

SYNOD 2023
FEEDBACK FORM ABOUT THE GROUP DISCUSSION

“What changes need to be made – in myself, in our parish, in the Diocese –
to make the Church’s mission today more vibrant and effective?”

(Please complete this form clearly)

Name/Type of group (indicate parish)	ST BONIFACE, SOUTHAMPTON	
Date of meeting	FEBRUARY 2022	
Particular details that you wish to be noted (e.g. ecumenical, school, university etc)	Compiled from group discussions and written submissions.	
Number (indicate males/females)	M 27	F 42
Age range	14-88	

I. THE JOURNEYING COMPANIONS

How can we be more welcoming as a Christian community?

- **Welcoming at the start of services is key, encouraging parishioners to reach out and engage more with one another. Priests to continue to meet and greet on arrival and leaving Mass.**
- **Promote toddlers and youth groups. Encourage start-up of cell groups and Bible study.**
- **Consider starting a RCIA group. Equally, support and reach out to lapsed Catholics and converts. Do not be afraid to engage with difficult issues such as LGBT.**
- **Being understanding of those whose ‘lived reality’ is not aligned with Catholic teaching, eg divorced, separated.**
- **Opening the church during the day.**
- **One contributor said we need to model ourselves on Jesus. He wants to be at the centre of our lives and homes. Jesus attended to the needs of others through his action not just words. Jesus was merciful; He met with sinners.**

2. LISTENING

How can we be good listeners to those close to us and those outside the Church? To whom do we listen?

- **Many parishioners said that to start with, we need to enable and encourage openness and have a genuine desire to learn about what is being said, without preconceived ideas: love your neighbour as you love yourself.**
- **We need to establish an ethos of trust, humility and respect, being merciful and respecting the decisions of others. Parishioners acknowledged that listening takes time, and involves being proactive by visiting people and initiating conversations.**
- **The overwhelming majority of parishioners said listening begins with personal prayer, prayer groups, adoration, listening to God, listening to the Holy Spirit and seeking God’s will in his Word.**
- **We need to ask ‘What does God want of us?’ and we need to seek the grace of the Holy Spirit in our thoughts and speaking. A lot of people said we need to listen to the marginalized, the young, ethnic minorities, immigrants, people of the LGBTQ community.**
- **We need to listen to the people who give us hope in time of difficulty. People said we should be mindful of the Catholic community found in our Catholic schools. We need to listen to the children and the parents in these families.**
- **Many parishioners said we need to listen to those who have stopped coming to church, starting with family members who no longer attend. It was suggested that expanding the Calling Ministry and starting SVP home visits would be a good way to listen to the**

housebound. Many parishioners said we should listen to people who can guide us / those we trust.

- Finally, a few parishioners said we should cooperate more with other denominations and listen to them.
- At the parish level, a few parishioners said the PPC need to listen to parishioners and ask 'How can we serve you?'. A few contributors said we should seek to create more opportunities for dialogue at the parish level, e.g., holding a bi-annual general assembly / opening a helpline for prayer / support. Another thought was that we all need to be able to listen to and accept constructive criticism, accepting our own faults and being open to change and growth.
- Some parishioners recommended making listening courses available to parishioners, e.g., 'Relate' & 'Ananias'.

3. SPEAKING OUT

How can we be more honest in our dealings with each other?

- Trust and Respect - We need to establish an environment of trust so that people can speak without being judged or criticised, or even ostracised. We need to assure people that all voices count and different opinions are respected.
- Same Age Group/Like minds - We need to establish groups/communities of same age so that people can speak comfortably.
- Charitable with words - When speaking out, one needs to measure one's words and be sincere and honest in what is said. Fraternal correction.
- Don't be discouraged when the person you are speaking to takes offence.
- Past hurt due to abuses - The Church needs to speak out about past wrongs and acknowledge the ongoing hurt about sexual abuse and corruption, and also be transparent in what the church is doing to end it.
- Communication - One-on-one communication should be encouraged more.
- Place of Prayer - Pray before speaking to others so that the Holy Spirit can give direction.

4. CELEBRATING

How might we celebrate better the Liturgy in our parish?

- The overwhelming majority of parishioners wanted more music in the church, and two mentioned a budget for this. Several wanted a variety of Mass styles: organ, chant, gospel, latin, Gregorian Chant, vernacular, and especially children's masses. Some parishioners said they would like to have Mass celebrated sometimes in the traditional Roman rite, with Mass being offered Ad Oriente
Several parishioners wanted guidance on how to pray and introductions for the readings, with education on what readings will be about. Train Mass readers.
- Parishioners also asked for time for silent prayer, either for their own intentions at Mass, or during periods of adoration. They also asked for homilies to be published online and post-Mass reflection. They also wanted advance information on which preface/eucharistic prayer/creed will be said.
- Individual parishioners asked for the following: longer homilies: taking parishioners' feedback on homilies; Our Father in different languages; sharing theological insights; music starting before Mass, for early attenders to pray; more volunteers to share theological insights; and clergy asking for feedback and learning points in homilies.

5. CO-RESPONSIBLE IN THE MISSION

How well do we work together as clergy and laity for the mission of the Church?

- Clergy and laity can better work together by understanding that everyone is responsible and necessary in the mission of the church. On a parish level this involves frequent communication between clergy and laity and giving power to the laity. Having the PPC is a good start.
- Announcements, especially ones for fundraising, can be done by parishioners to increase involvement and reserve the priests for worship. Communication between priests and parishioners should be 2-way communication: laity should be able to speak up, and priests should be able to ask laity for assistance when required.
- We should be open to talking to other parishes, sharing ideas and exploring what communication works best together. Everyone in a parish should be encouraged to share their gifts and talents in the church and everyone should be participating in the liturgy. It is important to include the youth of the Parish in all communication and give them space to air their views; they are the future of the church and should be encouraged to grow in their faith.
- To make things less intimidating for new parishioners and those early on their faith journey, more informal ways to engage with the parish should be considered, such as dog walking or book clubs or pub quiz style events. An issue with working together is the separation between clergy and the laity from a higher level. Some clergy believe they are superior to their parishioners and the laity can be restricted in the teachings they receive. Part of this is that the clergy is too exclusive. Opening up to allow women clergy has potential to help bridge that gap. There should be increased awareness of more flexible vocations within the church, to allow people to work but still have a recognised dedication and service to the church.
- Those high up in the Church need to understand and listen to the views of the laity. A laity theology order would give opportunity to allow more people to bring fresh insights to the church and explore more and new ideas, incorporating research in other fields such as biology.
- The Church needs to meet the modern world and respect the spirituality in some modern lifestyles, and use the opportunity to bring people in to the church. Resources are limited in the Church. Self-generating income would be valuable in providing resources to priests and allowing them to fulfil their roles, and also to provide for the laity perhaps in the form of formal teaching and education programs to cover theology and arts etc. This would give people access to thorough teachings and again help in bridging the gap between clergy and laity.
- We need to be on a closer level to have full understanding that we are all responsible in understanding the needs of the Church and catering for them. We should move away from the attitude of leaving everything to the priests, with the assumption they are the only ones with the knowledge, power, and ability to do anything.
- Some parishioners said it would be good to offer more formation aimed at parents, supporting them in the faith-education of their own children.

6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

How can our group, parish, diocese and the Church be more outward-facing?

- Inwardly. In order to be successfully outward-facing, the Church needs first to accomplish healing and growth. A key thing to strive for is an 'informed laity' as St John Henry Newman puts it. That we would know our faith, and have a personal relationship with Jesus. This should be done with integrity to the richness of our Church and its teaching.

This will enable us to pass our faith on within our Church and through our families, and then with wider society.

- **Communication.** The Church needs to be more open and transparent with its communication. We have such an amazing message to share, yet are not good at communicating it. The overall standard of communication needs to improve as it has the power to reach people; we should invest in it, as a Church. There is also an opportunity for cohesive links within the whole Church. Overall this would improve us as a parish, as well as enhancing our communication with wider society. We need to find ways to communicate the church's message to culture.
- **Outreach.** To be authentic Christians we should live out the gospel - with integrity - without compromising our faith. Let us be active in our local schools, hospitals, food-banks etc., supporting events like Shoebox appeal. Connecting with our society-makers, like MPs or Press, about issues that concern us. Create opportunity for this in our own events which support the church and society; married couples through financial courses; young people through youth groups; Bible studies; opportunity for open dialogue where we can 'wrestle with God' regarding hot-topic issues such as abortion or gender.

Encourage the clergy to be active in their dialogue - reaching out to all in the parish. Have an occasional church library of pamphlets and entry level books left on the church steps so people passing on the high street could take something if they had an interest.

Opportunity for links with Christian unity (See next question)

7. WITH THE OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

In what ways might we improve our dialogue and relationship with other Christians?

- **Get to know each other:** Get to know local churches, foster friendship (tea & coffee events) and dialogue (helps dispel misconceptions); conviction that there's goodness in everyone seeking God; participate in Churches Together in Shirley; invite Hillsong to Southampton.
- **Get to know each other's faith:** create share groups, organise Christian faith meetings with specific themes; Bible study together.
- **Pray together:** worship in common (eg Evensong/compline at Christchurch); pray for each other; healing events with other Christians; promote week of Christian unity. Interdenominational worship at precinct; processions together (Good Friday).
- **Reach out together:** pool resources and activities to build community activities; street ministry together; promote more religious activity; do lobbying together; reach out to non-Christians (eg Jewish and Muslim communities).

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

How can we make the Church more participatory and increase co-responsibility?

Parishioners offered a vast spectrum of solutions to this question:

- a. Growing in co-responsibility takes long term vision and change. Giving people responsibility in all activities in our parish. Responsibility and participation go hand in hand. Specific tasks. Ask individuals across a broad spectrum of parishioners. Encouraging people to take the initiative, expanding the pool of volunteers and managing volunteers better, e.g., returning to use of rotas. At the same time, we must ensure commitments to the parish are not overwhelming / taking away from the main reason we go to Mass. Volunteers still need that time to prepare for Mass, go to confession etc. Pre-Mass communion with God.
- b. Provide a greater range of activities that would be of interest to different parishioners, e.g. rosary on a Wednesday and Saturday, adoration, Bible study group, welcoming social events, online services, 'children's day', Family events, Children's Mass, First Friday of the

Month Mass, Stations of the Cross in Lent on Fridays, New Year's day and New Year's Eve events, social justice issues.

- c. Encourage feedback from parishioners and encourage people to be more participatory in the Mass, helping them grow in understanding about Mass. Parish leaders of different ministries to speak at the end of Mass. Also an opportunity for parishioners to share from courses / pilgrimages etc they have been on.
- d. Less of an authoritarian approach. Follow Pope Francis' example

9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

In a synodal style Church, what new processes of decision-making and decision-taking are needed? How transparent and accountable are the decisions made?

- Many parishioners wrote strongly about the lack of decision-making power for women in the Church. Some called for women priests, and others called for women to vote in the synod. Many also felt that the finances should be more transparent and the laity should be consulted. Emphasis was put on local community discussions and general communication with parishioners. Two wrote they currently feel the Church is neither transparent nor accountable, and two wanted prayer for guidance.
- Individual parishioners asked for the following: more unity between Bishops and the Pope (flippant remarks can be harmful for trust), Mass dedicated for clergy, the Bishop to visit local churches regularly. One pointed out that strong leadership is important, balancing modernity with tradition.

10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

How do we form people to make them more capable of "journeying together"?

- Seek God's help: prayer groups; Bible study groups; devout, earnest and committed prayerfulness, seeking God's guidance and direction; call upon Holy Spirit to guide and support us on this journey together; to journey together we need to pray together – create moments of prayer together (we lack prayer opportunities like Holy Mass during the week in the evenings). Journeying together is important, but we also need a Church that protects one's privacy, peace and solitude and does not simply become one big social club.
- Faith formation: Grow in knowledge of faith together; need for ongoing education in the faith.
- Build relationships: talk and listen to each other; create opportunities to grow as friends in the faith; be willing to step up to create these opportunities; target specific age groups: children ages 1-5 with parents; children 6-10 with parents; children 11-15 with parents; respect for the rights, dignity and opinion of every individual; listening process should treat each person equally so that every voice can be duly heard; ensure that as many people as possible can participate regardless of location, language, education, socio-economic status, ability/disability, material resources; celebrate and embrace diversity within local communities; inclusion – make an effort to involve those who feel excluded or marginalized; avoid any form of discrimination or judgement.
- Create sense of co-responsibility: we all have a role to play, gifts and talents to share; the parish should not simply be a place we go to on Sunday; we should support the parish with the loyalty of a "football fan". Are we true "fans" of the "club of Christ", who live and breathe for Christ and His Church? At the same time, Church should not become just another burden on busy people's weighty to-do lists.
- Good strong leadership: Clear vision – ensure sign up to the parish vision; clear strategy to deliver the vision and utilise small groups with assigned tasks to execute the various components of the strategy; continuous monitoring; anticipate problems/challenges, be

ready to respond and adjust accordingly while remaining on track; maintain open flow of communications between all groups so that all are journeying together.

- **Good communication and organisation**