



SYNOD RESOURCES - 6

Feeding back St Pius X Kingston

Introduction

The Synodal Process we are undertaking is guided by a fundamental question:

How does 'journeying together' take place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel? And, what steps is the Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church? (PD 2)

As everyone journeys together, listening first to the Lord in their heart and then speaking openly and listening with each other, we learn to hear the voice of the Lord speaking to us.

In our Archdiocese, Archbishop John is inviting everyone to respond to the invitation of Pope Francis and take part in the initial diocesan listening phase of the Synod. Each local parish is asked to host a meeting, or series of meetings, where conversations about the Church's mission in the life of the parish and the diocese can be prayerfully examined; and where the will of the Lord can be discerned, as we seek to grow in faith and number.

This document offers a simple template for recording the parish listening meetings which can also be used in schools with older children and teachers, as well as in other settings. It is intended to be used with the other Synod resources (prayer, questions and group facilitation) available on the diocesan Synod page.

Please remember that each one of us is encouraged to share with honesty and openness about our real-life experiences, and to reflect on what the Holy Spirit might be saying to the Church at this time.

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Scriptural Reflection

Which passage of Scripture was used to guide and inspire the meeting?

Reading from John 16:12-15:

Rather than use the provided questions we approached the synodal journey as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) and looked at it from the parish view point and then the whole church. Both two face to face meetings involving 21 parishioners and 6 paper questionnaires were done in a similar format. It was led entirely by the laity. We used the provided questions to direct thoughts rather than attempt to answer them precisely.

What were some of the key phrases, thoughts and comments shared? Was there a thread in what was shared?

- Need to engage the younger generation, use different ways to attract and retain them
- Church needs to address how it deals with people at the margins of the church, with inequalities e.g. women, who constitute half the Church, LGBT
- Church needs to engage more with laity, listen to and make use of their knowledge and research
- Laity to be given more responsibility in the Church and encouraged to take up in key roles in the Church especially women
- Review of sacraments especially reconciliation, marriage, holy orders -
- Faith of adults is underdeveloped and stilted so need to develop adult catechesis including biblical studies including priests, using modern technology
- Increase attention to catholic social teaching
- Church needs better communicators, and to be more vocal in the secular world
- Official statements should be more sensitive and compassionate and not expressed purely as moral theological terminology with a lack of regard for their audience.
- Church needs to appreciate the complexity of human relationships reaching out to the margins of the church and those who feel harmed by the church
- Pray for more vocations

Communion

1. *What are the ways in which your parish most successfully brings people together?*

- Range of activities available for a greater involvement in parish life but hampered by small size of parish .

- Strong presence of Filipino community who can be role models for the rest of the parish
 - We communicate with and welcome new parishioners and are non-judgemental
 - Parish Hall a bonus and convenient for events
 - We communicate, organise and listen through parish council
2. *In which areas of parish life (liturgical, charitable, social etc.) does your parish feel and act as one?*
- Adhere to liturgical year
 - Liturgy celebrated well and with respect and solemnity
 - Help people in distress and need
3. *In what ways can you help to build up communion effectively and authentically in the coming months and years?*
- Improve inclusivity, outreach to the wider community, charitable works, improve digital connectivity, improve website ,
 - encourage people to volunteer their skills volunteering
 - liturgies for special groups e.g sick
 - Adult Catechesis – including development of personal relationship with God through prayer
 - Meditation group based on the Scriptures
 - Greater awareness and promotion of the diversity of our community -working closer with the Filipino community and they with us
 - Retaining the Youth after Confirmation – some kind of Youth Club?
 - Involving young people more
 - Pray for and look after our Priests better
4. *Is the parish the sole locus for Communion in your area?*
- Mass available daily and several Masses at the weekend
 - Mass is said in local catholic schools .
 - Parish did not organise streaming of Mass during lockdown so parishioners had to go elsewhere .
5. *Christ is present as the head united to his body (Ephesians 1:22-23) in our parishes and communities. How is this reflected in your parish/community life? Are there other reasons that you gather together?*
- Feast day of the parish , quiz nights, St Patricks night, welcome and leaving of parish priest, bible group

6. *How do you relate to members of the Church who have drifted away from practice?*

- Need to look to catholic schools which are highly rated
 - Many parents who are culturally catholic but with irregular practise whose children are in catholic schools need to be encouraged to deepen their own faith through adult formation
 - Religious education on its own does not lead to commitment so schools should have specific persons in them responsible for religious formation.
 - Integrate the parishes into this work of schools
 - Find new ways to actively engage youth e.g World youth day
 - Many older Catholics have recognised that their religious education ended when they left school and have expressed a desire for further learning.
 - People who have been harmed by the Church need to be encouraged to return , apologies, change of policies, support, increased transparency

7. *How does your parish relate to other parishes nearby and the diocese as a whole?*

- Deanery meeting of laity no longer occurs, priests from deanery meet but no feedback to the parish.
- Representative sent to diocesan meetings e.g year of bible meeting, but no clear outcomes and was not cascaded down , catechists attend annual catechist meeting, couples go to marriage celebration, Missio meeting
- Larger parishes could help smaller ones

8. *Role of the priests and how this could be improved*

The traditional model of delivery of Mass and the Sacraments looks to be unsustainable if the present level of decline in priestly vocations in the Western Church continues. We need to understand why this decline is happening and address the issues that it raises.

- Recruitment of priests from Asia and Africa. Is this sustainable for the future? Is it desirable?
- Increasing workload on an ageing priesthood.
- Solitary living. perhaps living in community rather than alone
- Efficient use of priests. Do parish administrators need to be priests?
- Is a good vacancy better than a bad appointment?
- We need to be innovative to stem the decline in numbers entering the priesthood.
- Has celibacy become a barrier to vocations?
- Do we need to develop non-traditional pathways to ordination? Should deacons be ordained?

- What forms of ministry, outside of the religious life, should be available to women?

What were some of the key phrases, thoughts and comments shared? Was there a thread or consensus in what was shared?

- Schools continue to help adults keep in touch with the church
- Youth especially see variations between school and parish experience
- Review sacraments reconciliation, marriage, holy orders
- More adult formation
- Review priesthood especially at parish level

Participation

1. *Reflecting on 16 months of the pandemic, how has participation in your parish been affected? Were these issues there before?*
 - No streaming so people went elsewhere , 2/3 have returned, lost many.
 - Frequent changes of parish priests has resulted in varying numbers as they have different personalities and approaches to the parish
2. *How can participation be strengthened moving forward into the future?*
 - Areas of welcome, increase use of social media, parish website , better parish records of its members, their skills, consent to contact so tasks can be delegated
 - improve communication , regular parish council meetings which are then reported to the parishioners
 - Recruitment of more young people and families to support the parish: Closer liaison with our schools
 - being more of a family – the Priest needs to get to know everyone better.
 - More involvement of the Laity at every level.
3. *What are the means by which different voices can be heard in your parish (particularly those on the periphery of parish life)?*
 - Parish council encouraging leaders from the different groups to come forward
 - Not just use the newsletter to give out information but encourage laity to make announcements, provide updates after Mass, better use of website
4. *Which groups and individuals are least included in your parish?*
 - Young people 18-30 year olds

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

- Core group who fulfil several functions, we need to engage others

6. *How does your parish effectively identify and use the gifts of its people?*

- Not very effectively, need to collect more information, GDPR has made things more difficult as well as DBS, need to use a more personal approach

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

- Filipino community very organised monthly masses followed by lunch, attend regular masses

What were some of the key phrases, thoughts and comments shared? Was there a thread or consensus in what was shared?

- Improve communication through technology
- Laity take on more responsibility at all levels
- Increase opportunities for adult formation which should lead to more catechists
- Parish council needs to be active, events organizing.
- Parish priest needs to be a team leader and engage and work with parish council

Mission

1. *Given what you see of the Church (words and actions), in the parish and beyond, what would you say is the Church's mission?*

- Improve evangelization
- Christians should act as role models for everyone
- Practice what we preach
- Challenge politicians on social moral issues
- Be more proactive
- Support Christians in countries were persecuted
- Promote catholic social teaching
- Serve the plant, climate change
- Make church more relevant
- Each parish to acknowledge and promote diversity of races within it: reflecting the universality of the Church and worship of God in various forms and celebrations: including life celebrations: births; birthdays; weddings; renewal of marriage vows, deaths.

2. How as a parish are we looking at other faiths, other churches

- Take part in initiative of churches together
- Increase involvement with schools
- Reach out to people who no longer come to church
- Invite people from other churches to visit us
- Reach out to wider local community including our sister RC churches.
- Better understanding of other Christian denominations and other religions: Ecumenism and Inter-Religious dialogue.

3. How does the life of the parish, in terms of catechesis, adult formation, liturgy etc. aid in the formation of parishioners as missionary disciples?

- Not enough catechists, need to encourage people to volunteer their services, ensure do not lose youth after confirmation
- Increase deepening of faith in young adults, continuing catechesis
- Pray for increased vocations and priests who are from our own country and culture
- more inclusive newsletters with increased information
- bring in youth through music, art theatre

4. Are we looking in or are we looking out, as a parish community? Can we do both effectively?

- Work well as a community, provide the sacraments
- Need to be more welcoming become one family and priest should know all his parishioners
- Need to work more closely with local parishes
- Improve communication between parish council and whole parish
- Increase devotion to Our Lady

What were some of the key phrases, thoughts and comments shared? Was there a thread or consensus in what was shared?

- Work more closely with other cultural groups to improve our understanding of being more culturally sensitive
- Working with the media, need charismatic leaders to convey the message
- improve social media presence, more proactive in defending the faith,
- Involve laity more at higher levels
- Church to be more open and transparent, less cover up

- Listen better
- Increase adult formation
- Women deacons and beyond, increased presence
- Respond faster to issues
- Set up think tanks, lobby groups
- Sacraments for divorcees
- A support and educational network for our priests
- Improved training for priests in communication and organizational skills
- emphasis on importance of all human beings and that serving our neighbour is how we serve God 'Laudato Si' – serving God to save the planet.

Submitting contributions

Parish delegates will be invited to one of three diocesan gatherings with Archbishop John, the Synod contacts and other parish delegates and clergy. These gatherings will provide a further opportunity for prayerful reflection on what the Holy Spirit might be saying to the Church at this time.

What is shared at these gatherings will form the basis for the diocesan submission. We also, however, would welcome all notes recorded at the listening sessions undertaken in the parish (and elsewhere, such as school and university chaplaincies). These can be photocopied and posted to the address below or emailed to synod@rcaos.org.uk as supportive documentation.

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Address: Synod Submissions, 150 St George's Road, London, SE1 6HX
Resources from the Synod Office in Rome are available in different languages at www.synod.va/en.html

Resources from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales is available at www.cbcew.org.uk/synodal-church/