

RC DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA THE TEN QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE PARISHES AS THE DIOCESE EMBARKS ON THE SYNODAL PATHWAY

Name of Parish : Catholic Parish of Sacred Heart, St. Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 5JT

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How many people took part in your synodal process (please estimate if necessary) Approx 4 + several contributions verbally.

1. How welcoming is our parish?

How do we embrace and reach out as a parish, and as individuals, to the community with us each Sunday – in person or via live-stream - as well as those who are still anxious about returning, those who seem to have fallen away, and those enquiring and coming to us as newcomers?

- In person – welcoming
- We don't think we are as welcoming as we were perhaps because of Covid, and the parish has lost its community feel. We need to get back to more parish events that are well publicised and hopefully well attended. We think people have got out of the habit of coming to regular Sunday Mass and this will take time to build up again. The church was always packed for the 11:00 o'clock Mass on Sundays now it is still easy to sit in a socially distanced way.
- We were newcomers, about 6 months ago, but we felt very welcomed by our parish priest, Fr.Thomas, and by the other parishioners. We attended a coffee session on Sunday, after Mass, and few of the parishioners came forward to introduce themselves and make us feel welcomed.

How welcoming do people find us?

- Less welcoming than before Covid, as everyone is with a mask and clear up the Church immediately.
- Because of Covid, people who are vulnerable are reluctant to shake hands, hoping the situation improves, for us to be more welcoming.

2. How good are we at listening?

Our world is full of noise and opinion; full of people making their voices heard, and those who feel that they go unnoticed. Are we good listeners?

- Sometimes, it is a challenge when we are disturbed and trying to hear God's word through Sermons, Readings, Mass Prayers.
- Sometimes, people are worried about saying things in case they are not listened to. We need to give people time to talk and take their points seriously. Perhaps sometimes we need to agree to disagree rather than being dogmatic and preaching to people. We need to get them back through our doors and let our prayers and love change any doubts in their hearts.
- Not sure, however, trying to hear God's word, through Scriptures, Mass, brothers and sisters.

Do we feel listened to?

- Sometimes, we feel that many want their voices to be heard rather than pause and listen to others' views.
- Sometimes probably, not the best speaker.

How do we learn to listen well – to each other, to the wider world, to God himself?

- We need to keep trying to listen what God speaks, and by reading the Word of God, we will be able to listen to his voice.
- Yes, we are constantly learning, the more we try, the better we hear.

3. How good are we at communicating?

Do we feel able to share our thoughts and ideas openly with each other?

- Talking to each other needs to be reawakened. There is still a lot of distance between parishioners. Perhaps there is more communication in prayer groups etc, for those online but those lacking in IT can feel isolated. Perhaps some sort of phone call systems could be set up for people living alone and needing to just talk or pray. Could the church video system have been used or could it be used for more than attending Mass? Being completely open is sometimes difficult for people who feel their ideas may not be completely in line with the church.

- Because of limited communication, a lot is left as private.

Are we living out our baptismal vocation, ready to speak the truth, in love, when necessary?

- Yes, in these times it can become challenging with lots of distractions in the worldly life

Does this include social media?

- Seldom.

4. How well does the Church's liturgy inspire a deeper encounter with the Risen Lord?

Does the Sunday Mass bring me closer to God, and enable me to be fed by Him?

- Yes.

- Having lost until recently all the traditions at Mass that is, standing, kneeling etc, and the need to get through it all quickly, I came away from Mass feeling sad and isolated. Hopefully, this will change in the new future, with music, songs of praise, the gift of peace, and a feeling that we are all praising God is one. I don't feel my prayer life with God necessarily brings me closer to the church, but hopefully closer to God at least

When I leave the Mass, what do I take out to the wider world?

- Strength of faith, the Word

Does my personal prayer life bring me closer to God and connect me with the Church?

- Yes, it's the only way to connect with God in a deeper way

When I pray, for what do I give thanks to God? – and what do I ask of Him?

- Thanks for the day, everything. Ask for health, Holy Spirit guidance, protection, blessings

5. How well do I understand and participate in the mission of the Church?

Do I feel that I am playing my part, and pulling my weight, in the life and mission of my parish, the diocese, and the universal Church? Or is that somebody else's job?

- Since lockdown, our perception of 'wider world' has dwindled and this is going to be difficult for us to address. Supporting others as our parish did, **twinned with Abod** is a good step forward but this all seems to have dwindled. At present, looking at information of the Catholic Church on TV, I think perhaps we should try to be a bit more like the church in Africa, where they all seemed to attend Mass, singing, dancing and with a joyous heart. Perhaps we are too reserved.

- Yes, could be more.

How do I respond to the Lord's call to witness to the Gospel?

- When there is an opportunity, I speak about it.

Do I keep my life of faith to myself, or do I share it with others in word or deed? What would help me to do that better?

- I share it with others openly, including colleagues.

- I am willing to know my faith first very well so that I can defend it and be apologetic

- Living our faith truly in our homes, office and in dealing with others

Is there freedom to exercise our particular gifts in the service of the Church?

Is my local community accountable and transparent when it comes to making decisions and, if not, what would help to remedy this?

Do I support the bishops and priests in arriving at their decisions?

- Yes, we need to support priests, bishops and the church in whatever little capacity we can by offering our time, and financially.

10. How well do we hand on the faith?

Are we effective in sharing and passing on the faith as individuals, as parishes, and as a diocese?

- Up to us individually to share our faith answering questions when asked to the best of our ability. As a parish or diocese, we need to make everyone feel welcome whether as a visitor or in the more-long term. I suspect that gay, lesbian, transgender and many divorced people feel they cannot turn back to God in the Catholic Church and so go to find Him in other denominations. We say we are a worldwide church, so we must find a way to welcome everyone with the Spirit's help.
- It always can be done more.
- As parents, encourage our teenagers to attend and participate in the Eucharistic celebration.

What would help us to do this better?

Can we see ways in which we might continue to work in a 'synodal' way – praying, discussing, and discerning together, not reliant on majority votes, but on a genuine consensus – a coming together of hearts and minds under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

- In prayer groups, not being afraid to be open; supporting each other, sometimes just with a genuine conversation.
- Having some bible study groups to know/understand/learn the faith better

6. How well do we engage with the wider world?

Do we engage with those around us: with our local community, with the life of our country, and our world?

- Yes

Do we believe that the Church truly has something to offer the world at large? Or are we too focussed on ourselves?

- The parish did start doing outreach activities, (evangelization) but this has all stopped. Should it start again? Should we have a toddler group, a teenage group, more monthly meals for over 65s? But they should not be left to one person to organise. All the above should be for any member of St Ives area, not just Catholics or Christians.
- Unity in Faith, prayer can achieve a lot.

7. How good is our relationship with other Christian traditions?

What is our relationship like with our brothers and sisters in other Christian traditions?

- We have a mosque on the same road as our Church. Perhaps we could organise something with them, a social event where we shared our music and food, could be a kicking off point. I know that we have "churches together" but again we need to do more together and perhaps social events may be a good way of starting off again followed by joint prayer with Bible study.
- Very good, each tradition has a certain strength.

Do we listen to each other?

- Yes, it can be difficult sometimes, but we need to make an effort to listen

What can we learn from them? – and what can they learn from us?

- From them- living in the Word, praising the Lord, obeying the sacraments

8. How well do we work as a team in our parish?

How is leadership exercised and experienced in our parish?

- There are strong leaders who do a lot of work.
- Our parish magazine has been useful in the past to communicate what is going on and for the various organisations to report back. But I have noticed, it is the same people who write the articles and do the various roles. We must try to find a way of encouraging new blood and others to input all the various committees. Not sure how, but more community spirit would help. If people feel they belong, then they would hopefully feel the need to contribute.

Are there positive ways in which we help to participate in the life and mission of the Church?

- Participation in prayers, Rosary
- Offer our services in Mass as volunteers

What are the fruits of this collaboration?

- Unity, support, where 2 or 3 pray together, the Lord is with them.

What are the obstacles and challenges?

- This Covid time made us feel more lonely, more private and we got used to it. The challenge, do we want to meet again do we want to be open to each other?

9. How open are we to the will of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

How do we discern the direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading us rather than just following our own private enthusiasms or agendas?

- We do need the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to really get all of the above going. In the past, we have had Christmas/ Easter talks and studies. Again, with Covid, these have gone online. Hopefully we will get back to people-based talks, where people can discuss and inspire each other with the Holy Spirit's help
- Open, but then not sure is it God's will or still mine?