

FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH
FEEDBACK
SESSION ONE: COMMUNION
18 JANUARY 2022

I. JOURNEYING COMPANIONS

Think of those who form our parish community as we journey together. Which people or groups are on the edges of our community? Whom do we know who no longer walks with us, those who used to and now we don't see? How do we engage with those for whom the experience of Covid has prompted thoughts about faith? How do we welcome people?

- We all have one belief and pray to the same God but don't always know the names of the people in our community, and don't always notice if they're not at Mass for a while.
- Social gatherings are a good way to get to know people i.e. coffee after Mass.
- A good way to get to know people is through the different groups we have in our church, for example, Lectio Divina and Study Group.
- We must be courageous and invite people to come to church. It's up to them whether they accept the invitation or not.
- Covid restrictions have definitely made it more difficult to socialise.
- Welcomers have always been good at SHC, introducing themselves to newcomers and suggesting they come for coffee. We must reintroduce coffee after Mass as soon as possible. It's a great point of contact for lonely people.
- What makes up a vibrant community? A participant of the group asked his family members aged 15-22 and 40-45 this question, some are practicing their faith, some are lapsed, and some belong to another religion. They confirmed that a sense of place and identity is important, inclusiveness, respect and a non-judgmental attitude, freedom to participate as much or as little as one wanted, a need to be relevant to people's lives; and good communications and transparency is essential.
- A local football club is a good example of providing all sorts of activities for the community as well as football, i.e. scout groups, toddler groups, dancing classes etc.
- Do we marginalise people? SHC has a transient congregation with people being involved for a while then moving away. Being a missionary church, it's self-sufficient and good at getting people involved.
- When 400 lapsed Catholics were surveyed as to why they left the church, they all cited the need for vibrant church life.
- Up and down the country people are returning to church services as they get more out of being there than going online. We need to ask people if their faith has been strengthened during Covid.
- So many people enjoyed global online Masses.

- As we have fewer priests nowadays, part of the way forward is to go online for Mass.
- Mechanisms to get people together – a welcoming and inclusive church. The great British reserve does hold us back.
- Being welcomed on even one occasion can be enough to bring people back.
- Every community should have structures in place, like this meeting, to get people together so they can get to know each other in an informal setting.
- We need to be more engaging – say hello to someone you don't know after Mass. Having conversations in this way builds community.
- Is the Church good at encouraging people to be more engaging? Could it improve? – This can't be forced, it has to come naturally. We can encourage each other to be more friendly and engaging and make sure the housebound are given the chance to be involved in other ways.
- We must also remember the lonely (particularly from Covid Lockdown) and lonely priests; physical, emotional and intellectual loneliness
- House groups / group gatherings have a key role as these allow us to look out for each other. Organised House Groups ensure that everyone in the church community is included in at least one social group and no one feels isolated.
- We need to find respectful ways of engaging with Catholics no longer attending church
- The biggest challenge is how better to engage young people; some progress has been made but we don't have the answer yet. What do young people want? Livelier music, more participation, youth led services ?
- We need resources to support 18-25 year-olds especially as they leave home and join different environments.
- There are many pressures on children particularly to study and work hard, to achieve high grades, to build a career. These pressures seem to be regarded as paramount.
- Sacred Heart is investigating the concept of *Family Catechism* – where teaching the youth about the faith becomes an action that engages the whole family. This is really important for families that are returning to church, perhaps after the birth of children or some other life-changing event.
- It's great that the Verona Fathers at SHC are a missionary order. We're very fortunate. They give us something we haven't experienced before, how they deal with poverty and basic survival in the missions. Their stories engage people and teach them what goes on in the real world.
- SHC is a welcoming church and during Covid the priests went out to give Holy Communion and comfort to the housebound and those caring for sick relations.
- SHC is an active church with the number of activities increasing and revolutionising our church, maybe due to Covid.
- SHC is a very different experience to other churches; it is a mission church open to all, every day . It is a church of many nationalities – 38 identified ! - welcoming to all.
- The Alpha course has opened doors and given yet another opportunity to be welcoming.
- Our priests are dedicated to the missionary cause and are supportive and caring.
- Pope Francis has made a difference to the Catholic Church, making it better known.
- Do we know who the marginalised are? The church as a whole is not good at seeking them out.
- We must listen to our church community and think about non-Christians - how to make opportunities and build structures to listen to them and grow the church.

- There is a lack of encouragement & opportunities offered to the laity for Continuing Faith Development, unless one wishes to become a Catechist.

STATEMENT: The Church is good at accompanying people on their journey of faith?

- **Overall : Agree ****

II. LISTENING

Do we listen to each other? How do we best do this – people to people, clergy to clergy, bishops to bishops? How do we deepen our listening, making it a “a listening of the heart” and not just of the issues and subjects at hand? How do we ensure that the Church responds to the culture and needs of society?

- If we listen to each other, progress will be made – a bit like what we’re doing at this meeting.
- Do we do it often enough? Can we question the clergy and bishops? The press does it – it would be good to open up communications and talk directly with the individuals concerned.
- Do we read Catholic newspapers which cover a lot of difficult topics and give differing views?
- We can also pick up and learn a lot from the internet which have forums to which we can respond.
- How do we best listen? It’s best to get a variety of opinions, not just talk within our own groups who are coming from the same platforms.
- Try and be more inclusive – listen and gain confidence – feel comfortable to share our thoughts with others. Befriend different people and give them time to express their views.
- Views of the church can be difficult to deal with – atheists point fingers and blame the church when things go wrong. We need to unite and support each other. There’s not enough discussion among us. We should talk about the problems together.
- The Church is stronger than events – it always recovers.
- Bring people in and listen to them – don’t judge them.
- We need to know what’s happening – we go to church but don’t look outside it. We were never taught to listen. We need to read the Catholic tabloids to know what’s going on.
- We need to improve our listening by welcoming and talking to people outside church and in group meetings.
- If people feel uncomfortable joining groups, they put up barriers. We must find a way of making them feel comfortable. Having a social life and expanding it will make people more ready to engage.
- Invite outside people into our community, even if we find it difficult. It’s sometimes embarrassing to talk to non-Catholics about our religion. We should find ways of attracting people to our church.
- People would value the opportunity to talk to our clergy and bishops. The Tea with Fr Julio Zoom sessions were a good innovation.
- The homily at Mass is the “Jewel in the Crown”; time to listen to the priest
- Listen to each other; be prepared to discuss issues with the priests.

- Funerals and baptisms are no longer community events; such good opportunities to share if they were.
- One of our participants was educated by monks who were a mystery to them until they realized they were actually human!
- There used to be a big divide between clergy and the laity. Since Vatican II laity and women have participated much more in the church's activities.
- People opt out of helping at church – too busy. Priests need to ask for volunteers and ask people to come to church. Missionaries have lots of experience of doing this.
- People don't want to get involved. Their relationship with Jesus needs to grow – we cannot remain children in our faith.
- After Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Faith comes with prayer.

STATEMENT: The Church is good at heart to heart listening?

- **Overall : Neither agree or disagree****

III SPEAKING OUT

What is the communication like in our group/parish/diocese? Do we have the freedom to speak freely, openly, and respectfully? How am I living out my Christian life?

- If we are Christians are we happy to speak about everything? We must stand up for our beliefs.
- Do we feel able to speak to others about our spirituality ? Do we speak to the priests about the matters that trouble us.
- Take responsibility and intervene if needs be if a service is being disrupted; but we wary of potential reactions to intervention.
- Pray before speaking out about controversial subjects; prepare what you want to say
- We can always find a way to bring our religion naturally into conversations with non-believing friends: interesting snippets from homilies, new friends at church, new ideas from Lectio Divina, as well as standing up for our Pro-Life beliefs, however awkward and uncomfortable we may feel. If we stand up for Jesus now, He'll stand up for us on Judgement Day.
- Many of us have friends who aren't Catholic but are happy to accept different beliefs so we can experience no difficulty in expressing our faith and personal beliefs.
- We have lots of non-Catholic friends and difficult questions can arise. We must share our beliefs and let others share theirs. It is important to put our viewpoint across.
- Actions of communion and behaviour can achieve more than speech.
- Don't be afraid to say that we believe. We have respect for each other and can say why we believe in the church's teachings.
- How are we living out our Christian lives? We make sure our faith is known. Let people know how much our faith means to us. This could make people interested – the power of example.
- One participant has two grown up children looking for a church to belong to. SHC is the most appropriate, but they're looking at different denominations to see what they have to offer. Maybe they should do the Alpha course?

- Interestingly, most people find it easier to talk about their faith as they get older.

STATEMENT: The Church is good at communication?

- **Overall : Agree****

Statements were answered in groups, responding from 1-5.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Neither agree nor disagree

4 Agree

5 Strongly agree