

FRANCE ARCHDEACONRY SYNOD 2022

18 MAY: SESSION II focused on our relations with the Roman Catholic church

Père Miguel Desjardins, Directeur Conférence des Evêques de France, Co-Secretary of the Conseil d'Eglises chrétiennes en France

Père Desjardins lived in England for some years before coming to France and is a member of the Chemin Neuf Community, which is an ecumenical community.

<https://www.chemin-neuf.fr/qui-sommes-nous/la-communaute-du-chemin-neuf/>

His work with the Conference of Bishops in France and with the Council of Christian churches in France is focused on ecumenism.

- **The structure of the Roman Catholic church in France**

There are 94 dioceses in mainland France, each led by a Bishop. The Vicar General is the bishop's right-hand man and knows everyone, while the Chancelier deals with legal matters. There is in most dioceses a Delegate for Ecumenism.

These dioceses are grouped into 15 Provinces, each led by an Archbishop.

At a Parish level, the priest is responsible for a chaplaincy and the Dean looks after the deanery area; he is often a useful contact person.

It should be noted that each Bishop is master in his Diocese, and although they all belong to the Conférence des Evêques de France, this committee cannot force a Bishop into a particular form of action. They aim to support each other and to share resources.

To find information about the Catholic church in France

<https://eglise.catholique.fr>

To find contact details, names of Bishops etc

<https://eglise.catholique.fr/guide-eglise-catholique-france/carte-des-dioceses/>

Currently discussions are going on about how to make the church more missionary, and how to "reboost" the church, given the diminishing level of belief in God, and the fewer numbers of priests and religious brothers and sisters. This inevitably causes some tensions between those seeking change and those opposed to it.

It is necessary to find where best to invest resources, and two areas in particular are in the spotlight: safeguarding and ecology.

- **The function of the CECEF (Conseil d'Eglises chrétiennes en France)**

<https://unitedeschretiens.fr/cecef/>

Since 1987, this organisation has brought together representatives of different Christian churches in France. It is presided over by three co-chairs, representing the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches. They discuss what is happening and sometimes issue a common statement, for example the statement on Ukraine.

It is an ecumenical movement which focuses on Human Rights and Ecology in particular.

"L'Eglise Verte" is the equivalent of the Anglican Eco-Church movement and they offer a useful carbon footprint calculator.

<https://www.egliseverte.org/>

They publish a magazine *Unité de Chrétiens* and issue 206, April 2022 is introduced by Père Desjardins and includes an article about Archdeacon Peter Hooper.

<https://unitedeschretiens.fr/revue-unite-des-chretiens/6153-la-parole-et-la-paix-dons-de-dieu-pour-un-temoignage-commun/>

- **The role of ecumenical relationships within France for the RC church**

They hold conversations with Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, Evangelical and Orthodox churches. All discussions aim to translate into practical questions, for example how to deal with “mixed marriages” (eg Catholic/Protestant).

Ecumenical activities include:

- Alpha
- La Nuit des Eglises (opening churches for visits, concerts, exhibitions, talks etc) <https://www.narthex.fr/nuit-des-eglises>
- Radio Chrétienne <https://rcf.fr>
- International music and worship festivals, for example « Welcome to Paradise” organized by chemin Neuf for those aged 18-30 <https://welcometoparadise.fr/en/> ; the Jesus Festival <https://jesusfestival.fr/en/>

The message he wants to convey is that to be a Roman Catholic is to be ecumenical.

The catholic church is currently examining the way the church is governed and is looking at, for example synods in the church of England although there are arguments for and against.

He concluded by saying that we can learn from each other, developing a way of discerning where the Spirit is leading, and not just holding contradictory debates.