

Bishop Fabbro's Letter to the Faithful on the Synod Summary Report

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- **June 20, 2022**To: The Faithful of the Diocese of London

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The accounts of the days of the early Church immediately following the news of Jesus' resurrection, tell of the disciples locked away in the upper room, hidden and isolated. They were secluded because they were afraid. Scandalized by Jesus' death on a cross, they were left unsure as to what might be next. It was in this moment and place, when they had withdrawn in fear and uncertainty, that Jesus' promised gift of the Spirit was poured out on them, and they were filled with a new heart and a courageous zeal to make Jesus and his gospel message known. They left that upper room and went forth into their world to proclaim the Lord they had known and who had shown himself to have overcome death and risen to new life.

In so many ways our lives in the Church today parallel those of the early disciples. We know that Jesus has risen from the dead and because he has, we, too, have the promise of everlasting life in him. Yet, we also hold back from giving witness to him and the hope that is thus ours. We, too, have been hidden away in virtual isolation, separated from each other, from sharing fully together in the Eucharist, out of fear of COVID-19 and the threat it held. We also have been scandalized and disheartened by harsh, often brutal realities of our times and the shocking, painful failures in our Church. And we likewise have been deeply disappointed for what has not been or a future that did not come to pass as we had hoped.

But like the disciples in the upper room, it is in this moment, in these circumstances that Jesus pours out the promised Spirit on his people, to enliven us, to fill us with a new fervor for the gospel and to rekindle in us a passion for a renewed Church.

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit has been particularly evident in the hundreds of synodal

listening sessions held in our diocese in the late winter and early spring of this year. In these simple, powerful gatherings, framed by the word of God, hundreds of parishioners, pastoral leaders, educators, students and participants in various community programs — men and women, young and elderly — have shared their joys, their difficulties and their hopes for the Church. And all of this has been done in a spirit of listening — of listening to others with the heart. This elemental part of the synodal process, launched by Pope Francis for the Church throughout the world, has been an extraordinary gift to our diocese, revealing that the Spirit is alive and present among the people of God.

I have seen the initial draft of the Summary Report of the listening sessions. It narrates the hope for a more welcoming, more inclusive Church, a Church that engages our young people, a Church of mercy and compassion, a Church that is attentive to the needs of all, especially the poor and the marginalized. Overall, what has been offered represents the longing for a Church that models and makes present Jesus Christ.

It now belongs to all of us, particularly those in pastoral leadership, to listen to what has been put forward, to consider it prayerfully and to respond openly and generously to where the Holy Spirit is leading us in these post-pandemic times. In this period of profound change in our Church, the call is, once again, to conversion of mind, heart and spirit and not only on the part of some but by all.

The Summary Report prepared by the Diocesan Synodal Committee will be made available to the whole diocese by means of the diocesan website [at this [link](#)] this weekend, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. By the end of June, all the input received in the listening sessions in a Family of Parishes will be returned to it, so that in the weeks ahead those in pastoral leadership and the members of the parishes, through a process of prayer, may undertake to discern particular goals and objectives for the Family in the months and years ahead.

This is a time of promise for our diocese as we journey together on the road to actualizing the Church that the Holy Spirit is leading us to become — a Church like that first small group of disciples on Pentecost that moved out of the upper room to embrace all people.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, CSB
Bishop of London