



SYNOD RESOURCES - 6

Feeding back

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? (PD2)

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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Email: synod@rcaos.org.uk

Address: Synod Submissions, c/o Archbishop’s House,
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Scriptural Reflection

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

Acts 15 – Council of Jerusalem

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

We had a period of prayer and reflection, including a hymn (Lead, Kindly Light), prayers to the Holy Spirit, scripture reading, a period of silence, and the prayer for the Synod.

Communion

Please list which questions were used. If you reflected on questions other than those offered on the diocesan website, please provide them here as well.

What are the ways our parish most successfully brings people together?

In what areas of parish life are you able to discern the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit?

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

This question was discussed at St Justus, Paddock Wood, so reflects the views of this parish predominantly. Mass was mentioned as the major source of bringing people together in the parish. Social events surrounding Mass (e.g. coffee) and women's and men's social gatherings also draw people together. Lack of venue can sometimes restrict the gathering of small groups. Spiritual offerings such as Lenten retreats were valued, although the parish can be better at drawing people together socially but not so much spiritually.

The parish's twinning with Malawi was perceived as an important sign of the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit in the parish – it has been an important expression of faith in action over the last 21 years. Adoration, the Bazaar and May Fair and other spiritual offerings were mentioned as other signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Participation

Please list which questions were used. If you reflected on questions other than those offered on the diocesan website, please provide them here as well.

Reflecting on 16 months of the pandemic, how has participation in our parish been affected? Were these issues there before?

How do families and young people effectively participate in the life of our parish? What do we do to support them?

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

There were overwhelming comments about the impact of the pandemic both positive and negative. Positive developments included how zoom/technology became a new way for people to gather and worship. The opportunity to engage in worship with other parishes around the world via live streaming was seen as a benefit.

Negative aspects included a lack of live streaming in our own parish and disappointment that our church was closed for private prayer. There was poor communication, an out-of-date website and an inadequate database. Another negative aspect was the isolation of the elderly and the fact that groups mostly stopped. This affected peoples' social lives as well spiritual. Lack of opportunities for the young was also a negative. In general, there was a perceived lack of leadership during this time.

There was unanimous agreement about the need for support for young people so they can participate in the life of the church. There are ample opportunities for the young to engage in the Mass, but fewer opportunities outside the liturgy. The children's liturgy (cherubs) is recognized as highly fruitful and a very effective way for them to learn scripture and be formed in the faith. Many opportunities were suggested for ways for young people to engage including a youth group, a Frassati society and perhaps even the employment of a part-time youth worker.

Mission

Please list which questions were used. If you reflected on questions other than those offered on the diocesan website, please provide them here as well.

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

How is our parish set up for evangelization? How does our parish reach out to the broader community?

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

It has been noticed that the parish is increasing in numbers since the pandemic, although we have not reached pre-covid numbers. Nonetheless, there is a perceived new energy within the parish that has come with a new parish priest. The pandemic has caused us to be inward looking. There was a recognition that we are welcoming and friendly but that there is a risk of being too insular and that outsiders would need to make the first move. There was an acknowledgment that we can be uncomfortable with reaching out to outsiders and engaging in evangelization. The parish's outreach to Malawi is strong, yet our outreach within our own local community is much weaker.

There is a recognition that there are groups such as Legion of Mary and SVP that are outward looking and yet we also acknowledge that we need to be bolder about talking about God and faith. The parish needs more structure for evangelization and some suggestions included a parish magazine, inviting people to courses or activities, addressing myths about the Catholic faith, greater promotion of outreach events and even leaflet drops.

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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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/