**Bishop Nicholas Hudson - Intervention**

**Continental Assembly**

**Prague, 6 February 2023**

In England and Wales, the resonances were deep between the Document for the Continental Stage (*DCS)* and our own *National Synthesis*. The role of women had been a headline finding of the Synod in our countries[[1]](#footnote-1) – as it was in the *DCS*. Like the *DCS*, we heard fewer calls for women’s ordination than for their inclusion in the Church’s governance. However, we noted that few lay *men* exercise governance roles either.

Other headline findings which we shared with the *DCS*? Inclusion was a dominant concern of our Synodal journey: the inclusion of LGBT+ people; the inclusion of remarried divorcees in the life of the Church. These conversations often encountered a tension which the *DCS* echoed from our *National Synthesis*: the tension to be found in the Church needing boldly to “(proclaim) its authentic teaching while at the same time offering a witness of radical inclusion and acceptance.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

The inclusion of young people was also a dominant topic in our Synodal journey. Many dioceses had a large youth engagement, especially from schools. The joy expressed by the young people who took part contrasted with the pain of those concerned about young people’s involvement. This tension the *DCS* failed to observe. However, we were with *DCS* in recognising the tension between young people who seek to adhere to the 1962 Missal and those who prefer more contemporary celebrations.[[3]](#footnote-3) We felt *DCS* did not communicate sufficiently the “sadness and anger… sense of grievance and marginalisation”[[4]](#footnote-4) of many around the liturgy.

As in most countries, many English and Welsh priests were unclear as to how they were supposed to engage with the Synodal process. As in most countries, there was frequent expression of appreciation for our priests, along with concern that too much is asked of them. However, clergy and laity alike were surprised to find scant reference in *DCS* to clerical sexual abuse.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The deepest resonance came with the call for formation, which pervades both *DCS* and our *National Synthesis*[[6]](#footnote-6) - a sense that diverse resonances and tensions call for diverse types of formation. This is to say:

* formation which gives voice both to those who feel themselves to be on the margins of the Church and also to the voice of Tradition;
* formation in truth and mercy: formation that holds in tension the authority of Scripture, Tradition, the Magisterium and personal experience;
* formation in the Faith, not least in the teachings of Vatican II;
* formation in Synodality – for clergy and laity together;
* formation in listening;
* formation in accompaniment.

The desire for formation might be expressed as a yearning for a Synodal spirituality. Such a spirituality could be captured, in essence, as a tent held up by the four vital poles - of encounter, journeying, formation, and accompaniment.

1. “One of the headline findings of the Synod in England and Wales,” Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales, *National Synthesis Document*, <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/06/synod-national-synthesis-england-wales.pdf> London, 2022, #15 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *ibid.* #49; *DCS* #30 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “Trying to have their own space in liturgy and songs, ”*DCS* #9 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *National Synthesis Document* #72 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This especially given the *DCS*’s acknowledgment that it is an “obstacle of particular relevance on the path of walking together,” *DCS* #20 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *ibid.* #82-83 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)