

Parish synod meeting – summary

Name of Parish: Holy Cross

Date/location of meeting: Due to Covid concerns we held a total of 11 small group sessions in parish and online

Meeting leader and number of attendees: Total of 51 attendees which incl. 9 group leaders, plus 4 individual responses. Group & individual responses were gathered together, and a representative summary made from all of them. We wanted to ensure that we recorded as many comments as possible from groups & individuals, but we have not attempted to weight them in any way.

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Discussion 1: Communion and Participation

What questions were discussed?

1. What has your faith meant to you these past eighteen months living with Covid?
2. What do you think of the Catholic Church as it is today?
3. What is my mission?
4. What is God's dream for me?

Please summarise three main themes that came out of your parish discussion.

- **Community**
- **An open and inclusive Church**
- **Openness to change**

What do you want us to know about your meeting(s)?

Community: There were many concerns about lack of engagement from families and young people, but also about how many of the isolated and elderly have lost contact with the Church during Covid. It was suggested that we need to start again and work hard in every possible way to engage with our parish community, especially with families and young people, and involving our schools. But from there we need to go further to engage more widely with our local community and other local churches, striving ecumenically together, both with prayer and joint community work. Finally, Covid has made many far more aware of our worldwide Church community. We should work to build more links with our brothers and sisters elsewhere in the world and aim to become a less Western-centred Church.

An open and inclusive Church: People *are* the Church. We must be more open and welcoming to all and offer particular welcome and support to those in the community who often feel excluded. Divorced and remarried Catholics, homosexuals, the trans community and children who have been conceived by IVF were noted by various different groups as people who need our love and support. In addition, many felt that the strong male / female divide in the church was unhelpful. We must work harder to find ways to enable *all* members of the Church to feel equally valued.

Openness to change: While core Church teaching must remain unchanged, we need to discern what is relevant for our times and what we can let go as out-of-date cultural traditions. Those participating were open to the idea of many changes, particularly more formal involvement of women in many aspects of the Church. There was also support for all of us to engage with Pope Francis' writings on matters such as Social Justice and Care for Creation.

Please email this document to sranna.marie@staned.org.uk

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Discussion 2: Mission

What questions were discussed?

1. What has your faith meant to you these past eighteen months living with Covid?
2. What do you think of the Catholic Church as it is today?
3. What is my mission?
4. What is God's dream for me?

Please summarise three main themes that came out of your parish discussion.

- **Need for reform of our Church**
- **We need more Joy in our Faith**
- **To live in love, compassion and humanity**

What do you want us to know about your meeting(s)?

Need for reform of our Church: Many (the vast majority of groups discussed this) continue to be actively concerned about past and ongoing Church scandals and feel that these have not been dealt with adequately or transparently. The Church needs to reform centrally and improve its leadership across the world if we are to spread the Good News effectively in our communities.

We need more Joy in our faith: Living our Faith and going to church should be joyful experiences. There should be less emphasis on obligation and judgement and more on the gifts that our faith gives us. Some brought up a strong wish for a return to Services or Masses of Reconciliation, rather than individual confession, as a way of bringing more people back to church. The message of the Gospels, plus the great richness of the liturgy, music, custom and tradition of the Church, when used with thought and care, will attract people to our Faith.

To live in love, compassion and humanity: All felt a responsibility to create a welcoming Church. To recognise that God lives in each individual. To pass on our faith to our children and encourage them both actively and by example. To recognise that little acts faithfully done are as important as great ones. To "be the light in the darkness." To bear witness to our Faith within our communities – many felt that showing by example, using our God-given gifts for the good of our local and wider communities (Social Justice & Care for Creation) and bearing public witness to our Faith in a variety of ways (processions, public rosary, church gardens were discussed) were the most effective ways of spreading the Good News. We must strive to try and create Heaven on earth and leave the world in a better place than when we arrived.

Please use this space to make any other comments about the meeting that you wish to highlight.

Many who attended these meetings commented on the fact that we don't discuss our Faith often enough and it would be good to do so more often. Many also commented on the fact that they had enjoyed this synodal experience.

Please email this document to sranna.marie@stanned.org.uk