

St Patrick's Church, Grangetown - Synod Report – March 2024

At the beginning of the Synod process we gave out questionnaires (four in all) to every parishioner who attended mass and were surprised at how many people responded. Initially many of our parishioners were sceptical about the Synod but more than expected engaged with the process and a number of their suggestions have been implemented in the parish i.e. we now have a Bible study group and also have a Twitter and Facebook page which are regularly updated. They stated that they felt more comfortable being anonymous and felt that they could express themselves freely. It should be noted that the parishes are never given a great deal of time to produce these reports which then makes them seem rushed.

We have seen some concrete results since we began the synod process. Our school is now much more involved with the church once again with regular school weekday masses and also family masses. The school newsletter also shares information about religion education and the liturgy, this is also shared on their website and Facebook page. The priests attend functions in the school and take an active role in governors' meetings. We also have a Mini Vinnies group in the school. We now have a good crop of young altar servers and more children in the choir. Also, our tea room for refreshment after Mass has reopened and is well used. It was however felt that more could be done around volunteering as the bulk of the parish work is still being undertaken by a few individuals so we will produce and disseminate a questionnaire outlining what needs to be done and asking people to tell us what level of commitment and time they are prepared to give (as there are some jobs that require a weekly commitment and others a daily commitment).

We have already publicised, and continue to publicise all Synod documents on our parish website and point people to them in our weekly Newsletter.

Many people in the parish expressed the feeling that the very word 'synodality' was confusing and off-putting and had to be constantly explained. 'Journeying together as the people of God' might have encouraged more people to join in with the discussion. It was also felt that the Synod Document/Synthesis was too wordy for the majority of parishioners and too large. More might have read it if it had been smaller and more user friendly. It was suggested that documents needed to be aimed at the average person and not to be too 'wordy', maybe using a child of 8 years of age as a guideline.

Many felt that they would appreciate non-liturgical services i.e. prayer groups or discussion groups, however this would require the commitment of the clergy.

The report mentions Vatican II and its teachings and a number of parishioners felt that they had no instruction on this and would welcome it. Again, this would require the agreement and support of the clergy. The question was raised about who and when this teaching is given to the children? The school has implemented the new RE scheme which is approved by the Bishops of England and Wales which is based on the RE Curriculum Directory. This covers the

catechism. The school is one of the first to introduce this new curriculum and will be a model for other schools in the Archdiocese.

It was realised that people may have questions that they want answering but don't have the opportunity or courage to ask. It was suggested that we provide slips of paper for this use which parishioners could anonymously place in a box at the back of church. The answers would be published in the weekly Newsletter. We will implement this with the support of the clergy.

The paragraph in the report regarding establishing ministers according to the needs of the local churches was discussed. It was felt that we needed to get more people involved and again felt that a questionnaire regarding volunteering, skill levels and commitment might be the way forward. However, it was felt that the initiative and training should be coming from the Archdiocese. It was noted that any role involving children or vulnerable adults required Safeguarding checks and as we know this can take time.

Training of priests and the care of the priests once they were in a parish was discussed and some perceived that there was a lack of care from the Archdiocese. Priests from overseas need much more support than is currently on offer. Our parishioners have provided huge support to our new priests from Nigeria, including always being available for stewarding at funerals and also taking them almost daily to Nazareth House by car as they had no means of getting there. They now have a car of their own.

The Church of England have Church Wardens in every parish, who are elected, whose role is to support the priest and ensure the parish functions when no priest is available. Maybe this is something Catholics could adopt? There certainly needs to be guidelines provided to give support to parishioners when priests are not available, as will be bound to happen in the future.

With regard to the formulation of listening skills it seems that some people are natural listeners and others are not. It was felt that ensuring that prayer is always a part of any meeting allowed God in. It may be worth the Archdiocese producing easy to read information leaflets about synodal listening skills for everyone.

It is a shame that the priests in general don't seem to be as involved in the synod process as the parishioners. There may be any number of reasons for this and some wondered if they felt threatened by the process. We have noticed that a change of priest means a different way of doing things and it takes time for new priests to settle in to the parish and its routine.

It has been disappointing to some that more information has not been forthcoming from the Archdiocese about the implementation of some of the recommendations in the Archdiocesan Synod Report or on the synod process in general. We have had a number of new people come to church since our report was produced so have decided that in order to keep the synod in the forefront of people's minds, we will produce a prayer card/bookmark containing the Synod

Prayer to give to every parishioner and encourage them to use it. It will also be mentioned again on our website and newsletter.

A number of parishioners raised the fact that the cathedral was hoping to raise a large amount of money for new statues. This was felt to be totally at odds with the needs of the diocese i.e. the retirement clergy fund, feeding the homeless, aid for overseas or even outreach work in the diocese.

The synodal process seems to want to get the laity more involved in church affairs but in reality, and at church level, the laity have very little say when it comes to running the church i.e. with regard the church building or finances. The clergy make all the decisions. The use of a democratically elected Parish Council, who have more than advisory status, may be the answer, but the clergy probably fear this.

St Patrick's church, with the agreement of the then Archbishop sold their church hall on the understanding that they would use the proceeds to build a new church hall in the church grounds. However, the next Archbishop refused to release the money and allow the build to proceed. So we do not have a church hall anymore. The money, as far as we know, is still in the Archdiocesan coffers.