



SYNOD OF SYNODALITY LISTENING SESSIONS HOLY CROSS PARISH FEEDBACK

Eight Synod Listening Sessions took place in the Parish in October and November 2021, including one online. Notes were taken at each and, after the last Listening Session, the notes were combined and then recurring themes were pulled out to produce this document.

COMMUNION

1. The Eucharist as the centre of Parish, Church and individual spiritual life

- The Eucharist is 'at the centre of everything we do' (the source and summit of Christian life)
- Brings us all together, across a range of differences, cultures, languages; across potential conflicts; across the world and across time
- Fr John Mulligan 'The Mass is the mortar with which we build our lives'
- The world can be/can seem so divided; the Church and the Mass offers connection, union, unity
- The co-presence of spiritual connection and activity with social connection and social activity is a powerful blessing
- The importance of the Eucharist brought out to homes of those who cannot come to Mass

2. Friendship and belonging

- The Church and Parish bring people together, providing companionship, friendship and feelings of belonging
- The importance of welcoming everyone, old and new, single and in families, of all different ages, backgrounds, linguistic, cultural and ethnic groups
- ‘There’s no point in being holy in Church and unfriendly outside it’
- Loving each other, and showing this love through care, company and compassion, through smiling and friendship inside and outside of the Church
- The importance of the physical proximity of Hartley Hall, the School and the Church, and the role that each play in bringing people together
- Communion as our friendship with others all around the world, united by God and the Church
- We live the Holy Spirit through our communion and companionship

3. Encounter, intentionality and invitation

- Many have experienced being touched or moved to join the Church or deepen their understanding, including the importance of living every day in keeping with the faith (not just on Sundays)
- The importance of being open and attentive to messages or signs from God to deepen our faith.
- God speaks to us in our daily lives in a range of ways – we need to pay attention
- Experiencing God in the everyday
- Being attentive or awake to the invitation to be united with Jesus Christ

4. Outreach and inclusion, including parish groups

- The incredible value of the different parish groups, both those for only parishioners (prayer groups, groups around the sacraments, RCIA, UCM etc.) and those which are opened out into the wider local community (for example the Diamond Club, the Parent and Toddler Group, Third Thursday Time, Scouts), to support Parishioners and others in the local area; to bring us together and bring others into the Church
- Tea and coffee after mass (when possible again) very important to bring people together, provide opportunities for discussion and companionships, for those who live alone as well as support for families
- Holy Cross School is a positive influence, building up community, bringing more people into the Church and Parish
- Fears for young people finding the Church irrelevant, and the desire to reach the young and find ways to help them understand the relevance of the Church
- We need to think about how to explain and highlight the meaning of the Church in our lives, both young and old, so that everyone feels ‘there is something in the Church for them that the world cannot give them’
- We need to provide multiple opportunities to bring people together, to welcome people into the Church, which requires thought to structure(s) and coordination
- The importance of welcoming everyone (of different cultural, linguistic, ethnic groups, of different ages, families, single parents and those alone, and those of different genders and sexual orientations) into our Church

- Communion is the uniting of all people in God, and in hope

5. Relationship with God/Jesus

- Knowing Jesus personally
- The Sacraments bringing people together
- Having a complete relationship with God
- Communion *as* conversion, taking a step in the right direction: a journey, a growing relationship, life as a journey of constant change, with others, in a community.

PARTICIPATION

1. Welcome, outreach (including the school) and evangelisation

- The importance of welcoming others into our Church and recognising that we need to provide “multiple, overlapping opportunities”¹, many different opportunities for people to join our Church
- The voices of women and LGBTQ people must be acknowledged and fully incorporated in everything we do as a Parish and Church (including in forms of leadership).
- We need to think hard about how to welcome those potentially marginalised, including those facing mental health challenges
- The importance of the physical Church building as a place of welcome and refuge – somewhere to come and be/sit, ‘like visiting an old friend’.
- This means we need to think carefully about the physical environment of the church building and how to make it comfortable, accessible, safe and welcoming to those of all abilities/needs.
- The importance of buddies, mentors, intentional accompaniers- forms of personal welcome and invitation
- Some people, including the young, may feel the Church or homilies are not relevant to them and their lives – how can we ensure the Church is real and important to all and ‘gives [them all] something to take into their lives’
- Working with other Parishes and faiths – developing local relationships
- The high mobility in our area presents a challenge

2. Invitational leadership

- Co-responsibility requires forms of leadership where parishioners take responsibility themselves and invite others to join them in participation, activity and responsibility
- Collaborative ministry means delegation of responsibility as well as tasks
- Leadership needs to identify skills and charisms in others to work effectively the benefit of all
- We are all the Church, and we are all the life of our Parish, every one of us

3. Stewardship and service

- Caring for and looking after others in a range of ways, cherishing the environment
- Being of use to others, being affirmed and affirming others, serving others
- Participation in this way gives us satisfaction

- Participation in this way leads to a better world
- We need to make time for and with other people; this may sometimes mean slowing down
- The SVP is a strong example here, standing beside those in need, listening, lending support without judgment

4. Formation and catechesis

- The importance of developing an understanding of rules and tradition – we need knowledge, experience, practice, discussion, opportunities to question, listen and learn
- The need for more opportunities for adult formation – inviting external speakers and providing talks is one way forward; one suggestion was inviting groups from Brixton
- Providing leaflets, FAQs or other forms of guidance around the Mass, the Sacraments and other elements
- Catholic schools (primary and secondary) catechise; most participants felt this was done well, but others felt it could be improved
- Some felt catechesis should be improved, stressing the need for robust imparting of knowledge: ‘Catechists must give correct information, not opinion’
- Catechesis as protection ‘The Devil is catechising now as well – Abortion – the Devil is so subtle.’
- There are many challenges presented by wider culture/society, threats to values (e.g., pornography, consumerism), which need to be faced

5. Prayer/spiritual life

- To lead a full life, we need to develop our own spiritual lives before we can evangelise, catechise or support others in any practical way
- Participation also means developing personal spiritual life, including developing understanding of (and engagement in) daily prayer and the beauty and relevance of the Psalms

6. Healing and union rather than judgement

- Participants fear the judgement of the Church, stressing the need to suspend judgement and instead to focus on healing and union
- Jesus approaches people where they are now, and offers options to change/convert
- We should accompany others in their healing, through welcome and love

MISSION

1. Our mission is proclaiming that God is Love

- The importance of reaching out, caring, loving, helping, talking, listening
- We should be ‘welcoming outside the gates’
- The importance of making our Church more visible

2. Everyone has the gift to evangelise

- It is the role of the baptised to support others, to reach out, to give hope

- Priesthood is currently denied to women and married men; some participants felt the Church could exercise more flexibility in this issue
 - The need for everyone to fulfil the promise of their baptism through evangelisation
 - 'The mission of the Church is to evangelise'
- 3. Witnessing**
- The importance of witnessing, of evangelising through a life well-led
 - We must know Christ first
 - We must be alert to/open to encountering the living God
 - Receiving and giving personal invitations
- 4. The challenges of being a missionary disciple**
- Being a missionary disciple means being more visible as a Catholic and talking about our faith, including at work and across our lives
 - This can mean leading through our behaviour as well as our words
 - This means being brave and having hard conversations
 - 'Mission means going out and telling people'
- 5. A focus on values**
- Some stressed the need for a focus on values not rules
 - The importance of responding compassionately to others
 - 'God is bigger than boxes to be ticked; we have constructed them, not God'
 - Christ loves us as we are and we must love each other as we are

Notes on the pandemic:

- Many noted that the pandemic brought us together in new and different ways, including online.
- Others felt strongly that online meetings were no replacement for face to face.
- Everyone missed coming together, physically for the Eucharist.
- Some felt strongly that the Church did not do enough to fight to stay open during the pandemic lockdown periods.
- Many felt the pandemic was an opportunity for reflection on how and why we do things, and an opportunity for change

¹ Weddell, S. A. (2012). *Forming International Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*. Huntington: IA: Our Sunday Visitor. P. 219.