

## **Parish of St. Thomas of Hereford, Weobley with St. Bede's, Kington:**

### **Joanna Helme, AGM Synod Report 23.10.23**

I know that the Synodal Activities we had here over a year ago and what is going on in Rome now both probably seem very far away, but I would urge you to continue to keep yourselves informed and to pray for the Synod. From the feedback we had from parishioners, not everyone was hoping for change, but many of you were and whatever the final outcome of the Synod, a different way of doing things is being established. The Synod has grown from the grass roots upwards and shown that similar concerns are being expressed in very different geographical areas. For the first time, many more lay men and women are involved in the Synod. Pictures show groups of people sitting around tables talking and listening to each other rather than serried ranks in hierarchical order sitting in rows.

I know there's a lot to take in, but I am reminded about that old joke about How do you eat an elephant? The answer being one spoonful at a time. We have tried to make sure that the various documents produced along the way are made available through the parish website, but if you want to get a real flavour of what is happening in Rome, you can go to the Vatican News website or sign up for the Synod Assembly Newsletter to be emailed to you. Christopher Lamb's News from Rome articles in the Tablet are also worth reading. From his latest letter it would seem that the 'conversations in the Spirit' are not always without controversy, which is bound to be the case given the diversity of our Church and the many different cultures represented. It seems likely that this year's Synod will produce some commissions to further what ever comes out of it. It was recognised fairly early on that it was impractical hoping to be able to cover everything fully in one Synod so there is another next year. It will indeed take time for the ripples to reach outwards to us in the parishes but I don't think that means we need do nothing in the meantime.

From our own Synod discussions, the wish for a truly inclusive church was a dominant theme. We have tried to put that into practice through the re-ordering of the sacristy at Weobley which now offers sufficient space in which to welcome people to Mass. We know from feedback how successful this has been and how visitors say what a warm and welcoming parish we are, both at Weobley and Kington.

Another wish was for lay formation, to enable us grow in faith and be able to take up our responsibilities. A small parish like ours really does depend on all its members playing a part and becoming involved.

There is much to be hopeful about. Please continue to pray that the power of the Holy Spirit will be enkindled in the Church.