



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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Dear People of God,

The Jubilee Year 2025, themed 'Pilgrims of Hope,' offers us a beautiful moment to highlight and celebrate the progress of our Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod.

As we embark on this Jubilee Year of Hope, we are called to journey together as the Pilgrim People of God, continuing to develop the graces and skills of being a truly listening Church. Walking together in the joys and challenges of life opens the Holy Doors of our hearts to receive God's gifts, and receive our neighbours, through the Holy Spirit.

The first Liturgy of the Eucharist in our Diocese was celebrated in the late 1700s by Spanish priests in Yuqout on Nootka Island, among the Mowachaht / Muchalaht First Nations. From those beginnings through to today, there has been a great diversity of cultures and people in encounter with God's word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

The first peoples indigenous to these lands, along with newcomers from many cultures, all have hope for their lives, communities, and descendants. These hopes are complex, often even contradictory and divisive. As Timothy Cardinal Radcliffe O.P. reflected on in his October 2021 pre-synod retreat for the Synod 2021-2024 Assembly:

"So we gather in hope for the Church and for humanity. But here is the difficulty: we have contradictory hopes! So how can we hope together? In this we are just like the disciples. The mother of James and John hoped they would sit on the left and the right of the Lord in glory and so displace Peter; there is rivalry even within the closest circle of Jesus' friends. Judas probably hoped for a rebellion that would throw out the Romans. Some of them probably just hoped not to get killed. But they walk on together. So what shared hope can we have at this synod?"¹

I, as the Bishop, along with priests, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, and pastoral administrators, must remain close to the people in our communities, listening to them and walking alongside them. Only together can we recognize effective ways to bring the good news and "announce the year of God's favour" (Luke 4: 18-19).

Since September 2023, through Listening Circles for parishioners, catechists, and family camp participants, and at the October 2024 Diocesan Faith Days, the Holy Spirit has affirmed the sacred gift of listening to one another and to God's word.

For the people who participated in these Listening Circles, a profound truth emerged: *"I belong. My life and faith journey matter to God and to my Church."* Moreover, many have felt inspired to say, *"I have something to share, and it is both important and sacred."*

On November 30, 2024, the Feast of St. Andrew (Apostle and martyr), Listening Facilitators from each parish, the Council of Priests, and the Bishop's Advisory Council gathered in prayer and discernment to reflect on the blueprint for the proclamation and ministry of Jesus—and, by extension, the blueprint of how the Church must look, listen, learn, and love:

¹ Timothy Cardinal Radcliffe O.P., *Listening Together: Meditations on Synodality* (Liturgical Press, 2024), 7–8.



He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”*

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21)

From this scripture passage, the group suggested dozens of possible questions that could be explored in Listening Circles. Bishop Gary and the Synod Team met many times over the following weeks to review the questions that were proposed, listen to the Holy Spirit, and discern the questions to be used in the first cycle of the Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod. Eventually, the dozens of suggestions condensed down to two questions that captured the essence of almost all the questions proposed at the Plenary, either implicitly or explicitly.

These final questions—along with an optional opening question—will serve as the foundation of our Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod in 2025, guiding each member of the faithful to walk with greater hope throughout the Jubilee Year, and anchoring their focus on Jesus, the Anointed One:

Optional Opening Question: What is a story from your own journey of faith and life that you would like to share?

Question 1: What is your experience/connection with Christ, the Anointed One, in your faith journey?

Question 2: How have you experienced blessings and hope in your life, in your parish, in your school, in your church, or in your family?

As we look forward to the Jubilee Year of Hope and the launch of the 2025 Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod cycle, we journey together as Pilgrims of Hope, united by faith in Jesus Christ, the Anointed One. Within this diocesan synodal journey, Cardinal Radcliffe’s profound question—“So what shared hope can we have?”—will come to light in due time. Together, we will embrace the sacred gift of listening to the Holy Spirit and to one another, guided by love as described in 1 John 4:18: “Perfect love casts out fear.”

I warmly invite everyone in the parishes of the Diocese of Victoria, our Catholic schools, and all people of goodwill to participate in the Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod. Your voice, your life, and your faith are vital to our shared journey as People of Hope, united in building a thriving community together.

In Trust and Listening Grace,

Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria

