

Listening Sessions Synodality:

Saturday 19th February 2022


WELCOME

by

Fr Gerard Mitchell SJ

Chairperson





The Synod Prayer


Led by
Sr Sneha



**We stand before You,
Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in
Your name.**

**With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in
our hearts;**






**Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.**

**We are weak and sinful;
do not let us
promote disorder.**



**Do not let ignorance lead
us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our
actions.**



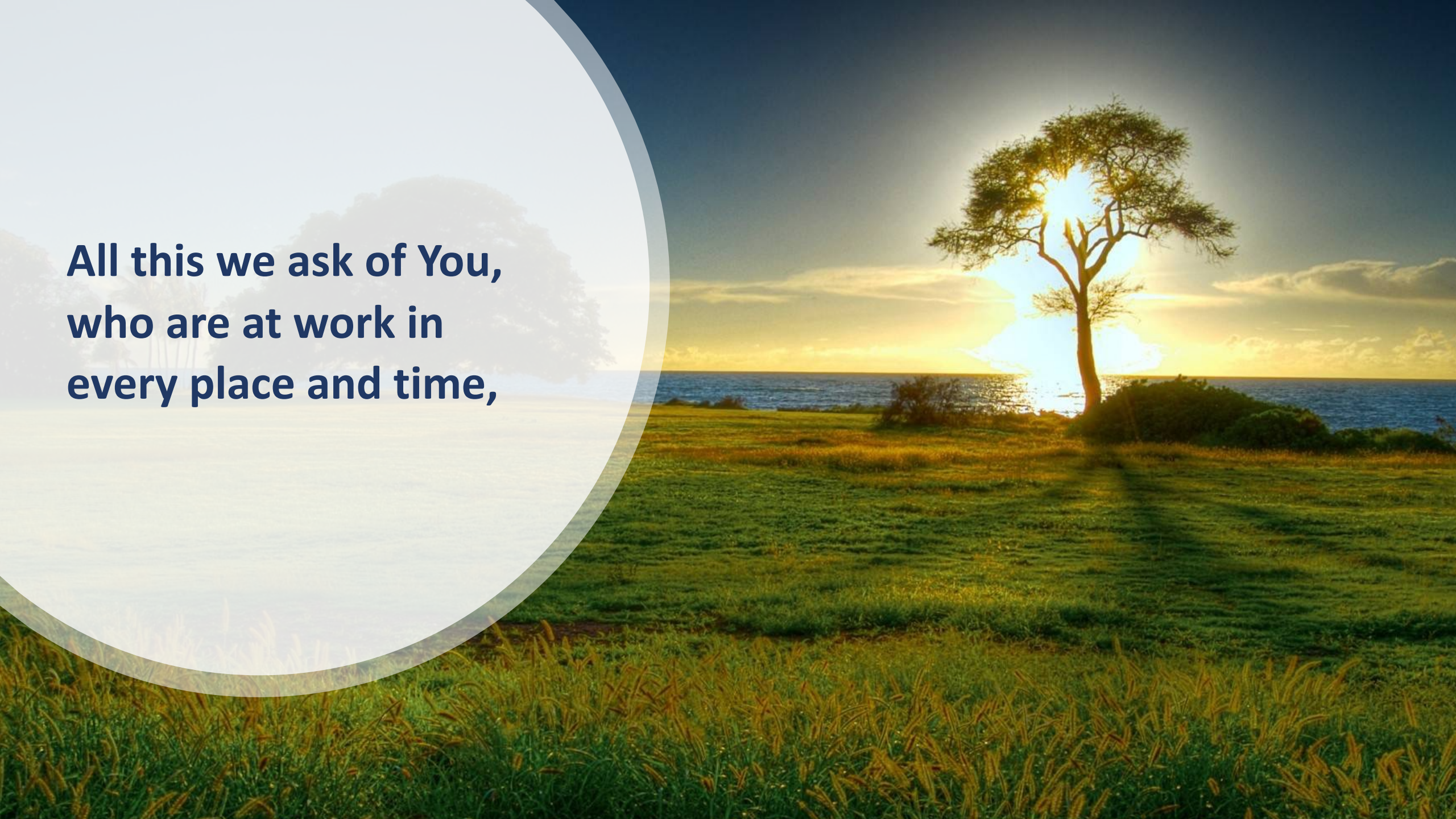


**Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey
together to eternal life**

**and not stray from
the way of truth
and what is right.**



**All this we ask of You,
who are at work in
every place and time,**





—

**in the communion of the
Father and the Son,
forever and ever.
Amen**



Agenda

- 1. Small Groups /Feeding Back:** reflecting on the last session. Has anything been missed?
- 2. Break**
- 3. Small Groups/Feeding Back:** Dreams for Renewal
- 4. Next Steps, Q&A, and Closing Prayer**

What has been missed?

From your own experiences...

What do you value about how the Church community journeys together and shows love to the world?





What we valued

- In UK, Churches were closed during COVID 19 lockdowns. This gave time for peaceful reflection at home, but I missed seeing the community in person, missed helping each other. We are the Church and we do help and support each other.
- Caste issues have been raised in our Church – the Church plays a big role in raising public awareness in UK and in drawing our attention to these issues.
- In India, I value education and healthcare but above all I value the Church.



What we valued

- The Church has supported the masses with food, shelter and travel as they migrated home from one end of India to the other during the first COVID 19 lockdown.
- Growing up in India, the Church was everything and where I felt security.
- The Church has strong value systems, providing service to the people, people can depend on the Church.
- Church can do big things for relief work and model community development work.



What we valued

- As a Pastor building security within the community in India I value their hospitality. The Church gives a feeling of oneness of the whole of India.
- Christianity is who I am and in everything I do. As children we are taught what is right and wrong, to be kind, and help people in need. Gives a sense of belonging.
- The connectedness in assisting in our church services that helps us with knowing that we are one people journeying together.
- When there is a catastrophe in the world, the Church with Pope Francis, unites our prayers with our action.



What we valued

- **Being able to send aid through Catholic organisations such as CAFOD as one way of us caring about the oppressed.**
- **When people are in need, we can reach out to people with our prayers and with this compassion, our hearts are moved.**
- **There is value in the Holy Father calling us to unity with other denominations to build cooperation.**



What we valued

- **Charity work of the Church, especially when COVID-19 affected the people very hard and the whole world was in difficulty. It was the Church that came forward with a helping hand to all irrespective of caste, denomination or religion.**



What we valued

- **When the people could not attend the church as they were closed due to lockdown, each house became a church and started worship there.**
- **Church was always with the people when they are in difficulty.**
- **Church as an institution survived all oppositions and oppressions from known and unknown corners.**



What we valued

- **Technology in the UK has helped us including allowing for inclusivity of UK women.**
- **The experience of covid in the UK has helped us to come back to early Christian times when the Church prayer was focused in small families.**
- **One participant noted that when they visited Pakistan they were struck with how the Word of God is read by the family at home and given importance.**



Instructions For Breakout Groups: 1

You be shortly invited to join a small breakout group for 15 minutes.

- Please nominate a scribe for your group who will feed back at the end.
- **Question:** Has anything been missed [in relation to our unique lens of Casteism and inclusion]?



OUR THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

REFLECTION
BY FR
GERARD
MITCHELL SJ

What has been missed?

From your own experiences...

In what ways does the church community fail to journey together and show love?



Failures and Learnings

- **Jesus is in every person. Church needs to move away from the image of God being somewhere else. God is among us and in us.**
- **We have a loving God, and the Church needs to journey together in India – all equal – not hierarchal. Be compassionate – Love each other, Love thy God.**
- **God brought good news to the poor, poor either materially and/or in spirit. Church should address the structural caste discrimination within the Church in India, which causes their poverty.**



Failures and Learnings

- Church in India should develop activities amongst the poor which gives them boldness to speak out on caste discrimination.
- Needs to be a change of attitudes in clericalism in India - when it comes to the selection of persons for the diocese and non-appointments of Dalits.
- Strengthen Communion / togetherness in the Church – me and you working and helping each other to grow together. The Church in India needs to encourage this.
- Church in India needs to: address the caste discrimination within the Church; make it more equal; provide more representation of Dalit Priests and Bishops.



Failures and Learnings

- We fail as a Church on Unity.
- When Unity is mentioned, it is more as a wish and hope rather than something that is seen.
- The leaders of our Church need more support.
- 80% of Catholics in the Catholic Church in India are Dalits, they are not represented in the hierarchy and have to sit on the floor.
- Cemeteries are separated due to a person's caste.



Failures and Learnings

- **Using the word unity with other denominations is different from showing unity and there is not much use in this, if we do not call for unity within the Catholic Church too, including between bishops.**
- **We do not have unity in the Catholic Church in India.**



Failures and Learnings

- The Church should treat everyone equally just as Christ treats everyone equally.
- The Church has become more hierarchal and is not responsive to the needs of the people.
- The CCBI (<https://ccbi.in/>) and the Catholic Bishops Conference in India are not united.



Failures and Learnings

- **There is a growing indifference towards Dalits and no Dalit priests get appointed as bishops.**
- **There are political cliques and people using the Church to try and promote their own self-importance.**



Failures and Learnings

- Dalits should be included and should be highly valued and celebrated for the individual gifts that they each have.
- The Church in the UK should be doing much more to honour and support them as we are not bound by laws that discriminate against them.
- People are not always fully aware of the issues and empowered to improve things. There is often an apathy.



Failures and Learnings

- We need to mourn, grieve, have righteous anger (not a sinful emotion) and courageously speak the truth, as Jesus did all these things too.
- We must recognise the number of people leaving; the numbers not joining because of our poor examples; those who feel unwelcome; the colossal number of people hurt; and the huge number of lives destroyed through and by people of our Church (at all levels).
- Rejection of Dalits is a rejection of Christ.



Failures and Learnings

- **The Church is hierarchical rather than democratic. It has never valued the views of the lay people.**
- **No democracy in the church or in the decision taking process in the church.**



Failures and Learnings

- **Bishops, priests and clergy form the crux of the church and lay people are nowhere in the hierarchy.**
- **The Church in India has compromised with caste and other unhealthy practices which exist in India, though they are against the doctrines of Christianity.**



Failures and Learnings

- **Christians widely practiced caste discrimination which the church did not discourage.**
- **Caste discrimination is rampant among Christians which has not been addressed properly by the Church.**



Failures and Learnings

- **The Church has failed to stand for and with the human rights of Dalits and with the struggle for the constitutional rights of Christians.**
- **The Church is unresponsive to the cries of laity for the support of equal rights for all Christians.**
- **Representation in church hierarchy is not evenly extended to the poor and marginalised sections.**



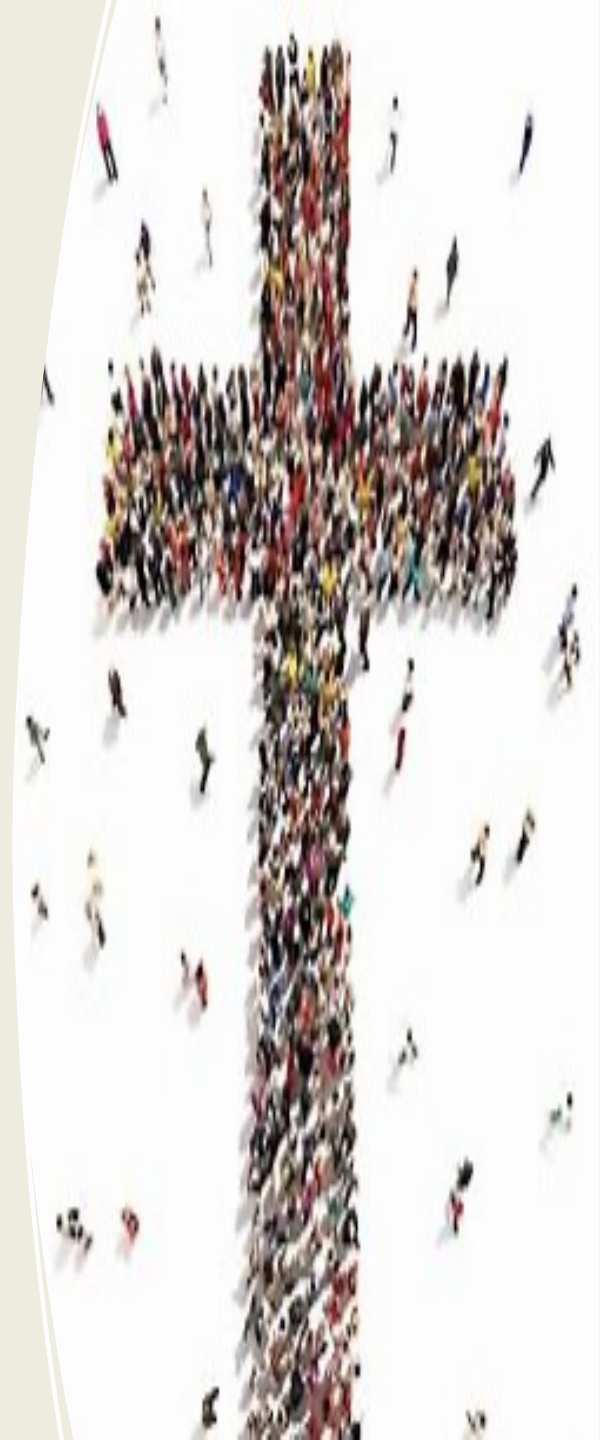
Failures and Learnings

- **Nothing positive can be said about the Catholic Church in India at a local level.**
- **It is embarrassing and shameful reading about the feelings of those who spoke at the previous session.**
- **It is terrible and saddening that there is such a lack of compassion and love for those on the margins.**



Failures and Learnings

- From an Indian perspective, the feeling is that as the universal Church is guided by the Holy Spirit, there isn't an unhappiness with what it professes. However, there is unhappiness about the local Church and nothing positive can be thought of at a local level.



Failures and Learnings

- **The Catholic Church in India needs to be more concerned about the local Church, and they are in need of a second Pentecost. There are significant problems within the Church and these issues should not be side-lined. For example, we are meant to be one through our baptism, but this is not very evident. The Church in India is not reaching out to the neediest in the Church. In terms of caste, there is a strong concern for the way that the church within the Church is acting.**



Failures and Learnings

- **Positive comments related mostly to those who participated in the Church in the UK and that even these related more to hope and opportunities rather than to many examples of partnership.**
- **Sadness and frustration that it is a struggle to find positive points to mention about the Catholic Church in India.**



Failures and Learnings

- **The spirit of Vatican Two about people being the Church is not evident in India**
- **Poor quality of education in India - large disparities due to a person's caste.**



Failures and Learnings

The Catholic Church in India is all good words but no action. Despite plenty of promises, guidance, suggested practical actions for change and monitoring mechanisms in place for monitoring progress, there has been no implementation of the suggested changes for the past six years. For example the CBCI prepared a very good policy on empowerment- in 2016. However, despite the policy being approved, nothing has been implemented to date (Feb 2022). The bishops in India were expected to implement, monitor and review all the plans in the paper. This included the spiritual, economic and educational needs of Dalits in the Church, but nothing has been done to date. It has given the signal to the laity that the bishops (who are all of high caste) are deliberately suppressing Dalits.



Failures and Learnings

- **There are still separate entrances for entering parishes in India, depending on your caste.**
- **While marginalised Asians/Indians may work different hours, there was no preferential treatment for the poor. It was perceived that Asians do a lot for their parishes and are always willing to help but are treated like free labour and second-class citizens.**



Failures and Learnings

- **The lack of effort around caste injustice in the UK by the hierarchy and development charities was also an issue. Parishes in general, never speak about these issues or try to raise awareness. There was felt to be considerable racism in the Church especially to Indians/South Asians and Eastern Europeans that is accepted by the Church. Despite those of South Asian and Eastern European descent, often being the poorest, most marginalised and hidden, it was felt that we do not make them feel welcome or make things easier for them. It was felt that there was much prejudice and misunderstandings.**



Failures and Learnings

- While there are small UK groups working tirelessly, caste discrimination often falls below the radar.
- The fact that the UK often see caste discrimination as an 'Indian' problem and not something they wish to challenge, is felt to be a sign of racism which does not recognise us as one global family, and that the concerns of UK Indians are not treated with equal concern.



Failures and Learnings

- **Bishops in the UK needed to do far more in this area.**
- **We are masking the issues by clutching for positive aspects, which hide the urgency and seriousness of the problems**
- **Feelings of strong mistrust in India towards the bishops. Felt to be a double standard, that they say one thing and do another.**



Failures and Learnings

- **Some of us have worked for a long time on racial issues in UK – CARJ is strong on combatting racism but fails to address casteism.**
- **I feel that casteism is an ignored area of racial justice issues for UK organisations and including the Church itself. I feel that it falls below the radar as people believe it is not in their organisation's remit, or they pretend it does not happen here in the UK.**
- **Churches internationally are busy addressing poverty but not caste. The Church in India is unable to address this issue.**



Failures and Learnings

- **Aspiring Priests and Sisters in India do not have protections from abuse and harassment etc. Also, there is no follow up of how many Priests etc are being trained.**
- **In the Church in India there is a difference between what the Church preaches and what it practices - it preaches equality and practices inequality/ discrimination. The Indian Church does not stand with Dalit Christians and does not speak out for them - there is no justice for Dalit Christians in the Church in India.**



Failures and Learnings

- I feel ignorant on Dalit / Caste issues. I feel that I do not know enough. There is not enough awareness about them. Why are the 80% of Christian Dalits [Catholics] not represented in the Church? - they should ask CBCI why. Dalits need to stand up for themselves. What can we do to help them?
- If there were more women in the Church it would be more equal.
- The UK Church has not supported the case for UK Caste legislation and have badly failed the affected Diaspora communities who looked up to them for support; also failing 2 pioneering Lords members [1 C of E; 1 Catholic] who took moral responsibility on their own shoulders to support the UK communities on their journey for equality.





Instructions For Breakout Groups: 2

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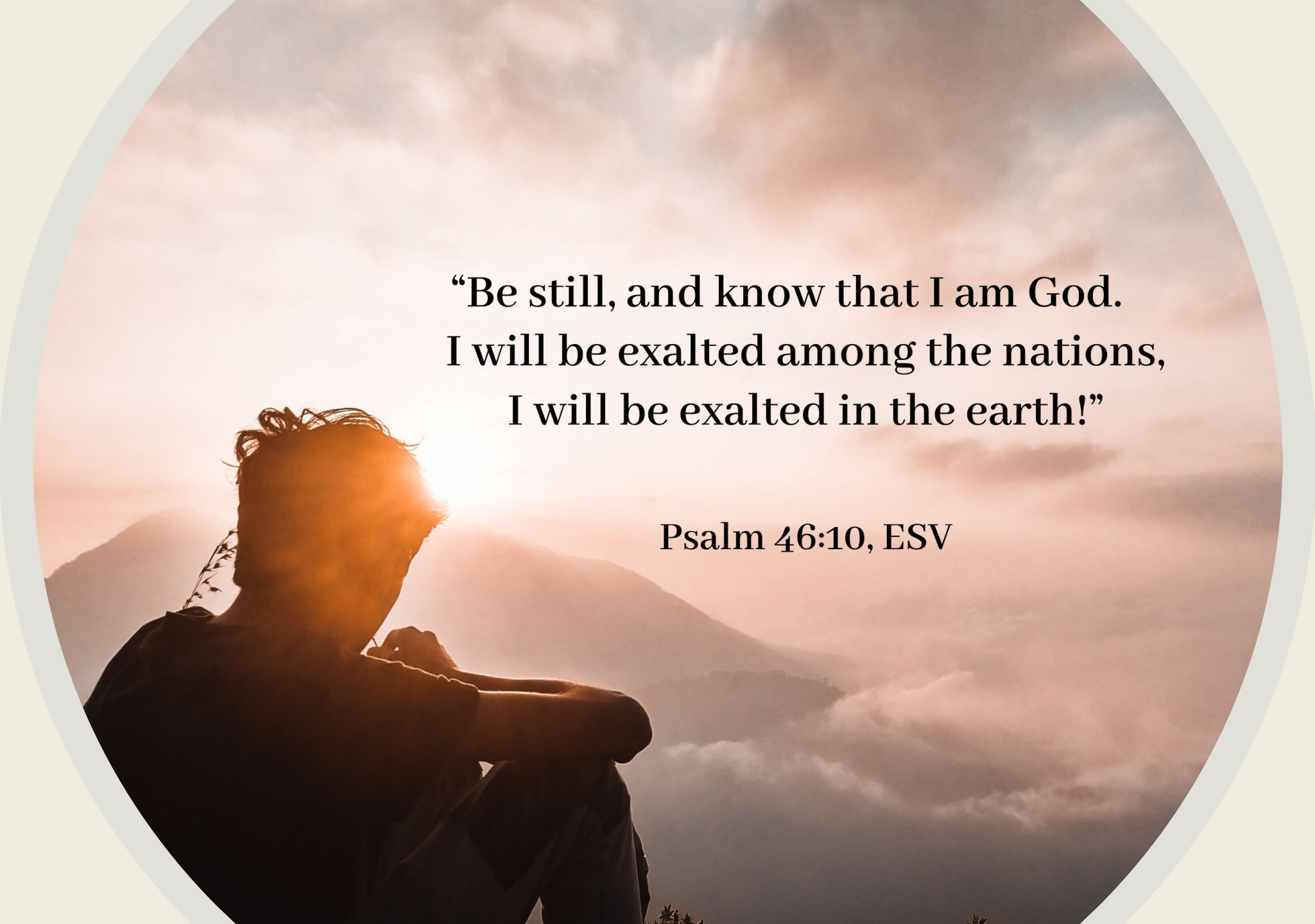


OUR THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS



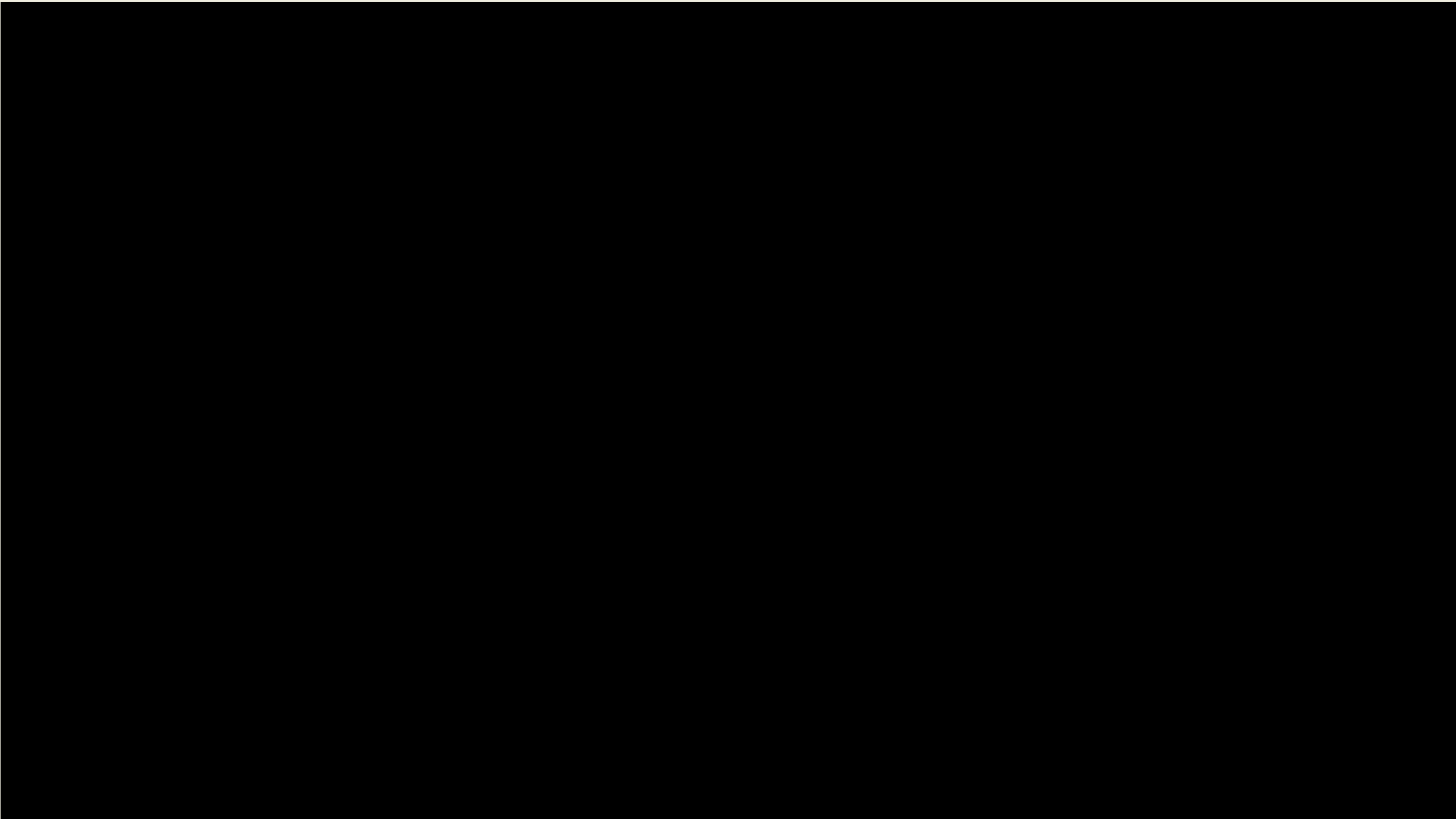
BREAK





“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”

Psalm 46:10, ESV





THOUGHTS SHARED BY FR GERARD MITCHELL SJ

Instructions For Breakout Groups: 3

- How could the Church(local and wider, laity and religious) build relationships, dialogue, learn from and journey with others on these issues?
- What steps might the Holy Spirit be inviting the Church to take, to make our parishes and communities more welcoming, inclusive, and missionary?
- **Time:** 40-45 minutes





OUR THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.
All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

