



Killaloe Diocese

SUBMISSION FOR PRE-NATIONAL SYNODAL GATHERING IN OCTOBER 2025

Killaloe Synodal Steering
Committee

1st May 2025



Approximately how many people took part in your spring gathering(s)?

202 people

Indicator of Age Ranges (please select any or all of the age ranges that participated in your spring gathering(s))

We have representatives in all categories

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-35
- ☐ 36-55
- ☐ 56 and above

Which dominant themes emerged from the conversations? (List the themes where strong alignment emerged in “Conversations in the Spirit”)

The following is a list of the main themes that came to the fore during the “Conversations in the Spirit” conducted at 10 gatherings across the diocese and through an on-line survey.

- Belonging & Inclusion.
- Role of Women.
- The Family.
- Lay ministry and leadership
- Co-responsibility.
- Church Governance Structures.
- Faith Formation & Catechesis.
- Missionary Outreach/Evangelisation.
- Youth Ministry.
- LGBTIQ+ & inclusion.
- Prayer and Spiritual Growth.
- Abuse and Safeguarding.
- Accessibility of the Liturgy
- Christian Vocation

In discerning the main themes that emerged during the ‘Conversations in the Spirit’ that occurred across the Diocese, the Diocesan Synodal Team made the following observations:

- The themes that came through in Spring Gathering Synodal Meetings were by and large in line with the findings of the Synodal listening processes conducted as part of the universal Synodal listening process .
- The very tight timeframe in which this process had to be conducted was cited as a major curtailing factor in regard to achieving a broader engagement and a more wholesome discernment of the themes.
- The absence of evangelisation, justice and climate as a theme were also noted.

Give a brief outline of why these themes were deemed important.

There is a strong call to prioritize young people within the life of the Church. Firstly, it was seen as something that should be key to the missionary endeavours of the Church. Secondly, young people were seen as the potential future of the Church. Interestingly young people and others groups converged in the view of the place and role of young people in the Church. They were viewed as the potential for new life, for the expression of new gifts needed and they holding the energy needed for spreading the Good News of the Gospel. There was a desire to move beyond aspirational thoughts to concert action in regard to engaging young people in the life of the Church.

It was very evident that the family needs support at this time. Faith filled families were seen as having a central role in the life of the Church. A more holistic engagement with the family as a whole was called for. Providing families with supports and opportunities to express and deepen their faith and in how we practically support family life was desired.

The role of women, their innate dignity and the desire for equality between men and women was given significant mention in most gatherings. A shift in the conversations was noted from this being seen as merely giving women a role, to now being seen as a matter of justice. The desire for the integration of women into governance and decision making roles, as well as having a meaningful role in the breaking open of the Word of God and in the leading communities of faith in prayer, were all mentioned.

People were keenly aware of the fall in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. This raised questions regarding governance, co-responsibility, leading communities of faith and how we as a Church will evangelise into the future. In this regard the development of Lay Ministry was seen as a key response. There was a shift from seeing lay ministry as merely “helping Father”, to now exploring it as a charism that now needs to be empowered. This will require the training of Lay Ministers, the preparing of local communities for such transitions in leadership, and the re-examining of canonical structures.

Faith formation and catechesis was a reoccurring theme. Faith formation concluding with the reception of Confirmation was no longer seen as tenable for a vibrant, personal or ecclesial faith life.

A desire for liturgies that speak to the lived experience of people was noted. There was also a call for more inclusive liturgies particularly with regard to the use of language; leading prayer and breaking open the Word of God were all noted. Enabling people to have a personal encounter with God by enriching enabling their personal prayer life was also mentioned.

The synodal process has given people a taste of a more welcoming and inclusive Church. “Conversations in the Spirit” created a space in which people felt listened to, and accepted. There was a desire for such inclusion, welcome and belonging to be evident in the broader Church life. For example how we welcome the stranger, and in how we create spaces of inclusion for the poor, migrants, LGBTIQ+ community and their families and for those whose lived experience maybe counter to that of Church teaching. There was a sense that the Church needs to continually own its broken past with regard to the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

The promotion of accountably, transparency and justice was seen as a key component of the Gospel and as such it should be reflective in the whole of Church life.

List themes around which notable differences in opinions occurred in the Conversations in the Spirit'

While a variety of topics were discussed no “notable” difference occurred in the “Conversation in the Spirit.” Differences of opinion, or the degree to which the Church should or could accommodate certain matters was evident in such topics as:

- The ordination and the role of women
- The church's stance on LGBTIQ+,
- Liturgy
- What constitutes Church Tradition and as a result what could be changed.

Give a brief outline of the reason for these differences of opinion

The ‘Conversations in the Spirit’ methodology created a space in which people felt heard and in turn, were open to hearing the alternative views of others. It created a meeting place where differences could co-exist as people searched for mutual understanding of their differences.

The role of women and in particular with regard to holding positions of responsibility, governance and leadership was seen as important. These conversations were underpinned by the themes of justice and equality and how this speaks to our current practices.

Outreach to the LGBTIQ+ community and their families was seen as something that should be part of what we as Church do. Divergence occurred with regard to how far this accommodation could go without impinging on the Church's teaching.

At the heart of these divergencies were people grappling with what we mean by tradition. The point of difference centred around Tradition with a big T, those matters it was felt we cannot change, and tradition with a small t, customs and practices that are continually changing and developing that are open to a change in Church teaching.

Were there any groups of themes that naturally seemed to come together in ‘Conversations in the Spirit’? If so, please note these groupings below:

- Family, Youth
- Lay Leadership, Co-responsibility, Governance Structures, Role of Women.
- Prayer, Discernment, Faith/Prayer Formation, Liturgy
- Catechesis, Evangelisation, Missionary outreach.
- Belonging, LGBTIQ+ , Concerns for justice issues
- Abuse, Safeguarding

Prompted by the Holy Spirit, which themes have been identified as priorities?

- Youth engagement
- Family ministry
- Faith formation and Adult Catechesis
- Lay leadership and Co-responsibility
- Prayer and Spiritual Renewal
- Inclusivity and belonging (especially for women and LGBTIQ+ individuals)
- Healing and Safeguarding
- Priesthood in a Synodal Church

From the sessions, explain why these need to be prioritised at this time?

As the conversations unfolded there was a sense that we needed to establish firm foundations on which a vibrant and secure faith community can be established. In this regard a dedicated ministry to supporting family life and family faith life was seen as a keystone holding together much of the Church’s mission.

Youth Ministry was seen as an investment in our future. To date we have relied on our schools to do much of this work. A parish and family locus will also be needed if we are to engage young people in their faith beyond the reception Confirmation. The stability of faith was seen as something young people needed amidst the uncertainties in today’s world.

If communities of faith are to survive not to talk of thrive, they will need people with a faith experience and faith knowledge which was in line with their lived experience. We live in a very complex world and as such people need to be equipped with the faith knowledge and faith experience to engage such complexities with faith. In this regard lifelong faith formation and catechesis was seen as important.

As mentioned before we seem to be moving into a new expression of Church life in which lay people will have to take more central roles of leadership, and in the coordination and animation of local faith communities. If the People of God are to be equipped for such a mission then training and accompaniment of lay leaders who are and co-responsible for the faith life of communities will need to be seriously engaged. Training and ongoing accompaniment will be imperative both for the lay people and the clergy in this new way of being Church.

At the core of any faith commitment is prayer and one's relationship with God. In this regard people will need to be enabled in their personal faith journey if they are to become active and involved in their faith. Prayer and spiritual renewal was seen as key. In this regard personal prayer, meditation, praying with scripture and leading communities of faith in prayer in the absence of a priest were all mentioned. It is about gifting and enabling people with a faith experience that can speak to their lived reality.

We are living in a very complex and extremely mobile world and as such the Church will need to explore how we hold to what is true, while all the time keeping inclusivity and belonging to the core of who we are and what we do.

Throughout the conversations there was a sense that we as Church need to be continually open to the lessons of our past. In this regard we also need to keep the story of abuse and our safeguarding commitments to the fore. How we treat the most vulnerable among us was seen as a barometer as to how and where the Gospel message has taken root.

There was a sense that the roles and responsibilities of the priests were changing and in a synodal church might there be space to explore and express anew the core roles, duties and ministries of priesthood.