

Synodality Feedback Report

Holy Trinity Church, Sutton Coldfield – February 2022

Report writers – Les Sheldon, Fr. David Lacy and Dcn. Daniel Hurd

Walking Together

Describe what happened in your parish, how you went about the Synodal process? Approximately how many people were involved in your parish, including those who have stopped coming to church or who never come.

.....

Three separate evening meetings on Wednesday's - 26th January, 2nd and 9th February 2022 were held at 7.30pm till 9.00pm, and followed the guidance proposed by the diocese – programme, focus, questions and in utilising different 'enablers' within the body of the parishioners (ie not clergy). Guidance notes about participation and listening were added to the reverse side of the programme sheets to help underpin the synodality process and aims.

The meetings were held in the Church and commenced with a 15 minutes of Exposition to foster a prayerful participation. The meetings were also live streamed and recorded to enable wider participation by those who could not attend in person. The opportunity to send in emails or to deposit anonymous responses in a designated box in the church porch. Each meeting and its particular focus and set of questions were included in the parish newsletter the Sunday prior to the meeting taking place to allow time for reflection and consideration.

The following attendance was recorded:

- Meeting No. 1 - 78 in attendance and 90 on line.
- Meeting No. 2 – 58 in attendance and 60 on line
- Meeting No. 3 – 56 in attendance and 65 on line

A total of 3 Emails were received and 47 anonymous responses posted.

In addition, a questionnaire was sent via the local primary School to parents (circa 300 families in a 2 form entry primary school) where there is a high proportion of Catholics (80%), but where regular mass attendance was around 6% - there have been no responses received from this group, although some parents did attend the parish synodal meetings.

Participation

What was your experience of listening and discerning? How did this feel? Did you have a feeling of participation in this journey?

.....

There have been many comments received to affirm a positive experience from the opportunity to participate and in listening to others. There was a genuine sense of respect shown to all participants, and strong feelings of hopefulness, appreciation and encouragement for a future that would see this process continued.

There was a high degree of unanimity and echo in many of the points raised, which was suggestive of a discerning movement whilst acknowledging the need to accord with the yeast of Christ and not that of the Pharisees and Herod (Mark 8:13).

Enrichment

How did it feel to be a part of this process? What were the joys? What did you find enriching? Explain how you felt the Holy Spirit was at work in your parish during this time.

What was particularly significant, surprising, or unexpected about this process? What new perspectives emerged from the process?

.....

The parishioners overwhelmingly welcomed their involvement and felt that the questions and format was both effective and helpful. It was particularly encouraging to hear the voices of young people raising important points about the need for inclusion and respect.

As well as the many expressions of unanimity, the Holy Spirit was felt through the desire expressed by enthusiasm, hopefulness - shared in a common desire to continue with this initiative, and in the many needs identified as presenting priorities for the Church – locally and globally.

Although some scepticism was expressed to suggest that the various comments would be lost as they were reported upwards, others suggested an opposite effect because of common echoes.

Response

In the box below outline which of the questions your parish discussed/dialogued about, the responses made, and issues raised.

The discussion records capture the many comments made in response to the themes and questions. These have been separated into the 4 categories below to add a further focus on how they might be directed as we move forward:

- PERSONAL – How people are affected personally
- PARISH - Comments criticisms or ideas related to Parish Life
- DIOCESE – Comments about the diocese
- THE CHURCH – Comments, ideas criticisms addressed to the wider church

Summary:

From a **'personal'** perspective there was a general call for more participation with opportunities that would allow individual stories and testimonies to be shared that revealed faith experiences in prayer, healing and conversion.

From a **'parish'** perspective there was an awareness that being co-responsible needed new forums to be created at parish level to bring the various groups/individuals together in a planned way. Accessibility was also high-lighted as a key issue, with the introduction of live-streaming' during the pandemic universally hailed as a providential success, and offering many new possibilities moving forward. It was noted however, that volunteering was often obstructed by a poor application of DBS/GDPR principles, especially in our schools.

From a **'diocese'** perspective' the visibility of the bishops and diocesan structures was questioned. It was also suggested that youth engagement needed a diocesan wide form/forum with a focus on

honest dialogue about the many issues that challenge faith today – LGBT/relationship issues etc. A general feeling that the laity were an under used asset was common.

From a '**Church**' perspective inclusion was the main universal focus – from special masses for those with learning difficulties, to greater female involvement in the hierarchical structures eg women deacons, and for communion for the re-married. There was also a call for the Church to confront the reality that contraception is now widely used. And a call for married Priests and for Deacons to be able to become Priests. Added to this, was the feeling that the Church needed to be more engaged with the media to counter 'fake' news and many distorted views of Catholicism, which are often corrosive to young peoples' faith.

Dreams

If you were asked to "dare to dream" about how you see the Church in the third millennium, what might your dream be?

.....

From the many responses given and in consideration of the general feeling of delight in being asked to participate in the synodal pathway, the dream that is common today is for a Church that is more participatory and inclusive – that seeks to engage all members, recognising their skills and talents, that is more hierarchically transparent and gender inclusive, that has a focus on welcoming young families, and that is engaging with the world and with other Christian churches, especially at local level.

It is clear that the pandemic has introduced new technologies (live-streaming), which has created many new and wonderful opportunities to present a positive face to the life of the Church, which offers many new possibilities to advance its dreams and hopes.

Meeting 1 - Communion: The Life of the Church: Formation

Questions

1. In what ways does the Catholic Church enhance your life?

PERSONAL

- Gives guidance, support and peace
- Helps to return to the power of the word
- Gives clarity to the decision making in my life
- Helps the family; on same path
- Sense of belonging and community; fulfilment
- Spiritual guidance and gives moral compass
- Guidance on how to live my life - WWJD
- Enhances life and faith and what it means to be me
- Altar serving enhances my faith and gives meaning
 - # Sense of solace and a guiding light for dealing with the youth
 - # Gives a purpose in life and basis for meditation.

PARISH

- To worship God in a group.
- Sense of community, prayer and life at HT

DIOCESE COMMENTS

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Happy to be a Catholic but Church needs to change particularly celibacy

2. Reflecting on 20 months of the pandemic, how has participation in your parish been affected? Were these issues and/or opportunities there before and how can participation be strengthened moving forward into the future?

PERSONAL

- We have been more than afraid.
- We now need to encourage more social contact.
- Feeling of being cut off.

PARISH

- We should have more meetings like this; it's inspiring.
- People excluded from church by pandemic; so keep live streaming
- Living alone meant live-streaming was great
- Wife is non Catholic but now comes as a result of streaming!
- On line masses and zoom is a huge benefit; concern is how do people come back?
- We must re-engage the young people.
- Where have people from Lisieux house gone?
- When we pray for dead/sick - can we have photos
- Never realised how much I missed church; but live streaming/zoom filled the gap
- Can parish have masses for children/families with learning disabilities.
- Have masses for kids who play football, rugby and sport on Sunday mornings
- This parish has a great record during pandemic: SVP, stewards, live streaming most groups have stayed in touch and done more.
- Stewards have started an hospitality ministry - good for the future

- We have been damaged but we must be optimistic
- Stewards have been welcoming during pandemic; be seen as a welcoming church.
- Live streaming has been a real positive and given the marginalised and others access to the church.
- Written comment suggests some prefer Zoom to actually attending church! During the pandemic many got solace by working together at a distance preparing liturgy for zoom.
- Make homilies shorter and more focussed - 10 mins max

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Church was over compliant with state during pandemic
- Little attendance at Confession; is it being phased out?
- Let Priests be married; end 700 years of celibacy.

3. What are the means by which different voices can be heard in your parish (particularly those on the periphery of parish life)? Which groups and individuals are least included in your parish?

PERSONAL

PARISH

- Surprised over Christmas; Fr Michael asked people in own language. We do not know enough about those who sit next to us!!
- Need to publicise the various groups in the parish.
- We should do more!!!! But people do not get up and do something!
- We have residential homes; can we go in and just talk to the residents.
- Eucharistic ministers used to visit hospital; can we do it again
- Parish has a youth committee; but we have really no connection with Primary school kids need to have presence in the church.....
- Join local churches together to really impact the call for charity.
- Concern about disconnect with primary and secondary school; will there be a new youth worker?
- Have we asked the pupils in school for their thoughts? Children have a far wider knowledge of other religions. But the world is becoming more secular.
- Volunteer to be a helper of whatever sort
- Make porch more welcoming with posters etc. Use cards for new people for data.
- Use neighbourhood groups as URC do

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- People need to be empowered and talents used
- Church needs to get young people more involved in the church, mass etc
- Seminarians comes to school; connection between school and church needs beefing up; all topics need covering.
- We do not make enough of our history. We should be revolutionary.
- Review liturgy; much music is dire; have mix of old and new.
- Invite parish groups to take part in the liturgy.
- It is the church's and our joint responsibility to seek out those whose voices are not heard.

4. How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues?

PERSONAL

- Family know that parents are involved but church not for them
- Need Church led events to attract others who are searching

- They respect my faith and choice, but are not impressed.
- Many are non-Catholics so faith not discussed

PARISH

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Church is not known for its practical arm
- Church is viewed as irrelevant; no presence in the media
- Media views Church in bad light; we need to tell all that the church has changed
- Statistic - 42% of Catholics who reach college age will drift away; need some basic apologetics to support what we believe - Fr Robert Spitzer apologist for Christianity
- We are ignored by the media - it's our own fault; none of our bishops on TV
- We need direction from church.....religion = superstition; need basic details
- Church needs to be more welcoming for those in irregular marriages - need support.
- We need to get the 42% back.
- Church seen as too strict: priests cannot marry and divorcees not allowed to marry in church.
- Unsupportive of spouses in abusive relationships
- As a shelter of abusive priests

5. How might the Church improve its decision-making processes?

6. Which of your concerns does the Church fail or struggle to respond to?

PERSONAL

- Be more welcoming to all including the marginalised

PARISH

- A general confession on a regular basis would be a good idea
- There is little in our parish to help explore our faith; why not have Bible study classes church history classes, catechism etc help us to learn more about our faith.
- What are we doing about Christian Unity; the Octave came and went and we did nothing. unless we get together with other Christians we will lose the ability to really act.

DIOCESE

- Need youth forum at Diocese level so that we can make a difference. Target should be young and old.
- I have heard of the deanery but have no idea what it does.

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Church needs to consult with lay people; no co-responsibility Our laity is well educated but ignored.
- Our church does not engage with the laity; other churches appear to do it better
- The challenges are the same for THE church and OUR church
- Other churches appear so proud of who they are and what they do we are not no; we must rise up and welcome all - micro or macro.
- We do not know what the decision making process is; can we find out!
- Curia is too powerful; let's look at the top. Curia is too powerful a filter.
- Church is not a LEARNING organisation.
- Married priests would make church more appealing
- Decision making should be as an international company does - with input from Holy Spirit
- Main concern is there will be no priests.
- Concern about those who have left the church; we must use real sales techniques to reach out to non-believers.

- Celibacy should be ditched to foster more vocations; priests should have other life experiences.
- Do not let the usual laity cliques run the parish.
- Why have still got celibacy -outmoded and outdated
- More lay involvement particularly women; less clericalism

Meeting 2 - Participation: Liturgy and Worship: Co-Responsibility

7. How do you believe your presence at Mass makes a difference?

PERSONAL

- Mass is the greatest prayer of all; should participate more
- Mass is participating in Christ - we are one with all, living/dead
- Felt there was a living presence
- It shows I belong to God's family.
- Regretfully very little; I don't understand God's presence

PARISH

- Gives a way to come together; sharing sacraments and common beliefs
- Welcoming; like singing; confirming relationship with God
- Live streaming was brilliant but no substitute for real thing; receiving communion
- Can priest delay offertory prayers until after hymn and collection

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Our ancestors fought for this Church; use tradition/mass to be the best you can.
- If we do not go then no pint in any of this.
- Technology means we do not have to be present.

8. Explain what difference does it make in your life to receive the sacraments?

PERSONAL

- Focus on what it's all about
- Essence of Christ's love; Christ is with us.
- Doing one's duty as a catholic.
- Sacraments are centre of Catholic life.
- Reconciliation can be traumatic; but is a great relief

PARISH

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Sacraments are very enriching and strategically placed - progression for parents and children; satisfying experience which encircles our life to adulthood.
- To see the parents and children engage with the sacraments; makes a difference.
- Confession should not be that difficult; should not be off-putting.
- Confession still a habit; should be more like spiritual direction - contemplative
- What does Mass mean for us if no one else comes?
- To say that divorce is wrong is not necessarily correct; abusive husband needed restraining.
- Communion for the remarried - inconsistent rules (see Boris Johnson). Married a divorced man so precluded from sacraments although attending mass every Sunday.
- Spiritual Communion should include those in Church who are unable to receive for whatever reason.

9. What part does prayer play in your life and your relationship with God/the Church?

PERSONAL

- How many use the Universalis to be in touch with church prayer with God/the Church?
- Old style prayer has its place. But need not be formal.
- Prayer can be the answer to loneliness and mental issues.
- Prayer makes you reach out - to sick or bereaved
- Anything can be turned into a prayer.
- Church is not a building but people of God
- Prayer is evidence of a common purpose
- Prayers said morning and evening
- Should re-instate prayers for the conversion of Russia! # Prayer is very important - keeping in touch with God. # Without prayer would be lost - but standard prayers are no use to me

PARISH

- Can we pray for the unborn aborted children in bidding prayers. Is there a day set aside ?

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- We do not teach one another. We should be more contemplative.
- How does prayer inter-react with us in church when we can pray anywhere?

10. How do you currently participate, personally, in the life of the Church? How much responsibility do you have as an individual?

PERSONAL

- As an altar server I feel connected to the community.
- I do not participate but help if asked
- Eucharistic minister and other activities

PARISH

- Stewarding was a case to get volunteers and that was successful.
- Stewards must become a welcoming ministry.
- Ask people to come and have a go at anything; many have the skills.
- We have many skills etc in this parish but we do not what they are.
- Beware that the structure does not block active participation.
- Expand the kiss of peace as it is now.
- FHC and First Confession should be a parish activity not a school one - families involved
- Link the sermon to what is relevant today
- Presently I am not involved but would like to be in the future
- All first communicants ought to be taught how to serve Mass

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- We wait for volunteers; we need to ask people to help. Pope wants ministries.
- We have a clericalism problem - we over officialise tasks. We are working our priests into the ground.
- People wait to be asked - but we need to shout up more
- Lay people need to take bigger part in church; in USA laity are encouraged. Clergy are involved in stuff they shouldn't be; need co-responsibility.

11. How do families and young people effectively participate in the life of your parish? What do you do to support them?

PERSONAL

- My family don't participate since covid.
- Take this question to Bishop Walsh school

PARISH

- We must keep trying; we have many groups and we must use them to get the young in.
- Thanks for opportunity to participate by reading; by zoom and meeting others.
- We are a community but we need to get to know each other better.
- We could have more social groups eg. Sport
- Target the parents of young children to get them to come; esp those at primary school
- We used to have cubs, brownies, guides etc. Other churches have them; why not us
- Could children's mass be later; people should be more tolerant of noisy kids at Mass
- Have not seen many young families here.
- Could we have a 'freshers' week when we find out about different groups

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Why don't people come to church? What are we not doing.

12. How does your parish effectively identify and use the gifts of its people? How can we better enable full participation and co-responsibility in the life of the Church at the parish and diocesan levels?

PERSONAL

- My family don't participate since covid.
- Take this question to Bishop Walsh school

PARISH

- Parish council could be used to remove tedious jobs from the priest
- No real connection between St Joseph's and Holy Trinity
- People reluctant to join in social groups eg Catenians, Choir
- People are worried about commitments so reluctant to take on other things.
- Ladies 232 is a very successful group and many like it.
- We have organised events but they are not supported
- We are not showing diversity: no ethnic attendees. Mostly of a senior age.

DIOCESE

- Clear out clergy from Cathedral and make them 'hot desk'
- Lack of communication both at Diocese level and universally.
- Very frustrating to have priests doing non-clerical stuff; many jobs might be done by the laity.
- Our bishops are virtually invisible; get them out and about
- Clear out clergy from Cathedral and make them 'hot desk'

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Lack of communications from Rome down.
- Many edifices need to be dismantled eg Canon law to enable co-responsibility
- Majority of attendees are women; women not represented.

- Many barriers get in the way - GDPR, DBS etc
- End clergy celibacy - it's outdated and detrimental

Meeting 3 - Mission: Social Outreach: Evangelisation. Our Dream

13. If you could describe your local parish fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like?

PERSONAL

- Dream: Fill up the church with those who have been baptised, confirmed etc.
- Pathetic that people do not volunteer eg the choir
- Sermons: Too long - one item is quite adequate. Use visual aids.
- 20% of what we hear is rebred; 30% of what we see is remembered.
- Euthanasia: our MP is leading fight to bring in euthanasia. We must fight it.
- Set up prayer groups; more rosary; more expositions
- To see more people attending parish events; re-start scouts
- Make homilies shorter and more appropriate

PARISH

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- Should be greater involvement of women.
- Anglicans can be married and priests - we need married clergy
- We need ladies as deacons - untapped supply
- Church should accept concentration and so no excuse for abortion.
- Church needs to fight euthanasia.
- Are we institutionalised in our church? Others follow other faiths because they have technologies. We need fundamental change of the institution.
- Need to make Christ visible.
- Church should not alienate the divorced or LGBTQ+ community or the deaf
- Consider church unification - not uniformity 1
- Allow married clergy
- Why do we still have these strange vestments after all this time?

14. How does your experience of parish life allow you to reflect, develop, act on and speak about your faith?

PERSONAL

- Life-changing experience should be aired; prayer is the answer.
- Publicise these good news stories.
- We are posed many questions from non-Catholics and we are not sure of the tenets of our faith.
- Children see through our lack of knowledge and we need to develop a deep expression of faith.
- Example of a father reconnecting through his child was expressed.
- Previous years in URC centred on Jesus. He was our example and should remain so.

PARISH

- Need more informal sessions like this to discuss our faith and develop ideas.
- Regular meetings to discuss our faith would help

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- How do non-believers find their way to us without any existing contact.
- How do we speak about our faith? Children go to Vesey where non-Christian beliefs are promoted. Why do we not read the bible?
- Emphasise why we go to Mass: to worship together. Kids feel bored but a price worth paying!

15. In what ways is the call of Jesus to serve the poor a priority in the Church and especially in our parishes?

PERSONAL

PARISH

- We have the SVP here. Rooted in visiting. Pandemic has changed the SVP when visiting was not possible. But now many other needs eg financial. We support food banks We need to rethink our game.
- We need to share our expertise. Bring our four communities together.
- Keep these meetings going and evangelise in our own parish and wider.
- Are we one parish or two - SH? Need to foster better relations with SH.
- Knights of St Columba and fireside charity are very active - feeding people off the street.
- Many groups in parish but we do not know what they do
- Evangelisation is important. 2 masses of commitment but we do not see them in church - what are we doing wrong.
- We need posters to show what groups exist in the parish.
- Have a bible group to thrash out what Jesus wants us to do. 1
- We need better communication in the parish

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- We must include the poor in spirit not just the physically poor.
- What would happen if we invited all those who have drifted to talk to them they would not come but maybe a questionnaire if possible
- Turning up in church is not enough; there are good people out there who do not come.
- We need to communicate better not just pass the microphone around.

16. What more can we do in our parishes to address the needs of the poor (homeless, lonely, the bereaved, prisoner, the sick, people with addictions, refugees, people with disabilities, those suffer in developing countries)?

PERSONAL

PARISH

- Abundance of skills in parish; need to get people together to get things done
- People lack the confidence; set up the networking and ask some to have a go....
- Perhaps a bereavement club and other clubs to offer solace etc
- Tellus what is happening in our parish.
- A food bank would be helpful

DIOCESE

THE CHURCH COMMENTS

- What about those who live their lives in private; they need to be approached.
- Church is not just an arm of social services.