

## Synodality Conversation : Bible Reading Group

18, 25 January 2022

*What experiences of 'journeying together' were shared? What brought joy? What caused pain or sadness?*

- The Bible Reading Group felt its sessions to be a journey together in the presence of and guided by the Holy Spirit
- The group celebrated the joy, comfort and spiritual growth gained through participation in the liturgy in communion with other members of the parish community
- Members of the group shared their valued experiences of the distinctive friendliness and outgoing warmth of the Salisbury parishes and groups they attended (eg Alabare youth groups, Alpha course, Nicodemus group); the joy of feeling members of a family (eg at Fr Michael's Jubilee celebration in Salisbury Cathedral), in contrast with experiences in other communities and countries
- We are social beings, need to worship together for spiritual growth, as well as making individual journeys in faith, draw strength from coming together with those on other stages (eg watching children find and grow in faith, older people feeling closer to the end of this life and entering the next); and gain enrichment from the diversity and commitment of parishioners from other ethnic groups and cultures
- Despite the sadness of so much alienation and disgruntlement in contemporary society, the group felt blessed by a predominant feeling of joy
  
- Members of the group shared their personal sadness in the joy of faith not being shared by other members of their family or neighbours
- The isolation of the Covid pandemic has worked against wanting to share our faith and draw closer to other individuals and families who attend Mass but do not come forward to participate in groups and other parish activities, causing anxiety and frustration
- The sense of the chasm between the family of the Church and wider society, the immensity of what is needed to achieve the fraternity and solidarity urged in Pope Francis's encyclicals and *Let Us Dream* is daunting
- The lack of confidence in speaking out against the corruption and selfishness in this country, and to counter its anger and despair causes pain and a sense of inadequacy. Our society is traumatised and is in spiritual crisis, in urgent need of healing but the Church has the means but no visible power to provide leadership. The conflict between the wish to help and the suspicion, resistance and even aggression of the unconverted is deeply troubling

*Were there any particular issues shared that the people felt the Spirit was inviting the Church to pay more attention to?*

- The need to make more of successful initiatives, to come out of the shell and evangelise, helping more people to encounter the Spirit. This requires a re-examining of what 'community' means in our parishes and restoring successful practices curbed by the Covid restrictions, for instance in greeting neighbouring communicants and offering healing prayer after Mass
- The need to get to know one another in the parish community, to be open and gain trust, to utilise the strengths and experience of individual parishioners to further confidence and solidarity. This process must be based on being truthful to ourselves, finding peace and inner strength through trust in the Holy Spirit, and sharing and learning from each other's journeys in faith
- In reaching out to others, including those of other faiths, non-believers, and the marginalised, we must be non-judgemental, while being proud of our Catholic faith and confident to proclaim our faith to whomever we meet. We must interact with humility, valuing the richness of all God's people, the sincerity and diversity of their beliefs, experience and cultural histories; there must be no institutional boundary between the people of the Church and those outside it. We must be constantly open to the inherent goodness of others.
- The need to be realistic in our ambition for change, the scope of what is practically within reach of what we can achieve within the limits of our capabilities. In dynamically changing times we need to be adaptable and prepared to leave our comfort zones
- Above all, the need to seek guidance from and learn to discern the will of the Spirit