

May 22 Parish Gathering Questions & summaries

1. Theme: Parish & local community

What does it mean to be a parishioner today?

Being part of a community – sometimes that can be inclusive (ie all people), or exclusive (ie single nationality)

- For everyone to feel 'at home' in the community of the parish
- A parish community is a community of beliefs and faith

2. Theme: Young people and families

What does it take to encourage people to participate & help in parish activities?

- 'Parish' is a tricky word. Some people see it as 'Mass'. We need to see it more as a community. A different look at Faith. Need to find elements to relate to.
- Mass can be off-putting. Seen as boring. Felt we had "community-minded" children – but not always with a spiritual element to it. All of us had children who went to church until it was their own choice.
- Music as a key to young people? Plenty of them on "Songs of Praise". How can we capitalise?
- Education / schools as one of the only places children can express and understand faith. Need to link parents in too. Crucial to bring them in too to extend their children's faith.
- Ideas: Messy church, music, Laudato Si (ownership of an aspect of the church garden / community), ecumenical meetings, 're-connect' programme for parents – bring kids too. Young people's perception of faith is so different to ours – we need to talk about it together.

3. Theme: Liturgy

What helps you take part in the Mass and other services? What helps you pray?

- We need to avoid compulsion and aim for other motivations to go to Mass. Mass used to be much more of a community event for parents and children (e.g. teas in the Hall after Sunday Mass)
- There is possibly a cyclical nature to Mass attendance – we should not get too discouraged about a drop off in attendance
- Youth were more involved in the Sunday Mass 10-15 years ago (readers, offertory, music, etc) – can we get them to participate more now?
- Memories of services that were well attended: Services of Reconciliation / Ecumenical Services (e.g. Palm Sunday when other local church leaders were involved) Can we return to some of these?

- Music helps engage people – favourite hymns etc
- Praying – we thought about the various reasons people pray – to give thanks / ask for help / illness / death. Structure, routine and habit help.

4. Theme: Care for creation & social justice

How could we reach out to help more people in the community?

- Face to face invitation to come for a cup of coffee after Mass. Opportunity to discuss things that are happening in the parish.
- Different parish groups (eg Laudato Si) communicating what they do to the whole community – would be beneficial to have the opportunity to have 5 minutes after Mass to talk about it.
- Publicly ask for volunteers at Mass. ALL parish groups need the opportunity to tell us what is involved, and maybe more will volunteer.
- Lots of war going on. Pray for peace and encouragement. Maybe we could have prayer groups.
- Mass should be for everyone so we can mix.