

# CONTENT ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY USED IN THE ENGLAND & WALES DIOCESAN SYNTHESSES

## FOR THE CONSULTATION PHASE OF THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

### INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this report is to share how Root & Branch conducted the content analysis of the England and Wales (E&W) Diocesan Syntheses and to encourage others to carry out a similar study to confirm whether the National Synthesis in other areas truly reflects the voice of the People of God.

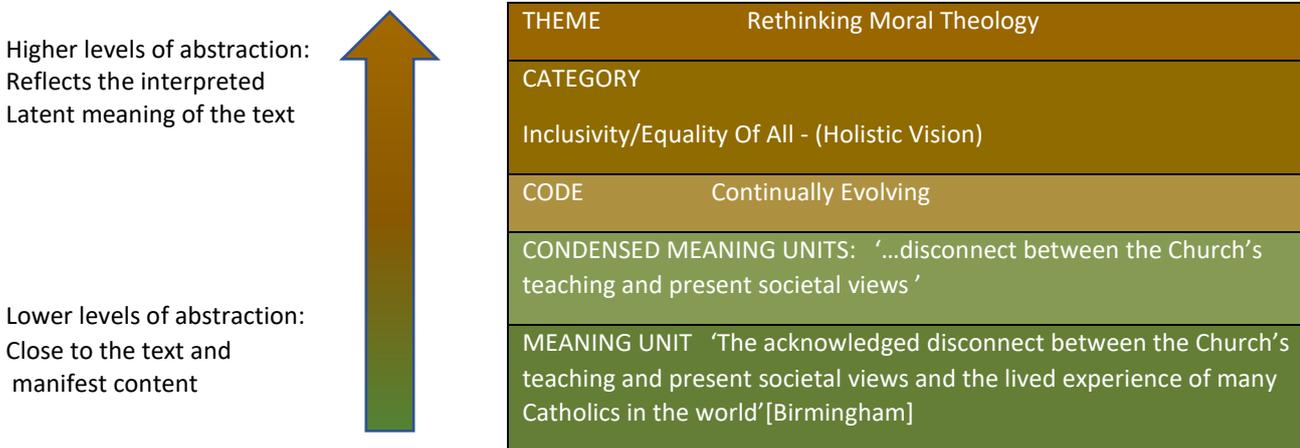
### Background and Context

The Diocesan Syntheses of E&W were produced during the Diocesan Phase October 2021 – April 2022 of Pope Francis’s journey toward the Synod on Synodality. It is estimated that of the 3.8m Catholics in England and Wales that – perhaps 30,000 – may have taken part in the “synod on synodality” representing roughly 0.8% of the E&W Catholic population. It should be noted that the Diocesan Syntheses refer to the fact that there was resistance in some parishes and dioceses. If one also considers the possibility that a process of filtering may already have occurred in some settings during the processing at either the parochial or diocesan level, the finding of a single identified term is likely to be representative of many voices and/or strength of expression.

### METHODOLOGY – Overview in Brief

Diagram showing Content Analysis at work - with evolution of terms, see Glossary below

Overarching Theme: People of God – Appetite for Reform



You too can undertake a content analysis of your diocesan syntheses using the system we used

We explain how rigorous this method is

We explain why it can be replicated, and in PROCESS below we show how it can be done

It allows for both qualitative/quantitative and deductive/inductive analysis

We explain the importance of a single term/concept mention in each document

We provide a glossary of terms for a content analysis [Table 1]

We provide an example of how text can be ordered into meaning units [Table 2]

We provide pre-selected search terms/concepts [Table 3] based on the Bristol Text [Appendix II]

We provide a visual overview of the content analysis results for E&W [Table 4]

In Appendix I we show our findings for E&W in graph form including statements (qualitative) from individual syntheses

### METHODOLOGY

**Identifying search terms** - In order to better understand the Consultation Phase and to determine whether there is an appetite for reform amongst the laity of England and Wales (E&W) and if so which reforms are most urgent, a content analysis of all 22 Diocesan Syntheses in England and Wales was conducted. This was set against the four pillars of the Bristol Text to Reform <https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/the-bristol-text> developed over a twelve month period of discernment by Root & Branch in conjunction with theologians and scholars, comprising the themes of *Rethinking Moral Theology*, *Sharing Church Authority*, *Redefining & Reclaiming Liturgical Ministry*, and *Embracing Diversity*. An additional separate theme of *Clerical Abuse* was included in the Content Analysis reflecting the strength of outrage expressed by the laity due to the revelations of sexual abuse of vulnerable people by clergy both as perpetrators and those complicit in the efforts to cover-up the crimes by prioritising protection of the hierarchical Church’s reputation above their duty of care owed to the abused person. For the Root & Branch

Content Analysis we proposed using these themes and concepts as a deductive method for determining whether there was an appetite for reform in the Institutional Church

**A rigorous system** - Content analysis was selected as a suitable methodology to interrogate the findings of the Diocesan Syntheses (E&W). It is a systematic, rigorous approach to analysing documents. The content analysis method applied in this research utilised both qualitative and quantitative techniques known as a mixed methodology approach and is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18).

**The importance of capturing inference** - The notion of inference is especially important in content analysis. The researcher uses analytical constructs, or rules of inference, to move from the text to the answers to the research questions. The two domains, the texts and the context, are logically independent, and the researcher draws conclusions from one independent domain (the texts) to the other (the context). The analytical constructs may be derived from (1) existing theories or practices such as reference to the Bristol Text to Reform in this instance; (2) the experience or knowledge of experts; and (3) previous research (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 173).

**It can be replicated** - Content analysis involves specialized procedures that, at least in quantitative content analysis, allow for replication. In this instance the use of the Bristol Text to Reform and the identification of search terms and concepts (Table 3) in conjunction with the Diocesan Syntheses (E&W), enable replication.

**Both qualitative/quantitative and deductive/inductive** - In this analysis, inductive (qualitative statements extracted from the text) and deductive methods (concepts derived from the Bristol text to Reform and preselected words/terms) were combined (data transformation) to score the Diocesan Syntheses (E&W), according to how well they met the adopted criteria of a mixed methods study (Table 4). Data transformation is believed, by some, to be the highest level of data integration or mixing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The belief, that the use of both inductive and deductive methods will enhance the impact of mixed methods, was instrumental in the design of this study

**The importance of a single mention** - Where any of the terms/concepts from either the list of identified words or The Bristol Text are found in a single Diocesan Synthesis (E&W), these are counted and recorded. Since each diocese represents from between 41 - 224 parishes (Table 4) a single mention of an identified term in any synthesis is significant. If one also considers the possibility that a process of filtering may already have occurred in some settings during the processing at either the parochial or diocesan level, the finding of a single identified term is likely to be representative of many voices and/or strength of expression. The objective in qualitative content analysis is to systematically transform a large amount of text into a highly organised and concise summary of key results. Analysis of the raw data from documents to form categories or themes is an inductive process of further abstraction of data at each step of the analysis; from the manifest and literal content to latent and abstract meanings (Fig. 1 and Table 1).

Table 1 Glossary of terms as used in doing content analysis.

Condensation	Condensation is a process of shortening the text while still preserving the core meaning
Code	A code can be thought of as a label; a name that most exactly describes what this particular condensed meaning unit is about. Usually one or two words long
Category	A category is formed by grouping together those codes that are related to each other through their content or context. In other words, codes are organised into a category when they are describing different aspects, similarities or differences, of the content of the text that belong together. A category answers questions about <i>who, what, when, or where?</i> In other words, categories are an expression of manifest content, i.e., what is visible and obvious in the data. Category names are factual and short
Theme	A theme can be seen as expressing an underlying meaning, i.e., latent content, found in two or more categories. Themes are expressing data on an interpretative (latent) level. A theme answers questions such as <i>why, how, in what way, or by what means?</i> A theme is intended to communicate with the reader on both an intellectual and emotional level. Therefore poetic and metaphoric language is well suited in theme names to express underlying meaning.

Overarching Theme: People of God – Appetite for Reform

Higher levels of abstraction:  
Reflects the interpreted  
Latent meaning of the text



Lower levels of abstraction:  
Close to the text and  
manifest content

THEME	Rethinking Moral Theology
CATEGORY	Inclusivity/Equality Of All - (Holistic Vision)
CODE	Continually Evolving
CONDENSED MEANING UNITS:	'...disconnect between the Church's teaching and present societal views'
MEANING UNIT	'The acknowledged disconnect between the Church's teaching and present societal views and the lived experience of many Catholics in the world'[Birmingham]

Fig. 1. Example of analysis leading to higher levels of abstraction; from manifest to latent content.

PROCESS

The initial step is to read and re-read the syntheses to get a sense of the whole, i.e., to gain a general understanding of what the documents have expressed. [It must be acknowledged at this point that conducting the content analysis at the stage of analysing the diocesan syntheses is not the initial step in the information gathering process. The parish submissions to the diocese will have been through a process of refinement in which some filtering may already have taken place].

At this point, ideas of what the main points or ideas are that the participants are expressing may begin to emerge. Then a process of dividing up the text into smaller parts follows, namely, into meaning units. Then condensing these meaning units further (Table 2), ensuring that the core meaning is still retained. The next step is to label condensed meaning units by formulating codes and then grouping these codes into categories. (Fig. 1).

In addition to referring to the Bristol Text to Reform to identify reform categories and themes reflected in the Diocesan Syntheses (E&W), pre-selected words and phrases were also used to increase objectivity and quantitative rigour. The words /phrases were jointly selected by two colleagues within Root & Branch and related to reform themes. (Table 3). The joint selection was a further measure to improve objectivity, replicability and reduce bias.

The data were inputted on Excel spreadsheets, one page per each theme; five in total (Table 4). Each of the 22 Diocesan Syntheses (E&W) was embedded with their document hyperlinks in the first Excel column A. Each of the five themes was allocated an individual Excel worksheet. Each of the categories identified within each theme and against which each synthesis was mapped was located at Excel columns B – C/D/E/F/G according to the relevant themes. Additionally 2-3 columns were used to record quotations used in the qualitative findings and capture narrative and inductive reasoning (Table 2). The search words and phrases were added to the Excel columns following the theme categories, aligned to their associated themes. [Using Excel as the data management tool has many advantages. Since the sample was relatively manageable being only 22 documents, there was no need to use special data analysis software such as SPSS. The standard search/find word function within Excel was adequate for this action. The built-in Excel graph facility generated the five data set graphs.]

Table 2 – Example of how Rethinking Moral Theology text is divided into meaning units & condensed meaning units (condensations are in parentheses).

<p>'A substantial level of dissatisfaction with the tradition of Catholic sexual ethics and sacramental discipline [which] unjustly excludes certain individuals from full participation in the life of the Church' [Wrexham] (<i>dissatisfaction with exclusion of some people from sacraments</i>)</p>
<p>'The acknowledged disconnect between the Church's teaching and present societal views and the lived experience of many Catholics in the world' [Birmingham] ( '<i>...disconnect between the Church's teaching and present societal views</i> '</p>
<p>'Theological questions about sexuality, gender and identity should be openly re-examined the light of modern scientific discoveries and of the lived experiences of people of different sexualities and gender identities' [Middlesbrough] (<i>Theological question reopened Re: sexuality in modern scientific/social/personal context</i>)</p>

“The Church’s stance on sex and sexuality is alienating, is given disproportionate weight, and does not reflect core Gospel values of love, forgiveness, compassion, mercy and care for the poor and sick, and social justice” [Westminster] (*Church’s teaching on sexuality does not reflect core Gospel values*)

‘Questions were asked about the need for clarity on whether the traditions are simply custom and practice following the development of the hierarchical Church or the teachings of Jesus and mission in the early Church’ [Plymouth] (*Is tradition simply custom/practice/hierarchy or the teachings of Jesus?*)

‘the sensus fidei on issues such as divorce and remarriage and homosexuality had changed radically in recent years’ [Cardiff] (*The faithful’s belief on divorce/remarriage/LGBTQI+ has changed*)

‘Perhaps we are too concerned about rules and regulations’ [Brentwood] (*too concerned re: rules/regulations*)

‘The current church practice of allowing married Anglican clergy to become catholic priests is contradictory logic and extraordinary in its practice. A further recent somewhat hypocritical act was allowing Boris Johnson to wed, when so many are declined sacraments for their marital status’ [Nottingham] (*Inconsistent/hypocritical practice re: ordination of married Anglican male ministers & allowing some former divorced people to wed.*)

‘There were repeated calls for the Church to change her moral teachings, including one person saying if the Church is not going to change her teaching then she should explain why not’ [Shrewsbury] (*Explanation sought re: reason that Church is unwilling to change moral teaching.*)

Table 3: Pre-selected Search terms/Concepts

Search Terms/Concepts				
RETHINKING MORAL THEOLOGY	SHARING OF CHURCH AUTHORITY	REDEFINING & RECLAIMING LITURGICAL MINISTRY	EMBRACING DIVERSITY	Clerical Abuse – The Voice of the Laity
AUTHORATIVE RULES OBEDIANCE	ABUSE OF POWER	ALL ARE ELIGIBLE	ABILITY, ABILISM	ALIGN CANON LAW WITH UNUDHR
BIRTH CONTROL	ABUSE SCANDAL	BASE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY /SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES	ACCESSIBILITY	ANGER DISPAIR, DISTRESS, RUINED POTENTIAL
CELIBACY	APOLOGY	CELIBATE	ACCOUNTABILITY	APOLOGY AND RETRIBUTION/ATONEMENT/ ACTION/JUSTICE/SHAME
COGNISANT OF CONTEXTS AND CULTURES NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE	AUTHORITY	DEACON	APOLOGY	AUTHORITY OF PRIEST AS FINAL, CLERICALISM
COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT WITH LAITY, INVOLVEMENT	AUTOCRATIC	DISCERNMENT	ASYLUM SEEKER	BETRAYAL
CONTINUALLY EVOLVING	CHILDREN	DISMANTLING OF CLERICALISM	DEAF	CLERICAL SEXUAL AND OTHER ABUSE - VULNERABLE, VICTIM, SURVIVOR
CONTINUOUS FORMATION,	CLERICAL ABUSE CRISIS	EQUAL ACCESS TO ALL MINISTRIES	DISABLED	CLERICALISM
DIVORCED. FULL ACCEPTANCE OF MARRIED/ DIVORCED/REMARRIED IN THE LIFE OF ALL THE SACRAMENTS/MINISTRIES	CLERICALISM	EQUALITY OF ALL BAPTISED	DISCRIMINATION	CONCEALMENT, TRANSPARENCY NEED FOR SCRUTINY/OVERSIGHT/ INDEPENDENT REGULATION AND PUBLISHED FINDINGS
DOCTRINE	CO-RESPONSIBILITY	EQUALITY OF THE BAPTIZED	ECUMENISM	COVER-UP, CORRUPTION
DOGMA	CORRUPTION	EUCHARIST	EQUALITY OF LGBTQ+ INC TRANS - MARRIAGE/BLESSINGS/ FULL ACCEPTANCE ALL SACRAMENTS/ MINISTRIES	CRIMINALITY , COUNCILS, MONITOR SAFEGUARDING
ECCLESIAL	COVER-UP	GENDERS	EQUALITY	FAILURE TO UPHOLD MORAL TEACHING

EMBRACE ENCOUNTERS WITH DIFFERENT CONTEXTS AND CULTURES	DENIAL	INCLUSIVE LITURGY	ETHNIC ORIGEN	FINANCIAL, RELIGIOUS, SPIRITUAL, SEXUAL ABUSE
EQUALITY	DISCERNMENT	LEADERSHIP	EXCLUSION	GOOD-NAME
EUCHARIST	INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY	LGBT	HOMOPHOBIC	HEALING RESPONSIBILITY ACCOUNTABILITY DUTY OF CARE
EVANGELII GAUDIUM. - THE CHURCH HAS TO ACCEPT THIS UNRULY FREEDOM OF THE WORD	INVESTIGATION	LITURGICAL MINISTRY - EQUALITY OF ALL THE BAPTISED	IMMIGRANT	NO APOLOGY FROM CHURCH OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF REASON FOR INDIVIDUAL LEAVING.
EVOLVE	INVOLVEMENT	LITURGY	INCLUSION	NO MORAL AUTHORITY OF CLERGY
GOSPEL	LAY GOVERNANCE	MARRIED/DIVORCED CELIBATE/NON-CELIBATE	INCLUSIVE LITURGY	NUNS
HOLISTIC	PARISH & DIOCESAN COUNCIL	MYSTICAL, CELIBACY	LEADERSHIP	OUTRAGE
JUDGMENT	PARTICIPATION	OBLIGATION	LECTIONARY,	PAEDOPHILE
JUSTICE	REFORM	ORDINATION OF MARRIED	LGBTQ+	POWER
LGBTQ+	REFORM TO CANON LAW/ IN LINE WITH UNITED NATIONS' UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS	ORDINATION OF WOMEN	MARGINALISED	PROTECTION
LIVING IN HARMONY WITH THE REST OF CREATION	SAFEGUARDING	ORDINATION	MISOGYNY	REPENTANCE, RECONCILIATION
MARRIED	SECRECY	PRIEST	OTHER FAITHS	REPUTATION
REFORM	SEXUAL ABUSE	REQUIREMENT FOR CELIBACY	PATRIARCHAL	SCANDAL
REJECTING ALL FORMS OF EXPLOITATION, EXCLUSION, DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE AND VIOLENCE	SHARED DECISION MAKING	ROLES	RACISM	SECRECY
RULES	SILENCE	VOCATION, MINISTRY	REFUGEE	SHUT-DOWN
SEXUALITY LGBTQIA+ TRANS MARRIAGE/BLESSINGS/ FULL ACCEPTANCE IN ALL SACRAMENTS/ MINISTRIES	SUBSIDIARITY	VOICE	TRAVELLER/ITINERANT	SYSTEM, HIERARCHY
TEACHINGS REVISION OF SCRIPTURE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE.	TRANSPARENCY	WOMEN	WOMEN	TEACHER
THEOLOGY	VOICE	WOMEN ORDINATION TO DIACONATE	YOUTH/YOUNG	TRUST
WOMEN	VULNERABLE	WOMEN ORDINATION TO PRESBYTERIATE		VICTIMS OF ABUSE BY CLERGY/BISHOP INDICATING/BLAMING INDIVIDUAL FOR BEING ABUSED

Table 4: Overview of content analysis results for E&W

		THEMES				
Diocese	Parishes **	Rethinking Moral Theology = 92% *1.	Sharing Church Authority = 95% *2.	Redefining & Reclaiming Liturgical ministry = 84% *3.	Embracing Diversity= 91% *4	Clerical Abuse – The Voice of the Laity = 90% *5
Arundel & Brighton	91					
Birmingham	224					
Brentwood	82					
Cardiff	59					
Clifton	104					
East Anglia	50					
Hallam	60					
Hexham & Newcastle	149					
Lancaster	79					
Leeds	82					
Liverpool	194					
Menevia	55					
Middlesbrough	66					
Northampton	70					
Nottingham	108					
Plymouth	60					
Portsmouth	90					
Salford	145					
Shrewsbury	92					
Southwark	179					
Westminster	214					
Wrexham	41					
Total	2294 **					
Positive mention to all categories			Positive mention to some categories		No positive mention to any category	

\*\*Accurate as at July 2022.

1. = Includes categories & search words/phrases
  - a. THEOLOGY/TEACHINGS -CONTINUALLY EVOLVING - (HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS) – 86%
  - b. SUBSIDIARITY LAITY/CLERGY/HIERARCHY - (WAYS OF THINKING) -95%
  - c. INCLUSIVITY/EQUALITY OF ALL - (HOLISTIC VISION) – 95%
2. = Includes categories & search words/phrases
  - a. EQUALITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL - REFORM OF CANON LAW – 95%

- b. AGREED BY ALL - WHAT TOUCHES ALL MUST BE DISCUSSED AND AGREED BY ALL – 95%
  - c. ELECTED BY ALL - ALL CATHOLICS HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE THEIR LEADERS RENDER AN ACCOUNT TO THEM - 95%
3. = Includes categories & search words/phrases
- a. ORDINATION OF WOMEN – 91%
  - b. MARRIED PRIESTS – 77%
4. = Includes categories & search words/phrases
- a. WOMEN – 100%
  - b. LGBTQ+ - 100%
  - c. RACE/ETHNICITY/MIGRANTS – 77%
  - d. DISABILITY/DEAF/MENTAL HEALTH/LEARNING DISABILITY – 77%
  - e. YOUNG PEOPLE – 95%
  - f. ECUMENISM/OTHER FAITHS – 95%
5. = Includes categories & search words/phrases
- a. CLERICAL ABUSE - NULLIFIES HIERARCHY'S AUTHORITY AS AN ARBITER IN MORAL AFFAIRS. BETRAYAL OF THE PEOPLE-100%
  - b. HIERARCHY TO APOLOGISE/SEEK FORGIVENESS/SHOW COMPASSION/RESPOND APPROPRIATELY (WITH ACTION) FOR HARM CAUSED TO VICTIMS, THEIR FAMILIES AND WIDER COMMUNITY – 82%
  - c. DAMAGE TO PERCEPTION OF RC DUE TO COVER-UP/DISHONESTY AND FAILURE TO TACKLE ABUSE. LOSS OF TRUST. – 73%
  - d. CLERICALISM: - ENSURED PROTECTION OF REPUTATION ABOVE WELL-BEING & DIGNITY OF THOSE ABUSED – 95%
  - e. COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE: - TRANSPARENT SYSTEMS OF SAFEGUARDING /AUDIT/SCRUTINY. – 100%

## CONCLUSION

The findings from the Content Analysis of the 22 Diocesan Syntheses (E&W) revealed a strong appetite for reform amongst the people that participated in the Consultation Phase of the synod on synodality. The results are presented in Appendix I. Using the methodology of content analysis it was possible to apply a mixed method approach with both inductive and deductive features to determine what reform issues mattered most and were in greatest need of action.

The methodology discussed in this report demonstrates how content analysis involves specialized procedures that allow for replication. In this instance the use of the Bristol Text to Reform and the identification of search terms and concepts (Table 3) in conjunction with the qualitative content of the Diocesan Syntheses (E&W), enable replication.

## ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT.

The Synod on Synodality, was opened by Pope Francis over the weekend of 9-10 October 2021 and subsequently in the individual dioceses by their respective bishops, on 17 October 2021.

The synodal journey is marked by three phases:

### **1 Diocesan Phase** October 2021 – August 2022

Diocesan Listening - October 2021 – April 2022

Bishops and archbishops in all the dioceses of England and Wales (E&W) along with their counterparts in the Universal Catholic Church were asked by Pope Francis to facilitate the first stage known as the Preparatory or Consultation Phase. They were to do this by encouraging parish priests to engage with parishioners: both regular church attendees and marginalised groups including people who had left the official church or those belonging to constituencies that felt unwelcome and excluded from the institutional Church. Pope Francis also invited, via the bishops and priest, people of different faiths.

For the parishes that participated, this phase ended locally with a collation of the participants' expressed views on the pre-selected themes of Communion, Participation and Mission. Their contributions and discussions were recorded, from which a report was produced which was in turn submitted to the diocese as part of the diocesan syntheses tasked with faithfully representing the voice of the participants.

Some parish and individual/group submissions recorded voices asking for a reconsideration of the Church's official teaching on a number of specific topics, particularly concerning human sexuality, contraception, homosexuality, gender identity and women's ordination (both to the presbyterate and the diaconate). While some dioceses stated that the Synod process does not consider matters of universal doctrine within its scope, nevertheless these topics were allowed for discussion in some settings whilst in others they were not.

It was noted that in some parishes and dioceses there was resistance by some priests/bishops to engage with or facilitate the process and in such instances, in some parishes, the process did not take place; and in others it is likely that the priest or a

'known' parishioner completed the consultation phase document (Parish or Diocesan synthesis) without any contribution from the parishioners. In other areas only those parishioners well known to the priest were invited to participate.

### National Synthesis April – August 2022

A period of discernment for bishops gathered in an assembly (Episcopal Conference) followed the concluding of the Diocesan Phase. The National Synthesis Team was appointed to collate and organise the Synod submissions received from the Dioceses of England and Wales as well as national Catholic organisations and other bodies to produce a National Synthesis for Rome. The nine-strong E&W National Synthesis team were all linked professionally to the 'institutional' Church either by direct association with the dioceses or the Bishops Conference of E&W or through journalistic associations. The National Synthesis (E&W) was released on August 15 2022. Its findings did not reflect the strength of the call for reform by the People of God evident in the Diocesan Syntheses (E&W).

### 2 Continental Phase September 2022 – March 2023

This involves the task of discussing the reports of the global/continental National Syntheses. As many as 112 out of 114 Episcopal Conferences and all the Eastern Catholic Churches returned their respective National Synthesis with their discerned findings. A single document, the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) was produced. The writing process involved appointing a team of 35 people, lay and clergy, women and men, representing all continents, who, in the course of two weeks, would produce the DCS. The process was overseen and approved by 15 cardinals and bishops prior to publication. The process continues with the convening of Continental Synodal Assemblies by each region's Bishops' Conference, between January and March 2023. These Continental Synodal Assemblies will be convened to reread the documents produced to date with the key focus on the findings of the DCS.

### 3 Universal Phase October 2023 – October 2024

Finally, the synodal journey will culminate with the celebration of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission". On the 16 October Pope Francis announced that the upcoming XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will be held in two moments, that is, in two sessions, spaced one year apart: the first from October 4 to 29, 2023, the second in October 2024.

It is estimated that of the 3.8m Catholics in England and Wales that – perhaps 30,000 – may have taken part in the "synod on synodality" according to Austen Ivereigh's tablet article [Synthesising the synodal process through listening to the laity and the Holy Spirit](#), representing roughly 0.8% of the E&W Catholic population.

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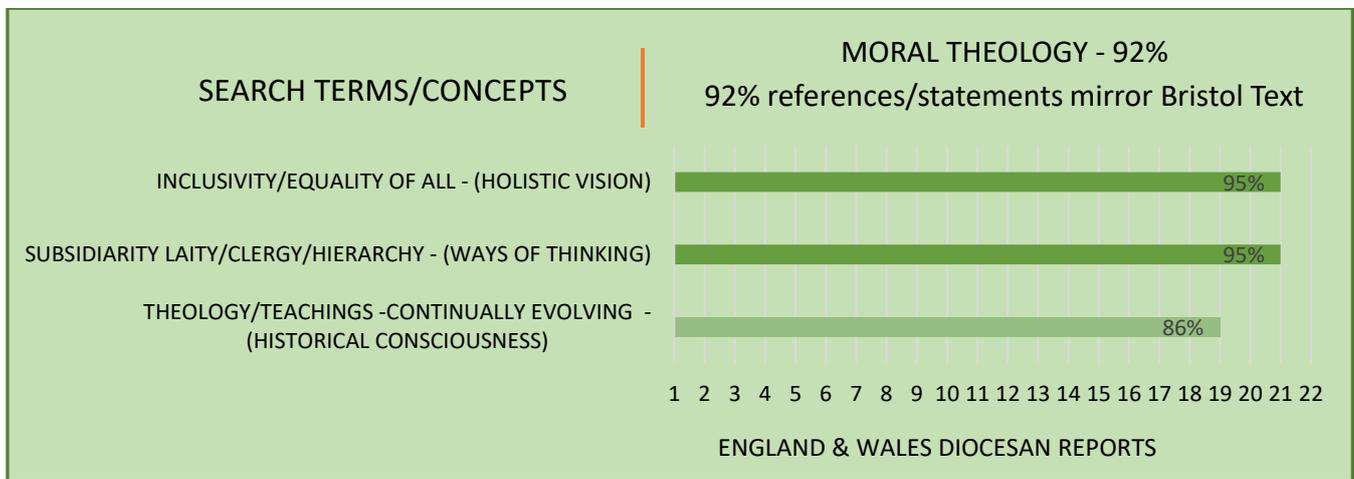
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(November 2022)

APPENDIX I A - RETHINKING MORAL THEOLOGY



The Church has to accept the unruly freedom of the word, speaking afresh in different cultures and contexts. Church teaching should be not rules but ways of thinking, formed in dialogue with all seekers after truth in each age and place.

Our moral vision should embrace the entire person, a living response to the prophetic vocation to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. (Bristol Text: 1 Moral Theology - Abstract)



‘A substantial level of dissatisfaction with the tradition of Catholic sexual ethics and sacramental discipline [which] unjustly excludes certain individuals from full participation in the life of the Church’ [Wrexham]

‘The acknowledged disconnect between the Church’s teaching and present societal views and the lived experience of many Catholics in the world’ [Birmingham]

‘Theological questions about sexuality, gender and identity should be openly re-examined the light of modern scientific discoveries and of the lived experiences of people of different sexualities and gender identities’ [Middlesbrough]

“‘The Church’s stance on sex and sexuality is alienating, is given disproportionate weight, and does not reflect core Gospel values of love, forgiveness, compassion, mercy and care for the poor and sick, and social justice’” [Westminster]

‘Questions were asked about the need for clarity on whether the traditions are simply custom and practice following the development of the hierarchical Church or the teachings of Jesus and mission in the early Church’ [Plymouth]

‘the *sensus fideii* on issues such as divorce and remarriage and homosexuality had changed radically in recent years’ [Cardiff]

‘Perhaps we are too concerned about rules and regulations’ [Brentwood]

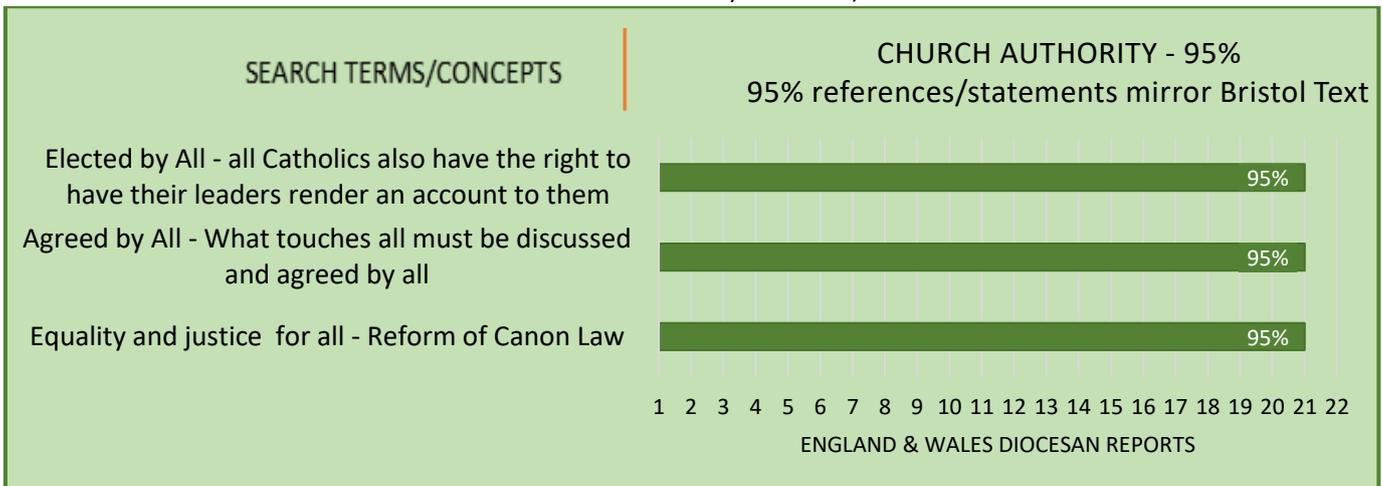
‘The current church practice of allowing married Anglican clergy to become catholic priests is contradictory logic and extraordinary in its practice. A further recent somewhat hypocritical act was allowing Boris Johnson to wed, when so many are declined sacraments for their marital status’ [Nottingham]

‘There were repeated calls for the Church to change her moral teachings, including one person saying if the Church is not going to change her teaching then she should explain why not’ [Shrewsbury]



‘What touches all must be discussed and approved by all.’

This ancient precept of the church requires democratic structures at every level, a restatement that the magisterium belongs to all the faithful, and leadership that is accountable and based on consent. Canon Law urgently requires transformation into a useful and accessible template, using the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights as its benchmark. (Bristol Text: 2. Church Authority - Abstract)



‘A fear of speaking out’; ‘clericalism is seen as a particular barrier to development in parishes’ [Clifton]

‘The scandal of child sexual abuse has resulted in a deficit of trust ...ruined the Church’s reputation and authority and scarred the people’ [Southwark]

“Clericalism is stifling the Catholic Church which is more concerned with Church Law than with the teachings of the Gospel” [Arundel & Brighton]

‘The hierarchy is rigidly bound to man-made traditions, rules and interpretations rather than Jesus’ example and teaching. Responses indicate that we need to see a major shift in attitude and behaviour by the hierarchy’ [East Anglia]

“It is extraordinary that no woman gets to vote in who leads our Church.” “[the priest] has the power to strengthen or ruin a community.” Would this still happen if the laity had more of a voice in the governance of the church?’ [Brentwood]

‘The Church is priest-obsessed, and does not listen to the laity nor allow them to use their gifts’ [Lancaster]

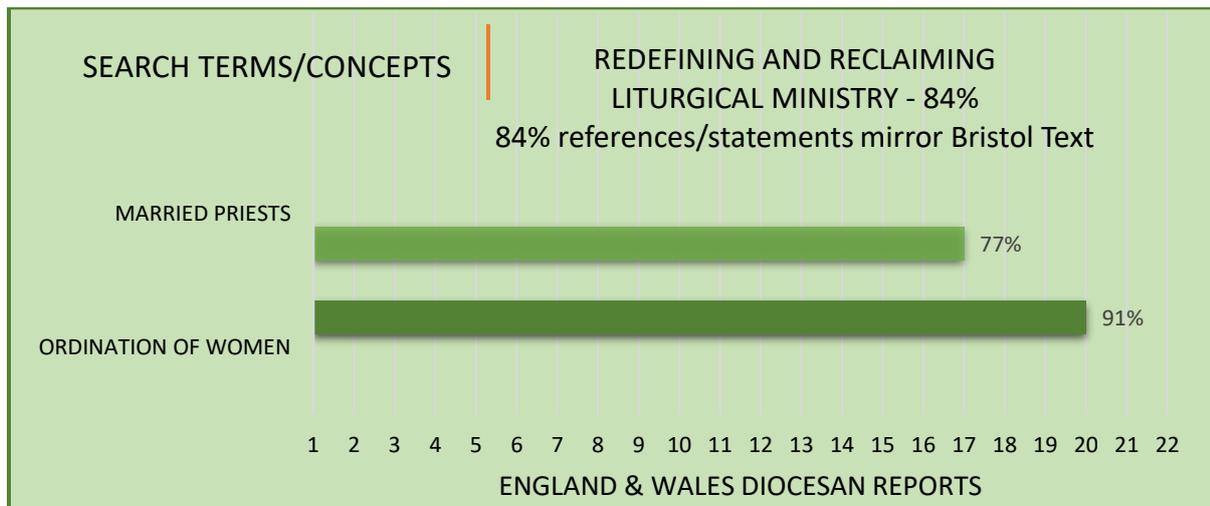
“we wouldn’t naturally choose to participate in any other institution which held its members in such low regard” [Hexham and Newcastle]

‘Many participants stated that synodal working will require an end to the “top-down” model of church leadership and regular parish, deanery and diocesan councils [with laity]’; ‘There was uncertainty about how governance or accountability were ensured’ [Wrexham]

Some laity felt unable to fully express their own ‘baptised prophet, priest and king’ role and one expressed this by quoting Canon Law 212.3 “the Christian faithful have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters that obtain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known.” [Hallam]



Every baptised person is clothed, without any distinction, in Christ.  
 All belong to a royal priesthood. Jesus’s call to celebrate his presence in the Eucharist requires no priestly caste.  
 All ministries are open to all, as they were in the early church.  
 (Bristol Text: 3. Redefining and Reclaiming Liturgical Ministry- Abstract)



“The Church must address its denigration of women that is scandalous in the modern world. The treatment of women is shocking.” It was felt that the exclusion of women from the ordained ministry was an “exclusion of women’s participation in the mission of Jesus” [Liverpool]

‘Promote Collaborative Ministry’; ‘Explore other models of being Church’ [Middlesbrough]

“Among the obstacles to mission is the place of women in the Church which is perceived as misogyny” [Shrewsbury]

‘Most of the women agreed that they would like to hear women preaching. “Some Doctors of the Church are women...they wouldn’t be allowed to preach at Mass, even now in the 21st century.” One mentioned a friend who wrote homily notes for preachers and found herself listening to her own writings at Mass! ...Ordaining married priests was hoped to bring the benefit of the experience that married clergy can bring to the Church “for priests to have a life just like ours”’ [Northampton]

‘Many of the respondents... echo the comments made by a priest: “I think more and more that the Holy Spirit might be leading us to the ordination of women and also to having married clergy. I say this not in response to a shortage of priests, but simply because I feel it as a conviction from reflection and prayer”’ [Salford]

‘Those who have left ordained ministry to marry should possibly be given an opportunity to return where prudent’ [Menevia]

‘There was a creative discussion around the potential for parishes to manage well without a full-time priest, posing the question: is there a need for the priest in the Church today?’ [Portsmouth]

‘Clergy selection, formation and ongoing training was in need of improvement: involving laity’; ‘the strength of feeling about the misogyny and inequality [and] language being exclusive’ [Hallam]

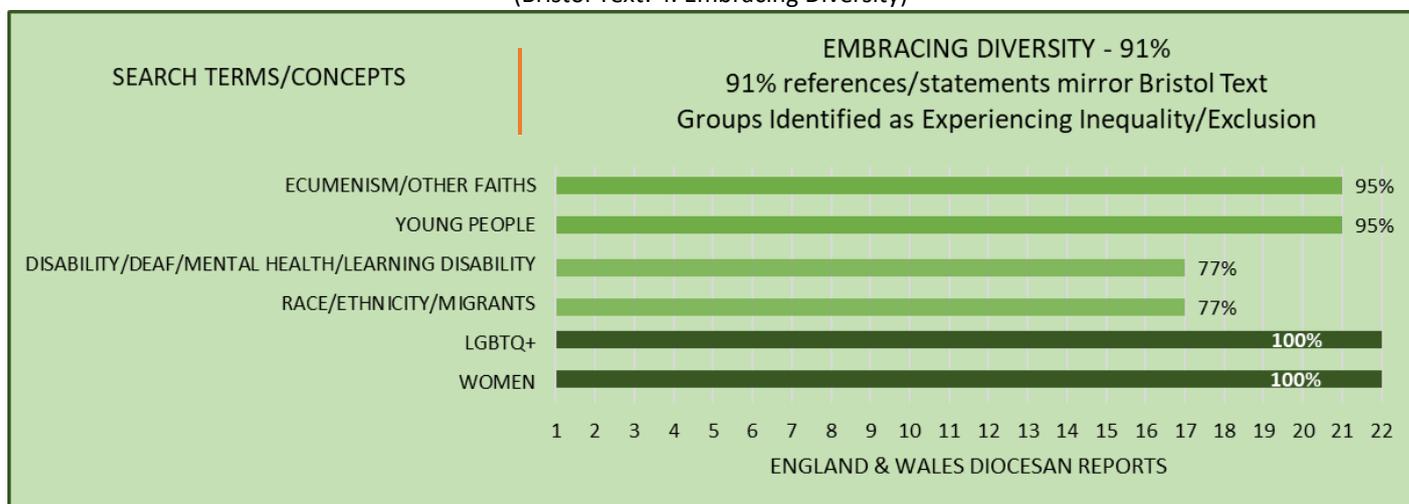
‘There is .. appreciation that the insights and charisms of the laity are a gift to the Church and need to be harnessed’ [Leeds]  
 ‘One parish articulated their reasons for a call for women priests and married priests: “...it was felt that for the Church to be truly representative of everyone and all walks of life, it was essential to explore these possibilities”’ [Shrewsbury]



Hierarchy ..... precludes the church from affirming the goodness in the diversity of creation, and the dignity and sanctity of all. Those who, for example, are gay should not be co-opted into lying about who they are in order to preach the Gospel. Our bodies and our spirits long for truthfulness, and come alive when we allow them to bear witness to it. All the faithful must see themselves in their differently-aged, differently-abled, differently-gendered, differently-bodied, differently-sexually-oriented, differently-coloured, differently-tongued neighbour. Then we can create affirming, equality-expressing theologies where no one is excluded from the 'we' that is the Christian community.

The Church must acknowledge and apologise for the harm it has done to those it has damaged.

(Bristol Text: 4. Embracing Diversity)



'Wolverhampton almost an epicentre for the poor, marginalized, immigrants, asylum seekers, economic migrants, disabled and those displaced by family breakdown and abuse. Jesus would feel very at home here!' [Wolverhampton - Birmingham]

'The place of women in society has thankfully changed out of all recognition. The Church's reaction to this has spread from the welcoming to obstructionism' [Birmingham]

'Every single student [in one school] mentioned LGBTQ+, women, divorced, single parents' [Westminster]

'Overall, it was felt [by young people] that the Church needs to reform situations where it marginalises members because of their gender, sexuality or marital/relationship' [Northampton]

"My friends (some of whom were raised Catholic) who are gay or divorced don't just feel marginalised, they feel condemned" [Shrewsbury]

The underlying message was that both women & men desired that women's voices should be heard, valued & involved in decision making. One concern related to the Synod itself: "will women's voices be translated into men's voices...?" [Hexham and Newcastle]

'A girl in Year 7 shared that she had to move parishes as her Priest does not allow female altar servers'. [Westminster]

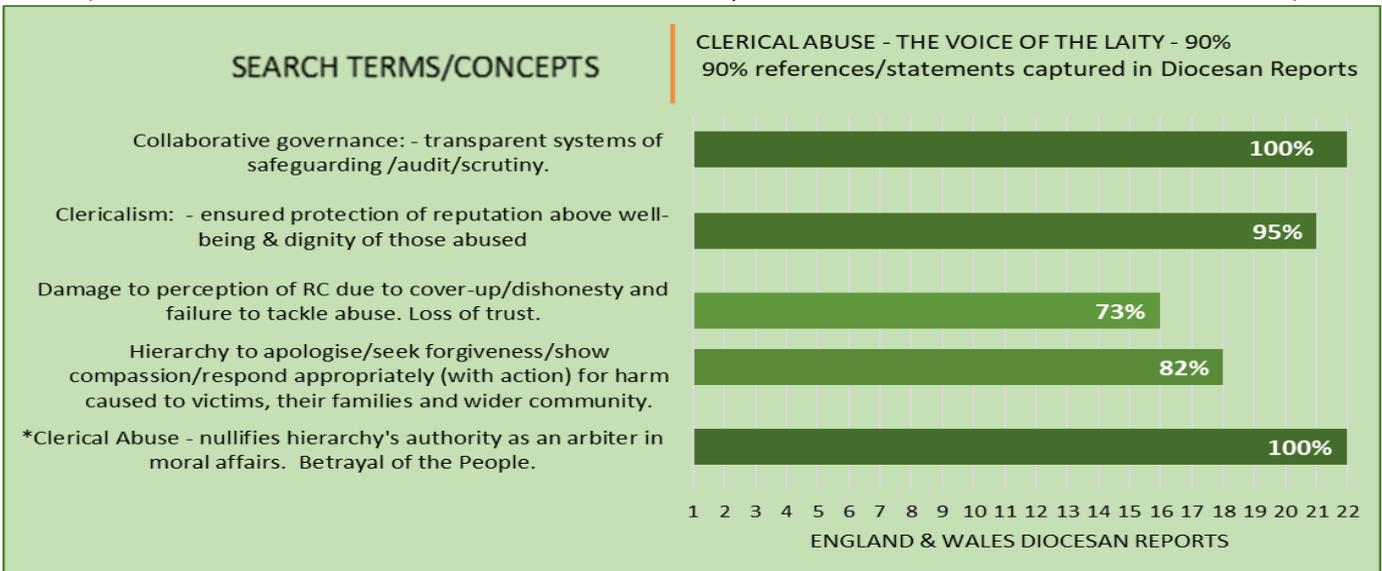
'Excluded communities; ... the sick, the disenfranchised youth, those with undocumented immigration status, those battling financial challenges. African students struggling with studies, loneliness, paying school fees. Travellers now like to be more involved in parish life & would like to be more included as welcomers, readers, & other parish ministries' [Nottingham]

'One family shared that a priest refused burial of a relative because the person committed suicide' [Middlesbrough]



The Catholic Church faces a profound crisis because the authority of its hierarchy has collapsed. The sexual and other forms of abuse committed by Catholic clergy throughout the world has rendered the belief in the clergy's privileged role no longer tenable. The response of church authorities to allegations of abuse has been to put the protection of the church's reputation before the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Survivors have been ignored, blamed, and accused of lying for their own ends.

Worse is the hierarchy's failure to have this long-running pattern of deceit and abuse independently investigated, and to put in place safeguarding, reporting, reparation, penitence and healing measures that approach being fit-for-purpose.  
 (Extract from Root & Branch Forum letter to Vatican 26th April 2022 - SUBMISSION for SYNOD ON SYNODALITY)



\* Clerical abuse refers to Clerical Sexual Abuse of Children - girls and boys and Financial Abuse. Other abuse for which the Vatican has acknowledged wrong-doing by the hierarchy such as the sexual abuse and servitude of religious sisters/nuns in religious communities and the historic abuse of vulnerable women and children in Mother and Baby homes (including forced adoption) by Religious orders, First Nation children who were victims of church and state forced acculturation policies - are not typically referred to within the diocesan

‘Another wrote ... that she had grown up believing priests to be ‘holy, good, trustworthy people – only to find that quite the opposite was true’. She then gave an account of how her young, vulnerable brother, an altar server, was regularly sexually abused and that other priests knew of and ignored what was happening.’ ‘The Church is humiliated by the abuse crisis. Is that why it is never preached about? We are all ashamed. We need it to be acknowledged from the pulpit’ [Clifton]

“However, these wonderful teachings are sadly undermined by the hypocrisy, behaviour, and unsustainable teachings of the Church ... People have been leaving the Church in droves far outweighing newcomers.” ‘The issue of child abuse among some of the clergy was mentioned, and that the Church can be perceived as being hypocritical’ [Brentwood]

‘Clerical Sexual Abuse, almost every report referred to the issue of clerical sexual abuse and attempts to cover it up ... caused incalculable damage to the Church ... shaped people’s attitudes and undermines its authority .... in moral affairs’ [Cardiff]

atonement ... seen as necessary now and into the future. The issue referred to as “the abuse scandal” and the lack of language for this suggests the process of assimilating the evil tragedy of what has happened to the church is only at the beginning’ [Hallam] ‘Safeguarding is to be central to everything we do in the parish. We need to prevent abuse happening. Church needs to trust Lay people with responsibility. There needs to be transparency of the financials in running a parish’ [Middlesbrough]

## APPENDIX II – THE BRISTOL TEXT TO REFORM

The Bristol Text to Reform <https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/the-bristol-text> is in English, Plain English, French, Italian, Spanish. German and Mandarin will soon be added

### ABSTRACT

#### 1. RETHINKING MORAL THEOLOGY

The Church has to accept the unruly freedom of the word, speaking afresh in different cultures and contexts. Church teaching should be not rules but ways of thinking, formed in dialogue with all seekers after truth in each age and place.

Our moral vision should embrace the entire person, a living response to the prophetic vocation to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.

#### 2. SHARING CHURCH AUTHORITY

‘What touches all must be discussed and approved by all.’

This ancient precept of the church requires democratic structures at every level, a restatement that the magisterium belongs to all the faithful, and leadership that is accountable and based on consent. Canon Law urgently requires transformation into a useful and accessible template, using the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights as its benchmark.

#### 3. REDEFINING AND RECLAIMING LITURGICAL MINISTRY

Every baptised person is clothed, without any distinction, in Christ.

All belong to a royal priesthood. Jesus’s call to celebrate his presence in the Eucharist requires no priestly caste. All ministries are open to all, as they were in the early church.

#### 4. EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Hierarchy, and especially an all-male leadership, precludes the church from affirming the goodness in the diversity of creation, and the dignity and sanctity of all. The Church effectively has no coherent teaching on gender, but instead only contradictory and scientifically outdated statements. Those who, for example, are gay should not be co-opted into lying about who they are in order to preach the Gospel, and the Church must acknowledge and apologise for the harm it has done to them and to those it has similarly damaged.