

Laity in the New Evangelisation

Introduction

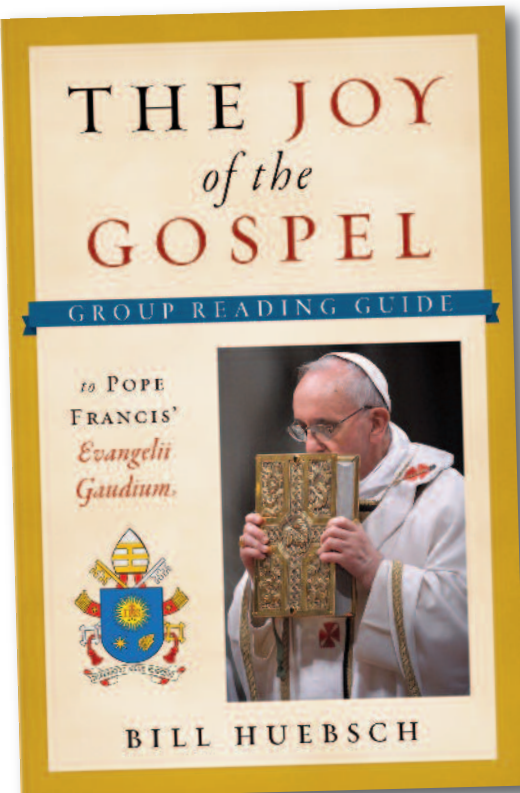
In 2016 we will be having a Synod within our diocese. The Synod will be on the Laity and the New Evangelisation. In order to prepare properly for this we are about to embark on a period of preparation. During this period we are asked to do three things:



Over the coming year there will be lots of opportunities to pray for the success of the synod. The Bishop will set out some questions that he would like us to respond to before and during the Synod. In order to be able to answer these questions we have to understand fully what they are asking and so we will also have different resources that will deepen out learning about the Church.

“Catechesis is nothing other than the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways.”

(General Directory for Catechesis #105)



This time of learning is called Catechesis.

The Bishops' Catechesis during Lent was an important first step on this journey towards the Synod. The next stage is for the Diocese to meet in parishes, small groups, schools and even around the family dinner table to pray, learn, discuss and respond to the main themes of the Synod. This resource is intended to guide you through that process and will offer ideas and suggestions of what to read, what to discuss and how to let the Bishop know your answers.



1. Download free Layar App.
2. Scan this page.
3. Watch some of the video clips from the Lent Catechesis to help prepare for Synod.



The Icon of Our Lady of Paisley will be visiting your school and parish in the next few months. Try to make time to pray with her using the 'prayer a day' leaflet.

The Synod is on “The Laity and the New Evangelization”

We're going to begin our catechesis by looking at what each of these terms mean.

Let's start with the word Synod. What does it mean and what do we hope to achieve at ours?

What is a Synod?

A synod is a gathering of the Church to pray, reflect and discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us at this point in the long history of God's people.

We are used to hearing about the work of the Synod of Bishops, as they offer the Holy Father their own experience (and that of their people) in responding to important challenges facing the Church. In a few months the Synod of Bishops will gather around Pope Francis in Rome and conclude their discussions around how best to support the family in the 21st century. Our synod here in the Diocese of Paisley will follow the same process, but instead of having delegates to represent the continents, we will have people

from across the diocese who will represent parishes, schools, families, organisations, young people, religious and priests.

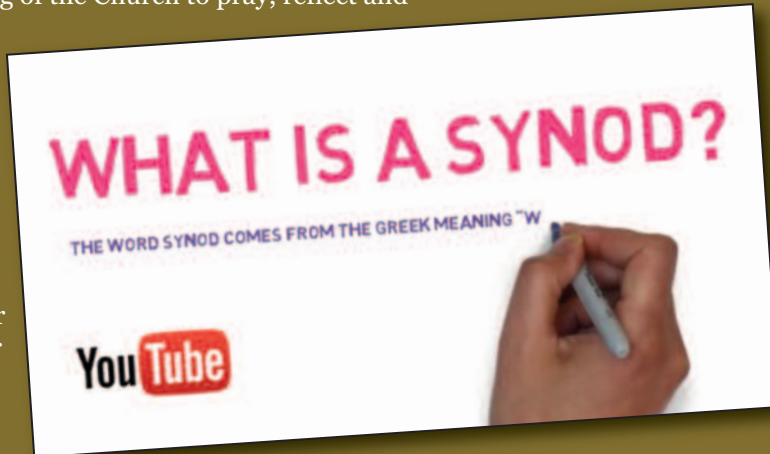
Just like the Synod in Rome, ours is not about voting on something, but carefully thinking about the important

questions Bishop John is asking us and then listening and sharing the thoughts of the whole Diocese with him.

Just as Pope Francis asked the laity to shape the agenda for his Synod, so too, here in our Diocese, your views will help the Bishop plot a course for the future of our local Church. Over the coming year there will be opportunities to pray, learn and respond to all of the topics related to our Synod. This resource can be

used to help us all “travel together” towards our Synod by helping guide our learning and giving us key questions to help us to respond.

Watch the YouTube video which explains the basic process for the current synod in Rome here:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Z8h7ap2jrQ
or search for What is a synod in YouTube.

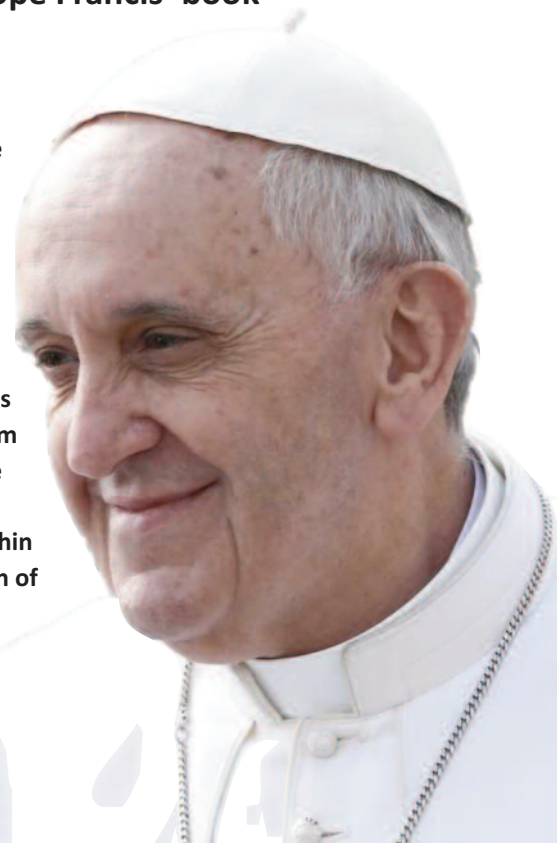


Let's move on to LAITY.

TO LEARN about what LAITY means we'll take a leaf out of Pope Francis' book (literally...this is a quote from his work Evangelii Gaudium)

“Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge.”

[Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 102]



Activities

What do you think the Pope is teaching us in this quote?

Let's think more deeply about what the Pope is teaching us here and reflect upon what this means for ourselves and our Diocese.

Individual task



Re read the passage. Reflect on the following questions. Some of your answers may be inspired from the Pope's words, others may come from your personal experience of the laity within the Church. *(You may want to make a note of your reflections)*

- Who are the laity?
- What stops the laity from fulfilling their mission within the Church?

- What role(s) do the laity already fulfil in the Church?
- How can this be changed?
- What does the Pope mean by "the evangelization of professional and intellectual life"?
- What can be done to support the laity in "applying the Gospel to the transformation of society."?
- What impact could a 'formed' laity have on the Church and wider society?

family activity



Chat about the following-

- How do people know we are Christians?
- Do you have to wait until you are in Church to show that you are a Christian?
- Can you name some other places or times that you have put into practice what Jesus taught us?
- How can adults show the world they believe in Jesus while they are at work or out with their friends?

pairs or small groups



In pairs or small groups pick out the key terms from the Pope's words. Write bullet points to summarise his teaching.

For example:

Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service.

- Most of the Church aren't priests. Priests serve the whole Church.

There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church.

- We're discovering more about who the laity are and what they can do to share the Good News (the Mission of the Church)

Deeper thinking

A word about the Church - Before we turn our thoughts to how the Magisterium – the ‘teaching office’ of the Church describes the lay vocation, it is perhaps worthwhile considering the Church itself for a moment. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) describes the Church in these terms:

Liturgical Assembly - Local Community - Whole Universal Community

This is a helpful way to think about the Church because it helps us to focus firstly on how we usually experience ‘Church’, coming together for Mass on Sundays and other occasions. (Liturgical assembly)

We then think of our wider faith life and are challenged to see the Church as an important part of our life out with the Church building (Local community).

Then we are reminded that, of course the Church is bigger than our local parish or diocese or even the reality we can see around us. We belong to a Church which not only reaches the ends of the earth but also embraces past, present - and eternity. (Whole universal community).

In Christian usage, the word "church" designates the liturgical assembly, but also the local community or the whole universal community of believers. These three meanings are inseparable. "The Church" is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ's Body. [CCC 752]



On your own, with your family or as a group, talk about what you understand by the three terms to describe the Church. List the different ways that you have already participated in the Church/as the Church through these 3 ways. Can you think of other

ways that you could try to become involved?
Further Reading: If you would like to learn more about the metaphors and symbols of the Church please see Appendix A

The Lay Vocation

How do I know if I am a member of the laity?

The Second Vatican Council's great document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* ("The Light of the Nations") reminds us that being a member of the laity is a call from God, a vocation which begins from the moment of our Baptism.



Through Baptism they are made one body with Christ and constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and royal functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world. [LG 31]

The quote from Pope Francis on page 9 clearly tells us that the lay faithful are the majority of the Church BUT there are still many ways in which their talents are not being used to their fullest effect in parish and diocesan communities around the world.

Over 50 years ago now, the Second Vatican Council called for the lay faithful to play their full role in revitalising the Church and engaging fully with the world in which they live and work every day, so as to be a leaven of the Gospel.

Revitalise

Verb: imbue (something) with new life and vitality.

synonyms: reinvigorate, re-energize, brace, fortify, strengthen, give new strength to, give a boost to, build up, bolster, prop up, help, renew, regenerate, restore, revive, revivify, rejuvenate, reanimate, resuscitate, refresh, reawaken, rekindle, put new life into, breathe new life into, enliven, stimulate, put some spark into, kick-start, uplift

Lumen Gentium also affirmed the dignity of the laity and their purpose: all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ. [LG 32]

Reflect upon the following questions.

You may want to discuss them in small groups or take a note of our thoughts.

In what way does the Church need to be revitalised?

What do you think the metaphor "leaven of the Gospel" means?

How do the laity "engage fully with the world in which they live and work"?

What suggestions do you have for how we could do this better?

In your experience, do lay people feel equal to priests in the Church?

Do you think that lay people see their role or activity in the Church as being as important as the priests?

What is the Mission of the Church?

How do the laity carry this out in your parish

Vocation: This word (from the Latin vocare, meaning "to call") refers to the call of all Christians to know and love God, to share the divine message of salvation with others, and to enjoy the eternal happiness of heaven.
ccc1-3

The Parable of the Yeast
33 He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'
Matthew 13:33



Now that I know I am a member, what's my job?

There is an entire document dedicated to this "Lay Vocation" in the Church, it is called *Apostolicam Actuositatem* ('Apostolic Activity').

In this document the very purpose of the Church:

proclaiming and building up the Kingdom of God

is explained, and the job of the lay person is made quite clear :



Read the following quote.

"Our own times require of the laity no less zeal: in fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified. With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer interpersonal relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone. These factors have also occasioned new problems which demand their expert attention and study. This apostolate becomes more imperative in view of the fact that many areas of human life have become increasingly autonomous. This is as it should be, but it sometimes involves a degree of departure from the ethical and religious order and a serious danger to Christian life. Besides, in many places where priests are very few or, in some instances, deprived of due freedom for priestly work, the Church could scarcely exist and function without the activity of the laity."

When do you think that this document was written? Would it surprise you to know that it was written 50 years ago?

50 years on, does the Church require more or less zeal from the laity?

1 Make a list of all of the 'modern conditions' that continue to be challenging to people living their faith. ("With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer interpersonal relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone")

2 Why is it important that the Church continues to study and be at the forefront of

new research? ("These factors have also occasioned new problems which demand their expert attention and study".)

3 Which areas of human life are becoming increasingly autonomous? What impact does this have on ethics and living a Christian life?

4 Why should it be the laity of the Church, and not just priests, who are actively proclaiming and building the Church in these areas?

You will recall that the definition of the Church uses three terms:

Liturgical Assembly • Local Community • Whole Universal Community

When we think of the role of the laity we must always keep in mind all 3 of these elements.

When we are reflecting upon the job of lay people, to carry out the mission of the Church in our homes and families but also in the fields of technology, bio-ethics, relationships, education, science, social media etc, we must always remember that this work is intended to be that 'leaven' for the Good News, offer an encounter with Jesus and ultimately promote salvation.

they exercise the apostolate in fact by their activity directed to evangelization and sanctification and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes salvation. Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardour of the spirit of Christ. [AA 2]

Ok, 'Build and Proclaim' is that it?

Apostolicam Actuositatem says the laity engage in this work, which is known as an apostolate, through Faith, Hope and Love. The document goes on to sketch out those areas in which lay people are particularly effective by virtue of their own skills and opportunities. It even says that, in order for the work of the priest to be fully effective, lay people need to play their part.

“Strengthened by active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they (the laity) are eager to do their share of the apostolic works of that community. They bring to the Church people who perhaps are far removed from it, earnestly cooperate in presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction, and offer their special skills to make the care of souls and the administration of the temporalities of the Church more efficient and effective. [AA 10]

The Second Vatican Council saw the laity as being the very people who could reach out to those who are 'far removed' from the Church – either because they have drifted away from it or because they have never really encountered the Gospel before – and of engaging in pastoral work.

This is described as catechesis (we think of the work of teachers, RCIA and SPRED teams etc.) or the care of souls (think of the variety of ministries, prayer groups and lay apostolates in your own parishes). It is also envisaged by the Council Fathers that the laity should play a part in managing the 'temporalities' (i.e. the fabric and finance) of the Church and taking much of this burden from the clergy whose main concern should be the pastoral care of the flock.



Apostolate

1. the office or mission of an Apostle
2. an association of persons dedicated to the spread of a religion or a doctrine

Catechesis, Care of Souls and managing the temporalities of the Church

- Can you think of the people or organisations who do this within your parish, the diocese and the wider Church in Scotland?
- Why do you think that some members of the Church do not contribute to these aspects of the Church? What is stopping them?
- What can we do to encourage everyone to feel responsible for these 3 areas?

Is this apostolate role only for the adults of the Church?

No. One of the most prophetic aspects of this Council document was with regard to young people. Although 50 years old this year, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* recognised that young people are on the receiving end of a series of rapid societal and technological changes. We know this to be even more true in 2015, when our young people are shaped by all sorts of influences, but are also inhabitants of a virtual world of technology and social media which can often leave their elders 'outsiders looking in'. There is no doubt, however, that these same young people are blessed with generous hearts and no less idealism than the optimistic generations of the 1960s. It is crucial, therefore, that they interact with the Gospel and become the face of the Church to their contemporaries: the best youth ministers are the young themselves:

Their heightened influence in society demands of them a proportionate apostolic activity, but their natural qualities also fit them for this activity. As they become more conscious of their own personalities, they are impelled by a zest for life and a ready eagerness to assume their own responsibility, and they yearn to play their part in social and cultural life. If this zeal is imbued with the spirit of Christ and is inspired by obedience and love for the Church, it can be expected to be very fruitful. They should become the first to carry on the apostolate directly to other young persons, concentrating their apostolic efforts within their own circle, according to the needs of the social environment in which they live. [AA 12]

- How do children and young people play an active part in the Church?
- Are they always encouraged to play an active role?
- Are there enough opportunities for them to take responsibility within their parish communities?
- What stops them from becoming involved, or staying involved?
- What can we do to help them find their place within the Church?



Sounds good, so how do I get trained for this job?

The document goes on to talk not only about the importance of formation (training) for the lay apostolate but also the settings in which that formation takes place.

Read the following and think about all of the times and places where you have been 'formed' in the Church. (we will begin with children and families)

In the family parents have the task of training their children from childhood on to recognize God's love for all men. By example especially they should teach them little by little to be solicitous for the material and spiritual needs of their neighbour. The whole family in its common life, then, should be a sort of apprenticeship for the apostolate.

Children must be educated, too, in such fashion that transcending the family circle, they may open their minds to both ecclesiastical and temporal communities. They should be so involved in the local community of the parish that they will acquire a consciousness of being living and active members of the people of God.

Priests should focus their attention on the formation of the laity for the apostolate in their Catechetics, their ministry of the word, their direction of souls, and in their other pastoral services.

Schools, colleges, and other Catholic educational institutions also have the duty to develop a Catholic sense and apostolic activity in young persons. If young people lack this formation either because they do not attend these schools or because of any other reason, all the more should parents, pastors of souls, and apostolic organizations attend to it. Teachers and educators on the other hand, who carry on a distinguished form of the apostolate of the laity by their vocation and office, should be equipped with that learning and pedagogical skill that are needed for imparting such education effectively

Likewise, lay groups and associations dedicated to the apostolate or other supernatural goals, should carefully and assiduously promote formation for the apostolate in keeping with their purpose and condition. [AA 30].

How are families supported in ways to form their children?

Are children involved in the parish community?

What is being done to form the next generation of Catholic teachers?

Would you say you completed an 'apprenticeship' in your family?

In what ways does your priest help form you for your role as lay apostolate?

Are the groups in our parish taking opportunities to be fully formed?



Families, schools, parishes and groups

So families, schools, parishes and groups all have a role to play in providing the necessary human, theological, liturgical and spiritual formation for the lay apostolate.

Human formation

is important because the Gospel is essentially a Gospel of love and mercy, Good News indeed for a humanity which has been wounded by sin and selfishness.

Theological formation

is important because we need a good grasp of the Church's beliefs and teachings in order to explain them to others.

Liturgical formation

So too liturgical formation because the Church prays what she believes and the Church is never more 'herself' than when she is at prayer, worshipping God in the liturgy and celebrating the Sacraments.

Spiritual formation

Finally, spiritual formation is crucial because, without the nourishment of prayer and deep spiritual roots, much of the activity of the Church can deteriorate into a superficial 'busyness' no different from 'NGOs' – Non Governmental Organisations – a particular bugbear of Pope Francis.



Liturgy

Our word 'liturgy' derived from the Greek λειτουργία (leitourgia) and sometimes translated as 'the work of the people' means service offered to and by the people. In a recurrent theme of the teaching of Pope Benedict, the faithful are called to what is termed 'participatio actuosa' – something more than 'active participation' – which should not be confused with a superficial busy-ness) – but more like a state of deep openness to the mysteries which are enacted in the sacred liturgy. In other words, making ourselves as really present to the Lord as he is to us.

The social doctrine of the Church (in issues relating to justice and peace), is an area of special expertise of the lay faithful. It is a source of great pride that our national Catholic development agency SCIAF and the work of Mary's Meals has such a profile nationally and internationally and that both are headed up by lay people.

Take some time to research their work.

Can you think of ways that the laity can contribute to this work?

In many ways the laity are called to that prophetic dimension of their Baptismal anointing. All God's people are sharers in this ministry of finding the signs of God's presence in our world and interpreting 'the signs of the times' through the eyes of faith. It is crucial, therefore, that all the faithful – ordained and lay – are engaged in this reading of the signs of the times here in Scotland: how God is speaking to the Church amidst the changing circumstances of our nation and its people. How do we respond to the call to holiness in our times?

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Discuss



Discuss the different changes happening within our country?

Can you think of any groups, organisations or individuals who respond to these changes on behalf of the Church?

Research and produce an information leaflet that explains some of the ways that the Church is responding to the call to holiness in Scotland.



In summary:

The apostolate of the laity is to proclaim and build up the Kingdom of God within Liturgical Assembly, Local Community and the Whole Universal Community. Each has their own skills and experiences to bring to this work, including the young people of the Church. With the right human, theological, liturgical and spiritual formation in our homes, schools and parishes the laity become "eager to do their share of the apostolic works of that community" through catechesis, care of souls and managing the temporalities of the Church.

Personal Reflection:

How are you responding to this vocation to holiness?

Got it! But, how does this feed into the Synod?

After each session of praying, learning and responding there will be an opportunity to gather our thoughts and share them with the Bishop.

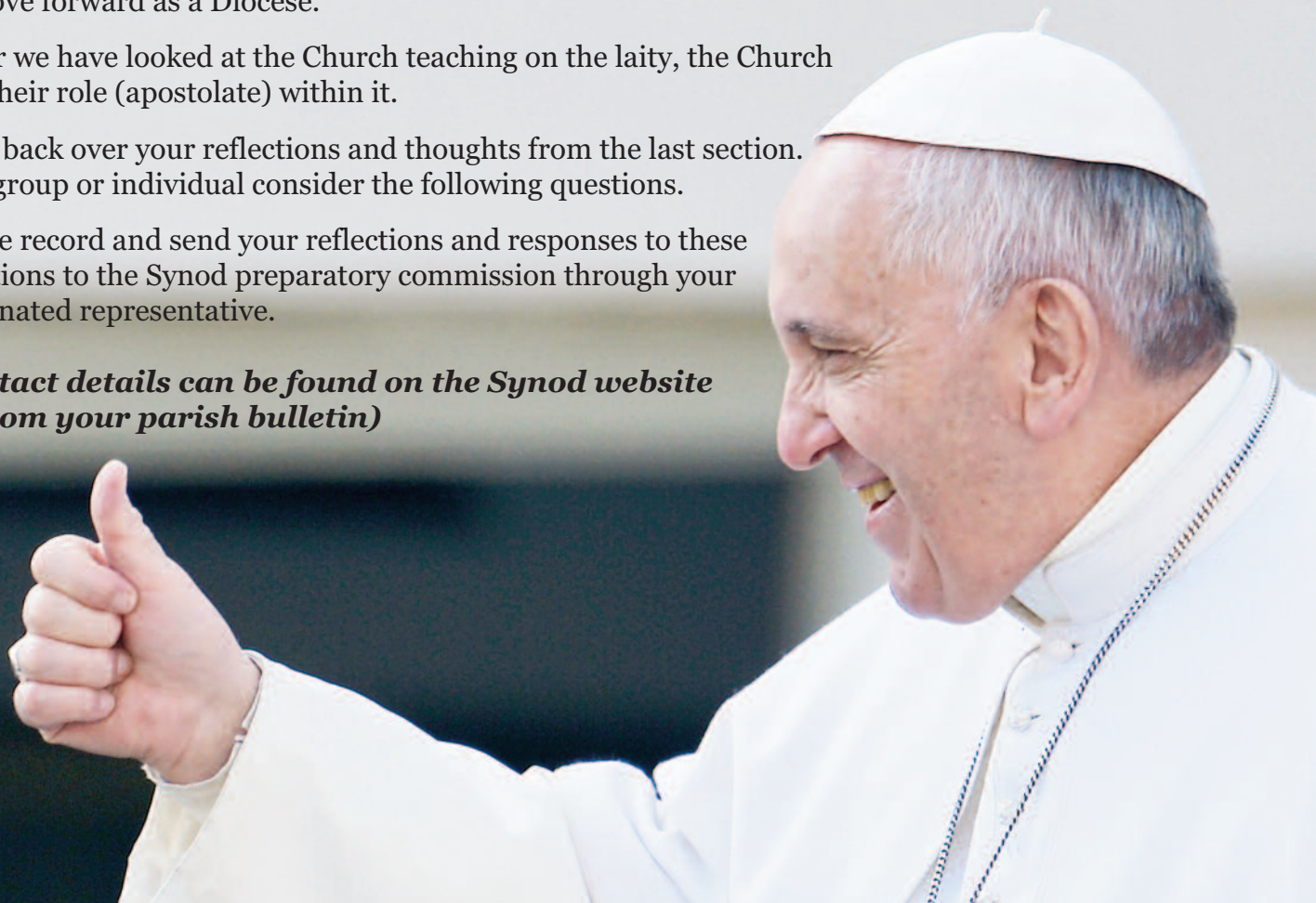
A series of questions will be used to help make sure that we remain focussed on the main theme of the Synod: The laity and the new evangelisation. The responses to the questions, sent in by you, will help the Synod to think deeper about the theme. They are not intended to be 'answers' but reflections that will help form the Synod's thoughts and ultimately help the Bishop to discern how to move forward as a Diocese.

So far we have looked at the Church teaching on the laity, the Church and their role (apostolate) within it.

Look back over your reflections and thoughts from the last section. As a group or individual consider the following questions.

Please record and send your reflections and responses to these questions to the Synod preparatory commission through your nominated representative.

(contact details can be found on the Synod website or from your parish bulletin)



- What is stopping the gifts of the lay faithful being put to best use in the Church?
- Are there times or situations when lay people can work on behalf of the Church in a more effective way than ordained ministers (priests and deacons)? When?
- Thinking of people you know (perhaps in your own family) who no longer identify with the Church, what brought this about? Is there a part you can play in reaching out to them? →→
- What are the particular challenges facing young people in our society?
- What can we do in Paisley to promote a culture of vocation (to ordained service and committed lay apostolates) in our families and communities?
- Do your experiences of Liturgy help you to reflect and deepen your active participation in the Church?
- Have you any other comments or questions in response to this section?