



ARCHDIOCESE *of*
SOUTHWARK

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? (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.

Websites: rcaos.org.uk/synod
aec.rcaos.org.uk/synod

Email: synod@rcaos.org.uk

Address: Synod Submissions, c/o Archbishop’s House,
150 St George’s Road, London, SE1 6HX



Scriptural Reflection

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

John 7:37-44

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

We followed the programme for the two hour meeting so we did not share thoughts specifically on the Gospel reading, but prayed in silence for a short period after it.

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.

- 1. What are the ways in which your parish most successfully brings people together?**
- 2. Christ is present as the head united to his body in our parishes and communities. How is this reflected in your parish/community life? Are there other reasons that you gather together?**
3. In which areas of parish life (liturgical, charitable, social etc) are you able to discern the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit?
4. How is the Holy Eucharist the main focal point for your parish?
5. In what ways can you help to build up communion effectively and authentically in the coming months and years?
6. How do you relate to members of the Church who have drifted away from practice?
7. How does your parish relate to other parishes nearby and the diocese as a whole?

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

There was a focus on particular groups: mostly youth but also the elderly. The common theme was a lack of sense of community. People gather for Mass but nothing else. People described groups that used to exist (mother and toddler, Children's Liturgy, prayer group, Rosary group, Justice and Peace group). These had folded before the pandemic. More recently, the pandemic stopped social evenings such as fish and chip suppers and gathering after Thursday morning Masses.

There was a general sense that everyone wanted more of a community, but people are unsure of how to go about it and whether they would be supported if they tried to set something up.

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.

- 1. How has the pandemic affected participation in your parish? Were these issues there before?**
- 2. How can we better enable full participation and co-responsibility in the life of the Church at the parish and diocesan levels?**
3. Which groups and individuals are least included in your parish?
4. What are the means by which different voices can be heard in your parish, especially those identified in the previous question?
5. How do families and young people effectively participate in the life of your parish? What do you do to support them?
6. How do you currently participate personally in the life of the Church? How much responsibility do you have as an individual?
7. How does your parish effectively identify and use the gifts of its people?
8. How can you broaden the way you include people whilst keeping always true to the Gospel and our core Christian identity?

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

Concern about challenges of leadership at various levels in the church. There is a vicious circle: there is nothing to join, but people don't want to start things because they think no one would join.

There is a particular issue with children: the Children's Liturgy group folded pre-pandemic not because of a shortage of adult volunteers (although the Archdiocese's safeguarding processes did put some off) but because there were no children coming. Children are visible around First Holy Communion and Confirmation but not much otherwise. What can we do to encourage them and hold onto them?

Specific suggestions included holiday youth groups, eco youth club, more children's participation in services (e.g. leading the

liturgy sometimes), music that is the same as they learn at school. An increased focus on mission was suggested as a way to inspire youth in particular. Music was seen to be attractive to children both by adults and by the children themselves (we had 5 children at one meeting aged between 8 and 13).

The phrase 'red tape' came up a lot as a blocker to running things, particularly around DBS checks. The need for referees in the Archdiocese's process (i.e. significantly beyond the legal requirement) makes it almost impossible to convince people to do it.

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.

- 1. Are we inward or outward looking as a parish community? Can we do both effectively?**
- 2. How does the life of the parish, in terms of catechesis, adult formation, liturgy etc aid in the formation of parishioners as missionary disciples?**
3. What is the Church's mission?
4. From this perspective, how would you characterise our local situation and local needs?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit calling you to mission and service today?
6. In what ways do you already intentionally and actively seek to share the Good News of Jesus Christ?
7. How does our parish reach out to the broader community with the Good News?
8. How can the call to holiness and the call to mission be reflected in different aspects of parish life?

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

People didn't feel that the parish has a strong sense of Mission as a community. There was mention in one of the meetings of the need for a Mission plan or strategy, guided by the Holy Spirit. The potential role of the church on the environment was mentioned several times which would be a potential new Mission direction.

Quite a few people mentioned a worry that the church is not inclusive or open to modern society, and that this is particularly off-putting to young people who struggle to align what they learn in Confirmation classes with what they learn from school and society about the role of women, the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community etc. A clearer explanation for 21st century teenagers of what the church believes, why, and how that sits with openness to other views, would be helpful for parents,

catechists and teachers.

A strong theme throughout both meetings was a sense that everyone feels the lack of the sense of community and mission, but no one knows how to fix it and are nervous about trying things.

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/