) – Baptised and Sent calls for "improved education, particularly for teachers, to ensure effective faith formation" and stresses that formation must be resourced and sustained.*
- *The establishment of a national body and a strategic plan is the logical structural response to this, particularly given the document's acknowledgement that the Church faces "a crisis of faith and of the ability to communicate faith" and that this could be somewhat remedied with "better-trained educators (who) can empower parishioners with clearer understanding of their beliefs."*

Proposal 6

Title:

Developing the parish/local faith community as a faith formation space, as “a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey and a centre of constant missionary outreach.” (EG 28)

We propose that the parish/local faith community is reclaimed as a space where faith formation becomes central, holistic, lifelong, relational, and co-responsible.

Description:

Parishes are places of welcome, dialogue and searching, where faith formation is central to parish life and where a real continuum of care can be found for the believer and searcher. It is continuous and developmental across the whole life cycle including children, adults, parents, and new members. This also creates more shared co-responsible ownership of who provides faith formation. Faith formation is co-produced by parish, home, and school. This implies stronger parish leadership in catechesis, deeper parental involvement and collaborative frameworks rather than parallel systems.

Rationale:

This implies that energies are given to the lifelong journey of faith. This creates a shift in focus from solely sacramental preparation to lifelong journeying together. The parish then becomes a place not only where sacraments are celebrated, but also where people can journey in faith together, responding to the signs of the times.

Intended Impact:

- Many more people will experience support for their journey of faith, across all ages and stages.

- The parish is no longer just a place where people turn up to celebrate sacraments, this focus on faith formation renews parish life.

Implementation Pathway:

- Establish a comprehensive formation framework for parishes that is intergenerational by training parish catechists to work with all ages and stages, actively promoting ongoing Adult Faith Development.

- The parish would welcome and accompany those who are searching and exploring what it means to belong to the Christian Community, and for those who wish, continue this though the RCIA.

- Space for faith and dialogue that embraces the signs of the times by engaging with the social teaching of the Church. For example, integrate Social Justice and Care for Creation by forming Parish Justice and Ecology Groups.

- Within a catechetical framework, develop more flexible sacramental pathways responding to diverse situations and parish family support groups and networks.

- Empowering and equipping parents as primary educators in faith. To enable this, the parish must offer parent faith formation workshops (in-person and online), faith-at-home resources with practical tools and peer mentoring networks for parents and others.

Referenced in Baptised & Sent:

- (Pg. 5, #10) - *Calls for s renewal of baptismal awareness and the potential for renewal of parish life.*
- *Renewing this baptismal awareness was seen as essential to revitalising parish life and ensuring that "shared responsibility within the Church should emerge naturally" from this common foundation.*
- (Pg. 6, #13) - *Schools, parishes, and families were all seen as crucial contexts though some tension existed regarding their respective roles.*
- *"Better-trained educators can empower parishioners with a clearer understanding of their beliefs."*
- (Pg. 7, #14) - *Calls were made for resources, pastoral accompaniment, and parish structures prioritising diverse families.*
- (Pg. 8, #20) - *Care for creation and social justice were mentioned but seen as underrepresented, with some expressing disappointment that "Laudato Si' and the call to ecological conversion were barely mentioned," urging the Church to integrate 8 these concerns more fully into parish life.*
- (Pg. 10, #25 - *For faith formation and education, differences arose regarding the role of schools vis-à-vis parishes and families. Some suggested "removing sacramental preparation from schools entirely so that parents and parishes take full responsibility," while others preferred "a shared approach between school, parish, and home." These reflected generational and philosophical divides, with some favouring "experiential and relational faith formation" and others emphasising "a structured, doctrinal approach to teaching the faith.*
- (Pg. 11, #30) - *"All are anointed as priest, prophet, and king." Participants stressed that new leadership models, parish support structures, and inclusive decision-making are needed for this to be realised in practice.*

Note of Concern:

It would be remiss of the group not to mention a number of concerns that emerged and perhaps hindered this groups progress at times.

- **Terms of Reference**: The Terms of Reference provided to working groups did not reflect the reality of the task assigned to them. This particular document mentioned that monthly meetings should take place to facilitate this process. If this instruction was followed, the group would only have met three times in total and would not have been able to complete this piece of work. It is also important to note that the terms of reference stated that this process should have started in January, yet members were only asked to join the working group in March. Compacting a five-month process into a six-week window brought enormous pressure onto this working group. This created a tension within the group and eventually led to the loss of a group member.

- **Timeline:** Members of this working group all work professionally for the church in either educational, pastoral or ministerial roles. The implementation of this condensed process was completed during the busiest time in the church calendar which included Holy Week, Easter, Confirmation and Communion season. Finding sufficient time for reading, writing, prayer and reflection proved challenging and took a considerable toll upon people's ability to engage meaningfully with the process.

- **Process of Discernment:** Whilst the group accepted the need to work within the timeline provided, it is fair to say that the process of discernment was hindered significantly by the condensed timeframe allocated to this process. There were genuine concerns amongst the group that the synodal discernment process lacked authenticity and felt forced at times.

- **Style of meetings:** There was a significant shift in the mindset of the group once we managed to meet in person. The group would like it noted that in person meetings should be the preferred modus operandi for all future working groups involved in the synodal journey ahead, as it was much more fruitful.