



Kia tau te rangimārie ki a koutou

In his first document as Pope, Pope Francis wrote *“I invite all Christians everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her since no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.”* Evangelii Gaudium 3

Last Sunday in his homily for the opening Mass to begin the 2-year process of consultation for the Synod on *Synodality, Communion, Participation and Mission* he encouraged all Catholics to become *“experts in the art of encounter”*. He wasn’t just talking about that renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, that kind of encounter needs to be something we do every day unflinchingly, he says. He was speaking of an encounter meaning *meeting our fellow Catholics by being ready to listen to them with our hearts and our ears*. We have all been invited, every single baptised person in the world to meet other Catholics to listen to them, and to allow God to help us to walk together *“wherever we are”*. Pope Francis speaks of this as the Synod process of consultation beginning this coming Sunday 17 October, as *“an adventure in which everyone must take part”*. He wants us to make this an adventure, not just another task to be done, but an adventure in which we imagine together the future of the Church. He had a wonderful line in his homily where he said *“Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties”*.

Now is the time for all of us to genuinely encounter one another, listen to one another as we journey through life. Now is the time to listen to one another and to hear with our hearts, and not just our ears. This is for the good of the Church, this is for our good. Pope Francis longs for a Church in which we are open to listening to one another. That means everyone.

Over these next few weeks look for opportunities to become *experts in the art of encounter*, to engage in the Synod consultation process, to feed in your ideas of what the Church should be in the future, and above all let’s pray together for the success of this incredible adventure we have been invited to join in with over the next couple of years.

Nāku noa,

John

*“God’s style is nearness, compassion and tenderness. He always draws near to us, is compassionate and tender ...Allow me to say, we are saints. But then, by our actions, we become sinners. But fundamentally, we are saints.”*

Pope Francis General Audience Sept 2021