

For our Gathering on Saturday 7th November, we will be framing our time together around the Emmaus Story and during the weeks of October we invite you to, like those early disciples, remember how Jesus, through the power of the Spirit, has been walking with us.

To help us in our 'remembering' we invited some of our companions who have accompanied us on our journey since May 2020 to share with us a message that gives us their personal insight on accompanying us on our journey and looks towards the future.

As followers of Jesus we are called to be a people who walk together with Jesus and that is the essence of the synodal Church that Pope Francis said is 'the path that God expects of the Church in the third millennium'.

Rafael Luciani, in his message to us, emphasises that a synodal Church is central to the vision of Pope Leo and he clearly identifies its key requirements: 'walking together as authentic synodality, by its very nature, requires listening and the participation of all the baptized'.

In the same way for our gathering to be authentic it requires the listening and participation of all our members.

Even if you are not able to participate in the Gathering, either in person or online, your 'promptings of the Spirit' as you listen to the messages are part of what the Spirit is saying to all of us.

No one's feedback will cover all that the Spirit is saying to us, but every word, sentence or paragraph is part of the communal message and will provide the foundation for our discernment.

We therefore warmly invite you to listen to the messages and to share your thoughts.

The messages will be available on our YouTube channel and each week we will upload a new group. There will also be a Feedback Form for the relevant week and to enable us to collate the feedback we invite you to use that form.

If you wish to access a PDF of the messages they will be available on our website. <https://www.scottishlaitynetwork.org.uk>

Week 1

Messages from: Omar Haramy, Alison Phipps, Hyab Yohannes and Khawla Badwan.

YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/3VSTofmNtaI>

Week 1 Feedback Form: <https://forms.gle/ejyNJtzzmaAKB3xi6>

Week 2

Messages from: Massimo Faggioli, Diarmuid O'Murchu, Phyllis Zagano, Tom O'Loughlin, Rafael Luciani and Tina Beattie.

YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/2JmiZBk21d8>

Week 1 Feedback Form: <https://forms.gle/RbSQJ7Q4F6Hw2Wyq6>

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Massimo Faggioli

Dear friends of the Scottish Laity Network.

Greetings from Rome where I am for a few days for a conference. I'm very happy to contribute in a very small way, in a way I can, to the reflection on the path and the very important work done by your network, which has been very important for me because in these last few years it gave me the opportunity to think more deeply about what was happening in the church.

I spoke with you Synodality, about Pope Francis, about the Pandemic about Pope Leo's pontificate.

It's been very important work because as I said to my students, when I was teaching from here virtually, just once yesterday, with this background in Rome here. I told them that apparently all of this is unchangeable and it never changes, but actually it has changed, it is changing and it will change. And this work of change needs the commitment and the work of networks of lay people who are committed or militant when it's needed in a responsible way as I've seen that you are doing in your work.

So I've been very fortunate that you asked me to be part of this and it has accompanied me in these last few years, it has made sense for me to be part of this in a very small way because it gave me a certain sense that what I was doing is important and it is received.

But this is just a small part of the big work that you've done which should be an example or even a model for other networks of lay Catholics around the world. So I really think that it's been important work, I hope and I'm sure that it will continue. And again, I am grateful that I could be part of that and I hope to see you again somewhere.

Good luck with your discernment, about the work of the group, and see you again.

From Massimo Faggioli from Rome goodbye.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Diarmuid O'Murchu

Greetings everybody. As you gather for your time of reflection and discernment.

This is not an easy time for any of us in the Catholic church are indeed in any of the other Christian denominations as we experience a time of great diminishment.

And yet out of that kind of dying process will emerge New Life in due course. Meanwhile I think what we've been called upon is to exercise a great deal of creativity and imagination in order to keep hope alive.

And one of the issues that's very troublesome and not that easy to speak about is the issue of clericalism. And by that, I mean the dominance of a particular clerical system, which has been an integral part of our church for so long and is now fading into historical past and will die out in due course.

What will replace it remains yet to be seen but I do believe it should be some new form of lay involvement because the church belongs primarily to lay people and sacraments belong primarily to the People of God.

And so how we begin to recreate a sense of church through community building, through networking and through exploring alternative ways of exercising our capacity for ritual making; because that's at the basis of all sacraments, we were born with this capacity for ritual making and how we translate it into action is indeed a big challenge for this time.

So creativity and imagination and also that deeper quality of dialogue, and conversation. Drawing on each other's gifts and talents and supporting each other as we explore new ways together.

May the wisdom of the Spirit guide us in that process.

Thank you.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Phyllis Zagona

Hi, I'm Phyllis Zagona. I'm happy to talk to you today about Women in Ministry the Way Forward.

You know, the Church, the People of God, has much to think and talk and pray about as the days ahead unfold. Synodality the oft-malign process of seeking the will of the Holy Spirit is key to decision-making. Yet synodality remains unevenly applied from continent to continent, country to country, diocese to diocese, even parish to parish. Would that the Holy Spirit give each a double portion.

All is not lost however, for people who hope and pray dearly that the hierarchy will listen to the voice of the Spirit as presented by the People of God on the topic of Women in Ministry.

Pope Francis led the way by changing Canon Law to include all laypeople as candidates for the installed ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist. The first two Lector and Acolyte are specific Liturgical Ministries that have been filled by men and women from place to place and time to time essentially on an ad hoc basis.

Now, since 2021, both women and men not on the path toward ordination may fill these roles to which they have been permanently installed.

Does this portend a smoother path for the restoration of ordained women Deacons?

The role of installed catechist can confuse the issue. However, the expanded role of the installed catechist goes beyond his, or her, responsibility to inform catechumens about the faith. As witness to the Gospel the installed catechist is a teacher beyond the classroom walls.

One wonders could the installed catechists someday receive preaching faculties from the Diocesan Bishop?

As the People of God remain walking together on the synodal path may we all recall that it was the Council of Trent in the 16th century that called for people who were permanently called to various vocations, specifically Lector, Acolyte and Deacon to perform those functions in the mass.

Could the sermon today lead to an acceptance of these Tridentine recommendations and include women as representatives of Christ in the Word and in the Liturgy.

We need to Pray.

And we need to Hope.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Tom O'Loughlin

Hello. I've always been intrigued by the name, the Scottish Laity network. My reason for this is that the word network, is a very profound word. In fact, it's one of the ways that many people believe we should translate the word, the ecclesia and the ecclesia is not just a gathering of people with a common interest.

Like, for instance, I belong to a group that's very interested in looking at maps, but it's just a common interest in something other than ourselves, maps, that brings us together and we only know each other at a very superficial level. But a network is people who are actually linking with one another because of who they are. They're forming something out of themselves that's greater than each of them individually and yet relates as individual to individual. A network is not a platoon, it's not a group, it's a web of people, all of whom, know one another and knowing one, another help one another and so can achieve a vision and the life that would be deprived to them as individuals.

Curiously and network isn't limited by a moment. Like you might form a network to solve a problem to study synodality, or you might form a network to get rid of a problem, for instance, clericalism, a network has its own existence.

And that's why we can talk about networks being made up of relationships and look at the language we use in the church, we use the language of relationships, we talk about one another as brother and sister and that's because we value one another precisely as a network

And if you want to understand the early Christian, you have to think of it as sets of networks. A network, indeed several of them, in Corinth. Another in Ephesus, another in Colossae another in Thessalonica. More further afield some in Africa, some back in Palestine,

And when we study how Paul talks about them Paul is thinking of them as a network of networks. In fact one scholar of early Christian texts, and how the texts were diffused, you can only understand that in terms of Network Theory calls it the Holy Internet.

On a network a network has its own value. Just being part of the network makes me as an individual richer and I through the network and my individuality it makes the other people richer.

And that's indeed the way we have to think about what we do when we are acting as a church. Because a network bonds itself together. That's why eating was so important to the early Christians and why eating is fundamental to what we call the Eucharist.

We eat together because this expresses our networking. And then eating together we thank the father in Jesus style. We break a loaf, we share a cup of wine and then, in being the network, we make the Christ present 'Where two or three are gathered in my name'. That's a small network. 'There am I in the midst of them'.

The Scottish Laity Network in choosing that name has touched on the very basic historical truth of ecclesiology and it has touched on one of the central mysteries of ecclesiology.

I hope the Scottish Laity Network realises what it's put his finger on and values itself precisely as a network.

At a time when our church buildings are emptying and when people cannot distinguish between a church, that church and a church building, the church as an institution, if we can think of ourselves as belonging to this network and that network we will not only rediscover discipleship in the network, we will celebrate meaningful worship of God.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Rafael Luciani

Rafael shared his article [Why Vatican II and synodality are the twin tasks of Leo's papacy](#)

Pope Francis devoted his 12-year pontificate to recovering synodality as a constitutive dimension of the church, rooted in the church's long historical tradition and matured by the reception of the Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology of the people of God. Pope Leo XIV appears to be increasingly focused on translating that vision into permanent forms of governance, participation and shared discernment through collegial decision-making bodies, particularly through organisms of participation such as pastoral councils.

This approach is significant since the fundamental question the Catholic Church faces today is no longer whether synodality matters, but how it is received and implemented as a constitutive mark of the whole church's life. Synodality is not an option anymore. It is essential and the church's way of proceeding in our day.

Thanks to various theological developments in recent decades, the Synod on Synodality and the Francis pontificate, synodality moved to the centre of contemporary ecclesiology and pastoral theology. For example, the project "Together" that I presented to Leo in August 2025 is the first project aiming to build a "global network of networks" promoting research, formation and international conferences on synodality. The initiative is being developed by the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in collaboration with the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) and the Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR).

Leo is revealing what may be the defining ecclesiological direction of his papacy. As a Pan-American pope whose ecclesial and pastoral identity is deeply rooted and defined by the Latin American church, he is signalling the emergence of a fifth phase in the reception of the Second Vatican Council. Francis inaugurated the fourth, after Paul VI launched the first, and John Paul II and Benedict XVI presided over the second and third. He appears to stand at the intersection of two unfinished, yet ongoing processes: the reception of the Second Vatican Council and the implementation of synodality as articulated during Francis' pontificate. His challenge is to bring together the memory of the Council and the future of synodality. This is the context in which Leo's pontificate unfolds.

The pope himself seems acutely aware of this ecclesial responsibility. Speaking to the College of Cardinals in January 2026, he insisted that mission and synodality are "deeply rooted in the Second Vatican Council and in the entire journey that has sprung from the Council," adding that "we can never emphasize enough the importance of continuing the journey that began with the Council." It is no coincidence that he chose to begin his weekly catechesis commenting on Vatican II, calling it the "guiding star" of the church, and explaining that "the term ekklesia is an assembly of people who recognize that they have

been summoned together". Therefore, for Leo, synodality is not a new ecclesial project separate from Vatican II, but a further stage in its reception.

On the evening of his election, he clearly spoke of the desire for "a synodal church, a church that walks." That phrase situated his pontificate within Francis' ecclesiological vision. Leo's subsequent interventions during his first year suggest that he wants synodality to reshape ecclesial governance in a sustainable way, balancing unity in diversity and diversity in unity, in a church of churches.

Such language is not accidental. Since the conclusion of Vatican II in 1965, the church has been engaged in understanding itself more deeply as a communion of faithful, of bishops and of churches: all the baptized, the people of God, walking together and participating in the life and mission of the church. Synodality further asks how participation of all, communal discernment, shared decision-making processes, and accountability should shape the everyday life of the Church. Leo has inherited the task of giving this vision clear institutional consistency. As he said to the participants of a conference in Camaldoli, Italy, in 2025, on the theme, "What kind of bishop in a synodal Church?": "walking together as authentic synodality, by its very nature, requires listening and the participation of all the baptized".

Francis had emphasized the participation of the entire people of God and repeatedly described synodality as "the path that God expects of the Church of the third millennium." A first step taken by Leo to implement this vision is his emphasis on what we can call episcopal collegial synodality rather than on ecclesial synodality, a concept that was particularly embraced and developed within the Latin American Church by the Latin American Episcopal Council. This was done more explicitly at the opening of the extraordinary consistory in January 2026.

To frame this discussion, it is important to recognize that Leo's pontificate is situated within the third phase of the Synod on Synodality (2025-2028), a period marked by the emergence of new ecclesiological and pastoral questions. As this phase develops, we will learn more about Leo's understanding of the relationship between the all, the some and the one — the entire people of God, the bishops and the ministry of the pope. Francis articulated these three subjects through a deliberative dynamic, practicing the exercise of the primacy (the one), alongside with the bishops (the some), but as part of the whole of the people of God (the all). This was achieved completely by Francis, when led the discerning, drafting and voting of the synod's final document with the whole synodal assembly and declaring it magisterium of the successor of Peter, fully implementing *Episcopalis communio*.

Leo's early pronouncements suggest that he sees this balance as the central challenge of the next phase of synodal reception. This is why so many of his speeches regularly return to themes such as consultation, reciprocal listening, communal discernment and shared decision making-taking processes as a style that should be assumed at all levels and by all people in the church. These are not merely spiritual nor methodological attitudes. They are part of a constitutive synodal church through which participation of all and authority of some can be integrated without diminishing either.

To achieve this, a concept emerging from Leo's addresses is what we called in the synod's final document relational conversion. Speaking at St. John Lateran, he described listening as a capacity that allows the church not only to respond to the faithful, but also to anticipate their needs and expectations. Such language points toward a model of authority that is exercised as a service to all through reciprocal listening rather than unilateral action. This is something we can see in his own personal style, since he was bishop in Peru. In fact, during the Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies, Leo stated that "being a synodal church means recognizing that truth is not possessed but sought together." Such a brief affirmation captures the theological foundation of his vision.

This perspective mirrors one of Francis' most consequential ecclesiological insights. In his 2021 address launching the synodal process in the Diocese of Rome, Francis insisted that synodality is neither a slogan nor a temporary initiative but rather expresses "the nature of the church, her form, her style, her mission."

What appears in Leo's early pontificate is an effort to operationalize that vision. Leo began his pontificate in the midst of the third phase of the synod, dedicated to implementation and reception. As a result, his focus is not necessarily the what of synodality but how it can be concretely embodied in the Church's structures. Consequently, Leo's regular emphasis on pastoral councils, diocesan consultative bodies, and synodal teams should be understood in that context. He has consistently argued that these structures cannot become merely bureaucratic mechanisms. They must be real spaces of listening, discernment, and shared decision making and taking processes.

For Leo the task is not simply to preserve Francis' legacy but to determine whether the ecclesiological vision of Vatican II matured throughout the process of the Synod on Synodality can become the ordinary way of proceeding and being church. Leo's challenge will be to demonstrate that a synodal church can also be a governable church, and strengthening collegial synodality will be a major step forward in that regard. All of this is moving toward new ways of understanding and embodying ecclesial synodality, whose contours will likely become clearer in the ecclesial assembly of October 2028 in Rome.

The implications of synodality for institutional life are still being defined, and many questions concerning authority, participation, and decision-making remain unresolved. The historical significance of Leo's pontificate may ultimately lie in his ability to hold together realities that are often presented as antagonistic, such tradition and reform, or primacy, collegiality, and participation of all.

The starting question for Pope Leo XIV is not whether the Church should become synodal. That was already answered by the XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The church is constitutively synodal by nature. His is a pontificate tasked with bridging the memory of Vatican II and the implementation of the church's synodal identity into the future. Whether he and the rest of the people of God succeed achieving this goal or not will shape Catholic life for decades to come.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Tina Beattie

I'm delighted to send this message of my support for the Scottish laity Network.

Over the past few years they've provided a really rich programme of theological, awareness-raising, education and dialogue for the laity, not only in Scotland, but much more widely.

With a program of speakers and topics that have animated the life of the church and I think met a deep hunger among people in the Catholic laity with perhaps more than we are offered in our weekly homilies and worship rations.

So really congratulations to all those who organized it. And long may you continue to provide so much for the hunger and yearning of the laity for a closer understanding of, and relationship with, the God revealed in Jesus Christ and the scriptures.

Thank you for all you do.