



diocese
of limerick
our catholic community

“MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER IN HOPE”

LIMERICK DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN

2016-2026

Based on the April 2016 Diocesan Synod

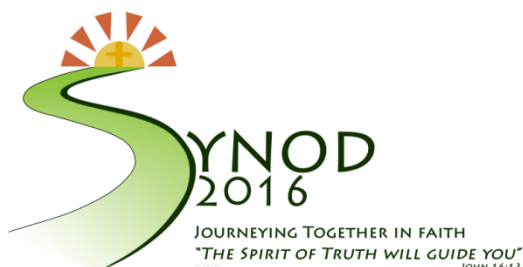


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Moving Forward Together in Hope

Introduction

The Diocese of Limerick has celebrated a Diocesan Synod, the first in 80 years. It has been an event of the Holy Spirit, an experience of deep encounter, a time of hope. The image of it that I treasure is one found on our Synod website – the hall in Mary Immaculate College with 400 people, lay, priests, single and married, young and older, gathered together in circles working hard but joyfully at discerning what God was calling us to as a Diocese.

Throughout our preparation for the Synod, the whole Diocese has been learning together to be “synodal”, that is, walking together, journeying together, with Jesus among us, as we move forward in hope. When we gathered in April we invited the representatives of other churches and other religions along with representatives of the civic and social agencies of the City and County Council to join us. I felt our gathering was a glimpse of the Church that the Holy Spirit wants to be – a community of communities with Jesus among us, serving society at all levels, offering it a soul, wanting to give our spiritual and social contribution that builds up the fabric of society.

I recall more than one person saying to me how moved they were to find themselves sitting side by side with priests, chatting about future directions of the Church. Some young people said to me they were sure if other young people could see this, they would be hugely impressed and really begin to understand more about the Church.

So I thank God for the Synod. It has given us an experience and an image that provide a benchmark in our hearts and minds for the future. With this pastoral letter I now present the Diocesan Plan that has been developed on the basis of the Synod. Before getting into the detail, I would like first of all to offer some perspectives that emerged from the Synod.

Looking at Reality with New Eyes

Pope Francis often invites us today to have what he calls a “contemplative gaze”, that is, we need to look around us in our home and our streets, our villages, our towns and our city and discover God dwelling among us, “fostering solidarity, fraternity, and the desire for goodness, truth and justice”. Perhaps those around us aren’t coming to Church but they are searching for meaning in their lives. And even in the negatives and apparent rejections that we find, something of God’s work can be uncovered. The Synod was an exercise of trying to look around us with new eyes to see the potential even in the face of difficulties.

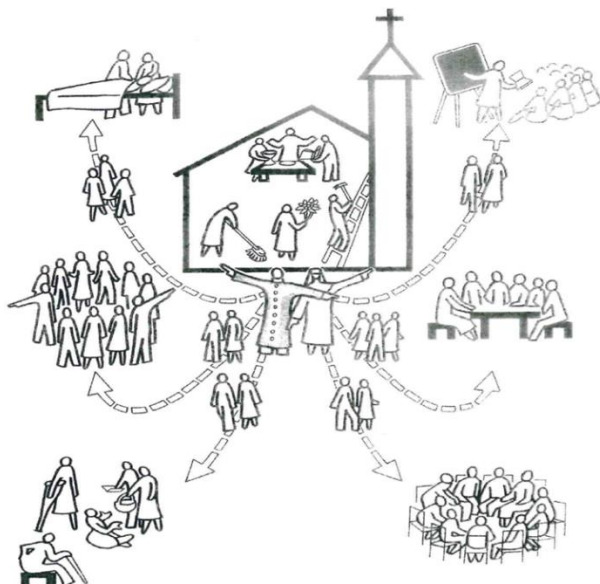
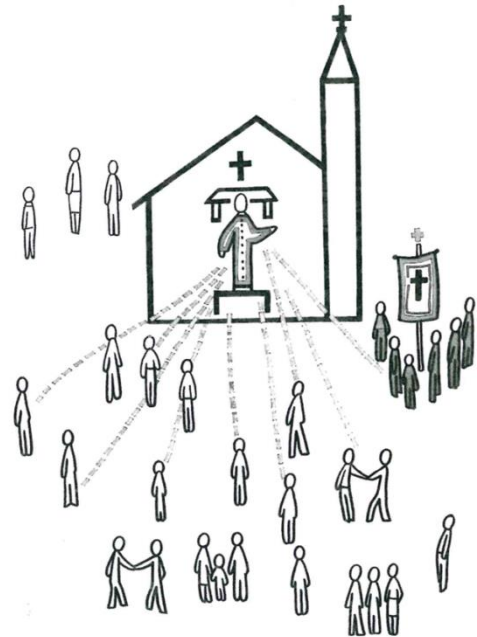
Our Synod journey concluded during the Year of Mercy. It is no surprise, therefore, that we looked at the six themes of our Synod with eyes of merciful love, hope and tenderness. We made a realistic assessment and voted on many proposals. We acknowledged there are less priests and we need new models of leadership. We heard how young people find it hard to connect with the Church and so we need to find new ways to be with the young church. A major theme was that of families needing support in handing on the faith and in facing difficulties as a family. Liturgy, we saw, needs to link more with life. Above all, as a Church community we recognised our desire to reach out much more beyond the sacristy, beyond the church building or Sunday Mass, beyond the usual structures that we are used to.

It is in looking around us with eyes of love that we generate into life the Church of the New Commandment of love.

A Community of Communities with Jesus among Us

It seems to me the Synod has called us to a more Mission-shaped Church, relying less on the priest-on-his-own simply providing sacramental services. It was a call to rediscover the vocation and responsibility of *all* the baptised and that we are *all* co-responsible in building up the Church. Let me offer some images to share what I mean.¹

One way of looking at the Church is to see it primarily as a parish service with the priest at the centre of everything. It more or less all depends only on him and we judge the efficiency or otherwise of the church by his “performance” and the level of services he can give. It is true that the priest is an ordained minister and so has a particular grace at the service of the community. But it is a deformed picture of the Church to view it as something akin to a shop with the priest as the shopkeeper selling goods, someone who is more or less successful in marketing those goods! I exaggerate for the sake of effect but you can see what I mean. The Synod clearly understood this is not image of the Church we want going forward. Our Diocesan plan presupposes another way of viewing the Church.

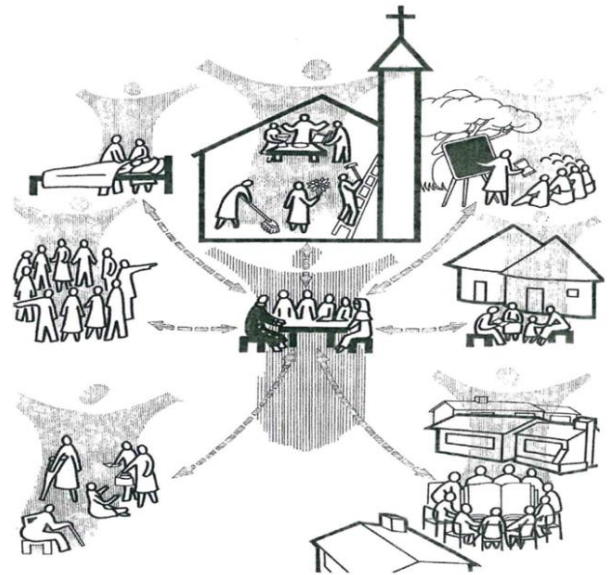


A second way of looking at the Church is to see the parish made up mainly of the priest but with a number of active collaborators, people “helping” the priest. This has the advantage of not placing all the responsibility on the shoulders of the priest alone. It sees lay people “involved”. It is a move in the right direction. It is not good for the priest to be an isolated figure because isolation is a bad counsellor as Pope Francis put it recently. We don’t go to God on our own. We go together. At the Synod we spoke of how priests need help in their ministry. This is also true in the face of the ageing profile of priests in our Diocese. We spoke also of the appointment of administrative assistants. That would be a positive development.

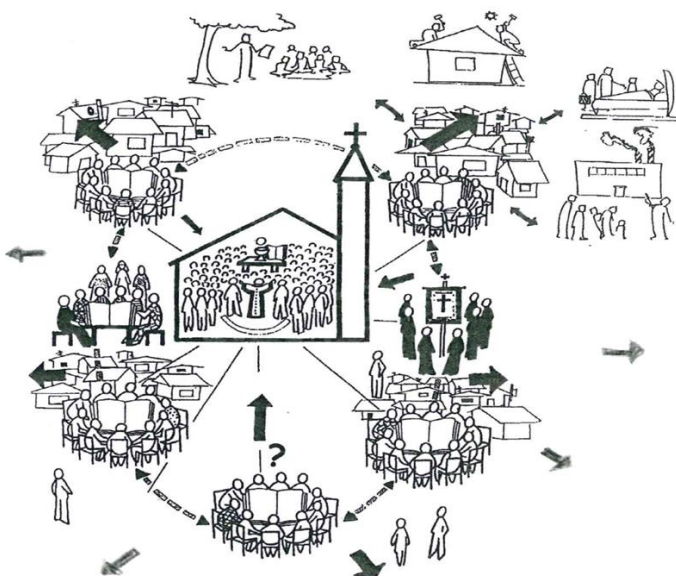
¹ The Lumko Institute is the pastoral institute of the South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference. These diagrams are taken from Lumko’s resource materials which are geared towards understanding and building a Church of ‘Communion of Communities’.

But again to limit the Church to a parish made up primarily of a small number of committed lay people active in “churchy” roles would still be a caricature of Church that the Second Vatican Council calls the “People of God”, the “Body of Christ”, the “Temple of the Holy Spirit”. Something more is needed.

A third approach to how we see Church is to promote an active lay involvement in leadership and discerning roles such as, for instance, parish pastoral councils and parish finance councils. In this way of seeing things, the priest works collaboratively with his sister and brothers “serving” the parish. There is much that is positive in this. A key notion today underlined by the Holy Spirit is that the Church is a communion of all the baptised with all the vocations in the Church offering something specific. Each person has a particular gift for the whole community and it is working together in communion with one another in Christ that we best hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. We need participative structures in our Diocese and parishes to make this happen. Our Synod has said clearly that we need to have a parish pastoral council in each parish. It is also church law that each parish should have a parish finance council. The Synod has indicated some initiatives the parish council can consider to pursue this collaborative approach.



I should note, however, that even this approach to Church is not enough. The idea of a priest and the parish council serving the parish is good but we have to take care not to slip into what Fr. Paul Philibert O.P. told us about in our very first Synod gathering nearly two years ago, -- the risk of creating a parish community where there’s a few very active members, even democratically voted onto a council, but the rest of the parish almost as clients of the Church’s mission, clients of an ecclesiastical franchise, observers of sacred, sacramental rites performed for their inspiration and spiritual comfort.



What the Spirit today seems to be pushing us towards is what might be called the Church as a “Community of Communities”. I believe the tone of our proposals at the Synod is moving us in this direction.

I would like to make a few points about this. Pope Francis has written that, “in virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be

insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients". That is true for the Diocesan plan that has emerged from the Synod.

The Church's mission of evangelization calls today for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Just as it's not enough to have a priest on his own, it's not enough simply to have priests with a few collaborators doing "churchy" things. The parish is a community of communities with Jesus among us. Such communities are built up around three "communions" – communion with the presence of Jesus in the Word of God, communion with Jesus in our neighbour, communion with Jesus in the Eucharist (and the sacramental life of the Church). It is in living these three "communions" together with one another in the light of the New Commandment to love one another that the Church comes to life.

I am keen to see the development of various communities emerging throughout the Diocese where, as well as the Sunday gathering, people have an opportunity to share especially the life of the Gospel together. This is something we can all do regardless of our personal life's circumstances. And this would also mean groups of encounter with members of other churches and other religions as highlighted by the Synod.

There's a further point. Parishes alone do not make up the Church. The sacramental and classic parish structures alone do not define the Church. There are many religious orders and congregations. There are groups and associations, movements and institutes, councils and committees, social and spiritual initiatives of all sorts in the Diocese. Just think, for instance, of the Diocesan involvement in schools, hospitals, nursing homes and the prison. And there are new "charisms" (gifts of the Spirit) that breathe life into the structures of the Diocese and parish. We need to be open to charisms that the Spirit pours out for the up building of the Church. Lately, for instance, we've seen the arrival of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia whose enthusiasm has already touched many. But we can think too of Muintearas Íosa, the St. Vincent de Paul association, the Friars of Renewal, the Charismatic Renewal Movement that next year celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, the Emmanuel movement, the Neo-Catechumenal Way... And many others. The Church is like a garden made up of many flowers. We need to be able to look around and appreciate the many elements of Church life.

In looking at the Church as a community of communities, we also have to remember that our Church communities can never be self-enclosed. We always need to go out, creating what Pope Francis calls "a culture of encounter". The last sentence Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the famous theologian and martyr killed during World War II wrote was that the Church is only Church if it is there for others. Pope Francis too often encourages us to go out of ourselves, outside our comfort zones, enter into encounter with others around us. It is healthy for us. It is poisonous to be closed in on ourselves.

What this means is that the Church can't just be concerned about issues to do with liturgy, faith formation in schools or issues of leadership. These are important dimensions in the life of the Church but they are means to an end, not the purpose of the Church. The Church has to be focussed on going out to serve. There are so many around us needing help – those suffering from addiction of all sorts, the homeless and migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, those suffering mental health issues... Even if our parish might feel it doesn't have

the problem of homelessness at its doorstep, that shouldn't stop it looking around to see can it help elsewhere. It was good that our Synod referred to agencies like Bedford Row, the Children's Grief project, Compassionate Communities etc. We can also be grateful for other Church initiatives such as Trócaire and the Limerick Social Services Council that remind us of our mission to go out to others.

There is something else I want to underline very strongly. It is important to remember that our Christian vocation is lived out day by day in our personal lives at all levels – family and work, sport and entertainment. I am always a Christian – whether it be at work, at home or at sport. Recently, there is a risk that we might think we are “involved” in the Church if we are doing things like leading lay liturgies or becoming a Eucharistic minister or visiting the sick on behalf of the parish. These services are necessary and I wish we had many more lay people doing them – the Diocese hopes soon to be recruiting lay volunteer catechists (teachers of religion), members of bereavement teams, hospitality groups etc. – but we must also avoid reducing our Church commitment to those services. As one woman put it during one of the Synod sessions, “now that I have reared my family, I want to do something for the Church”. I admired her generosity and it's great. We need a generous new spirit of volunteering in the Church! But, of course, we always have to remember that the woman just mentioned had spent most of her life to date rearing her family and that was doing something enormously important for the Church. She built the “family Church”. Each of us, in whatever situation of life we are in, is called first and foremost to witness to our faith day by day in our “vocation” of life.

Pope Francis also makes this point. He notes that many more lay people are involved now in lay ministry than before. That is good. But, he adds, while “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.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 102). The goal of the Church is to help renew and transform the world around us, the environment, the social inequalities we see, the world of the family that needs so much care today. We are all involved in linking the Gospel and life in our everyday life that includes our social, political and economic activities. Our Synod will be fruitful to the extent it leads to a greater sense of missionary discipleship in all of us and in each of our specific callings in life.

An Event that will Unfold in Time

Our Synod took place last April but it is an event that will now unfold over time. I am grateful to the members of the Preparatory Commission, especially Fr. Éamonn Fitzgibbon, Synod Director, and Ms. Karen Kiely, Synod administrator, as well as the delegates of the Synod, including the priests, who gave so generously of their time and energy. I know the delegates are appreciative of the formative experience the Synod turned out to be for them. The specific commitment with regard to the Synod is now concluded with the publication of this Diocesan Plan. The journey of the Synod now passes over into and continues in the normal life of the Church.

Over the summer, a number of people examined the results of the Synod and provided a key to reading the proposals to help us move forward. The delegates at the Synod

met again in October to offer comments on the first draft of our Diocesan Plan. I am happy we are now publishing this plan.

I will be sending our Diocesan Plan to Rome. As promised at the Synod, I will also send a letter in the form of a Report on the Synod, mentioning the issues that emerged in our Synod and specifically referring to some of the topics not on the Synod agenda but which were highlighted on the last day.

Over the next ten years, we will all be involved in implementing what we've heard the Spirit say to our Diocese through the Synod. I should note, however, that the Synod has already had its impact. Significant developments have already taken place. With the clerical appointments a few months ago, we have moved more clearly towards a team model for priests with a number of priests offering their ministerial service in a number of linked parishes. This will develop further. Of course, there will be teething problems and much learning on all our parts but it is the direction indicated by the Synod and I am grateful to the priests for responding to it with generosity.

I am particularly pleased that I have been able to appoint Catherine Kelly as our Diocesan Secretary/General Manager, the first layperson to hold that position. I have begun to put in place new arrangements for the implementation of the Synod directions in the area of faith formation and family ministry, liturgy and youth ministry. In terms of community building and belonging, I am happy to say that the Diocese has appointed a chaplain to the Travelling Community in Limerick. I know several parishes have already begun to reflect on what the Synod means for their parish and how they might take inspiration from the Synod.

Pope Francis has a mysterious saying that "time is greater than space". What I understand him to mean is that we mustn't try to hold on to things, possess them or cling to secure arrangements but rather we are in a time when it's important to begin processes that are dynamic. That is what we'll be doing in the coming years. We'll see where the Spirit will lead us.

Moving forward with hope

The Prophet Isaiah (Is 43: 18) presents the words of God: "Behold I am doing something new. Look, do you not see it?". Our era is not just an era of change it is a change of era. It can be a challenging time but faith invites us to believe in the love of God in all circumstances. Change can mean living a certain poverty. In some ways, we won't have the institutional or society-based supports of the past. That's a form of poverty. But this can also lead to a positive understanding of poverty, that poverty of heart and mind that saint Francis of Assisi spoke about, knowing how to set aside our own riches of traditions, our former ways of doing things, our personal likes and dislikes and opening to new ways. Sometimes we might feel what we have to offer is small compared to the challenges we are facing in the Church and in the world today. But let's remember something Mother Teresa said. She lived in Calcutta with enormous problems. She said that all she could do was but a drop in the ocean compared with the problems. But, she added, that drop is important. If I don't give that drop then the ocean would be missing something.

I believe it is one of the great tricks of the Devil to make us confuse a false humility with what in reality is a temptation against hope. A false humility makes us see only our imperfections and sins, challenges and difficulties and stop there. It does not move into the positive step of trusting in God who is leading us forward. This false humility is, in reality, a temptation against hope. True humility, however, while certainly acknowledging our limits, recognises that I am what I am but God is the One who can do so much more than I can imagine. Hope builds on this.

What is true for each of us personally is true also for the Diocese. We need to have the trust that a child has in his or her mother. In hope, we abandon ourselves to God, believing God loves us and is at work in our personal limits, sins and challenges as well as in the limits and difficulties in the world around us! We must have trust in the form of believing in love in all circumstances, even those apparently negative ones, and in all times. God is thinking of me/us. God is my/our best fan, as the Pope put it in Krakow to the World Youth Day. God will give me/us all we need to go ahead.

Hope is more than cheerful optimism, or just seeing the positive. It is a question of being anchored in the God who gives us the gift of trust and perseverance. It is in following the Crucified Christ that we find strength to keep going. Mary, our Mother, is the great example of hope and trust. In her humility, she proclaimed the great social revolution that comes about in Jesus Christ: "The Almighty works marvels for me... He casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly, he fills the starving with good things and sends the rich away empty..." (Lk 1:46-55)

As we implement our Diocesan plan, let's be encouraged by Pope Francis' words: 'The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step... An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others... (EG, 24)... I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. "Mere administration" can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be "permanently in a state of mission" ' (Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on the Joy of the Gospel, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 25).

Reading the Diocesan Plan

I invite you now to read carefully our Diocesan plan. It is also to be read together with others in our parishes and communities. As I mentioned above, over the past few months a lot of work has gone into reading the results of the Synod. The Synod vote has given us an overall direction for our Diocese and also a clear thrust for each theme that emerged in the Synod, thus providing a Vision to guide us in the years ahead. It has also enabled us to prioritise proposals within each theme and devise a strategy for delivering the broad range of actions identified.

In order that we can realise our Vision the overall strategy proposed in the Diocesan Plan is to develop capacity or ability to deliver at diocesan and local level.

You will see in each theme that the aim is to begin by doing something at diocesan level to increase our ability to move on this theme – this is achieved by training, employing or appointing people to key positions. Then, in turn we aim to similarly develop the ability on the ground to make progress on actions by providing training and resources and ensuring there are people at local level who can deliver actions in this theme.

We have many proposals and many actions named in the plan. The intention is that local communities approach many of these (the ones that are not core or essential) as they would a menu and choose those that are appropriate to their circumstances. Obviously, we can't do everything all at once. Each local community needs to discern together what elements of the "menu" they want to proceed with in the coming months, next year etc.

Finally, there are two other categories of proposals for which we have employed a different strategy.

Firstly, there are those proposals brought forward by groups or agencies who are already working in particular areas and who have particular experience and expertise, for example Compassionate Communities, Bedford Row, Children's' Grief project. Here the strategy is to work with and support these groups rather than working in parallel. Secondly some proposals have been brought forward by delegates themselves who have a passion and experience in the particular area, for example, Inter-faith dialogue, Living with disability, *Laudato Si* and care for the Environment, or the John Paul II Awards for young people. Again here the strategy is to go back to those delegates and work with them to act upon their proposals.

I hope you enjoy reading through the Diocesan Plan. Can I suggest you say a little prayer to the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read and think about what is proposed here. It's a plan for all of us and we all have to be able to see how we can bring it about. So, let's move forward together in hope: "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth" (Ps 124:8).

+ Brendan Leahy
Bishop of Limerick
Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8th 2016

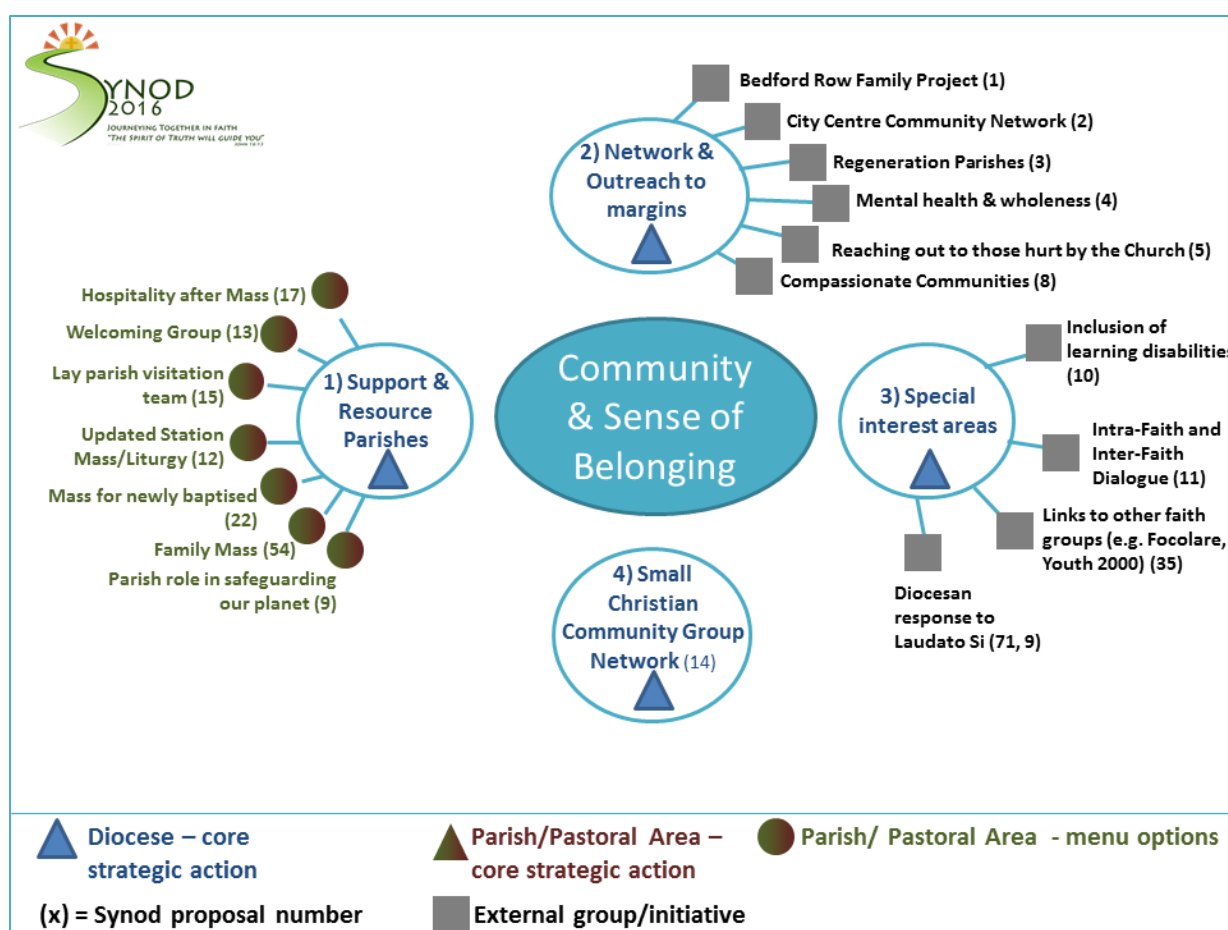
Theme 1: Community and Sense of Belonging

Vision

In Baptism we are all welcomed into the Christian community and conferred in our dignity as children of God. As children loved by God and in whom God delights we are called to be disciples of God's infinite love. The Synod invites us to reflect on what Community and Sense of Belonging says to us in our time and in our Diocese. How can this theme renew us? How will it be reflected to the Diocese as a whole?

We recognised two approaches to the Synod vote on building an inclusive church. The first was in the 'key' of parish – local initiatives to reach out to local people. The second worked in wider categories – people on the margins across the city and the diocese. There were strong votes in favour of proposals from both approaches.

The following figure provides an overview of the actions proposed under the theme of Community and Sense of Belonging:



The proposed actions are outlined in more detail on the next page:

Core Strategic Action One	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese will develop a 'menu' strategy supporting, training and resourcing parishes as they choose from a menu of local proposals (similar to Core Strategic Action Seven in Liturgy and Life).		Parish Pastoral Councils and Leadership Groups will be gathered in Spring 2017
<u>Further Actions:</u> This core strategic action will in turn enable subsequent delivery in our parishes of the following proposals:		Parishes will choose from this menu over the lifetime of this Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospitality after Mass 	17	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Welcoming Group 	13	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lay parish visitation team to visit homes, hospital and nursing home 	15	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce an updated version of the Station Masses/Liturgies 	12	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue tradition of inviting all children baptised during the year to a special Mass where they receive an individual blessing 	22	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To foster the Family Mass 	23	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parishes collectively examine how they can make a difference to safeguarding our planet and develop outcomes that are practical and relevant in their own area. 	9	

Core Strategic Action Two	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
In regard to the wider categories of inclusion – people on the margins in the city, people with mental health issues, disability, people hurt by the church, the natural environment – the diocese will network with groups and agencies already engaged with these people with a view to concrete actions to support their work.		In Spring 2017 a group will be established at diocesan level comprising people who are aware of issues facing people on the margins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with marginalised: as a missionary Church/Bedford Row Family Project 	1	This group will work on delivery of each of these proposals for action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the city delegates and parishes are encouraged to engage with and support the City Centre Community Network 	2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Regeneration parishes - Caring for and inclusion of the Marginalised' 	3	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the area of mental health and wholeness engage with the marginalised members of our 	4	

community – homeless, prisoners, travellers etc., and be a missionary church		
• Reaching out to those hurt by church	5	
• Compassionate Communities – <i>Café Conversations</i>	8	

Core Strategic Action Three	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
A number of proposals were brought forward by delegates who have particular interest and/or expertise in aspects of community life. Contact will be made with those groups who brought forward particular proposals with a view to furthering these.		2017 ongoing
• Learning disabilities to be included in the Diocesan plan	10	2017 ongoing
• 'Intra-Faith and Inter-Faith Dialogue'	11	2017 ongoing
• To create links to other faith groups (e.g. <i>Focolare</i> and <i>Youth 2000</i>)	35	2017 ongoing
• Develop a Diocesan response to <i>Laudato Si</i> , an approach/philosophy involving all schools, parish structures and communities	71, 9	2017 ongoing

Core Strategic Action Four	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
That a network of Small Christian Community groups be established throughout the Diocese. Small communities of around 10 people would meet monthly to share a reading of Scripture, linked to life and building up community.	14	2018

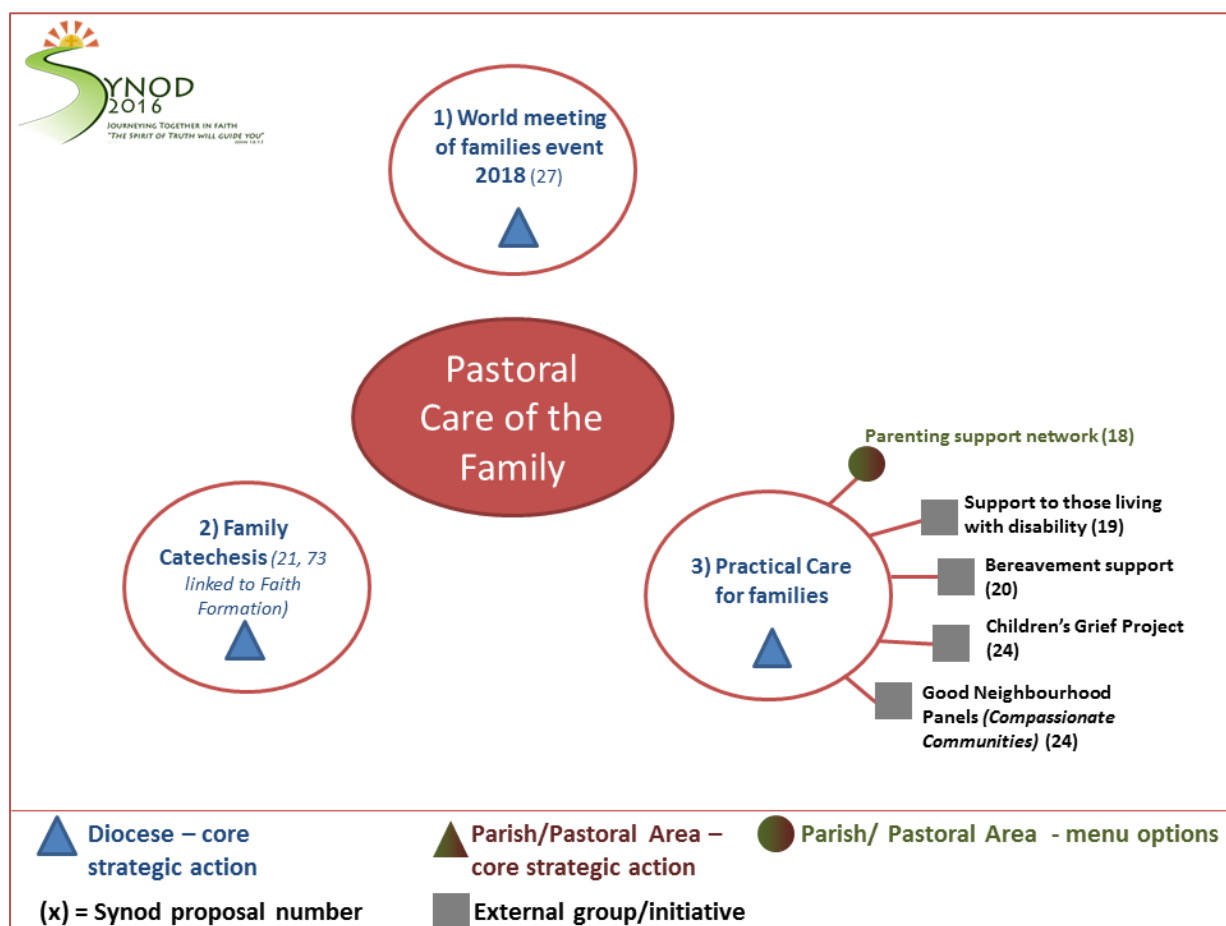
Theme 2: Pastoral Care of the Family

Vision

The Christian vision states that family life is sacred and its activities holy, and that the family can be described as the “domestic Church.” The family, ideally and potentially, is the school of human enrichment, where everyone is someone, where everyone belongs and has a place, where each is appreciated for the unique individual he or she is. It is also the school of Christian belief, where faith is caught, if not always explicitly taught. For all these reasons Pope Francis, told the Synod on the Family, “The Lord is asking us to care for the family, which has been from the beginning an integral part of his loving plan for humanity.”

There are two priorities in this vote at the Synod – a faith development outreach and secondly, practical care on areas of need, such as bereavement, disability and parenting. Any approach to faith development with parents needs to be dialogical – engaging with their burning issues, seeking to share the good news of the gospel in relation to those issues. The upcoming World gathering on families due in Ireland for 2018 offers a positive context for prioritising faith outreach to parents now.

The following figure provides an overview of the actions proposed under the theme of Pastoral Care of the Family:



The proposed actions are outlined in more detail below:

Core Strategic Action One	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese is inviting representatives to attend a Conference in Dublin on The Joy of Love, <i>Amoris Laetitia</i>, incorporating the launch of the World Meeting of Families Event in Ireland 2018. Following this a Diocesan Forum on the Family will be established. This Forum will fulfil the role of a Diocesan Promoter of Pastoral Care to the Family.	27	2016-2018

Core Strategic Action Two	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
(See Core Strategic Action 3 in 'Faith Formation')		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having trained lay Catechists/Sacramental Co-ordinators (as outlined under the theme of Faith Formation) the diocese will then be equipped to develop and deliver a support programme for parents to provide family catechesis and facilitate them in passing on the faith to their children, and deliver a parish support programme for children preparing to receive sacraments. 	21, 73	2017

Core Strategic Action Three	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
In the same way as we suggested around the Community Theme we will liaise, link and engage with groups and agencies that have the appropriate experience and expertise in providing practical care on areas of need.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Parenting Support Network to support parents (and their relationships) from the birth of their babies onwards. 	18	2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to those living with disability. 	19	2017 ongoing

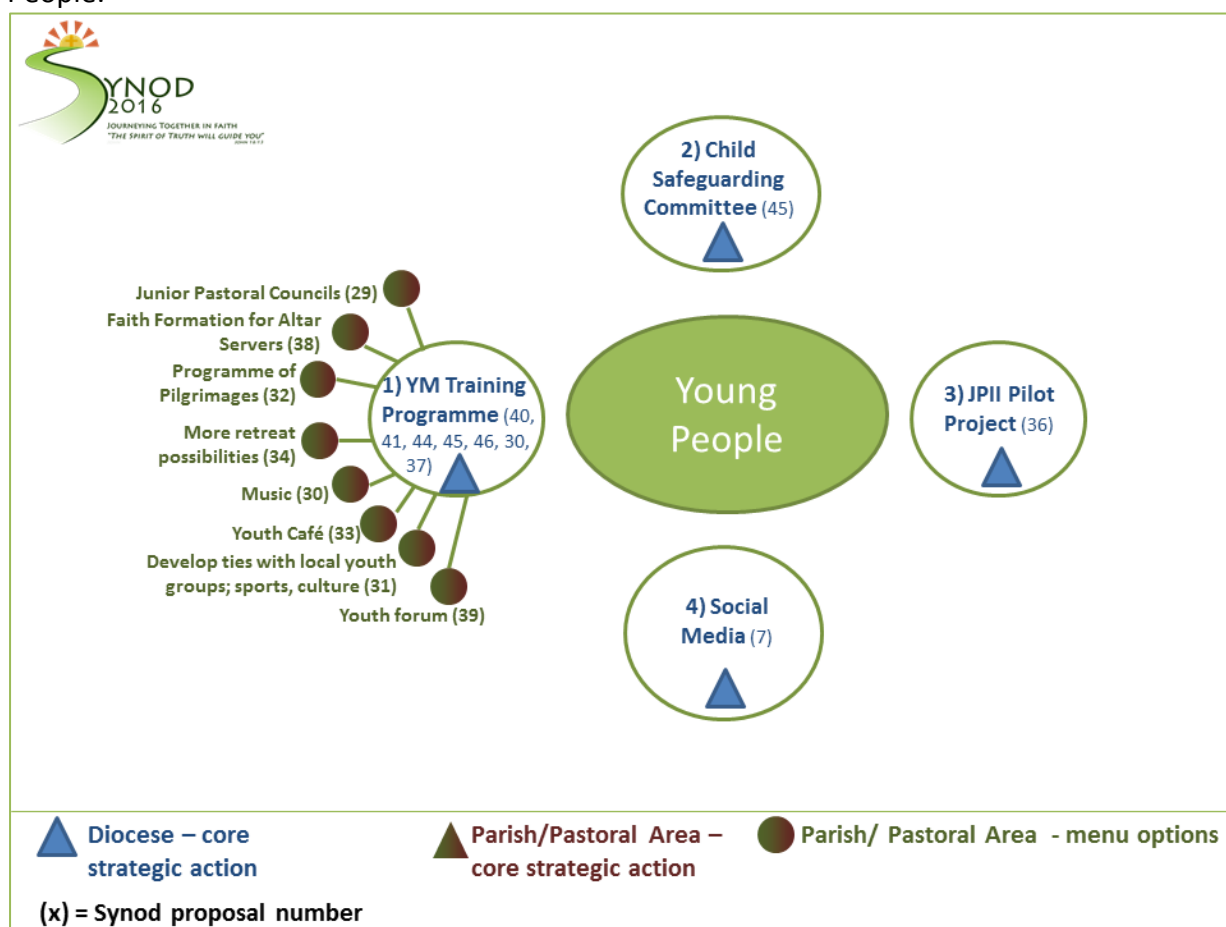
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer led community bereavement support trained and supported by Milford Care Centre. 	20	2017 ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Diocese, as part of its pastoral care of families programme, provide support to the <i>Children's Grief Project</i> in its work for children/young people affected by loss through death, separation or divorce. 	24	2017 ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Good Neighbour Panels</i> - Milford Care Centre's <i>Compassionate Communities Project</i> trains Compassionate Communities Volunteers who will be available in each Parish to assist people living with life limiting illness (and/or their family caregivers) to ensure that their social and practical needs are met. 	25	2017 ongoing

Theme 3: Young People

Vision

By implementing the proposals accepted in the Synod we hope to ensure that young people feel connected, involved and active in a multigenerational church whereby grandparents, parents and children minister to each other. The overall thrust of the vote on the proposals at the Synod was to replicate at a local level the success of the youth ministry at diocesan level - to create local opportunities for young people to meet their peers in the *Eaglais Óg*.

The following figure provides an overview of the actions proposed under the theme of Young People:



The proposed actions are outlined in more detail below:

Core Strategic Action One	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese will develop and begin the delivery of a youth ministry training programme for volunteer youth ministry leaders. This programme will include a range of elements highlighted in other votes – safeguarding, music, media, mental health, evangelisation.	40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 30, 37.	This training programme will be prepared through Spring 2017 and will be delivered from Autumn 2017

Further Actions: The above strategic action will enable the newly trained Youth Ministry Leaders to choose from the following for their local community:		This menu will be available for parishes to choose from throughout the duration of the Pastoral Plan
• The formation of Junior Pastoral Councils	29	
• Programme of ongoing faith formation for Altar Servers	38	
• To develop a programme of pilgrimages, local, national and international	32	
• To provide more retreat possibilities for young people in primary and secondary schools, college and young adults.	34	
• To use music as a means of engaging young people in their local church and liturgy.	30	
• To set up a Youth Café	33	
• To develop ties between church and local youth groups - e.g. sport, culture	31	
• Encourage and support youth leadership by means of a youth forum	39	

Core Strategic Action Two	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The work of the Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee in all its various aspects will continue to be fully supported and developed.	45	This work is continuous

Core Strategic Action Three	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
A Pilot Project in which the JPII Awards will be launched in one community will occur.	36	2016-2017
Further Action: • The JPII Awards, following the Pilot, will be reviewed and rolled out.	36	2017 ongoing

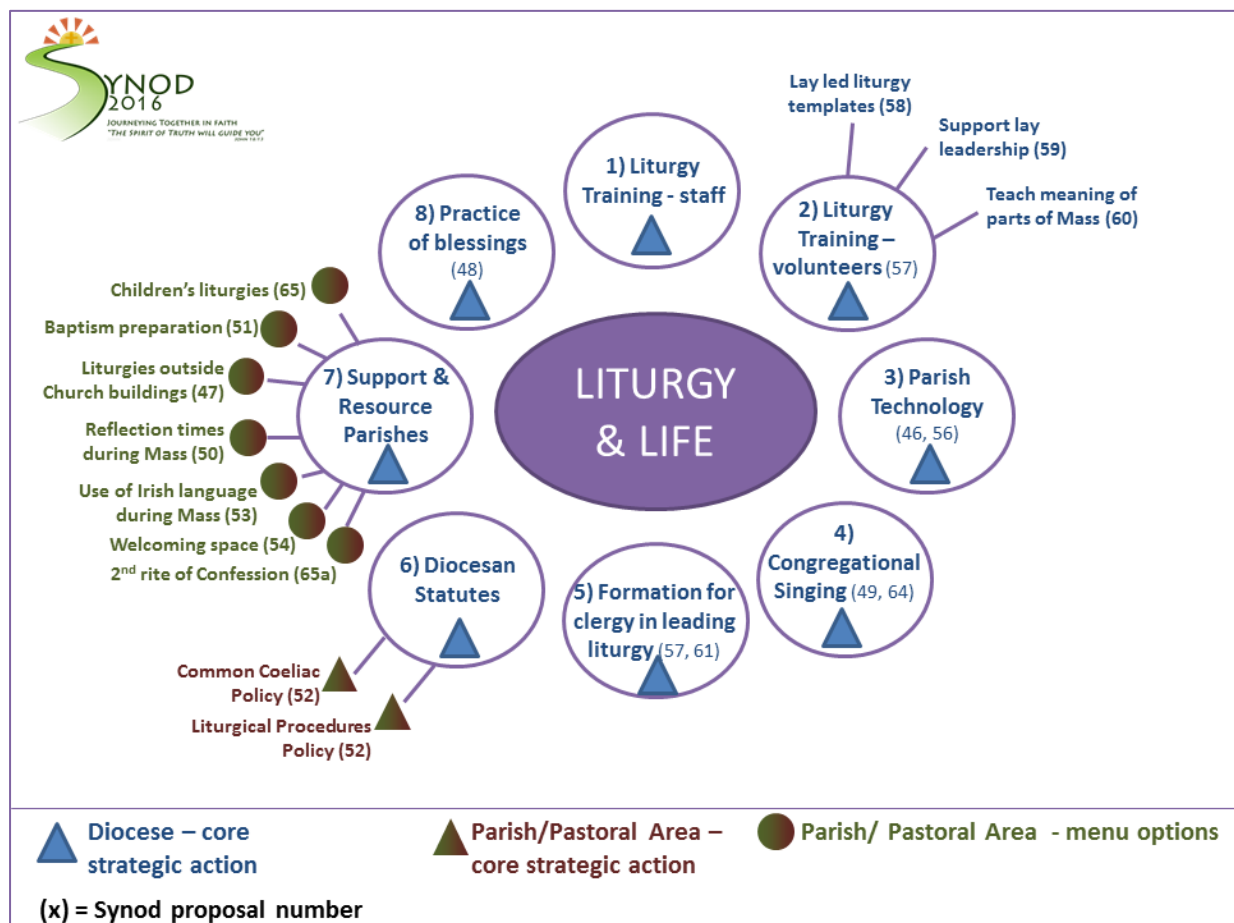
Core Strategic Action Four	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese will continue to use and further develop its use of social media especially with young people. Every parish to avail of Social Media e.g. a Facebook page. The diocesan office to take a central role in training and helping people/parishes to develop skills.	7	2017 ongoing

Theme 4: Liturgy and Life

Vision

The Synod demonstrated that there can be no separation between the liturgical life of the community and the ordinary life of those who share in it. There is an intimate link between life and liturgy. We must explore and advance the development of liturgical ministries in the diocese. The core thrust of the vote was towards enhancing the quality and experience of liturgy at a local level achieving 'conscious, active and full' participation. And here we saw that the emphasis was on liturgy that connects with the lives of ordinary people and that can be delivered by ordinary people. The development of local capacity for leadership in liturgy was a key enabler for this – both for liturgies led by clergy and by lay people.

The following figure provides an overview of the actions proposed under the theme Liturgy and Life:



The proposed actions are outlined in more detail on the next page:

Core Strategic Action One	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
To build capacity at diocesan level two people have been assigned for Liturgy Training in Maynooth.		2016

Core Strategic Action Two	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
Training will be provided for local volunteers to lead liturgies in the diocese on a designated date when priests are away on in-service training.	57	Training will take place before Easter 2017 and the date for delivery will be shortly after.
<u>Further Actions:</u> This core strategic action will in turn enable subsequent delivery of the following proposals:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay led Liturgy templates 	58	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laity & Liturgies/Sacraments: develop and support lay leadership in liturgies and the celebration of sacraments (e.g. lay led liturgies of the Word with Holy Communion, homilies, baptisms, funerals, 'occasion' liturgies, etc.) 	59	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach people the meaning and source of all parts of the Mass and sacrament 	60	

Core Strategic Action Three	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese will undertake an initiative to equip each parish church with modern technology	46, 56	2017-2020

Core Strategic Action Four	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
A training initiative will be designed and delivered by liturgy staff this coming year to foster congregational singing.	49, 64	Spring 2017

Core Strategic Action Five	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The Institute for Pastoral Studies will provide a Summer School in 2017 for clergy and as part of this ongoing formation will be delivered on homilies and leading liturgy.	57, 61	Summer 2017

Core Strategic Action Six	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
As a result of the Synod a set of Diocesan Statutes will be finalised which outline the local law for this diocese containing procedures and policies.		2016
Further Actions: This core strategic action will in turn enable subsequent delivery of the following proposals:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Common Coeliac Policy will be developed 	52	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similarly other policies and procedures around liturgical procedures will be clarified where necessary and developed where necessary. 	62	

Core Strategic Action Seven	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese will support and resource parishes as they choose from a menu of local proposals.		2017 ongoing
Further Actions: Parishes will choose from:		Over the lifetime of this Plan parishes will choose from this menu year on year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have liturgies outside the church building. 	47	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection times during Mass. 	50	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on preparation for Baptism & its celebration during Sunday Mass 	51	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better recognition be given to hymns, prayers & blessings <i>as Gaeilge</i> which may be incorporated into the Eucharist 	53	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church Environment- Create a Welcoming Space 	54	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a child friendly space in churches and also to facilitate 'play & pray' etc. during Masses 	55	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liturgical Music and resources for Family/Children's' Masses and Young People's Masses – Separate session for children, prepare for Christmas, Easter concert, Kids Clubs, Easter concert. 	65	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More general and imaginative use of the second rite of confession. 	65a	

Core Strategic Action Eight	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
A Sunday will be dedicated throughout the diocese to reintroduce the practice of blessing into our lives. Ideas and resources will be provided to parishes.	48	Ongoing

Theme 5: Faith Formation and Education

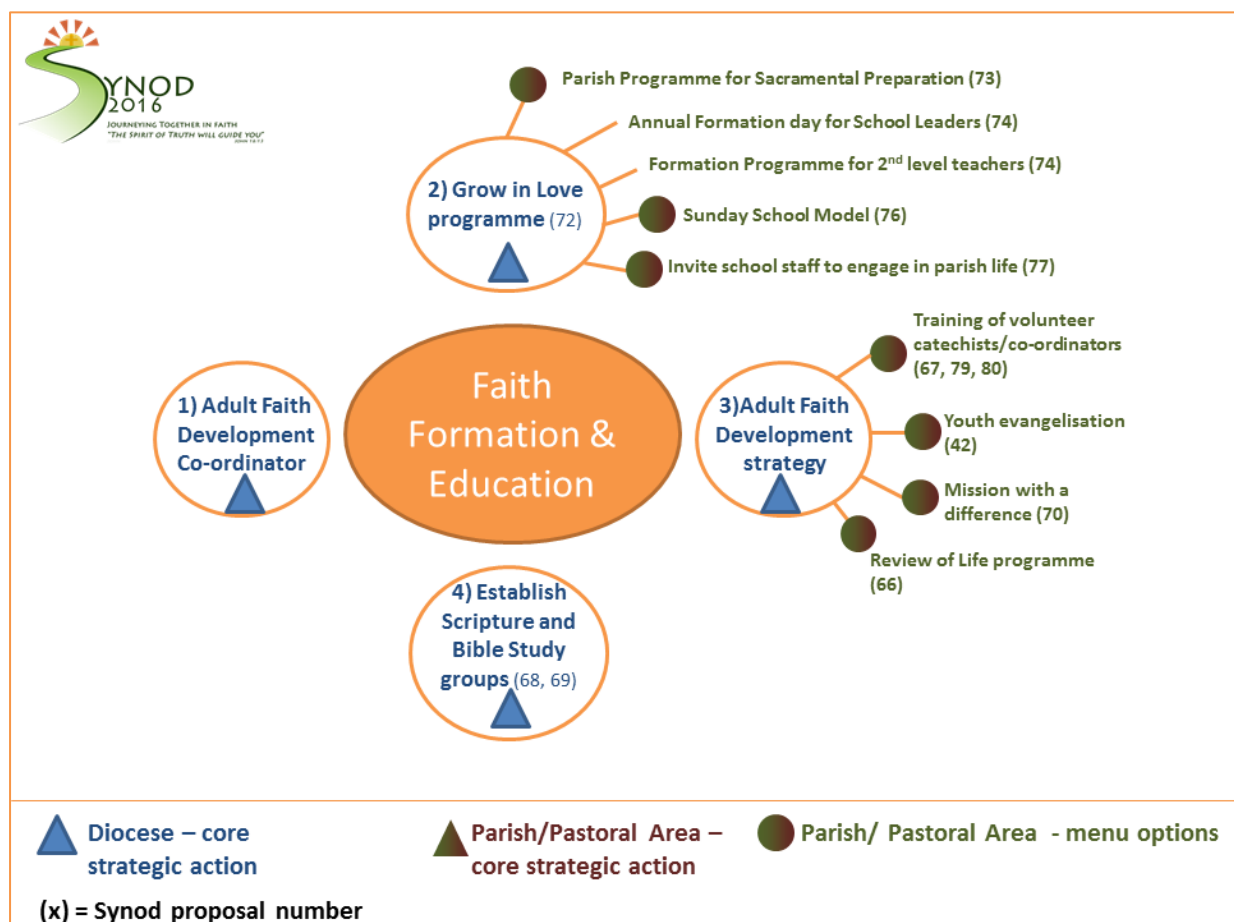
Vision

In Ireland, a systematic or formal approach to faith formation has largely been the remit of Catholic schools and focussed on children/young people. While this is important, we also need to be mindful that faith formation is a lifelong process and that adult catechesis 'is considered the chief form of catechesis.' In our local context, we are exploring new models of leadership for a Church in a changing reality, where the lay faithful are being entrusted with particular tasks in their faith community. In approaching faith formation, a core question is how do we meet people where they are at in their own lives, at their starting point, and accompany them on their faith journey?

While the voting here was more wide-ranging than the other areas we saw that the core concerns coincided with the two proposals that received the strongest vote in the whole Synod – an intentional faith formation initiative to share the Good News and the equipping of local volunteers to lead that initiative.

We believe that the core intention here is for a multi-layered approach to faith development – one that would succeed in connecting with people across the course of their lives rather than just at particular moments of sacramental preparation.

The following figure provides an overview of the actions proposed under the theme of Faith Formation and Education:



The proposed actions are outlined in more detail below:

Core Strategic Action One	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese has increased its capacity to respond in this area in that it has already employed a fulltime worker for adult faith formation.		2016

Core Strategic Action Two	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
<p>September 2015 saw the introduction of a new religious education curriculum and programme, <i>Grow in Love</i>, for Catholic primary schools. The diocese will implement this programme in all its dimensions. <i>Grow in Love</i> offers a unique opportunity to renew the partnership between home, school and parish, actively involving families in the faith formation of their children. The vision is that the parish community and parents will take a more prominent role in the future preparation of children. The strategy will include ongoing work in the schools and the promotion of home-school-parish links and will develop a parish programme for children's sacramental preparation.</p> <p>Similarly, the diocese will encourage our Secondary schools to engage with the Catholic Schools Partnership's process entitled '<i>Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School.</i>'</p> <p>Third Level education will be engaged through chaplaincy teams.</p>	72	2016 ongoing
<p><u>Further Actions:</u> This core strategic action will in turn enable subsequent delivery of the following proposals:</p>		These proposals will be delivered over the course of the lifetime of this Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish support programme for children preparing to receive sacraments 	73	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategic approach to supporting Religious Education and the characteristic spirit of Catholic Primary Schools – annual formation day for school leaders 	74	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a formation programme for 2nd level teachers 	75	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parish to take responsibility for the 	76	

evangelisation of children by means of a Sunday School Model		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff of our Catholic schools are a wonderful resource to our communities. As an outcome of the Synod we will encourage and support this resource in the life of our local parishes. 	77	

Core Strategic Action Three	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese will commit to a faith development strategy prioritising adults. A central element of that strategy will be the training of volunteer lay 'catechists', 'animators' or 'coordinators' to deliver this strategy at a local level.	67, 79, 80	2017-2019
<u>Further Actions:</u> This core strategic action will in turn enable subsequent delivery of the following proposals:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To form committee / working group to evaluate existing catechesis and religious education of young people and look at ways of introducing a Parish / Pastoral Area based evangelisation of youth. 	42	2018 ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek creative ways to engage with people, through a 'Mission with a Difference', a 'festival of faith' with open air events. 	70	From 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That a programme for Faith Formation be rolled out which uses a 'Review of Life' to support those who have had positive experiences to articulate not just what happened but their faith experience and journey. 	66	From 2018

Core Strategic Action Four	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
Establish Scripture & Bible Study Groups across the diocese enabling us to rediscover who we are.	68, 69	2018

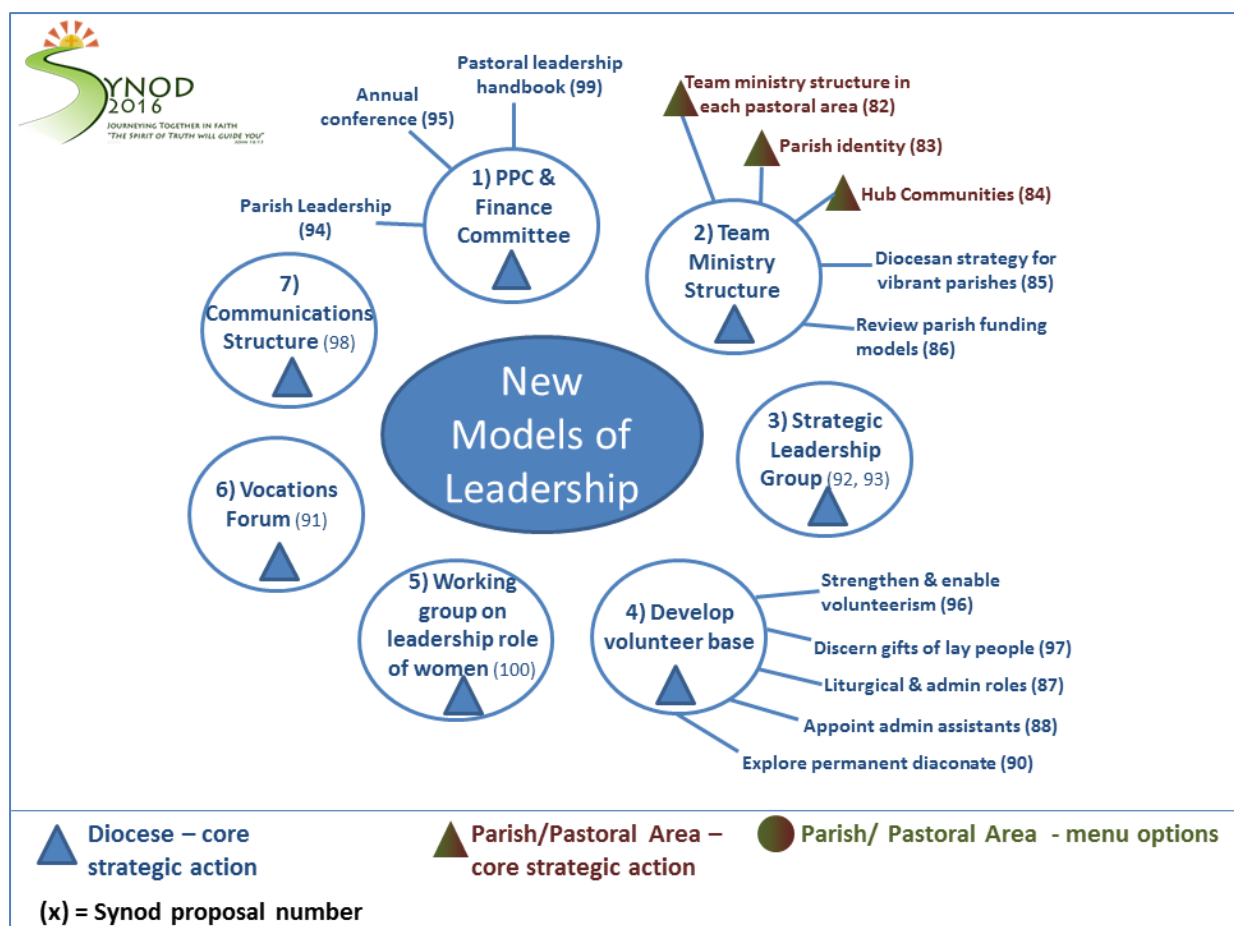
Theme 6: New Models of Leadership

Vision

We need to look at new models of leadership for two reasons. Firstly, because we are living in a very different world from the one most of us grew up in. We also need to look at new models because the concept of a leadership which depends almost exclusively on the priest cannot continue. That is what leadership, and not just the leadership of priests, should mean in the Christian community, discovering, recognising and fostering one another's gifts.

There was a very high proportion of strong votes in this section – there was very strong support from the Synod for the proposed actions on new models of leadership. At the core of this we saw an affirmation of the shared baptism of all members of the church – priests, religious and laity – and a desire that the gifts of all be brought into fruitful and collaborative service of the gospel.

The following figure provides an overview of the actions proposed under the theme New Models of Leadership:



The proposed actions are outlined in more detail on the next page:

Core Strategic Action One	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
The diocese is committed to action that will copper fasten a Pastoral Council and a Finance Committee in every single parish. In this way the following proposals will be delivered:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Leadership: develop the role of parish pastoral councils regarding parish leadership 	94	2016 ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual Conference for Parish Pastoral Councils 	95	2016 ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A handbook will be provided for Pastoral Leadership in Limerick Diocese 	99	2016 ongoing

Core Strategic Action Two	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
We accept the current structure no longer meets the needs and the challenges of our time. We commit to working together to ensure the establishment of a Team Ministry structure in each of the pastoral areas in the diocese. We will do this in dialogue with priests and people, building on the principles of co-responsibility and collaboration aware that we all share in the priesthood of the faithful.		2016 ongoing
<u>Further Actions:</u> This core strategic action will in turn enable subsequent delivery in our parishes of the following proposals:		A Team Ministry structure is currently being developed among many parishes in the diocese. This work will continue to evolve and grow.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a Team Ministry Structure in each Pastoral Area. 	82	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide and grow a model of leadership to enrich the life of individual parishes maintaining parish identity. 	83	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming Hub Communities through open communication/dialogue and consultation with all individual parishes through their pastoral council. 	84	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a diocesan strategy for enabling communities to become vibrant parishes, so that these parishes can be safeguarded and not suppressed. 	85	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of the funding models / sources for Parish Income - clergy income and parish personnel salaries. 	86	

Core Strategic Action Three	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
We will commit to the establishment of a strategic leadership group for the diocese, one with the mix of expertise to engage with the range of challenges arising from the Synod.	92, 93	2017

Core Strategic Action Four	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
We will commit to initiatives to develop and sustain a strong volunteer base in the parishes and in the diocese who will work alongside paid staff to further the mission. We see this as having two elements. A 'structure' of support in terms of description of roles, provision of training etc. But also we saw that for volunteerism to be sustained it needs a 'spirit' – a nourishment of faith and vision that Basic Christian Communities (BCC) can offer. We will commit to supporting the development of appropriate models of BCC taking into account the potential that groups such as <i>Muintearas</i> can offer. Thus the following proposals will be developed:		In 2017 a Volunteer Fair will be promoted throughout the diocese
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening and enabling Volunteerism in the Diocese. 	96	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discernment of the Gifts of Lay People. 	97	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To move towards the employment of Lay People to fulfil both liturgical and administrative roles in parishes, in clusters and/or in pastoral areas. 	87	2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of Parish/Cluster Administrative Assistants. 	88	2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the introduction of the permanent diaconate into the diocese. 	90	

Core Strategic Action Five	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
We will as a matter of urgency establish the proposed working group on a leadership role for women in the life of the diocese.	100	Spring 2017

Core Strategic Action Six	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
<p>Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life are something that the diocese will continue to promote. In the last few years a number of initiatives to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life have been developed.</p> <p>A Forum will be established drawing representatives from each pastoral Area.</p>	91	<p>This work is ongoing.</p> <p>A Forum will be established in 2017</p>

Core Strategic Action Seven	Proposal number(s)	Timeframe Guidelines
<p>Establish a working group to examine the current communications structures in this diocese.</p>	98	2017

Appendix: List of Proposals to Synod

Theme 1 Community and Sense of Belonging

1. Proposal Engage with marginalised as a missionary Church / Bedford Row Family Project Proposal
2. Proposal That the city delegates and parishes are encouraged to engage with and support the City Centre Community Network
3. Proposal 'Regeneration parishes - Caring for and inclusion of the Marginalised'
4. Proposal In the area of mental health and wholeness engage with the marginalised members of our community – homeless, prisoners, travellers etc., and be a missionary church'
5. Proposal Reaching out to those hurt by church
6. Proposal That church buildings be multifunctional centred around a permanent sacred place.
7. Proposal Using social media especially with young people – e.g. Facebook page
8. Proposal Compassionate Communities – Café Conversations
9. Proposal Our community's role in caring for our environment
10. Proposal Learning disabilities to be included in the Diocesan plan
11. Proposal 'Intra-Faith and Inter-Faith Dialogue'
12. Proposal Introduce an updated version of the Station Masses/Liturgies
13. Proposal Establish a Welcoming Group
14. Proposal That a network of Small Christian Community groups be established throughout the Diocese.
15. Proposal Lay parish visitation team to visit homes, hospital and nursing homes
16. Proposal There should be a Parish Register in each parish
17. Proposal Hospitality after Mass

Theme 2 Pastoral Care of the Family

18. Proposal Establish a parenting support Network to support parents (and their relationships) from the birth of their babies onwards.
- 19 Proposal Support to those living with disability.
- 20 Proposal Volunteer led community bereavement support
21. Proposal Develop a support programme for parents to provide family catechesis and facilitate them in passing on the faith to their children
22. Proposal Continue tradition of inviting all children baptised during the year to a special Mass where they receive an individual blessing
23. Proposal To foster the Family Mass.
24. Proposal The Diocese, as part of its pastoral care of families programme, provide support to the Children's Grief Project in its work for children/young people affected by loss through death, separation or divorce.
25. Proposal Good Neighbour Panels
26. Proposal Establish Family Life Centres
27. Proposal Appointment of Diocesan Promoter of Pastoral Care to the Family with an empowered and effective dedicated team for Pastoral Care of the Family

Theme 3 Young People

- 28. Proposal To introduce interactive homilies and intergenerational faith sharing.
- 29. Proposal The formation of Junior Pastoral Councils
- 30. Proposal To use music as a means of engaging young people in their local church and liturgy
- 31. Proposal To develop ties between Church and local youth groups e.g. sport/ culture

- 32. Proposal To develop a programme of pilgrimages, local, national and international
- 33. Proposal To set up a Youth Cafe
- 34. Proposal To provide more retreat possibilities for young people in primary and secondary schools, college and young adults.
- 35. Proposal To create links to other faith groups (e.g. Focolare and Youth 2000)
- 36. Proposal To introduce the Pope John Paul II Awards to the Diocese
- 37. Proposal Raise awareness of the mental health issues affecting young people
- 38. Proposal Programme of on-going faith formation for altar servers
- 39. Proposal Encourage & support Youth Leadership by means of a Youth Forum
- 40. Proposal Expand on existing Diocesan Youth Ministry events and activities
- 41. Proposal To introduce Pastoral Area Youth Ministry Workers to each Pastoral Area
- 42. Proposal To form committee / working group to evaluate existing catechesis and religious education of young people and look at ways of introducing a Parish / Pastoral Area based evangelisation of youth.
- 43. Proposal To create a Diocesan Residential Retreat Centre
- 44. Proposal To develop a youth ministry training programme
- 45. Proposal Child safeguarding

- 46. Proposal To more fully embrace the world of Media and Technology

Theme 4 Liturgy and Life

- 47. Proposal Have liturgies outside the church building
- 48. Proposal Reintroduce the practice of blessing into our lives
- 49. Proposal Develop & Support Congregational Singing
- 50. Proposal Reflection times during Mass
- 51. Proposal Emphasis on preparation for Baptism & its celebration during Sunday Mass

- 52. Proposal Coeliac Policy - Common policies throughout the diocese, especially regarding those in Eucharistic Ministry, with a view to making the church a more welcoming place for all.
- 53. Proposal Better recognition be given to hymns, prayers and blessings as Gaeilge which may be incorporated into the Eucharist
- 54. Proposal Church Environment- Create a Welcoming Space
- 55. Proposal Create a child friendly space in churches and also to facilitate 'play & pray' etc. during Masses
- 56. Proposal Use of Modern Technology in church and for church
- 57. Proposal Formation training for clergy & laity who lead liturgy
- 58. Proposal Lay led Liturgy templates; develop and support lay leadership in liturgies and the celebration of sacraments (e.g. lay led liturgies of the Word with Holy Communion, homilies, baptisms, funerals, 'occasion' liturgies, et

- 59. Proposal Laity & Liturgies/Sacraments
- 60. Proposal Teach people the meaning and source of all parts of the Mass and sacraments
- 61. Proposal Assist in improving the standard of and quality in delivering homilies
- 62. Proposal The Diocesan Liturgical Commission to establish policies and procedures around different liturgy practices
- 63. Proposal New Diocesan Hymnals
- 64. Proposal Liturgical Music – Develop & Support Cantors in local communities
- 65. Proposal Liturgical Music and resources for Family / Childrens’ Masses and Young People’s Masses – Separate session for children, prepare for Christmas, Easter concert, Kids Clubs, Easter concert.
- 65a. Proposal More general and imaginative use of the second rite of confession.

Theme 5 Faith Formation and Education

- 66. Proposal ‘Review of Life’ program for faith formation rolled out across diocese
- 67. Proposal An Adult Faith Formation Programme
- 68. Proposal Establish Scripture & Bible Study Groups
- 69. Proposal Revisit the story of who we are
- 70. Proposal Mission with a Difference
- 71. Proposal Diocesan response to *Laudato Si*
- 72. Proposal Support the links between home, school and parish
- 73. Proposal Parish support programme for children preparing to receive sacraments
- 74. Proposal Develop a strategic approach to supporting Religious Education and the characteristic spirit of Catholic Primary Schools – annual formation day for school leaders
- 75. Proposal Design a formation programme for 2nd level teachers
- 76. Proposal The parish to take responsibility for the evangelisation of children by means of a Sunday School Model
- 77. Proposal As an outcome of the Synod that we would invite and encourage the staff of our Catholic schools to be more engaged in the life of the local parish
- 78. Proposal Review the Age of Confirmation and delay to later e.g. Transition Year
- 79. Proposal Lay Catechists
- 80. Proposal Training Programme for Evangelisation
- 81. Proposal Establish various locations to host prayerful guided reflections

Theme 6 New Models of Leadership

- 82. Proposal Establishment of a Team Ministry Structure in each Pastoral Area
- 83. Proposal To provide and grow a model of leadership to enrich the life of individual parishes maintaining parish identity.
- 84. Proposal Forming Hub Communities
- 85. Proposal To develop a diocesan strategy for enabling communities to become vibrant parishes, so that these parishes can be safeguarded and not suppressed.
- 86. Proposal Review of the funding models / sources for Parish Income - clergy income and parish personnel salaries
- 87. Proposal To move towards the employment of Lay People to fulfil both liturgical and administrative roles in parishes, in clusters and/or in pastoral areas.

- 88. Proposal Appointment of Parish / Cluster Administrative Assistants
- 89. Proposal Bring Priests from Abroad
- 90. Proposal Explore the introduction of the permanent diaconate into the diocese
- 91. Proposal "Vocations to the Priesthood and my role"
- 92. Proposal To establish a diocesan strategic leadership group; to include non-ordained people, that would be gender balanced and inclusive of all aspects of Diocesan life
- 93. Proposal To establish a diocesan pastoral council including clergy and laity, representative of all, offering real leadership, and good communication with parishes
- 94. Proposal Parish Leadership; develop the role of parish pastoral councils regarding parish leadership
- 95. Proposal An annual conference for Parish Pastoral Councils
- 96. Proposal Strengthening and enabling Volunteerism in the Diocese
- 97. Proposal Discernment of the Gifts of Lay People
- 98. Proposal Establish a working group to examine the current communications structure in this diocese
- 99. Proposal A handbook for Pastoral Leadership in Limerick Diocese
- 100. Proposal To establish a working group to explore and scope out how and where women can play a leadership role in the governance of the Church at Diocesan and local level