

DIOCESAN SYNOD - WORKING PAPER

Abbreviations

AM	Africae Munus (<i>Apostolic Exhortation</i>) <i>Benedict XVI</i>
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
DD	Dies Domini (<i>The Day of the Lord</i>) <i>John Paul II</i>
DPP	Diocesan Pastoral Plan
DV	Dei Verbum (<i>Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation</i>)
EG	Evangelii Gaudium (<i>The Joy of the Gospel</i>) <i>Pope Francis</i>
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi (<i>Evangelization on the Modern World</i>) <i>Paul VI</i>
HS	Holy Spirit
LG	Lumen Gentium (<i>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church</i>) <i>Vatican II</i>
MC	Missionary Childhood
NPD	National Pastoral Directory
OAH	Old Age Home
RCIA	Right of Christian Initiation of Adults
RM	Redemptoris Missio (<i>The Mission of the Redeemer</i>) <i>John Paul II</i>
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium (<i>Constitution on Sacred Liturgy</i>) <i>Vatican II</i>
SCC	Small Christian Community
SSVP	Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
STC	Social Teaching of the Church
VD	Verbum Domini (<i>Apostolic Exhortation</i>) <i>Pope John Paul II</i>

Introduction

The year 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of the creation of the diocese of Hwange. The bishop decided that it will be more fruitful and fitting to celebrate the Jubilee with a diocesan synod. On the 1st May 2011 he wrote a letter addressed to the priests, religious communities and all members of the diocese to let us know that he had convoked a Diocesan Synod to be celebrated during the second half of 2013.

A diocesan synod is a time of celebration in which the Bishop of a diocese asks representatives of his Clergy, Religious and Lay faithful to walk with him, pray with him, to dialogue, listen together with him to what the Holy spirit is saying to the Church. In this dialogue the Church discerns the will of God for the evangelization mission of the local Church in fulfilment of the commission of Our Lord.

The aim of the Synod was to renew our faith and commitment to the Lord, so that the Church in Hwange Diocese could be more faithful to Him and in this way become more attractive to others. Indeed, when we listen more attentively to the Word of God, we evangelize ourselves and evangelize others. When we accept and live the Good News of the Gospel, full of joy, we preach, and invite others to have the same experience of salvation we have already found in Jesus.

A steering commission of five members was appointed by the Bishop and later amplified to 12, in order to help all in this journey together (remember the meaning of the word Synod: Walking Together) towards this renewal of faith and deeds.

This commission has met eleven times in order to facilitate the preparations (logo, prayer, even some other matters related to the Golden jubilee), but, mainly, the questionnaires to help us to find out where we are at present, before planning for the future.

The questionnaires followed the D.P.P., though we didn't start with the first objective, but the second: "How to become Witnesses to Christ" (Q. 1-3); followed by the third objective: "How to Evangelize" (Q. 4-6); and finally, how to live the "Ecclesial Communion", or the "Church as a Family" (Q.7). The reason why we started with the second objective was that, due to the especial situation of the country at that moment (uncertainty, fear, political tension, perhaps early elections) the DPC had chosen this objective as a priority for that year, hence we thought this was the best way to start our journey, to ask ourselves how we were Witnesses to Christ in the different situations.

The questionnaires haven't tackled all the points of the pastoral plan, neither all aspects of our faith. Some of them were very long and many of you complained about it. In the end it seems that nearly everybody was tired of answering questions. Nevertheless this exercise was needed to find out our weaknesses and our strengths. Very often, the answers were given in a hurry, maybe without understanding very well the question; at times, we found that some questions were answered out of fear, not reflecting the truth, especially those related to the relationship between culture and faith (inculturation; Q. 3). A summary of your answers has been given to the different parishes for everybody to know in which state we are.

After all this process and after the successful celebration of the Golden Jubilee, the time has come to have the immediate preparation and, in due time, the celebration of the Synod. The initial aim of celebrating it during the second half of 2013 has proved impossible to fulfil. Even now we don't know when this second stage of DISCERNMENT will be complete. The important thing is that we ALL WALK TOGETHER IN THE LIGHT OF THE RISEN LORD.

As the Bishop invites us, let's pray for the success of the Synod and, PLEASE, WORK TOGETHER in trying to give suggestions for the Synodal members to have a clearer idea on what to do, to choose, to decide when they meet together. This work of discernment affects all and, therefore, all of us should try to take our share. This is not the work of a commission, or a few, that is the Synodal members, but the whole diocese. Although only those who will meet for the Synod will be the ones talking, deciding when the time comes; but they should know what the majority think and suggest on each of the topics.

In this working document we have in mind what the letter to the Ephesians say that: "Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her... that he might present to himself the Church in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (cf Eph 5:25-27). This is now our work, to make the Church, that is, ourselves, holy and without blemish. In order to evangelize others, we have to evangelize ourselves first. How can we make our Church of Hwange more resplendent, more faithful to Christ, in order to spread the Kingdom to others? We are sent, we are missionaries, but first we should be attentive listeners of the Good News of salvation.

This working document, though it has a different outlook from the DPP, but the DPP is like the foundation on which to build now, presupposes it, even if there is not always an express reference to it. After the celebration of the Synod we'll see where the emphasis should be put now or what to add or remove from DPP.

THE PLAN. We have divided the work into four parts:

1. **EVANGELIZATION** (p 3)
2. **WITNESSING TO CHRIST** (p 17)
3. **ECCLESIAL COMMUNION** (p 24)
4. **LITURGY/WORSHIP** (p 27)

We can put it in this other way: We are sent to ***Evangelize*** (ourselves and others) (see Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15); living our lives as true Christians, that is, ***Witnessing to Christ*** (see Acts 1:8); but living ***in Communion***, well united to each other, as the first Christians did (see Acts 2:44-45); and ***Worshipping (Liturgy)*** and nourishing ourselves and others with the signs of the sacraments and the other means of salvation, as Jesus left to us (see Acts 2:42.46-47).

Each part, as you will see, has many subtopics, preceded by a brief theological reflection and an assessment of our situation, before asking for suggestions to the topic.

1. EVANGELIZATION

- 1.1. "Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you....." (Mt. 28:19-20): With these words, before he ascended to heaven, Jesus sent his disciples to proclaim the Good News to the whole world.
- 1.2. Though Evangelization, spreading the Good News, has always been present in the Church, however since the Vat. II and the recent Popes the need and urgency of Evangelization has been emphasized, to remind the whole Church that she *"Exists in order to evangelize; that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be a channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass"* (EN 14). St. Paul said of himself: "Preaching the Gospel gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble if I failed to do it" (1Cor 9:16) and in the second letter to the Corinthians he adds: "The love of God overwhelms/urges us" (2 Cor 5:14). Therefore, Evangelization, Preaching the Good News and what follows from that proclamation, is the deepest identity of the Church. This is our starting point in this renewal of our faith and plans.

1.3. What is Evangelization?

- 1.3.1. Paul VI puts it this way: *"Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new"* (EN 18), that is, to bring the Gospel values of the

Kingdom of God to all spheres of our life, such as justice, peace, respect for human life and dignity, mercy, charity (a civilization of love), hope, and joy.

1.3.2. There are three different situations:

- a) The area of *ordinary pastoral ministry*, that seeks to help believers to continually grow spiritually so that they can respond to God's love ever more fully in their lives;
- b) The area of the *baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism*. The Church tries to help them experience a conversion which will restore the joy of faith to their hearts and inspire a commitment to the Gospel;
- c) Lastly, we cannot forget that *evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ or have always rejected him*. John Paul II reminded us that 'today missionary activity still represents the greatest challenge for the Church' (EG 14; cf RM 13 & 14; Benedict XVI, Homily for the Conclusion of Synod of Bishops)

1.3.3. These three areas of evangelization are found in our diocese among:

- Those who have not yet met Christ
- The baptized who were never effectively evangelized before
- Masses of baptized Catholics who do not live their baptism
- Those who have never made a personal commitment to Christ and the Gospel
- Those formed by the values of the secularized culture
- Those who have left the Church and have lost a sense of faith
- Those who still hold on to and practise some traditional customs or rituals contrary to the Gospel

1.4. **Jesus, the first Evangelizer.**

1.4.1. In order not to be lost, we look and try to learn from Jesus himself, who is the "first and greatest evangelizer" (EN 7). "Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and illness" (Mt 9:35). "Jesus, anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil" (Acts 10:38).

1.4.2. "As an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a Kingdom of God; and this is so important that, by comparison, everything else becomes 'the rest', which is 'given in addition'. Only the Kingdom is absolute, and it makes everything else relative" (EN 8). His teaching, describing in many ways the happiness of belonging to this Kingdom, a happiness which is made up of things that the world rejects (Mt 5:3-12), the demands of the Kingdom (see Mt 5-7), the heralds of the Kingdom (Mt 10), its mysteries (Mt 13), its children (Mt 18), his activity was aimed at making the people realize that the Kingdom of God, THE LOVE OF GOD, THE SALVATION OFFERED BY GOD IN HIM, was already present among men, liberating them from everything that oppresses them, above all, liberation from sin and the Evil One.

1.4.3. “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Gospel” (Mk 1:15). All his life is at the service of the Kingdom, or, in other words, in doing the will of the Father: “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work” (John 4:34).

1.4.4. The Kingdom of God, his plan, is made visible in what Jesus is, what he taught, what he did. His signs and miracles, his preaching to the poor, the marginalized, are a way of experiencing the mercy of God in our lives. His teaching is always in accordance with the LOVE of God, but especially his life of service and love to the end (cf John 13, 1...) show that HE IS THE GOOD NEWS HIMSELF. Hence, to see Him is to see the Father (cf. John 14:9). He indeed, is “The Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). But above all, the love of God is more visible in his death, resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, Spirit of Truth to the apostles, to the Church. (cf RM 13-16)

1.5. Demands of the Kingdom

1.5.1. To accept in our lives the plan of salvation, the Kingdom of God, of Love, we need some basic attitudes in our heart:

1.5.1.1. TO REPENT is the first thing we all have to do if we want to enter into the Kingdom of God. The word used in the Gospel of Mark, *to repent*, or in Greek, *Metanoia*, means a radical change: of mind, of attitudes, of heart, of deeds. It is something demanded of those who hear for the first time the Gospel message, and of those who are already Christians. When Jesus called people to repentance he also invited very religious people, leaders of his time, to change, to repent. We can be apparently very religious without true conversion. We all need CONVERSION of heart. Someone has put it this way: “In the life of every person... there are dark corners where the light of the Gospel has not yet penetrated. We must begin by seeking out those dark and seemingly impenetrable corners and allow the light of the Gospel to be shed on them” (Auxiliary Bishop Edward Clark of Los Angeles. Address to Religious Education Conference, March 2006). The Church is in need of constant conversion, and the Synod is a very good time to try to see what should be changed in our lives to be more in line with the Gospel, passionately living his commandment of Love and Service to all, especially those in need.

1.5.1.2. TO BELIEVE, is the second attitude and goes together with the first one. It means to accept Jesus in our lives. We have to change the way we look at the world, the way we look at other people, the way we relate to everything and everyone, our values and our behaviour and indeed our lifestyle. In short, judge and act like Christ. “Faith does not merely gaze at Jesus, but sees things as Jesus sees them, with his own eyes: it is a participation of his seeing” (Lumen Fidei 18). It is a participation in his trying to do the will of the Father above all else (cf John 3:34). To do this we all need a personal and constant encounter with him. In this way we’ll experience the fullness of life he has brought to us (“I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full” John 10:10) and the joy this life

brings to us. Unless we have this personal experience and encounter with Jesus, we won't be able to spread the Good News with enthusiasm and conviction.

- 1.5.1.3. **TO TAKE UP THE CROSS.** From the very beginning of his preaching, Jesus experienced opposition to his message and even rejection, both to his teaching, his message and to his own person. But, faithful to the Father's will, goes willingly into his passion and death to bring life to those who believe in Him. Even his own disciples abandoned him. Jesus on the Cross is indeed the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). But his resurrection brings the victory over all evil, including sin and death. With his resurrection the disciples understood the truth of Jesus' message and life. He was truly the Messiah they had been waiting for, though they, very often, failed to understand his words, especially those of TAKING UP THE CROSS to follow him. After his resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit they knew that: "We must all experience many hardships before we enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). What has happened to Jesus is what God wants for all humanity, so that the love of God overcomes all evil and death. The transformation has started and has to be carried out by his followers, though they too will experience opposition, rejection, even death. This is part of following Jesus, of being his disciples. The cross will ever be present in his followers, in his Church. We, very often, forget this fundamental aspect of our following Jesus, and thus, in times of trial, we look desperately for the easy way to solve the many problems affecting us.
- 1.5.1.4. **TO BE FULL OF HOPE AND JOY.** "Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey" (Spe Salvi 1). The Good News Jesus preached opened the future to those who were listening and gave them HOPE and JOY. With hope "the dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently...has been granted the gift of a new life" (Spe Salvi 2)
- 1.5.1.5. Yes, we face many problems in our lives. To take up the Cross is hard, but we have HOPE and confidence that, with 'God at our side' (cf Rom 8:31) everything is possible, and we'll overcome all kinds of problems, even death. "Be courageous: I have conquered the world" (John 16:33), that's why we are also full of JOY in the middle of our trials, (Pope Francis has reminded us of all this in his recent exhortation "*Evangelii Gaudium*") and we can say truly in the Mass that "We wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ"
- 1.5.1.6. **TO BE GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT.** "Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it" (EN 13), guided by the Spirit, as Jesus himself had been in his life. "Through this people and

in them it is the Holy Spirit the main actor in the realization of that action in the people and in the world” (RM 21). “In fact, it is only after the coming of the H.S. on the day of Pentecost that the apostles depart to all the ends of the earth in order to begin the great work of the Church’s evangelization... It is in the consolation of the H.S. that the Church increases. ...It is the H.S. who, today, just as at the beginning of the Church, acts in every evangelizer who allows himself to be possessed and led by him, places on his lips the words which he could not find himself, and at the same time predisposes the soul of the hearer to be open and receptive to the Good News and to the Kingdom being proclaimed” (EN 75; cf RM 21-25).

1.6. The Church Evangelized

- 1.6.1. “The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. She is the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, the community of brotherly love; and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love... She is the People immersed in the world, and often tempted by idols and she always needs to be called together afresh by him and reunited...if she wishes to retain freshness, vigour and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel” (EN 15).
- 1.6.2. “To be more effective, the *missio ad gentes* must keep pace with the new evangelization. In Africa, too, situations demanding a new presentation of the Gospel, new in its ardour, methods and expression, are not rare” (AM 165)
- 1.6.3. The question now is which means are best for all this to become true and effective in our diocese, or in other words, to listen more attentively to the Word and be guided by the Spirit
- 1.6.4. **Small Christian Communities**
- 1.6.5. In our diocesan pastoral plan the first objective was: “TO ADVANCE IN THE MODELLING OF THE CHURCH AS THE FAMILY OF GOD” with the first goal being the “PROMOTION OF THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES”.
- 1.6.6. SCC’s are a new and joyful reality in a number of our parishes and missions.
- 1.6.7. According to the answers received on the vision people have of the SCC, the following were noted:
 - 1.6.7.1. SCC’s are platforms and means of evangelization
 - 1.6.7.2. SCC’s often satisfy the laity’s desire for a “deeper relationship with God” and a more effective presence in family, work and world
 - 1.6.7.3. SC’s helped them express their faith and be “more aware of the presence of God” in their lives
 - 1.6.7.4. SCC’s helped to make the connection between their life experience, Scripture and Church teaching
 - 1.6.7.5. SCC’s created a feeling of belonging to the larger parish and helped to a fuller participation in the Sunday liturgy.
 - 1.6.7.6. SCC’s helped, too, to a deeper commitment to serve others. They create a ‘network of prayer and concern’

1.6.8. And yet, not everything is so bright. There are also some “dark corners”, for example:

- 1.6.8.1. There is a significant turnout of women, but *very few men and two or no youths*
- 1.6.8.2. *Some take themselves as mere observers*
- 1.6.8.3. *Members are not punctual*
- 1.6.8.4. *Most restrict themselves to scriptural sharing and parish duties, but not real commitment in their daily work*
- 1.6.8.5. In the rural areas, it is very difficult to start the SCC's, especially when Christians are very few and live far apart.

The question, then, will be how to improve on this path, which has proved very successful in so many aspects and places, and overcome the problems we have encountered so far.

1.7. Biblical Apostolate

- 1.7.1. “As the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth, fertilising it... so it is with the word that goes from my mouth” (Is 55:10-11) We read of the first Christians that “They remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles” (Acts 2:42). We need to LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD, if we want to be truly Christians and evangelizers.
- 1.7.2. We live in a religious environment where the Bible is used a lot as much as it is abused. Most Catholics are less confident with Bible than many of those belonging to other churches or sects. An honest assessment of the reasons is needed.
- 1.7.3. The Constitution Dei Verbum says that the Biblical Pastoral Ministry can be divided into two major areas:
 - Providing easy access to Sacred Scripture
 - Nourishing the Church's faith through the Word of God (DV 23-25)
- 1.7.4. In answer to these two aspects, our DPP (3.6) had the following points:
 - Make Bibles available and accessible in the parishes and Pastoral Centres.
 - Deepen and strengthen the use of the Bible in homes, SCC's, Associations.
 - Make its use on Sundays more meaningful through training Readers and Preachers.
 - Establish Bible prayer groups. Promote the practice of Lectio Divina
- 1.7.5. Considering the many centres in our diocese that meet most of the Sundays without a priest, activities which emphasize the joyful aspect of the Word of God, especially, but not exclusively, in Liturgy have to be fostered.
- 1.7.6. From the responses to Q. 7, on the use of the Bible in SCC's almost all undertake the seven steps method to read and pray with the Word of God. Other methods can be used or explored. We all need a constant conversion and a personal encounter with Jesus and to read and pray with the Bible, is one of the best ways to listen to him.

How can we improve on that vital point of listening to the Word of God? How?

1.8. The Church sent to Evangelize

1.8.1. Catechesis

- 1.8.2. We read in the Gospel of John that the first two disciples who followed Jesus that famous 'afternoon' (cf. John 1:35-42) were in a hurry to communicate to others what they had discovered: Jesus was the Messiah they were waiting for. The two going to Emmaus, once they realized that Jesus indeed had risen, went back to Jerusalem to communicate the good news to others.
- 1.8.3. Not so long ago, this was also the case here in many of our communities and thus we had many catechumens attending lessons, encouraged by others to do the same. This joy and enthusiasm of trying to share the treasure already found seems to have died out. A number of our catechumenates are not functioning very well (actually the number of catechumens is going down), at times the catechists are not there to teach and help those attending, and even, at times, the community does not care much if this happens. Of course, there are others who do care and try to take a very active part in spreading the Gospel to adults and children, but this is not always the case. The person to person proclamation of faith through SCCs, associations and movements (cf. the DPP 3.1.6) is not always there.
- 1.8.4. We cannot be complacent in this point so vital for the Church. If we do not fulfil it well we are actually failing in our main duty, the spreading of the Gospel. And with this we are not trying to proselytize, but to announce the Good News to others.
- 1.8.5. In our responses to Q 4 there is a variety of answers which show how not all walk at the same pace. Now it is time to see how to harmonize the syllabus, methods, and so many things, as far as possible. **We should go through those questions and answers and see which practical suggestions we have for the synod.**

1.8.5.1. **Some points to be thought of and offer practical suggestions:**

- 1.8.5.1.1. How to revive the person to person proclamation of the Gospel.
- 1.8.5.1.2. Which is your opinion about opening new missions: where, how, people involved.
- 1.8.5.1.3. Syllabus for the catechism.
- 1.8.5.1.4. Involvement of the Christian community in the catechism.
- 1.8.5.1.5. Acceptance of the catechumens.
- 1.8.5.1.6. Accompaniment to the catechumens: Godparents and the whole community.
- 1.8.5.1.7. RCIA: do we know what it is? Do we accept it as a rule for our diocese?
- 1.8.5.1.8. How can the Pastoral Centres help in all this?

1.9. Post baptismal instructions

- 1.9.1. Baptism is not the end, but the beginning of a life lived according to the new status, we are CHILDREN OF GOD. But we have to grow, because baptism is just the starting point. We read about the first Christians that: "They remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42)

1.9.2. We have to see how to articulate well all this in our communities.

1.9.3. **These are some aspects to look at:**

1.9.3.1. *Confirmation*. In our answers to this question there is a variety of responses which show a number of weak points in not few places (page 16). It is good that we all try to move at the same pace, adopting a common policy (see later under Sacraments)

1.9.3.2. *Christian formation of children, youth and adults*. Apart from the SCCs gatherings, we have also the different associations, where, very often, there is little time for a serious Christian formation. We are not able to give an answer or account of our faith (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). We don't know very well what we believe. The Bible is not well known by many of our Christians, let alone the teachings of the Popes and bishops. That's why it is so important that from the beginning of the year each association has a formation plan for the year and that the plan is followed, implemented. The formation is not a question of some lessons given at the time of the Congresses, but a continuous effort to know Jesus and his message better every time.

What can we propose on this point? Who should be involved in this work? The Pastoral Centres can help, but are they the only ones responsible for the permanent formation of adults? Can you offer practical suggestions?

1.10. Agents of Evangelization

1.10.1. St. Paul wrote: "They will never have a preacher unless one is sent" (Rom 10:15). "But who then has the mission of evangelizing? The Second Vatican Council gave a clear reply to this question: it is upon the Church that there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going into the whole world and preaching the gospel to every creature...The whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God" (EN 59) ALL OF US ARE SENT.

1.10.2. Pope Paul VI reminded us that "Evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial...No evangelizer is the absolute master of his evangelizing action... he acts in communion with the Church and her pastors" (EN 60). Being this true, we have to see how best we can bring about the Good News to everybody. This is a duty of:

- The Bishop
- The Priests
- The Religious
- The Laity

1.10.3. *The Bishop and priests*

"In union with the Successor of Peter, the Bishops, who are successors of the Apostles, receive through their Episcopal ordination, the authority to teach the revealed truth in the Church. They are teachers of the faith.

“Associated with the Bishops in the ministry of evangelization...are those who through their priestly ordination ‘act in the person of Christ’. They are educators of the People of God in the faith and preachers, while at the same time being ministers of the Eucharist and of the other Sacraments. We pastors are therefore invited to take note of this duty, more than any other members of the Church. What identifies our priestly service...is this aim, ever present in all our actions: to proclaim the Gospel of God” (EN 68)

All priests are called to pay attention to these words and act accordingly. They, too, must be “light of the world and salt to the earth”.

Do you have any suggestions to offer to the priests?

1.10.4. The Religious

“They embody the Church in her desire to give herself completely to the radical demands of the beatitudes. By their lives they are a sign of total availability to God, the Church and the brethren... (Their) silent witness of poverty and abnegation, of purity and sincerity, of self-sacrifice in obedience, can become an eloquent witness capable of touching also non-Christians who have good will and are sensitive to certain values” (EN 69).

We have several religious congregations working in our diocese and for that we are grateful to God. We desire that they may always be faithful to their vocation and charisma. Through a good theological formation and the living witness of their dedication to God and the brethren, they may help the diocesan Church to grow in her faith.

Any suggestions for the Religious in our Diocese?

1.10.5. The Laity

“Through her lay members, the Church is present and active in the world. Lay people have an important role to play in the Church and in society. To enable them properly to take up this role, it is fitting that centres of biblical, spiritual, liturgical and pastoral formation be organized in the dioceses” (AM 128).

Pope Benedict XVI goes on to say that they are or should be:

- “Ambassadors of Christ” (2 Cor 5:20) in the public sphere, in the heart of the world
- Called to holiness which is lived in the world
- “Light of the world and salt to the earth” in the professional life
- Within SCC’s or in Associations they should continue to shape their conscience and support each other in the struggle for justice and peace (cf AM 128-131)

1.10.6. Catechists

“Catechists are invaluable pastoral agents in the mission of evangelization...Dear catechists... by striving to be faithful to your mission, you will contribute not only to your own holiness, but also in an effective way, to building up the Body of Christ, the Church” (AM 126-127).

Our diocese relies by and large on voluntary catechists. They are full of good will but ways must be sought to help them to receive:

- Good and sound doctrinal formation
- Moral and spiritual support from the community in which they live and work
- Material support for their formation, when they attend meetings or workshops

Each community is invited to have a look at these or other points related to this topic

Please, comment on these or other points related to catechists and offer your opinions?

1.10.7 The family

Once again we quote from EN: “One cannot fail to stress the evangelizing action of the family in the evangelizing apostolate of the laity...The family has well deserved the beautiful name of ‘domestic Church’...The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized” (EN 71)

This same doctrine has been repeated by other Popes, like Benedict XVI in AM, when he says how “in the family its members acquire basic teachings. Learn to love inasmuch as they are unconditionally loved, they learn respect for others... they learn to know the face of God from their loving parents... they learn the culture of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation...loving concern for the weaker members, because of youth, sickness or old age...By virtue of its central importance and the various threats looming over it – distortion of the very notion of marriage and family, devaluation of maternity and trivialization of abortion, easy divorce and the relativism of a ‘new ethic’- the family needs to be protected and defended ” (AM 42-43)

In the family the members should learn how to pray, to read the Bible, to deepen their faith, learning in a practical way how to behave as a good child of God, how to be charitable, how to be committed Christian.

This year the first part of the extraordinary Synod dealing with the family and the many problems we face today in this field will take place in Rome. Next year, 2015, will be the second part. While we are waiting for the result of those deliberations, it is good to have a look at our Christian families, with their many problems and how we can help them.

We have to see that indeed our families are *instruments of Evangelization*, within themselves and spreading the Gospel to others; *channels of the sanctifying grace of God*. It will be good to look at:

- What type of family apostolate do we have in our parishes? (see later on, under the sacrament of Matrimony)
- Family catechesis

Offer practical suggestions

1.10.7. The Youth

“Circumstances invite us to make special mention of the young. Their increasing number and growing presence in society and likewise the problems assailing them should awaken in everyone the desire to offer them with zeal and intelligence the Gospel ideal as something to be known and lived. And on the other hand, young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth. The Church counts greatly on their contribution” (EN 72).

“Youth is a time when genuine and irrepressible questions arise about the meaning of life and the direction our own lives should take...Young people need witnesses and teachers who can walk with them, teaching them to love the Gospel and to share it, especially with their peers, and thus to become authentic and credible messengers” (AM 61 citing VD 104)

This is a field which calls for especial attention from all of us as we see that many of our youth are targets of exploitation, are manipulated, without much hope under the present economic situation. (see answers to Q 6). How can we help them to regain hope, joy, enthusiasm, dedication to Christ, so that they too spread the Gospel?

Make practical suggestions on:

- Youth advisors
- Bible courses for the youth
- Formation courses, programmes (Youcat?)
- Youth gatherings
- Others

1.10.8. Children

“I have written to you, children, because you have come to know the Father” (1 John 2:14)

The number of children in some of our centres is large and they are eager to learn and to do many things, provided they are helped, advised, and guided. Even the name of their association was changed from Holy Childhood, to *Missionary Childhood*. The change is significant, if we take advantage of it. They, too, should be missionaries, sent to other children like them, to know the Gospel from their early days. They should become familiar with Jesus, the friend of children, and to learn how to serve and love others, as Jesus taught us.

Any suggestions on:

- MC animators
- MC meetings
- MC Congresses
- MC activities
- Others?

1.10.9. Associations and Movements

These are a joyful sight in our local Church where particular individuals belong to them and often feel more at home than even in the SCC's. They have also attracted many people to the faith. It is good to examine why and how, and to see whether this can be used in evangelization. We see with delight the dedication and commitment of so many people within these associations and how in many places the Church is maintained mainly by them: when some of them teach catechism, visit the sick, help the needy, and help in so many Church activities.

However, we cannot fail to notice with concern that:

- In some places, *not all members are very committed*, or fail to meet regularly;
- At times, the *wearing of the uniform* becomes so important, that once this is achieved, other things become irrelevant or forgotten;
- There is a lot of excitement and commitment to prepare *the congresses*, but not so much for other Church activities which should be attended to;
- A serious *commitment in public life* is often lacking in their members
- *Serious formation programmes* are either lacking or not well followed.

What can be done so that these movements and associations are indeed the salt to the earth and the light of the world? Which practical suggestions do you have on this issue?

1.11. Some Major Areas of Evangelization

“The Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament, a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men and women” (LG 1). We have to be able to make visible and share the love of God. “Love is the light –and in the end, the only light- that can always illuminate a world grown dim and grant us the courage needed to keep living and working” (Deus Caritas Est 39)

Therefore the universal Church, in all its structures –dioceses, parishes, etc- should be seen as a sign of love and peace by all. Among the areas where love should be more visible we highlight the following:

1.11.1. World of Education

“Catholic schools are a precious resource for learning from childhood how to create bonds of peace and harmony in society, since they train children in the African values that are taken up by those of the Gospel... Young people in particular, should study the educational sciences with a view to passing down knowledge full of truth: not mere know-how but genuine knowledge of life, inspired by a Christian consciousness shaped by the Church’s social doctrine” (AM 134)

We have a number of catholic schools in our diocese. The diocesan synod offers us a good opportunity to see how they are functioning and whether the Catholic ethos is really taught there. The catholic schools should be instruments not only of imparting knowledge, but of educating in values, moral values, and a way of making the Gospel known to the students attending these institutions.

Is it so in the catholic schools of our diocese? What is the difference between a catholic and a non-catholic school?

It is also good to see the pastoral care we offer to the teachers in our schools, both Catholics and non Catholics. Not forgetting that we have many other students attending other schools and it might be that we are neglecting the pastoral care we should offer to them.

Do you have any suggestion on this point of education?

1.11.2. World of Health Care

“The Church has always been concerned with health. She follows the example of Christ himself who proclaimed the word and healed the sick, and then gave his disciples the same authority ‘to heal every disease and every infirmity’ (Mt 10:1; cf. 14:35; Mk 1:32-34; 6:13, 55). Through her health care institutions the Church continues to show this same concern for the sick and for all who suffer” (AM 139)

“The Church’s health care institutions and all their personnel should strive to see in each sick person a suffering member of Christ’s Body” (AM 140) Pope Benedict encourages the health care workers to “Be patient, stand firm and do not lose heart! “ And as far as pandemics, “seek also constantly to form and inform people, especially the young” (AM 140)

“Health care institutions need to be managed in compliance with the Church’s ethical norms” (AM 141)

We have some catholic hospitals and clinics in our diocese, and maybe others could be opened. These guidelines offered by Benedict XVI in AM should be the criteria to follow in those institutions as well as in the OAH of Dete, and Lubhancho, not forgetting that we all have to be witnesses of Christ’s love to the sick and suffering.

Which practical suggestions can you offer on this field of health care?

1.12. Ecumenism: Together with other Christians

Christ prayed that “all be one” (John 17:11) “The power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways. Is this not perhaps one of the great sickness of evangelization today?...As evangelizers, we must offer Christ’s faithful not the image of people divided and separated by unedifying quarrels, but the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding meeting-point beyond the real tensions” (EN 77)

The reality is that Christians are divided and even in some families one can find each member of the family belonging to a different Church. We inherited a divided Christianity from our first missionaries. We have also a great variety of indigenous Churches. Added to that we also find new “ministries and a multitude of prophets”.

The concept of Church in the minds of many people is not properly understood. For many it is just a human institution, useful at times. One can easily switch from one Church to the other without any moral problem. “After all, we all have the same Bible and there is One God” it is a common slogan.

Some of the Churches or religious movements are clearly anti-Catholics, anti-ecumenical. We also know the pressure some of them exercise on our people in order to join them and leave our Church. That’s why many priests are particularly worried about this.

The reason of trying to work for Christian unity is quite clear. It is the Lord’s wish that “There should be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16)

There is much difference, of course, between churches and churches and we cannot be naive on this topic of ecumenism. The Bishops are calling our attention on this point, so that we distinguish between the major churches, whose baptism has been accepted by our own Church and so many other religious groups or sects with whom a dialogue is nearly impossible. **It might be good if we ask ourselves about:**

- How we know the other churches and sects. To pay attention to the many good things they have and learn from them, as well as to know their weak sides
- How we appreciate our own faith and see the difference between our faith and the one professed by other groups
- The meaning of belonging to the Catholic Church
- How we can work together, especially, as the DPP suggests, in areas of peace, justice, reconciliation and charity (DPP 3.5.1).
- How can we make any progress towards UNITY, avoiding syncretism
- Every year the week between Ascension and Pentecost is a week to pray for UNITY among Christians. How do we live that week in the different parishes?
- **Any practical suggestions on this area of ecumenism?**

1.13. Mass Media

1.13.1. “What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops” (Mt 10:27). Salvation is ultimately

God *communicating* and sharing his very life with men and women. The Word of God became flesh so as to communicate himself to all.

- 1.13.2. "The media can make an important contribution towards the growth in communion of the human family ... They need to focus on promoting the dignity of persons and people; they need to be clearly inspired by charity and placed at the service of truth, of the good, and of natural and supernatural fraternity" (Caritas in Veritate 73).
- 1.13.3. "The Church needs to be increasingly present in the media so as to make them not only a tool for the spread of the Gospel but also for educating the African peoples to reconciliation in truth, and the promotion of justice and peace" (AM 145)
- 1.13.4. The traditional and new forms of mass media provide the Church with a privileged way of bringing the message of the Gospel to ever greater audiences and in a variety of different ways.
- 1.13.5. We are entrusted with a message of salvation for all and therefore we have to make use of all methods which are good, to make it known. We have to know it ourselves, and we have to make it public.

We can ask ourselves which use we make of the means we have at the moment:

- Newsletters from the different parishes
- National Church Magazines
- Internet, TV channels, for those with access to it
- Mobile phones
- Social networks

Are we satisfied with what we have and the way we use it? Is there anything we can do to improve in this field of communicating the Good News to others? Practical suggestions.

2. WITNESSING TO CHRIST

- 2.1. "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). This is the mandate which Christ gave his apostles on Ascension day. We, too, Christians of Hwange diocese are invited to be witnesses of the Risen Lord, to walk in the light of the Risen Lord, to proclaim in our daily lives, by word and deeds, that the Lord is Risen and lives among us.

St Francis of Assisi said: "*Preach the Gospel always. When necessary, use words*". Actions speak louder than words.

- 2.2. "For the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbour with limitless zeal...Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses...It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus" (EN 41)

- 2.3. The Objective 2 of our DDP is precisely this one: Witnessing to Christ, and it implies to live our faith in private and in social life, showing that we *are committed Christians* wherever we go; that we act in *a just way*, bringing light and salt to our world, so much in need of true beacons of peace, justice and reconciliation; that we are also *people concerned for the needs* of the people, trying to help as much as we can, living in solidarity with so many who lack even the essentials of life; and trying to live an *incarnated, inculturated faith*, bringing the light of the Gospel to our traditions and culture, trying to be truly Africans in the way we profess our faith, without fear or with a divided heart.
- 2.4. From the answers, a simple and yet apt definition to witnessing is given, namely: to practice what we preach (Q 1.15). It is an antidote to being Sunday Christians only, or Christians with two personalities. And yet the answers leave no doubt about the need to improve on our witnessing to Christ.

It is time to go over these issues again, and, with courage, to make concrete suggestions on each one of them.

2.5. Committed Christians in private and social life

- 2.5.1. “You are the salt for the earth... You are the light for the world...Your light must shine in people’s sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:13-16).

We are living in a society where corruption is so widespread that it looks “normal” to demand bribes, to cheat, to be dishonest, to have a double life, one in private, and another in public. But we are Christians 24 hours a day and called to witness our faith at home, at work, when meeting and enjoying with friends, in short, everywhere. Some of our Christians hold a public office, or are civil servants. And yet it seems that our “salt” has lost its taste, our “light” is quenched. We live like the rest. We don’t make any impact in the society where we live or raise questions by our honest way of living, our faith put into practice.

- 2.5.2. Pope Francis says that faith cannot be considered an exclusively private matter such that it is excluded from our social lives (EG 183). Evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and man’s concrete life, both personal and social” (EG 180-181)

What do we do with our faith? Do we use it only when going to Church, or it is active and alive in all aspects of our life: financial, social, political, and of course, in our commitment to Church activities?

2.5.3. In our responses to Q1 while a number of answers suggest that we are “trying, though we have not reached perfection yet” (Q 1.17), but many say clearly that we are “two persons, one at Church and another at home, work, etc.” (Q 1.21). Even the STC seems not to be known by the majority of our Christians. CCJP is not functioning in many of our parishes/missions. What can we do about all this? Our proposals should be very concrete and conveying a sense of determination to change, to be what we are called to be: WITNESSES OF CHRIST everywhere, well aware of the fact that this is not an easy thing and, as in the case of Jesus, our lives well lived under God’s eyes, and our words, if we denounce unjust situations, might not be well accepted, in fact they might bring us problems. Are we ready to take up the cross or we just follow the easy way not doing anything at all, while all the time complaining about the situation, but waiting for others to solve the many problems our society faces now? **Where do we stand at present? Where do we want to be in future?**

2.6. Channels of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace

- 2.6.1. “If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering” (Mt 5:23-24). “How often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times? Jesus answered, ‘Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times...And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart’ (Mt 18:21-22.35). “Evangelization today takes the name of reconciliation” (AM 174).
- 2.6.2. “True and lasting success is attained through the gift of ourselves, of our intellectual abilities and our entrepreneurial skills, since a ‘liveable’ or truly human economic development requires the principle of gratuitousness as an expression of fraternity and the logic of gift. Concretely, in economic activity, peacemakers are those who establish bonds of fairness with their colleagues, workers, clients, and consumers. They engage in economic activity for the sake of the common good and they experience this commitment as something transcending self-interest... True peacemakers are those who love, defend and promote human life in all its dimensions, personal, communitarian and transcendent. Life in its fullness is the height of peace” (Benedict XVI cited by the ZCBC in their Letter: ‘Restoration and Peace in Zimbabwe’)
- 2.6.3. In the Synod prayer we pray that we be “channels of reconciliation, justice and peace”. The country is very much in need of the three things. We are hungry for reconciliation and believe that it is possible to forgive and be reconciled with the help of agents of reconciliation.
- 2.6.4. In the responses people expressed their being victims of injustice, citing political violence and domestic violence (Q 1.3). There are many good suggestions on how we all should try to bring reconciliation, forgiveness,

peace, justice to our society. We recognise that it is possible to forgive, though not easy at all. Traditional ways, prayer, dialogue, being ready to forgive and accept that something was wrong were suggested as ways to bring about reconciliation. As we are having a look at our way of being witnesses to Christ, we cannot forget this important aspect of our lives, if we want to be truly peacemakers, channels of justice and reconciliation. **Could we identify areas where there is need for reconciliation and suggest practical ways of going about it?**

2.6.5. Reconciliation among individuals and communities emerges from our reconciliation with God. (AM 19-21). True and lasting peace can only be attained from the author of peace who is Jesus. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you, not as the world gives do I give to you" (Jn 14:27). **Peace finds completion in acts of justice and reconciliation. How is the CCJP working in the different parishes and how can it help to bring about justice, peace and reconciliation in our communities?**

2.6.6. Serious efforts have been made to bring down the Social Teaching of the Church to the people. It is clear however that a lot still needs to be done. **How can we improve our knowledge of the STC and how can we inspire people to live by the teaching?**

2.7. Inculturation

2.7.1. As we have said before, quoting from Paul VI: "*Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new*" (EN 18). Ecclesia in Africa said about inculturation that: "is a movement towards full evangelization. *It seeks to dispose people to receive Jesus Christ in an integral manner. It touches them on the personal, cultural, economic and political levels so that they can live a holy life in total union with God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit*" (EA 62).

2.7.2. Our faith, our trust in Jesus/God is not very deep. The words Elijah addressed to the people of Israel on Mount Carmel, could be rightly applied to us: "How long do you mean to hobble first on one leg then on the other? If Yahweh is God, follow him; if Baal follow him" (1 Kings 18:21)

2.7.3. "*Inculturation includes two dimensions: on the one hand, 'the ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity' and, on the other, 'the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures'. The Synod considers inculturation an urgent priority in the life of the particular Churches, for a firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa. It is a 'requirement for evangelization', and 'a path towards full evangelization' and one of the greatest challenges for the Church on the Continent*" (EA 59)

2.7.4. The Church in Zimbabwe is said to be in a transition. The faith is not yet fully planted in the culture of the people and the culture has not yet been

fully evangelized. There still exists a dichotomy between certain traditional practices of our African culture(s) and the specific demands of the gospel message. There exists an unhealthy tension between the two of them.

- 2.7.5. There are many good values in our culture which are being threatened by what has been called a new form of colonization in which the Western culture and values have been introduced as the best. The respect for life, communitarian spirit, the value of the extended family and many other good values are being eroded and replaced by other values.
- 2.7.6. The provocative words of Bishop Sarpong are worthy reflecting on. He says“... the Church appears to be gaining a foothold in Africa... The increase of the number of Christians over the past years has been phenomenal. On Sundays our Churches are packed. Extra church activities -choirs, scripture unions, legion of Mary...- are seen everywhere... But I think it would be a sad mistake for us to be complacent. All this seems to me to be superficial. In fact Christianity and Christian conviction are only a skin-deep”.
- 2.7.7. The traditional worldview of our culture poses some challenges for the Christian worldview. This is evident in the different and sometimes confused understanding and dealing with issues of spirits, ancestors, witchcraft. In our diocese, the names Tsikamutanda, Sikapeyili, Bhadlaza, Chikanga remind us of very unpleasant experiences with a lot of harm and confusion caused to our communities (see our Bishop’s letter on this issue)
- 2.7.8. From the answers, it is clear that, generally, people believe in the existence of bad spirits, witchcraft, tikoloshis and charms and that they fear them. Our tradition and culture provides answers for all circumstances of our life, conception, birth, growth, marriage, sickness, death. This gives us “security”.
- 2.7.9. When we become Christians, that security we find in our tradition disappears and therefore, if we are in trouble, we go back to those things or persons who can give us “answers” to reasons and causes for our troubles, even if those answers might not solve the problem. We are looking for security, for something tangible, like the Israelites believing in Baal, or other false deities, they were “visible” “tangible”, while God is invisible, and he is asking us to trust Him with all our heart. And so we still go to the so called “prophets”, or agree to attend the Sikapeyili ceremonies, or even we are the ones calling them, though that might bring division, enmities to the community.
- 2.7.10. What does the Church say about these ‘realities’ as experienced by people? Are they simply dismissed as non-existent and those who believe them as having little faith? Are there questions that our faith cannot

answer? If so, could they be identified and reasons sought as to why it is like that?

- 2.7.11. What can we do to get rid of fear, on the one hand, and on the other, to bring our faith to the many good aspects of our culture and traditions? Authentic inculturation will liberate the people from the life of double standards. We desire that time when a Christian will be an authentic and happy believer with no dichotomy between what he/she believes and what he/she practises. Jesus came to free us from sin and death, and in the process, make us a new creation, but truly incarnated in the place and society in which we are living.
- 2.7.12. This, of course, is not an easy path, but we have to be bold enough to try to walk along it, discarding/rejecting what is contrary to our faith, but at the same time, bringing the good things of our traditional ways of thinking and acting, to our ways of practising our faith. Hence we have to look, for example, at the way we celebrate the liturgy and all the sacraments, like marriage, or ceremonies related to death, burial, umbuyiso/malila/ makande, memorial services. Can we continue living double lives? How long? Something has to be done. What is it? Serious dialogue marked by honesty, openness and humility is needed. We need a clear understanding on all these points.
- 2.7.13. I.S. Mbiti has noted (“African Religions and Philosophy”) that religion for Africans is a question of existence or being. Long before his/her birth African’s life is immersed in religious activities, through his/her parents, and later on continue long after his/her death, through burial and funeral rites and other rituals linked to his/her death. “Wherever the African is, there is his religion; he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony and if he is educated, he takes his religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament” (page 15).
- 2.7.14. Will the time come when it could be said of an African Christian that his/her Christian religion touch all the aspects of his/her life so much that it accompanies him/her wherever he/she goes?. Therefore, inculturation involves all our life, not just the liturgy, important as it is this field, but it is to express our faith in a true Christian and African way, and from there, to apply this to all aspects of our life.

What needs to be done to get to this vision of an African Christian? Nearly all this is reflected on the DPP, (Objective 2. Goal 4) but, it seems, we haven’t gone very far in the past three years. Are there new proposals?

2.8. Samaritan Church concerned with the poor

- 2.8.1. “I have indeed seen the misery of my people... I have heard them crying for help...Yes I am well aware of their sufferings” (Ex 3:7).That was the way God talked to Moses before sending him to Pharaoh to set the people of Israel free and on the way to the promised land. And when Jesus started his ministry he said: “The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the Good News to the afflicted...” (Luke 4:18-19). Following the teaching and example of Jesus, the Church has always stood by the poor, making it her special preference.
- 2.8.2. There are many types of poverty:
- *Economic*, or lack of means to have a dignified life. This includes lack of adequate food, clothes, shelter, education, health facilities, and others. Even at this level there are many degrees, before reaching the extreme poverty, where a person lacks absolutely everything and is at the point of death, due to hunger, and other things needed to survive
 - *Social*, or exclusion from the society, due to many factors leading to that, to be marginalised: the orphans, the poor, the minority tribes, with a very low standard of education, those suffering from some diseases like AIDS, or some terminal disease, are, very often, excluded
 - *Psychological*, or the problems that some people find due to some deficiencies: the crippled, blind, albinos, mentally retarded, and others
 - *Spiritual*, lacking the fundamental knowledge of God’s love for each one of us, or the fundamental rights every person has by birth
- 2.8.3. Without going into many details, the fact is that many people in our diocese are poor, and some, very poor, even extremely poor. They lack everything, or nearly everything, especially if they lack LOVE, when *nobody cares*. The parable of the Good Samaritan is repeated again and again among us, with so many of us “*passing by on the other side*” (Luke 10:31-32).
- 2.8.4. And yet, to be credible, the Church has to show love, care, solidarity through all her members, towards those who are in need of material or spiritual things.
- 2.8.5. “Our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine” (1 John 3:18) “Anyone who says ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, is a liar, since whoever does not love the brother whom he can see cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20) “If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them: ‘I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty, without giving them these bare necessities, then what good is that? In the same way faith: if good deeds do not go with it, it is quite dead” (James 2:15-17) At the end we shall be judged according to the help given to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoners (cf. Mt 25:31-46)
- 2.8.6. “Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and

enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid....It means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter” (EG 187-188).

2.8.7. All of us in the Church and in society regardless of our position have an evangelical obligation to take care of the poor and the vulnerable (EG 201).

2.8.8. In our answers to Q 2 we notice that our understanding of poverty, or the way we answered to that question was a bit confused, but mainly we see that:

- **Caritas committees, or SSVP conferences, are not everywhere established**
- **Even where they exist, some say that they are not functioning well everywhere**
- **We depend too much on outside donors to help people in need. Is it that we cannot offer more of our time, support, work, money, above all, LOVE to those in need?**
- **Charity and all that involves, should be the work and concern of everybody, not just those committees mentioned, or even Lubhancho, OAH at Dete, or other similar institutions**
- **At times we restrict our help to those of our Church only. Is that correct, even if the other churches do that?**
- **Where things seem to work better is in the SCCs, though there is always room for improvement.**
- **And we shouldn't forget that the poor have to be evangelized as well, not just given material help, without caring for their spiritual life. “He has anointed me to bring the Good News to the afflicted...” (Luke 4:18-19) ” Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard... the Good News is proclaimed to the poor”(Luke 7:22)**

What can we suggest on this issue?

3. ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

- 3.1. We are called by God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And we are called within the Church, so that we can truly say as S. Cyprian: “Nobody can have God as a Father if he/she doesn't have the Church as a Mother”
- 3.2. We have been born as children of God within the Church and it is within the Church that we grow. From the beginning (cf Acts 2) the Holy Spirit, with his power and strength brings about the Church and sustains her, around Mary the mother of the Lord, renewing and guiding her continuously.

- 3.3. The Church in essence is a mystery, hence her models and images are unlimited. The Church is called “the Flock of Christ”, “the Vine of God”, “the People of God”, the Church as ‘Our Mother”, “the Body of Christ”, “the Spiritual Building”, “the Holy City”, “the Family of God”, “Temple of the Holy Spirit”, “the Bride of Christ” “the House in which God dwells with us”, “the First fruits of the Kingdom to come”. All images are complementing each other.
- 3.4. If we were to choose a predominant image that connects all the elements, we would use that of the image of Church as Communion. The ecclesiology of communion is a central and fundamental concept in the documents of Vat II.
- 3.5. The Church as communion has two dimensions:
- The communion of each Christian with God, brought about by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit (God is a mystery of communion within himself)
 - The communion of all Christians with one another, in this world and the next
- 3.6. “Ecclesial communion is more precisely likened to an ‘organic’ communion, analogous to that of a living and functioning body. In fact, at one and the same time it is characterized by a *diversity* and a *complementarity* of vocations and states of life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities. Because of this diversity and complementarity every member of the faithful is seen *in relation to the whole body* and offers a *totally unique contribution* on behalf of the whole body” (Christifideles Laici 20)
- 3.7. In virtue of our Baptism we all *are equal in dignity*, we are all brothers and sisters, we are all the Church, but we are all *co-responsible* for one another, so that we collaborate in everything in the way we can and are called to.
- 3.8. In our diocese, and especially after the First Synod for Africa, the predominant image and guiding idea for evangelization has been the Church as “The Family of God” We are all very familiar with the logo of our diocese, where those words appear. This image emphasizes:
- Care for others
 - Solidarity
 - Warmth in human relations
 - Acceptance
 - Dialogue
 - Trust

This image doesn’t exclude what has been said about ecclesial communion; in fact, it enhances it and, if well lived, will avoid all types of tribalism among ourselves.

3.9. Ministries

- 3.9.1. Within a family and promoting the ecclesial communion, where every person is needed and all skills contribute to the well being of the rest, we have to:

- Promote different lay ministries (Communion givers, Sunday service leaders, Catechists, Readers, Preachers, care for the sick, youth advisors, MC animators, funeral leaders, choir masters, etc.) in all parishes and centres
- Give adequate formation to all those taking up different ministries
- Conduct workshops on the mystery of the Church and the need for all to use their talents and gifts of the Spirit
- Proper formation and establishment of associations at all parishes

Do we live everywhere this spirit of collaboration and sharing in our parishes and centres?

Do we have any suggestion for the coming Synod?

3.10. Different vocations

3.10.1. In the Church there are many vocations, to the priesthood and the religious life. We are very grateful to God for all the priests and religious we have received from Him in the past 50 years. But we have to grow more in this direction. Some suggestions in the DPP were:

- Holding pre-seminary workshops at zonal and parish levels
- Vocation talks (or workshops) at different levels
- Visits to minor seminary and material care from the communities

Would you add anything else? Is this working well?

3.11. Structures

3.11.1. We have in our diocese: Parishes/Missions (the larger Missions have also other bodies, like clusters/zones of nearby centres, with their councils at that level), with their Pastoral Councils; Deaneries; Zonal Pastoral Councils; Diocesan Pastoral Council, and, of course, the Presbyterate and now, in formation, the Council of the Laity, apart from the other structures for the Youth and Associations. All these bodies are a way of exercising the Ecclesial Communion, or to take care of the whole family. Even the coming Synod is another expression of the Ecclesial communion.

3.11.2. These structures are there, but we find, at times, that not all people are ready to take part, and to work in these bodies. Some are very passive when they attend, especially the DPC, in which lay, religious and clergy come together to give advice to the Bishop. This body should be a more effective tool in the consultation, planning and carrying out the plans in the diocese.

Which are the reasons for this passivity or inaction? What can be done to revive all the present structures if they are not working well?

3.12. The family of God must become self-reliant

- 3.12.1. Many Church activities are still dependent on foreign aid. Ecclesia in Africa stressed how “It is necessary for each Christian community to be organized in such a way that it is able to provide for its own needs as far as possible. Besides qualified personnel, evangelization requires material and financial means” (EA 104)
- 3.12.2. As a family, the family of God, we all have the responsibility of looking for the means the family needs to live and to carry out all the work which should be done.
- 3.12.3. We all know how hard life is in many places for many people, and how generous many faithful are in their contribution to the running of the Church, and yet we are still very far from being self-supporting financially. We need to revise our commitment in the areas of:
- Establishment and training of Finance Committees or Councils (cf c 537)
 - Isondlo-Mtulo-Unsupo, as well as Sunday collection
 - Maintenance and other related committees
 - Making use of the resource booklet “Called to witness...Called to serve”
 - Identifying of needs (budget)
 - Transparency in the use of money by all members of the Church
 - **Other suggestions**

4. WORSHIP/LITURGY

- 4.1. “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42)
 From the very beginning of Christian history, the brothers and sisters have believed that Christ is with them always. He continues to offer them the fruits of His mighty saving deeds, inviting them to share in His dying and rising by their lives of work, service, and suffering. Each time that they assemble, especially for the celebration of the Eucharist, praying through Him, and with Him, and in Him, they bring His life and saving power to bear fruit in their own lives.
 “Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree” (SC 7).
 The Liturgy is an action of the whole Christ. Heaven and earth are united.
“For the liturgy, through which the work of our redemption is accomplished, most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church...the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows” (S.C 10).

4.2. General Principles for Liturgy

4.2.1. The Vatican Council tried to address the following points: lack of understanding of the words used in the liturgy on the part of most people, lack of involvement in the action of the liturgy on the part of the laity, and lack of clarity and simplicity of the words and liturgical actions. To address these problems we need:

4.2.2. Active Participation

The Council promoted the full and active participation of the faithful in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The renewal of external forms was to make it easier to enter into the inner depth of the mystery, a personal encounter with the Lord, present in the Eucharist.

"Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of liturgy, and which the Christian people, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people" (1Pet.2:9,) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism" (SC. 14).

"Active participation" has been confused with "external activity". "Active" participation has sometimes been applied in an activist way. The liturgy is primarily Christ's saving action, in which we are called to participate. We participate first with mind and heart and then with bodily expressions. Internal participation must have priority over bodily participation. It is when the mind and heart are connected with the body that Christ touches and empowers us to respond to his grace.

Liturgy is the Church's ritual worship offered by the Church to God, in and through which Christ acts. There is a danger of obscuring this true nature of the Church's worship when liturgy is prepared and celebrated as if it is something that belongs to us as individuals or as particular communities. Liturgy must not have any elements of "performance" done to "entertain" ourselves or other people. All our songs, prayers, dances are supposed to be a fitting response to God who also speaks to us in the Liturgy.

Where are we in this regard?

4.3. Silence

In the name of "active participation" there is one aspect of the Liturgy of Mass that is often sadly lacking in many celebrations, namely, Sacred Silence. According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, there are numerous times during the Mass when silence is to be observed. These include but are not limited to, after each reading (to reflect on its meaning), after the sermon/homily, and after receiving Communion.

We are a singing and dancing people, and in most of our communities today periods of silence are either absent or shortened. The appreciation and cultivation of silence would help us to even appreciate more what we sing and dance to. Without

meaningful silence some external movements and gestures could turn into distractions.

Silence is a proper response before the mystery of God's presence. As such, it is a proper response to Mass, to the mystery of God's presence. In silence we are able to see what is truly before us and comprehend the true meaning of things. This is the reason why the Church calls for silence during the liturgy of the Mass. Silence intensifies our experience of the reality that is before us. In order to appreciate more the Mass and to profit from it silence has to be given its due place.

Are there any points that are worthy discussing on the topic? Do we have any practical suggestions for discussion in the synod?

4.4. Liturgical Formation

"With zeal and patience pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful and also their active participation, internal and external, taking into account their age, condition, and way of life and standards of religious culture..." (SC 19).

The faithful fulfil their liturgical role by making that internal and external, full, conscious and active participation which is demanded by the nature of the liturgy itself. This is a right and duty of the people of God (SC 112).

The Bishops of Zimbabwe said that: "A liturgical committee should be established in every parish. Among its duties is to ensure that the faithful and priests participate in the Eucharistic celebration according to those tasks that are legitimately theirs" (NPD 5.1).

In our Diocesan Pastoral Plan (goal no.4) we pledged to promote the liturgical committees in each parish. Where are we in this regard?

- 4.4.1. Related to this is the place of *Sacred Music*. Its purpose is to give glory to God and to sanctify the people. The first and most urgent condition which the Church imposes in regard to her music is that it be in conformity with the place, time, and purpose of Divine worship; that it be sacred and not profane. Any form of music that just affects the senses and nerves, distracts people from the spirit of prayer and instead reminds them of a concert should not have place in the liturgy.

Where do we stand in terms of the quality of our music? Are Composers given enough attention and formation? Do you have any suggestions for growth and improvement?

When and how do we form our people liturgically? Could there be a catechesis in liturgy that is well defined? Are we satisfied with the level of understanding of the liturgy and the Mass by the faithful? Practical suggestions for discussion are needed.

4.5. Ordained Ministers

Ordained ministers are servants of the Sacred Liturgy. They carry out the liturgical tasks at Christ's command and they perform liturgical duties in the name of Christ. The lay members of Christ's faithful entrust themselves to the ordained ministers relying on them to fulfil with fidelity those sacred functions that the Church intends. **Are there any points that need attention on this area?**

4.6. Lay Ministers

We have many Lay Ministers of the Liturgy: Sunday Service Leaders, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Readers, Preachers, Funeral Leaders and many others. The Lay Christian Ministers who assist at liturgical celebrations should be well chosen. It must be those whose Christian life and morals are outstanding. They must receive a liturgical formation.

Where do we stand on this as a diocese? Is there any area that needs attention?

4.7. Sacraments

4.7.1. In Vatican II's Constitution on the Church, we read the following: "It is through the sacraments and the exercise of virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation" (LG NO. 11). This means that the universal priesthood is exercised especially through the sacraments, which play a fundamental role in Christian Life.

The significant association of "sacraments" with "virtues" shows that the sacramental life cannot be reduced to a set of words and ritual gestures: the sacraments are expressions of faith, hope and love. On the other hand, it emphasizes that the development of these virtues and all others in the Christian life arises from the sacramental worship and has its natural continuation in the flourishing of Christian life.

4.7.2. The seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life (CCC 1210). "It is therefore, of greatest importance that the faithful should understand the sacramental signs, and should eagerly frequent those sacraments which were instituted to nourish the Christian faith" (SC 59).

Our synod gives us a wonderful opportunity to look at our understanding and celebration of the Sacraments and find ways of improving these.

4.8. **Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist**

4.8.1. **Baptism**

Christian life begins with the grace of Baptism. Baptism is the door through which God acts in human persons to unite them to Himself in Christ and the Church. It makes them share in redemption. God infuses "new life" into them. He makes them part of the communion of saints. Baptism opens the way to the other sacraments, which serve to develop Christian life fully. For this reason Baptism is life, a rebirth by which people become children of God. We need to look especially to these points:

- **Preparation of baptism (see what has been said about it under *catechesis*)**
- **Celebration: How do we celebrate the baptism in our communities? As mentioned before: "The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (R.C.I.A.) is not only now Church policy, but a superb channel of evangelization, and a most suitable form of welcoming adults into the Christian fold". Where do we stand as a diocese with regards to this reality?**
- **Infant Baptism: Do we have a common policy on this? Do we have any Catechesis? What do we suggest?**

4.8.2. Confirmation

"By the Sacrament of Confirmation the baptized faithful are more perfectly bound to the Church and are endowed with the special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread the faith by word and deed" (CCC 1316). All Christians, because of their Baptism and Confirmation, are called to witness and to announce the Word of God, that is, all Christians are "consecrated for mission ". We examine ourselves in the following:

- **Preparation: How long should the catechesis of Confirmation take? Do we have any syllabus?**
- **Age: At what age should people be confirmed?**
- **Actual celebration: Are the communities involved, or simply they look at the way they should receive the Bishop?**

4.8.3. The Eucharist

The Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism, and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation, participate with the whole community in Lord's own sacrifice by the means of the Eucharist. (CCC 1322).

The Eucharist is:

- The bond of unity.
- Prevents us from sin
- Leads us to love our brothers and sisters

The Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, in which the sacrifice of the Cross is forever perpetuated, is the

summit and the source of all worship and Christian life. By means of it the unity of God's people is signified and brought about, and the building up of the Body of Christ is perfected. The other sacraments and all the apostolic works of Christ are bound up with, and directed to, the Blessed Eucharist (cf.SC 47).

Does our celebration of the Eucharist (or Sunday Service without a priest) sufficiently nourish the people? If not, what are they missing? Are people well oriented towards the Catholic way of celebration? Practical suggestions!

- 4.8.3.1. It is important to remember that the two tables of the Word and of the Eucharist are connected but the first leads to the other which is the most important one.

How do we understand that? Is it reflected in the way we worship? Any practical suggestions?

This sacrament is also to be adored not only to be received. In our DPP (1.4.4) it is said that we should revive adoration and benediction in all parishes/missions. Has it been done?

4.8.4. Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation and Anointing

4.8.4.1. Reconciliation

"If we say, 'We have no sin', we are deceiving ourselves and the truth has no place in us" (1Jn 1:8). The forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism is conferred by a particular sacrament called the sacrament of conversion, confession, penance or reconciliation (CCC1486).

Vatican II considered sin in its twofold aspect as an offence against God and a wound to the Church, the Body of Christ: "Those who approach the Sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offence against Him. They are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example and by prayer seeks their conversion" (LG 11).

Many have lost the sense of sin. It is evident in the numbers of people going for confessions. We have to find ways of making people aware that we all need healing and reconciliation with God and others.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation involves an act of real conversion (metanoia). With God's help we can be healed and reconciled with God and others. What can be done to improve the practice of this Sacrament? Can we have fixed times for Penitential services especially during Lent and Advent? How best can we make it an integral sacrament in which reconciliation at community level is also attained? Which catechesis do we have on this sacrament?

4.8.4.2. The Anointing of the Sick

Jesus was always very close to the sick and the bereaved. Our Christian communities should also be very close to the sick and those in grief.

“The Church believes and confesses that among the seven sacraments there is one especially intended to strengthen those who are being tried by illness, the anointing of the Sick” (CCC. 1511). With the Sacrament of Anointing she has given and continues to give them the healing touch of Christ's own mercy.

One of the serious challenges we are faced with today in our diocese is the proliferation of healing sects and self-proclaimed prophets and healers. After receiving the Eucharist and, at times even after receiving the anointing of the sick, some people still go to seek healing from these people. Is it a question of weak faith, of not accepting the cross, or there is something deeper which they require and the Church seems not to offer? Is it a lack of understanding of the sacraments?

We have to look at these points

- **Attention to sick people in our communities**
- **How do we minister to sick people who cannot receive sacraments?**
- **Celebration of the day of the Sick**
- **Celebration of the Sacrament**
- **Catechesis on this sacrament**
- **Other suggestions**

4.8.4.3. *Death and burial*

Are we satisfied with the way we celebrate the funeral services in the absence of a priest? Remember what was mentioned under inculturation about *uMbuyiso, Makande, Malila*

4.8.5. Sacraments of service to the church: Priesthood and Matrimony

4.8.5.1. The Priesthood

The main mission of a priest in the Church is to serve in Christ's name as a good shepherd. This means

- To preach
- To offer the sacrifice and to administer the other sacraments
- To promote fraternal communion in the community
- A priest should be a man of God and a brother among brothers, with the “smell of the sheep”

4.8.5.1.1. "By divine institution some of Christ's faithful are, through the Sacrament of Order, marked with an indelible character and are thus constituted sacred ministers: thereby they are

consecrated and deputed so that, each according to his own grade, they fulfil, in the person of Christ the head, the office of his teaching, sanctifying and ruling, and so they nourish the people of God" (c. 1008).

The Bishops of Zimbabwe say "A priest by his calling is essentially a spiritual man, a person dedicated to God and committed to the people entrusted to his care. Hence the centre of his life is the Holy Mass; he is expected to pray the Divine Office every day, to do his daily meditation and spiritual reading" (NPD 6).

The priest should have a fatherly/motherly heart towards all people under his care, Catholics and non Catholics

As this is a time of renewal we need to ask ourselves how the priesthood in our diocese is viewed by the faithful. Which are the areas of renewal which may be needed in this field?

4.8.5.1.2. Matrimony

"Christian Spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony by which they signify and share in the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church, (cf. Eph 5:3) Christian married couples help one another to attain holiness in their married life and by the rearing of their children " (LG. 11).

- **Preparation: How are we doing it: Are we satisfied with the way we are doing it?**
- **Celebration. Do we prepare and celebrate well this sacrament?**
- **Accompaniment: How do we help married couples?**

The sacrament of marriage is the foundation of family. "The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called "the domestic Church," a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity" (CCC 1666).

As a diocese we pledged in our diocesan pastoral plan to:

- Establish Marriage Committees in all parishes and form the members
- To conduct marriage renewal courses and celebrate marriage renewal ceremonies
- To revive and introduce marriage encounter
- To develop a program to help young couples
- To offer support to single parents

4.8.5.1.3. From the answers given to Q 7, 7-14 we see that something has been done on the points suggested by the DPP, but a lot remains to be done.

We have a good number of people in our communities who are not in full sacramental life because of their irregular marriages. Some are held back by issues of 'lobola'. Others take years to raise money for a big wedding. Some seem not to mind very much whether they are in sacramental communion or not? Some make an effort to marry in Church so that they can put on the uniform of the association, but, it seems, for no other reason.

We need a deep study of all these issues and the reasons behind. Could the synod try to find some answers to these points?

Many married young people are facing serious difficulties in their marriage. Unfaithfulness, and the culture of having an unofficial second wife, is becoming rife. This situation needs a pastoral response and a synod is a good time for that.

4.9. Other issues related to Worship/Liturgy

4.9.1. Sunday: The Day of the Lord

"Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church" (CCC 2177). "The first precept of the Church ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.") requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord." (CCC 2042)

Those who have received the grace of faith in the Risen Lord cannot fail to grasp the significance of this day of the week with the same deep emotion which led Saint Jerome to say: 'Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, it is the day of Christians, it is our day' (cf Dies Domini 2).

The pastors of souls are obliged to help Christians to make Sundays;

- A time for everyone to celebrate actively
- A time of encounter with the risen Lord in the word and the Eucharist
- A time of being strengthened in the Christian hope
- A time of "grateful remembering"
- A time of experiencing fellowship
- A time of renewal for mission
- A time of sharing with the poor

4.9.2. The Sunday obligation is responded to by many with half-heartedness and even negligence. Sometimes you find the majority of Christians being in a

community choosing to have a civil meeting on Sunday when there are other options. One can easily remain home entertaining visitors and abscond Sunday Mass/service.

How is it that when there is a funeral, people find time to do other things but they do not get time to go to Church? We must be witnesses of our faith, to stand for what we believe in, even in the face of civil and traditional authorities, and obligations. **What practical suggestions can you offer in this area?**

- 4.9.3. The preparation of the Sunday Mass or service is of paramount importance. "Given the nature of Sunday Mass and its importance in the lives of the faithful, it must be prepared with special care...efforts must be made to ensure that the celebration has festive character appropriate to the day commemorating the Lord's Resurrection. To this end, it is important to devote attention to the songs used by the assembly..." (DD 50).

"Sundays should also give the faithful an opportunity to devote themselves to works of mercy, charity and apostolate..., The Sunday Eucharist, therefore does not absolve the faithful from the duties of charity, but on the contrary commits them even more..." (DD 69).

How can we live and celebrate our faith on the day of the Lord in our diocese?

4.10. Prayer

The Catechism of the Church summarizes the Catholic's response to the mystery of faith: "This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer" (CCC 2558).

4.10.1. The Lord's Prayer

The disciples, having requested that the Lord teaches them how to pray, were taught by him what is called "the Lord's prayer". In it we learn the essentials about prayer, that in prayer we are:

- In God's presence, in the presence of a loving Father
- We should start by praising him and thanking him
- Accepting his will
- Asking for our needs, after we accept his will upon us
- We have to listen to him. Prayer is a dialogue with God
- We allow the Word of God and the Holy spirit to guide our lives

- 4.10.1.1. Sometimes it helps to pray with others (prayer groups) and we can also use the *prayer of the Church* especially morning and evening, if

at all possible. This prayer is founded on the psalms which are a good way of praying to God.

Do Christians as individuals and as families dedicate some time to prayer?

Sometimes there are retreats for different groups. Do people make use of them?

4.11. Devotional life of the Church

4.11.1. In addition to the sacraments, instituted by Christ, are many sacramentals, sacred signs (rituals or objects) that derive their power from the prayer of the Church. They involve prayer accompanied by the sign of the cross or other signs. Important examples are blessings (which dedicate a place or thing to sacred usage, or place a person under God's protection), sacred medals, holy water, rosaries, icons, holy vessels for Mass, and crucifixes.

4.11.2. Popular devotions like veneration of relics of saints, pilgrimages (like *Maria Unchena*, or others), processions (including Eucharistic processions), the Way of the Cross, Holy Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, prayers for the dead, and the Rosary are found in our communities. Even though these are not strictly part of the liturgy, they are encouraged by the Church.

4.11.3. Sacramentals, like Blessed Salt, Holy Water, Medals, etc., are not to be used superstitiously as having Self-contained Power, but they channel one's faith toward Jesus. As with the use of Sacraments, much depends on the faith and devotion of the person using them. *This faith must be Jesus-centred*, as was the faith of the blind man in John 9. The man had Faith in Jesus, not in the mud and spittle used by Jesus to heal him.

4.11.4. "Superstition is the deviation of religious feeling and of the practices this feeling imposes. It can even affect the worship we offer the true God, e.g., when one attributes an importance in some way magical to certain practices otherwise lawful or necessary. To attribute the efficacy of prayers or of sacramental a sign to their mere external performance, apart from the interior dispositions that they demand, is to fall into superstition. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2111)

Do we have a mature devotional life in the diocese, in knowledge and practice? Which areas may need improvement or strengthening?

