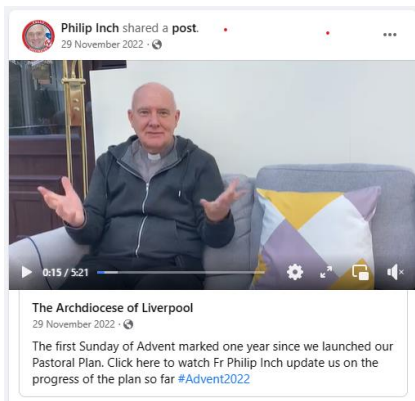




# HELPING SYNODALITY LIVE IN LIVERPOOL ARCHDIOCESE (AND WAY BEYOND, MAYBE)

Five practical activities for possibly applying by laity and clergy in parishes, deaneries, councils, primary and secondary schools, J&P teams, etc

## AN OPEN-HANDED INVITATION!



Dear Hugh

*Archbishop Malcolm McMahon has forwarded to me the correspondence you have had with him concerning your project "The Open Books Project". I was delighted to see what he has sent me.*

*One of my tasks, as the Episcopal Vicar with responsibility for Synods, is to ensure that we are putting into reality the theory – it seems to me that you are offering some very helpful tools for just that.*

*I would be more than happy to, on behalf of the Archbishop, receive anything that you might think will help us to further this task.*

*Yours in Christ*

*Fr Philip Inch Episcopal Vicar  
By e-mail 21 December 2022*

And by e-mail 16 January 2023  
in response to *Helping Synodality Live  
In Liverpool Archdiocese...*

**"Thank you for the  
wonderful document"**

HELPING SYNODALITY LIVE is in thanks to Fr Philip's kind invitation. It's something I hope you'll find different, likeable and practical: taking a UK lead with Applied Synodology across the archdiocese.

It's a little contribution to the realisation, wellbeing and, ahem, inching forward of synodality and the Pastoral Plan – by me as a plain parishioner in Portsmouth Diocese (working on its own 10-year Plan, for which I've made suggestions #2, #3 and #4).

Each of the ideas is meant to chime with the five points Fr Philip made in his update on Facebook in November: reach out to people in need; engage young people; help priests; accept new structures; nurture families of parishes. I also: studied the Pastoral Plan; checked the annual report; delved into the websites, newsletters and Facebook posts of about 70 of the churches in the archdiocese. And I took out my notes on synodality seen in the parish, diocesan and national reports and syntheses that fed the Document for the Continental Stage, ready for the October 2023 Synodal Assembly in Rome.

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Then I enjoyed putting together five suggestions based on my experience that might help synodality live in Liverpool (and elsewhere, for that matter). I had in mind that they should aim to be: fun with its sleeves rolled up; practical; ; good for making people feel good about themselves and the Church; and newsworthy.

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So you have: #1 acclaiming everyday saints; #2 opening up on financial transparency; # 3 cherishing parish history; #4 reaching out with FairTrade; #5 staging parish Paternoster Galleries.

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OpenBooks? It's an ongoing project by me as a synod of one, exploring financial transparency as seen on the websites of 1500+ parishes and dioceses. In October 2022 I sent a Summary to all bishops in the UK. This drew attention to what seems to be an endemic blind spot with Canon Law 1287.2 – one created after in the spirit of Vatican II to give parishioners the right to be informed on financial offerings. My #2 and #3 suggestions for bishops pointed out their value in fostering synodality – independent of Rome 2023-4.

With very many thanks for the opportunity to be of help

**Hugh Gibbons**

9 January 2023





# #1 Acclaim Our Everyday Saints

Applying synodality by applauding the inspirers, encouragers, uplifters suggested by our young people



## THE POPE'S NEXT-DOOR SAINTS

*"I'm thinking at this time of the saints who live next door. They are heroes – doctors, volunteers, religious sisters, priests, shop workers – all performing their duty so that society can continue functioning. How many doctors and nurses have died? How many religious sisters have died? All serving ... If we become aware of this miracle of the next-door saints, if we can follow their tracks, the miracle will end well, for the good of all."*

Pope Francis interviewed by Austin Ivereigh for The Tablet 8 April 2020



## AND CHARITY IS ALL AROUND US

*"We are clearly all in this together and we hunger for grace. We need community, we need blessing, we need charity. Community is where we find it. No longer the Friday fish fry, it is the Thursday afternoon Zoom with college friends. It is folks on the supermarket line. It is the garbage collectors honking and waving."*

*"Blessings come extra-ecclesial. They come from the school crossing guard, now directing traffic at the testing-site, who says, "God bless you, honey, good luck." They come when the landlord forgives a month's rent. They come when the market owner slips a pound cake in the bag, on the house."*

*And charity is all around us. Yes, we learn about it on television and Facebook, but who cannot appreciate the nurse traveling hundreds of miles to give another nurse a break? What about the restaurant owner who packs lunches for the homeless? Try counting the soup kitchens and food banks that work, day after day after day, because it is the Christian, or Jewish, or Muslim thing to do."*

Dr Phyllis Zagano in The End of Clericalism National Catholic Reporter 21 April 2020

CLAPPENINGS! THEY MIGHT MAKE DIOCESAN-WIDE HAPPENINGS.

Acclaiming Everyday Saints is a simple idea with social justice overtones – one that might be put into enjoyable action by congregations at Mass, schools of all sorts, families, friends – and football crowds. They'd be a likeable story to share with local and social media, and other faiths. And they would fit the Pastoral Plan in engaging young people – and ecumenism, as you'll see below.

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There's a precedent. Remember those lock-down Thursdays of public applause for front-line NHS staff? Build on that. Ask schools and other young people to identify and celebrate other everyday saints – people or groups or communities who quietly inspire, encourage, uplift, serve.

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They might create A-Zs of Everyday Saints – individuals or groups. For example, A for Aintree Village Food Bank...Z for Zero Carbon Liverpool City Region Supporters! It's fun with its sleeves rolled up – calling for imagination and co-operation. Just getting to this stage is worthwhile. But how about applying those saints more widely?

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Compile these unofficial saints into lists for parishes or deaneries – on paper or on-line. Then arrange to find a few moments to applaud some. When? It might be once a month at all Masses, or in school assemblies. *"Today we're going to send a collective thank-you to all Care Home Workers, by giving them a round of applause"*

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And: if you can, let your choice of saints know – tell'em what you've done, and why. They'll appreciate the thanks and recognition.

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You might ask other people to join in – a present from the Catholic communities. The Pastoral Plan says that *"We have a particularly rich legacy of ecumenical engagement here in the archdiocese and we were accompanied along the path to our Synod by brothers and sisters from various Christian traditions. As we look to the future, it will be important to build on these foundations."* So the suggestion of a common show of appreciation can be shared with many other communities – Christian and otherwise. It's also one with a feed to local and social media.

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And how about inviting large gatherings such as football crowds to join in. At half time, half a minute's applause for the everyday saints supporting a local good cause. So if someone has a contact...

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The A-Z idea came out of the Adelante Romero Gallery of Unofficial Saints made by Hugh Gibbons to mark the canonisation of St Oscar Romero in 2018. The Gallery is currently visiting St Oscar Romero's School in Worthing. The chaplain got the Faith Ambassadors from each Year to throw together their A-Z of Everyday Saints in about 10 minutes. Young people are good at this sort of thing. To see more, visit [www.just1.org.uk/adelantegallery](http://www.just1.org.uk/adelantegallery).

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Clappenings, then. Worth putting heads (and hands) together?



## #2 Open up Canon 1287 §2

### Applying synodality by updating structures in parish financial transparency

#### A Sermon on the Amount in 2009...

*"Dear Parishioner...Please find enclosed a brief outline of parish income and expenditure for 2009. I read recently that a witty Parish Priest entitles this information the sermon on the amount. On a more serious note, may I take this opportunity to thank the parish community for your outstanding generosity over the year, not only in supporting the Redemptorist parish and community at Bishop Eton, but also for your wonderful donations towards so many other charities. Thank you for this marvellous contribution to people far less fortunate than ourselves*

Fr Tim Buckley prefaces the first of his annual reports from 2009 seen on the website of Our Lady of the Annunciation (Bishop Eton), Childwall. His reports included full details on offertory and other income and expenditure – and all the mandatory and optional second collections.



#### ...appreciating the good stewards of the parish in 2021

*"...thanks to your continuing commitment to the life of the parish and the diligent oversight of the Finance Team and of our administrator, Hayley Metcalfe, the situation remains more than satisfactory. Hopefully, as life is gradually returning to something more normal, we can look forward to less fluctuations as we manage the accounts, but we do need to be ready for the challenges that rising inflation and a massive increase in the ordinary cost of living are going to bring. Like everyone else we will have rising utility costs and there are still some major repairs to the buildings to be undertaken...I am also grateful to the counting teams and all of you for your contributions. The parish belongs to all of us. I trust you are happy that we are acting as good stewards."*

**"The complete set of Manuals for use in the Diocese is on the diocesan website. If you have broadband please consider if you need to print out the Manuals."**

*"It is the Parish Priest's responsibility to report on his administration to the Curia...this is performed through the annual financial return to the Finance Office (Canon 1287 s1). It is also the Parish Priest's responsibility to report to the faithful (Canon 1287 s2) and this should also be done annually."*

Diocese of Nottingham Parish Administration Manual  
Seen on-line by OpenBooks2017-2023

**Tewkesbury Council votes in secret against plans to be more open**

BBC news website

Example of Cliquesalism seen in Private Eye, Dec 2022

OPENING UP THE BOOKS by updating an Archdiocesan financial norm seems a timely and necessary idea, given the many calls for greater transparency as an expression of synodality and respecting the rights of the laity. The suggestion uses existing structures – but is groundbreaking in suggesting that the laity and clergy might OK the Archbishop's new norms set for a key Canon born of Vatican II.

It would also be applied synodality where Liverpool sets an example for other dioceses – to surprise the Synod in Rome 2023-4!

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The people of the archdiocese recommended that *"that the pastoral plan include a strengthening of collaborative and synodal leadership at local and diocesan level with a sustained commitment to accountability, transparency, and inclusivity."* So do others. Many of the UK parish, diocesan and national reports for the Synod 2021-4 in Rome contain concern about lack of transparency in finances and other parish decision-making (cliquesalism, to coin a word...)

So transparency is the agenda for Rome. Clause #79 of the October 2022 Working Document for the Continental Stage says: *"In different parts of the world, transparency is seen as an essential practice for a Church growing into a more authentic synodality."* The authors chose to cite a UK observation: *"The Catholic Church needs to become more open and transparent, everything is done in secret. Parish Council agendas and minutes are never published, financial committee decisions never discussed or balance sheets shared."*

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It shouldn't be the case. In the spirit of Vatican II, since November 1983 financial transparency at parish level has been required by Canon Law 1287 §2 – innovative, painstakingly crafted. *"According to norms to be determined by particular law, administrators are to render an account to the faithful concerning the goods offered by the faithful to the Church."* (Nottingham norms, left, are lay-friendly). In that time, Liverpool parishioners have given upwards of £400 million. The public purse via Gift Aid has provided tens of millions more.

However, the OpenBooks Project found that few UK dioceses post their §2 norms on-line. Few parish websites show any sign of the priest's annual report, Finance Committee Minutes, or AGMs. Yet nearly all show how to donate – notably on-line these days.

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Transparency needs to be seen to be done, not just assumed. It has value in showing common courtesy and common sense in giving something back to givers. It's not a big ask. If a priest can write in a newsletter weekly, why supervise a finance account once a year?

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So the suggestion is for bishops to update and upgrade the norms – and show respect to all who fund the Church – along these lines:

- Update c1287 §2 policy. Post on the archdiocesan website.
- Require the parish priest to produce his annual financial report in the form of a PDF file. This must cover all offerings including second collections – plus a basic commentary and statistics. Where possible, this must be archived on the parish website.
- Require Finance Committees to post Minutes on their website.
- Invite Deanery Councils, Finance Committees and parishioners en masse at Mass to give and renew approval of these norms.

A starting date? 26 November 2023, maybe – a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary!



# #3 Cherish our peoples' stories

## Applying synodality by priests & parishioners to make history together

### NOTEBOOK-WORTHY 1

**Fr Liam Collister** *Born in Anfield, Fr. Liam was educated at All Saints infants and juniors, before attending De La Salle Secondary school and Saint Francis Xavier's VI Form College. He attended Saint Cuthbert's seminary, Ushaw, and completed his studies for the priesthood at Saint Marie's Seminary, Oscott, before being ordained at St. Matthew's Church, Clubmoor in 2012....*



Part of his biography seen on the website of St Oswald's & St Sebastian website 2023

**Parish Year Notebooks are a practical form of synodality for many people - now and in the years ahead** – not least, incoming clergy and parishioners, and often many overseas visitors on-line. The idea is to showcase in one place key information and highlights of the year for parishes and deaneries – something newsletters can only do in

In common with most in the UK, parish websites across the Archdiocese are light on history – especially today's. They can also be very, ahem, parochial. For example, there's little sign of lessons to pass on from the pandemic – how the parish, school, groups, individuals coped – that may be of use to your successors along the years, though there'll be another, for sure. Up-to-date information on Who's Who is often lacking – PPC and Finance Committee members; and, above all, parish secretaries. (Even a brief biography of the priest can be of help (eg Fr Liam's).

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**A Parish Notebook** might be on these lines. Compile a simple document, with highlights, lessons, events, experiences, gathered from across the parish. The Notebook would be an opportunity to appreciate and thank individuals and groups, and to publicise their values and activities. The parish priest might provide an introduction and overview. (A burden? One word a week should do!). Compile it into a PDF or other digital file. Put it on the website, and make an archive. If appropriate, include information from or link with other documents – eg the priest's annual financial report to the faithful. Done once, it would just need updating. (NB is there an opportunity for Awards?)

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**Benefits?** Year Notebooks would show and celebrate the local stories that make people feel good about their parish, the Church and - importantly - themselves. They would let others near and far see and share good ideas. And they could be especially helpful when mergers happen – or pandemics and synodal consultations, for that matter.

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### Parishes already have a lot of material for a Year Notebook

- Numbers and names officially recorded (sometimes in newsletters) eg Baptisms, Marriages, Confirmation, First Holy Communion, Deaths, Mass counts
- Highlights of the year – eg parties, pilgrimages, anniversaries, visiting priests or speakers, concerts – and vigils (see left)
- Name of people to appreciate the time and talents given to the parish – Secretaries, members of PPC and FC, sacristans, ministers of many sorts
- Groups – their main happenings in the year
- News and reviews of schools within or fed by the parish
- Outreach and ecumenical activities in local or national communities
- Social justice activities eg support for campaigns
- Changes to and plans for the church buildings or settings
- Changes in the local area or communities – such as Food Banks, other faith groups, housing development, transport.

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You get the drift? Worth at least thinking about for 2023 – and way beyond? Starting date? Anytime that suits from now on.



### NOTEBOOK-WORTHY 2

**"That was good. We should do it more often" is what the Imam said to me at the end of prayer.** *Others said the same, reiterating the same feeling I had, despite the cold, biting wind and rain, on Friday, 4th February, as we prayed for peace on the steps of the Cathedral. Our prayer was especially for a peaceful outcome from the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine. But we also put up a banner with the names of more than 10 countries who are presently being torn apart by violent and mortal conflict.*

*"A small group of some 40 or 50 people gathered. Hindu, Anglican, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic Church: we all prayed to our God of Peace. as were Archbishop Malcolm and Bishop Tom Williams, the Sisters of Seel Street, the Sacred Heart Sisters, the FCJ, and our own Cardinal. And who have I missed out?"*

Vigil of Prayer for Peace between Russia and Ukraine on 4 February 2022. Photo by Rev. Miranda Threlfall-Holmes

Seen on the website of St Vincent de Paul Church Liverpool 1 .



# #4 Reach out & stand up with FairTrade

## Applying synodality with a ready-made recognition of social justice

### PUTTING FAITH INTO ACTION

*“Churches, mosques, synagogues, and other places of worship across the UK have been at the heart of the success of Fairtrade – putting faith into action by using and promoting Fairtrade products and leading public conversation about justice for the farmers and workers we rely on.*

*“There is a brand-new online commitment process that’s easy to complete whether you have applied for Fairtrade status before, or not, and new certificates, posters and materials available to celebrate and showcase your Fairtrade commitment.”*

FairTrade Places of Worship Recommitment Guide on their website 2023



### SOUNDING SYNODAL IN GREGGS?

Their coffee, tea and juices are all FairTrade. And more. Seen in their Annual Sustainability Report April 2022 – which maybe has lessons in how to be a better diocese – is this.

*“In February 2021, Greggs launched its first sustainability plan – The Greggs Pledge – setting itself ten commitments to help make the world a better place by 2025, with the aim of developing these over the years to come. These Commitments, aligned with the ambitions of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, are based on three key areas where Greggs is best placed to make the most difference: building stronger, healthier communities; making our planet safer; being a better business.*

*“One year on from the launch of the Greggs Pledge, the business has made significant progress on its ten commitments and has reached some key milestones set out in 2021, including:*

- 686 Breakfast Clubs, feeding over 44,500 children every school day;*
- reduced the ratio of manufacturing food waste to sales by 31% and redistributed 28% of unsold food from shops;*
- donated over 1,000 tonnes of food to charity partners;*
- 32% of the products on the shelves in Greggs stores were ‘healthier choices’*

FAIRTRADE is a much-respected, long-established form of synodality in action that’s always worth considering for parishes, deaneries - and dioceses. Across the UK, few websites of Catholic parishes or dioceses show the familiar symbol of social justice ethos. Yet signing up for the Places of Worship Award also lends itself to a mass parishioner approval or annual renewal at the end of a Mass – with or without an inflatable banana as a visual aid for a presenter...

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Fairtrade is a movement that reaches out to help producers in developing countries obtain better trading conditions and promote sustainability. It aims to ensure payment of proper prices to producers, and raising social and environmental standards.

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Through FairTrade you make a real difference to the lives of more than 1.9 million farmers and workers in 1880 Certificated Producers in 71 countries. Women are 17% of farmers and 41% of workers.

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And its appeal continues to grow strongly despite pressure on family budgets. In the 2022 Fairtrade Report, sales were up 14%, and 65% of people in the UK say they choose Fairtrade. (Demand is also translating into sales, with the Co-op’s ‘Ethical Markets Report 2021’ noting that the UK ‘green pound’ has reached record levels, breaking through the £100 bn mark for the first time.)

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You’ll know Fairtrade from coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, cold drinks and juice, honey, cotton, wine, clothing, chocolate, flowers, beauty and wellness, spices, gold - and bananas. You can buy over 6000 products with the Fairtrade mark in all sorts and sizes of retail outlets - from the biggest supermarkets to small stalls.

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The Fairtrade Foundation UK was established in 1992 by Christian Aid, CAFOD, Oxfam, Traidcraft, and the World Development Movement - later joined by the National Federation of Women’s Institutes. Many other organisations and millions of people now support its aims – not only in this country but worldwide. Today in the UK, there are over hundreds of Fairtrade Towns and Boroughs, as well as Fairtrade universities and colleges.

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Many schoolchildren are taught to appreciate Fairtrade as part of social justice. So they need to see and be reassured that churches share and show the same appreciation.

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To be a Fairtrade Church, parishioners have to sign up to three simple goals. They’re not tough or costly – along these lines:

- use Fairtrade tea and coffee after services and in meetings for which you have responsibility
- encourage the use of other Fairtrade products
- promote Fairtrade both during Fairtrade Fortnight and the year, through events, worship and other activities whenever possible

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When? Anytime from now. (NB FairTrade Fortnight’s each February.)

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NB1 Way back, Hugh Gibbons created a simple website called Schools Speak Out for Fairtrade. It’s still available to browse at [www.just1.org.uk/fairtrade](http://www.just1.org.uk/fairtrade). NB2 A Fairtrade clerical shirt might make an unusual present for a parish to mark their commitment!



# #5 Harvest our families of languages

## Applying synodality as parishes showcase the prayer they have in common

### TEXTING OUR FATHER

Winners of a competition for The Lord's Prayer in fewer than 160 characters

**dad@hvn,**

ur spshl. we want wot u want&urth2b like  
hvn.giv us food&4giv r sins lyk we 4giv  
uvaz.don't test us!save us!bcos we kno ur  
boss,ur tuf&ur cool 4 evalok?

*Matthew Campbell, York*

**r pa in evan,**

respect 2 u, may u rain ear as in evan. giv us r  
needs, 4giv rsin as we 4giv r nmes. resq us  
from the evil 1. 4 ur always the most xlent  
dude. Yo.

*Steve Seymour, Bristol*

**God@heaven.org,**

You rule, up and down. We need grub and a  
break. Will pass it on. Keep us focused. You  
totally rule, long term. Amen.

*Rev Stephen Moore, Bellevue WA USA*

### DE LODZ PRIA

Our father whe you live for heaven. Your name  
must be holy. Make your comandia e come for  
we how you want say e must be for ground  
like for heaven. Give we chop whe e enough  
for we for this day. And excus we bad like we  
tuo di excuse the people whe them do we bad.  
No leave we go for bad road but move we  
for bad thing. Amen.

*Kamtok Pidgin language thanks to Mary Maimo of  
Bracknell and Cameroon*

### MAORI PUPILS PRAY

E to mātou Matua I te rangi Kia whakatapua  
tōu ingoa; Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga, Kia  
whakaritea tōu hiahia I te whenua, kia pērā  
anō I tō te rangi. Hōmai kia mātou āiane! He  
taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā, Whakakāhoretia ō  
mātou hara, Me mātou e whakakore nei I ngā  
hara O te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou; Kāua  
mātou e tukua kia whakawaia, Engari  
whakaorangia mātou I te kino. Amene.

*by St Joseph's Catholic Girls College  
Napier, New Zealand*

### OH LORDY: A PARABLETTE

St Benedict was riding on horseback  
from one monastery to the next.

A man called Will snarled at him:

"If I had a horse, I could pray too."

Benedict smiled. "Well, Will, I'll give you this  
horse - if you can say the Lord's Prayer  
without getting distracted."

Will jumped straight in.

"Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name, thy, thy...  
does that include the saddle?"

COLLECTIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER IN YOUR VARIETY OF LANGUAGES is a simple synodal idea that may appeal - especially for families of parishes in deaneries. It's not new, of course. The Church of the Paternoster on the Mount of Olives is a sort of mother church of Our Fathers. But home-made ones are fun to gather up, show your diversity - and air something you share. And they don't cost.

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They'd be another paternoster first that Liverpool leads! Born in the city in 1805, architect Peter Ellis installed the first of his continuous lifts in 1868 in his groundbreaking Oriel Chambers at 14 Water Street L2 8TD (now home to barristers).

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Paternoster Galleries are any collection you like to make of The Lord's Prayer in languages in and around your parish or deanery. They're ideal gather up and publish on websites or noticeboards.

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Gathering up languages is something that should be easy - both among parish congregations and in schools of all sorts. And their families. You may find that other Christian communities around may be of help. NGOs such as CAFOD or Christian Aid might find some versions of the Lord's Prayer. And if you have any overseas links, let them join in.

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Want to see an example of a Paternoster Gallery? Here are two versions. In 2017, Hugh Gibbons made one to coincide with Pentecost Sunday, and for use as displays in churches and school workshops. The translations were provided by a variety of people: local parishioners, schools, churches; but reaching out to a priest at the tip of Patagonia, a charity in Zimbabwe, a deacon in Colorado, a school in New Zealand, and some Googling (for Cheyenne and Anglo-Saxon...)

In the picture on the left, above, are the words of the languages simply printed A4 and pinned up on a noticeboard at Corpus Christi Church in Wokingham. On the right they're in wood with simple graphics in acrylic. They can be displayed on table top or special staves. On the side of each are the languages' word for Thank You and Water, with a commentary on the back.

Visit [www.just1.org.uk/galleries](http://www.just1.org.uk/galleries) or click here for a [PDF Guide](#).

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When to think about one? Ready for Pentecost, maybe.