

Diocesan Synthesis

Contribution from the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton,
New Zealand, to the Synod for a Synodal Church:
Communion, Participation, Mission

Introduction

Purpose of this synthesis

The purpose of this document is to describe the synodal process as it occurred in this diocese and to present a synthesis of, and a brief commentary on, the submissions received during the process.

A description of the process

The key part of the exercise was a structured consultation and discernment method of the "spiritual conversation" which is rooted in Ignatian spirituality. People in different parts of the diocese gathered in homes, parishes, or online to participate in a conversation and then provide a written submission. The intention of the spiritual conversation was to listen to the response to the following two questions, which are a simplification of the "fundamental question" recommended by the Preparatory Document provided by the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops:

- How are we journeying together?
- How might we do it better?

Across the diocese forty-four groups gathered to participate in a spiritual conversation. 260 people were involved in this process. Thirteen of the groups gathered online via group video call. The task of the synod was to hear from people in every walk of life, including non-Catholics.

The group submissions were summarised by an external contractor, then a committee of six individuals read both group and individual submissions alongside that summary. The process of spiritual conversation was then used by the group to discuss the writing of this synthesis, which is the product of the reading of each submission, the initial summary, conversation, and the writing, rewriting, and editing process.

It is helpful to identify the synod participation rate and compare it to the figures of Mass attendance to serve as an indicator of engagement. In 2019 the total Sunday Mass count for the Diocese of Hamilton was 9,536 which means the group synod process had a participation rate of 2.73%. Although the priority was the group process, individual submissions through online surveys were also accepted, and we received 124 of these.

While the process was useful, it is clear that no firm conclusions can be drawn from such a small dataset, and it is also clear that it is a very hard task to even attempt to pull together "common themes", given the diversity of comments and opinions expressed. Therefore the authors of this document make only a brief commentary here and include the text of the group submissions in an appendix below.

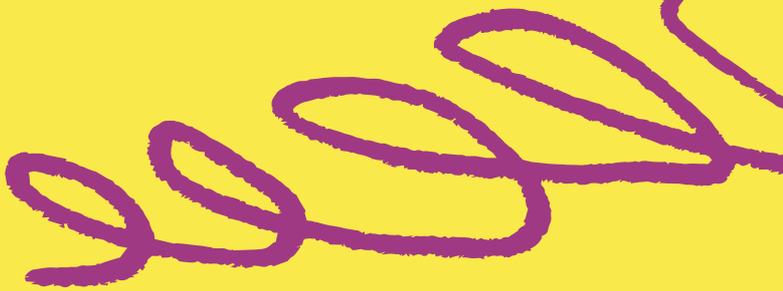


COMMENTARY

THE PROCESS:

It can be said that there was a general lack of interest in the synodal process. This was noticeable to diocesan staff who were involved on the ground in promoting the process, in seeking contributions, and in facilitating group conversations, and is apparent in the small number of submissions. Many people who are in the pews each Sunday and are committed to and involved in living their faith, and must have been aware of the process and of how to take part, still chose, for whatever reason, not to be involved. It is easy to see that many particular demographics from whom the Church desired to hear are not represented, or represented only very lightly, in submissions. Notably there were zero submissions from Catholic schools: there were principals and teachers who participated in the groups but as a particular group within the Church schools are not represented here. Priests were also present in some of the groups but, generally speaking, preferred to leave the process open to the laity.

The combination of the Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan, launched at Pentecost 2021, and the Synodal process launched in October 2021 perhaps may have contributed towards the apparent lack of interest. Partway through the synodal process, in December 2021, it was announced that Bishop Steve Lowe had been appointed the new Bishop of Auckland. This appointment, far from expected, perhaps affected the synodal process and people's willingness to become involved. Along with this, the contact person for the Hamilton Diocese's synodal process moved on from that position in March 2022; while this was not unexpected, it probably had some impact as well.



Some might argue that the low participation rate was a symptom of poor communication and marketing so perhaps it is helpful to list some of the efforts made in this area. Bishop Steve Lowe repeatedly recommended the synod process to priests, school leadership, and diocesan staff in his letters. Bishop Steve created a series of videos unpacking the Preparatory Document. The Preparatory Document was distilled and abridged to enable easy reading. A website page was created and dedicated to the synodal process, and social media were used in promotion. The diocesan newsletter featured information regarding the synodal process and how to participate. Cultural groups were contacted regarding the process. A number of parish newsletters invited people to participate. A few priests encouraged participation from the pulpit. Despite these efforts, within some parishes there was zero interest in the synod while in others only a small group presented themselves. No doubt more could have been done to promote the synodal process - perhaps television or newspaper advertisements could have been purchased - but it's hard to say if this greater exposure would have actually resulted in greater participation.

Notwithstanding these questions, the diocese is sincerely thankful for the groups and individuals that did make the time to participate in the process and put forward their contributions.

When considering the process as a whole **the principal theme that occurred to the committee was that of apathy.** Marked by the lack of participation in contrast to the marketing and communication efforts.

THE VOICES:

Choosing which specific voices to highlight in a document like this is a difficult task, given the diversity of opinion across a relatively small number of submissions. Within some submissions there was a sense of not being proud to be Catholic and of feeling spiritually lost. While others felt positive about evangelisation, being able to practice their faith and coming together for prayer and meals. When considering the disparate, and at times contradictory, nature of submissions together as a whole, the committee termed this reality as a **"lack of mission"**. The overarching theme of "lack of mission" is secondary to that of apathy.

There are several difficult aspects in the process of synthesising the submissions. It appears that some submissions attempted to speak for other people, so emphasising those comments is a little problematic. Some terms used are ambiguous and definitions are not given by those using them, and other terms used (about Church teaching) sometimes suggest a lack of clarity about what the Church actually teaches and believes, or suggest departure from it, so the committee has the difficult task of listening to these voices while presenting them in a way that doesn't lead to confusion for other people.

Given these difficulties, the committee offers three comments about hopeful aspects of the contributions and three comments about challenges identified in contributions, followed by three other salient points, and, as mentioned earlier, includes the submission comments in an easy-to-read format below and encourages all interested parties to read them in their totality.

Three hopeful aspects: How are we journeying together?

- There is a clear desire to deepen community, to grow in faith, and to evangelise. Submitters want to reach out to those on the margins, to share the faith with their fellow Catholics and with wider society, to grow community in their parish by breaking down barriers between people, to be catechised, to provide a real welcome to visitors and to returning Catholics, to pass on the faith to our younger people, to play a full part in the life of their parish communities, to participate in governance, or to see their gifts recognised and utilised.
- There is also a desire for change or renewal, submitters suggesting that in many aspects of Church life, things aren't working as well as they could be, and there's an enthusiasm to be part of solutions to this problem. (It should be noted that what "change" means, exactly, and the plan of how to achieve it, is different for different people.)
- There is a recognition of the need for catechesis and for re-emphasis of the importance of growing in relationship with Christ through the Mass and sacraments. There is a recognition of the importance of prayer, of small groups, of offering points of connection or entry points to people with different needs.



Three challenges: How might we do it better?

- Some people have some confusion about what the mission of the laity is, and there is a recognition that many feel unsure or unconfident about how to live that mission. It is clear that many people feel like they want to “do more” but are unsure of how to go about this, and that a characteristic shyness or reticence in the Catholic or Kiwi character is an obstacle to efforts to build community, evangelise, break down barriers, or reach out to those on the margins.
- Some people have a sense of disconnection and/or barriers - between people in a parish, between people and priests, between people and Church leadership. Some desire a different way of communication, and some feel the need to be involved in decision-making, leadership, and governance at parish and diocesan levels. At the same time, some recognise that leadership and decision-making starts with each person “doing their bit” wherever they find themselves.
- There is a clear sense that those who contributed to this process valued it - they appreciated the conversation and listening, and they spoke of desiring that this continue. There was also a call for continued transparency and accountability from Church leadership.

Three other points:

- Many submissions spoke of division: of difficulties experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic including division caused by the use of vaccination passes in parishes. Some submissions also suggested disconnection between an older demographic of 60-79 year olds and those aged 30-59. In expressing their desire for the Church and parishes to engage with and evangelise young people, older groups largely called for the “liberalisation” of liturgical practices or traditions in order to “make it relevant”. Comments included: “The younger generation in some cases find it all too antiquated” and “We need more up-to-date hymns and some of the old traditions need to be updated.” Individual feedback from 30-59 year olds, however, spoke for tradition and for rediscovering important aspects of Church teaching and practice, particularly liturgy: “The Church needs to accept that people want tradition. Listening does not mean adopting heretical and immoral ideas that the world wants us to adopt.”
- The noted absence of te reo, is keenly seen as an opportunity for the Church to a more lively engagement with Māori, particularly with local mana whenua wherever the Church lives her mission. A gradual conversion to this engagement would reflect the diverse face of the Church in Aotearoa, a face which bears the moko.
- The conversation around “hot button issues”, such as the ordination of women, clericalism, and how to welcome LGBTQi and divorced persons, reveals a deep need for ongoing conversation and catechesis in what the Church teaches and practises and why.

Conclusion

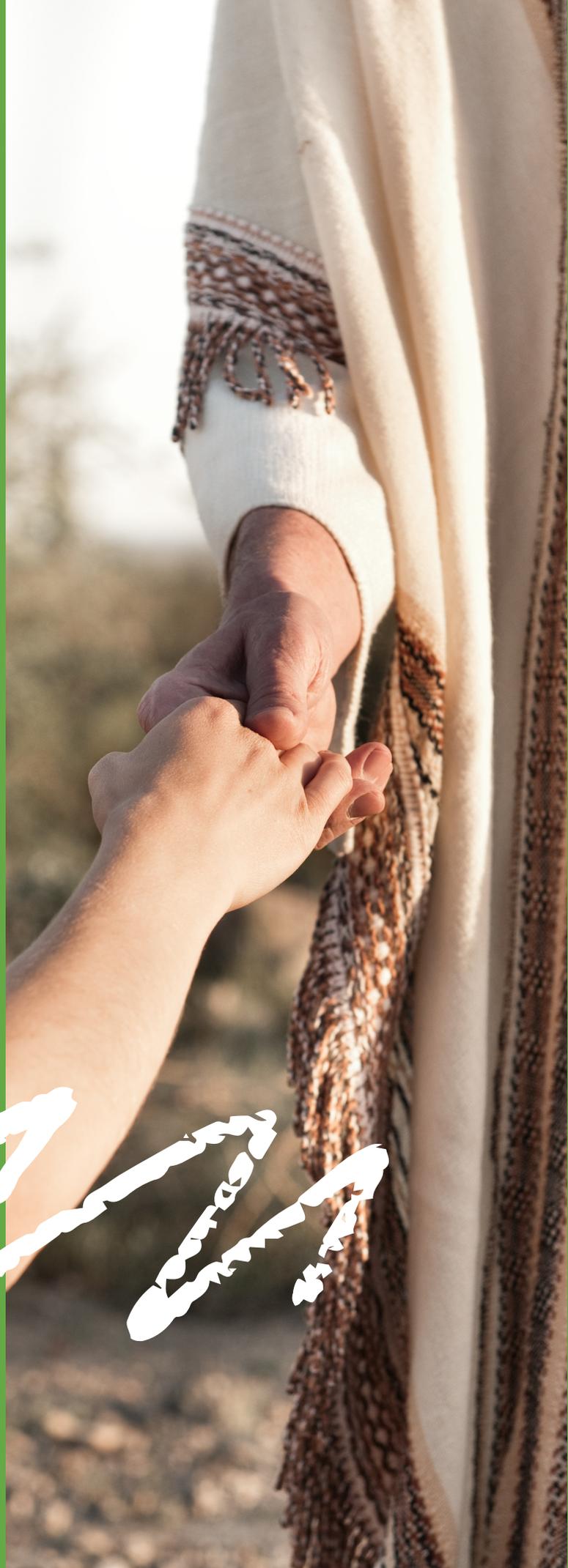
The themes of apathy and lack of mission point to the need for ongoing conversion:

- To know Christ
- To reawaken our identity as disciples of Christ
- To live the Truth in Love

Next steps

Although the participation rate in this process was low, and many voices remain unheard, the Holy Spirit was present in the conversation, and the Synod can be used to identify some tangible ways forward. One such step is to **establish a clear identity of what it means to be a Catholic disciple of Christ today, and of what the mission of the laity is and how to live it out.**

Another step is to effectively and energetically provide opportunities for people to grow in their understanding of the Catholic faith. These two steps are part of a longer journey, not a sprint, which requires patience rather than a frantic rush to fix problems or achieve outcomes, lest we become programme based and bound.



Appendix 1

Group Synodal Meetings - Feedback

People met together at different times and dates throughout the Diocese to participate in the synodal process. This process consisted of gathering in small groups (4-7) to take part in a 'spiritual conversation'. The spiritual conversation is a structured group conversation where there are specific times of sharing and silence. Within the spiritual conversation groups attempted to answer the two questions: How are we journeying together? How might we do it better? In addition, some groups gave some comments on their experience of the spiritual conversation.

The summary of each spiritual conversation (below) is intended to capture the essence of the group's conversation as opposed to an individual's contribution.

Group X

Number of Participants = 6

How are we journeying together?

A split feeling, a lost feeling. - We need guidance. We are currently getting a lot of bad press. When we grew up we believed everything, now we are older things are different.

Lack of guidance. So many people lost spiritually. Something is not right - why are my family leaning towards the dark side instead of the light side?

Too many horrible things on the TV. Why not Jesus Christ on the TV? School used to start with prayer. God is supposed to be in the middle of our family but we are lost. The next generation/era seem to be lost.

We are journeying together, perhaps we don't realise. The church is like a home without a mother because we have no active priest. We don't have a lot of connection with each other. We are missing a connectedness.

How can we have more unity with other churches? I see it in some of the things we do.

The journey is lifelong. Some go to other churches, the issue of divorce and remarriage, and annulment. I enjoy the Te Reo and Latin.

How might we do it better?

I don't know - how could anyone make it better? It's difficult and a big ask - it has to come from yourself.

Not sure, the sentiments of "it's just the way of the world now". Prayer, talking to Jesus Christ. Keep the faith up.

I can only say what I can do better. I cannot speak for others. It's hard to be connected with others, a lot of people are in a different age group, not a lot in my peer group. What can I do? Listening to people rather than thinking 'what I can do, what do I need to do' while hearing them.

Prayer is huge. We do have an older congregation - I hunger for the youth. We relied so much on the priest of old, then we got our councils, but we don't seem to have that here. You don't know what's happening - I've heard of things after they happen.

I wonder about our buildings, the cost, the up keep - how long has it been since there is a wedding here?

Discussion on marriage, living together, marriage vowels don't seem to be taken seriously. Annulments. Re-marriage.

Discussion on baptism - Baptism in the Mass, baptism out of Mass, it can be difficult for grandparents to get grandchildren baptised.

Group X

Number of Participants = 7

We need a welcoming spirit of friendship so that we can reach out and invite others and help them see the need for God.

Group X

Number of Participants = 5

We need to support each other to be able to joinery together, by being invitational, welcoming, inclusive and led by the Holy Spirit which also allows others to walk alongside.

Group X

Number of Participants = 5

The top priority is that the church should reflect love. It needs to be done in a way that is relevant to people of today, and needs to engage kids/teenagers growing up. We need to make it relevant and acknowledge change in our society.

Group X

Number of Participants = 5

Those within the church need to continue to grow in awareness and understanding of Jesus and His eternal presence in the Word, the tabernacle, our church, God's creation and the sacraments. We struggle to share this with those who find the church, faith, religion and Jesus Christ himself irrelevant or incomprehensible. We need to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit to reach out and touch others inside, and outside the church.

Group X and X

Number of Participants = 6

Sense of people enjoying the experience of the Spiritual Conversation

How are we journeying together?

There is little sharing.

We are not journeying together very well.

Not companioning each other

Too much division between laity and clergy - the gap is too extensive.

Division between generations in the church

Our own parish has diminished - this fact is not being addressed - I feel disappointed with the response today.

We come and go we need something to bring us and keep us together.

No communication from the pulpit to people - no sharing
 We are not allowed to speak
 We are a rudderless ship
 People want to offer something or say something but lack the confidence to do so.
 We are not allowed to mention publically events happening in the lives of parishioners

How might we do this better?
 Recognise the gifts of the non-ordained
 We deserve good homilies
 Having joy and happiness
 Being a welcome, reverend, joy filled church - to do this we need to be a happy involved church. The example was given of what it is like in the Taupo parish
 We need a sense of 'this is our parish not fathers parish'
 Being culturally sensitive and aware - NZ is a multicultural nation
 Sticking together with other churches. We can learn from them.

How are we journeying together?
 We feel that we journeyed those early years out of fear - fear of being punished. The emphasis on the after life. Fear and being scared.
 Presence of Catholic nuns in schools and punishment was discussed. This was not a good journey.
 It was observed that everyone is leaving the church and everyone is doubting the Mass - there is a need to rediscover what the Mass is. The youngsters are questioning what the Catholic church is. It is our hope they will come back.
 It was observed that we have lost many parish groups - like parish councils.
 There seems to be no more communication between lay leadership and priest.
 Coming back to church has been difficult due to covid and the issue of sexual abuse.
 The past hurts of physical punishment - there are still remnants of it. Hindrance to one's faith.

How can we do it better?
 Rediscover faith and the spiritual life.
 Perhaps a change of emphasis from punishment to mercy and compassion.

Group X and X

Number of Participants = 12

One of the recurring themes is the fact that we are not journeying together.
 Not feeling welcome
 Not helping people to feel welcome
 Our faith is strengthened when we are together
 We are hesitant to speak about the fact that our faith is private.
 We spoke about the significance of cultural barriers - helping people from other cultures (non pakeha) to feel a part of us.
 Realising the impact of covid - it has affected cup of teas etc.
 Two distinct liturgical groups.
 Sense of hope in regards to the new rules for the Curia in Rome, and that it will filter down in the church - non-clerical and non-religious can become department heads.

Lots of questions in response to the question.

Are we going the right way? What are you looking for? Jesus speaks to each differently.

How do we as a church journey with others in Cambridge

Recognising that we are called to share - key theme of share. We need to share the journey with others - others in our family, others in the church, others not in either of those groups.

Questions about the process - its a big process this can be quite overwhelming - is my contribution going to make a difference. If it starts locally this is more manageable.

Two key themes - connecting and welcoming.

The recognition that we are a 'shy bunch' as Catholics. Its ok to share with others that might challenge us or who no longer share the faith.

There was an acknowledgement that we connect by acknowledgement - who are you? What is your name? This should start in the carpark and be directed towards those who have been in the parish a long time that we perhaps do not know the name of.

What language do we use when we are extending the invitation to others, when we are are welcoming?

How might we do it better? - Key theme of wanting to spread the joy and love - intimate love of Jesus - we want everyone to know this. We recognise there are groups that do this well in our parish - e.g. the Passionist family group - where people are not judged and welcomed as they are.

There was acknowledgement that other churches often do welcoming and connecting better than what we do.

Joy - the joy of wanting to be a part of something.

We are all searching and want to know the meaning of life.

We want to get better at sharing the love of Jesus with others.

We want to get better at noticing others and giving gentle invitations.

Our church isn't journeying well with others - there are lots of issues that we are not seen to be addressing misogyny, lgbqi+, and others. Blockages that discriminate and isolate others. Road blocks, detours, and changes along the way are part of the journey, that's what families are like. We could learn a lot from those in our migrant communities. If we were to get together as parishes and the diocese and identify where people are on the road and having difficulty - we could work out ways to 'walk together' - ways like ecumenism.

We dream of a church of Mercy. Not to be judged according to who receive Communion and who does not receive, who is going to receive baptism or not.

Reflect on Jesus' invitation to 'come and see' - if we invite people do they stay?

Observation that the Church moves slowly. It has been the same church for twenty years. Not much change in our practices.

In today's time there is a lack of in depth understanding of the Sacraments - in particular the Mass. The children seem to lack an encounter and do not behave. There is a disconnect between what is going on in the Mass.

What are you looking for? We are looking for the heart of Jesus who is for everybody - we are all longing for God who we should believe and trust. Today's world is influenced by materialism, modern paganism but we should not distract ourselves by these, but refocus on the encounter with God. We are also challenged by the words of Jesus go and preach - ask ourselves do we really share it? Do we really preach?

A question discussed was 'why do priests not get married?'

Assisting with poverty and children - how can we educate parents?

The issues of contraception and abortion were talked about.

Groups ...

Number of Participants = 16

Diversity and unity.

Importance of teaching the young. Question and answer catechism.

Perhaps a more simple structure - without losing the beauty. How can we take children on the journey to understanding the Mass? More involvement. We are blessed by the choir.

Children's liturgy is a good place for children to start. Its difficult for teenagers, we can't force them, but we can pray for them. Importance of prayer.

We want to be together. We don't want to be separated into various Mass times we want to be one community. Community is important to us.

The point of connection is important - where is the place we go to if you are sitting in the back and wondering 'why do we do that?' Points of connection that are more obvious to people who are here casually and perhaps haven't spoken up before.

The Process:

Very good - I liked it. Good conversation. Its good to be able to just talk here. We can express what we feel and ideas. Talking and listening and expressing. Enjoyable. Listening with your heart not just waiting for turn. Perhaps a round of introductions at the beginning would be helpful.

Sense of a 'very blessed' time together, a privileged experience together.

Facilitating an encounter with Jesus outside of Sunday Mass. See Jesus in others as has happened tonight in our group.

Others think in similar ways.

So how to promote activities that draw us together... Catholic Women's league, SVDP, Choir - How many parishioners know what is happening in these groups?

-Can we learn from the experience of other chruchers in Te Awamutu.

There will be a Mass in the culture of our church that will be uncomfortable and confronting.

The desire for socialising... the family that prays and celebrates together stays together... being there for each other.

Feeling recharged by listening to each other.

In recent years the NZ church has slowed down.. So doing my best to connect with others.

Wanting/desiring to join parish activities despite the difficulties of transport in my personal circumstances.

Sense of gratitude and thankfulness.

Strong sense of togetherness.

Sense of wanting to build a greater sense of belonging both individually and within themselves. How do you get others to have that sense of belonging?

Structure and working together - how do we expand different ministries. How do we outreach to others? Its often the same groups of people who put there hand up.

How do we work together with those of other faiths... interfaith and ecumenism.

We do seem to journey with those from migrant communities well. We have strong migrant communities. There were also questions around where is that sense of belonging in the Maori community? Within the synod process - is the Maori voice missing?

Sense of confusion and uncertainty about the process. Is it time to make some moves locally and at diocesan level?

Theme of spiritual gifts - how do we see the gifts of others? Do we invite others to give their gifts? How do we invite others outside of the Church? Those who have not been in a long time? If we harness the gifts the Church will grow.

Life issues - we should remain staunch in this area. The world has forgotten about it.

Reach out to our own community before reaching outside of the church community.

A sense in which how can we trust the process? Should we trust the process?

3 groups

Number of Participants = 12

Emphasis on the importance of listening to each other - this is something we could do better.

Uncertainty of not knowing how to solve the problems of today.

Pray together

Importance of groups - a range of groups - week day Mass, cups of tea, different ways of gathering

How do we get more young people in our Church?

Sense of feeling we are searching for answers.

Through coming together we can answer some of these questions

We heard some deep hurt in our experiences, this needs to be addressed. We can do this by listening, being honest, and open.

How are we going to achieve what Francis is inviting us to.

Practical ways of communicating what 'we do' to the wider community. - e.g. Local SVDP reports in the local newspaper.

How do strengthen our sense of togetherness

Finding a way to make it easy for people to come among us.

Removing the blocks that keep people away.

The need to change from our 'Kiwi' private sense of church to be more 'out there'

Pondering the impact of Covid19 on our coming together

Ways to help people speak - if they can't speak in person - perhaps they might speak through a 'snippet box' in the back of the church.

The elephant in the room is the negative way in which we are perceived because of the sexual abuse shame.

For our generation (70's+) its a big shift from being told what to do towards sharing and listening - we need time to grow into this.

How to invite and encourage the younger ones.

We want to see a new translation of the missal

Facing the clericalism issue.

We are grateful that in this country we can practice our faith.

Sense of appreciation and anticipation around the fact that we journey together in Mass - togetherness is there. At the same time, perhaps not so well ecumenically with other faiths.

Apprehension or reluctance as to how to do this. What would it look like if we journeyed together more ecumenically and together as Catholics?

Awareness of covid pandemic not helping us journey together.

Sense that we still have questions, still listening.

Positive process - the synod process. Great to be able to listen to each other more.

Group X

Number of Participants = 5

Those within the church need to continue to grow in awareness of Jesus and His eternal presence in the Word, the tabernacle, our church, God's creation and the sacraments. We struggle to share this with those who find the church, faith, religion and Jesus Christ himself irrelevant or incomprehensible. We need to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit to reach out and touch others inside, and outside the church.

Online Group X

Number of Participants = 5

Overall

We are all the people of God, through our baptism. We have to know who Love is and to share this love with others. We want to be welcomed and to welcome, to belong, to give feedback, to encourage those in leadership, and to be allowed to live out our gifts. How do we showcase our vibrancy? How can we empower others in the church? How do we involve others?

Key themes that came up:

Leadership

We identified the need for leadership in our parishes in addition to the role of the priest in this regard. We need laity to be empowered and trained to lead liturgies so parishes are prepared for a possible future with fewer priests in the Diocese. We see value in a Church that draws upon the talent and creativity within it to offer opportunities for worship and education in the faith and leadership in building community. Use the gifts of parishioners in the Mass. For example, parishioners (men or women) who are competent and trustworthy to give a homily at times. Parishioners working at the leadership level need to be supported in their efforts. Return to the principle and practice of subsidiarity - decisions are made at the local level by parishioners together with the parish priest.

Managing Parish affairs

Larger parishes are able to employ reception and administrative support. Can some arrangements be made to assist smaller parishes? Priests have a role in overseeing parish affairs and as much as possible dedicate time to their sacramental role and to pastoral care.

Hospitality

Belonging and making an effort. The importance of acknowledging and recognising people by smiling and saying hello. An environment that makes each person feel special and good about belonging in the parish community.

At the end of weekly Mass, can we transition to community affairs? For example, acknowledge what has happened in the Parish during the past week and what is anticipated in the next week, which brings alive what may be in the Newsletter and helps build community. The Celebrant could interact with the congregation by for example asking who are visitors/having a birthday/having an anniversary. Some of this interaction could be better placed at the beginning of the Mass during the Welcome.

How we found being synodal

Collective engagement and thinking. It is affirming of our faith to listen to the thoughts of fellow faithful people; that is, to have input beyond our own 'bubble'. Language in the preparatory document is difficult to understand. The real value in this process is what can be gained at the local level as we live locally rather than at the global or universal level of our Church. Synodality means making changes to build more community participation in our local Church. Synodality is a fantastic opportunity to bring a wide range of people together, to discern where we're going and how we could improve our faith and actions. We could usefully practice synodality on a regular basis. We had no concerns about the silences and trust the Holy Spirit to come through. Wonderful to share openly. The facilitator made us welcome and no judgements were made. Nice to talk with others from different parishes.

Group X

Number of Participants = 7

How do Catholics journey together?

In little groups – individualistic

Coming together formally – coming to Mass, Prayer Groups

Coming together informally – shared meals, friendships (weaving together)

Not enough outward looking (like a family who lives and grows together, but does not go out to visit anyone else)

We don't notice other people, those different from ourselves – different ethnic groups, divorced, solo parents

Poor at following up on meeting people – okay with initial welcome/greeting, but don't follow through – a shallow welcome/greet

We don't see well enough, we don't analyse the situation relating to scripture, we are poor at connecting our real life with scripture.

How could we do it better?

Need to go out to those missing – the divorced, the shamed, separated, single, widowed

Need to go back in the past – understand who use to live here, understand and share better.

Need to heal the deep underlying hurts

Being a friend

Need something beyond the Sacramental program for the older children at school – a connection/belonging to the Parish

Youth to experience prayer – contemplation/mediation with Christ. Pray, Judge, Act.

Need to reach to those outside the 'norm'

Group X

Number of Participants = 7

How do Catholics journey together?

We're not doing it particularly well...

There's a lost generation

Once kids are confirmed, we don't see them again

No follow-up after Sacramental Programme

Their parents aren't coming either

How could we do it better?

Keep parents of Sacramental Programme "in the know" e.g. Facebook

Picnics / gatherings (but I don't know if people would come)

We're all getting older and less able

COVID is a challenge

Events like World Youth Day seem to enthuse young people - more events like this to involve the youth

Group X**Number of Participants = 7**

How do Catholics journey together?

Initially in our families

Then as we move away from our parents and away from home we come back to the Church family, our faith family

In the Eucharist – understanding how Eucharistic the bible is

Faith centred on Christ, the Eucharist, the cross

Through other people of faith

Understanding and believing Eucharist is Christ (the real presence)

Easy to get blasé – is/needs to be central in everything we do

Lack of understanding of truth – the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist

Easily distracted

Accepting mystery of God is not something to be solved but to be accepted.

Finding a place in a new Parish is not easy – takes time

Our Church is family, is home, anywhere in the world. We are the body of Christ

Unity – is one Church

Welcoming issue – longer in Parish more knowledge/closer relationships with others.

Is different with newbies – a distancing as relationships are built.

Comes across as unwelcoming

How might we do it better?

Socialising – cuppa after Mass

Looking for those who no longer come to Mass

Problems with societal/work pressures – limits involvement. A diminishing pool of people.

Call/invite people along – interpersonal encounter

Praying together, for each other, for life

Conversations about our faith – faith discussions/journey sharing. Willingness to talk and share

Sharing stories of the Saints

Group X**Number of Participants = 5**

How do Catholics Journey together?

Maybe not so well, as we're mostly white middle class and we often don't journey with others outside this group.

Don't see many youth, poor

Some minority groups feel alienated from the Church, eg, LGBTQI+

We do have lovely worship and adoration, here we journey together.

We mightn't be large in numbers, but we have high involvement in Pariah needs and ministries.

Great opportunity to socialize but of course this hasn't been possible of late. Social events are great.

Beautiful English Mass, but also a love for the Latin Mass. Would like to see a Latin Mass every Sunday in Morrinsville.

A huge percentage don't believe in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

A journeying together visually.. before Mass a hive of activity, but after Mass people disappear.

Have many submarine friends, who surface occasionally. Maybe approaching them isn't the right answer. Somehow they need to be brought back in a loving non-threatening manner. Maybe send the newsletter to these people.

Catholics don't fellowship well.

Feel part of a community at Mass.

Catholics faith is individualistic.

At parent's funerals, the young ones don't know what to do.

People don't like being at Mass for longer than 1 hour.

Restart COT with caregivers just prior to after school pick up.

Not a fan of Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation received in one go. Too early to give precious gifts too soon.

We're all at different stages on our faith journey. Feels privileged to have a non-Catholic husband. Many Non-Catholic friends.

The Church has drawn a moral line against the people that are perceived as different. The Pope is trying to address this.

How might we journey better together.

Have a weekly advert in paper and ask for expressions of interest.

There is a need to build companionship with one another and care for each other.

Not sure why Catholics leave the Church. We are kind of regimented, not like the Baptist Church. Never offer a Mass for the Divorced.

Catholics are different from the other denominations, we're not proud to be Catholic.

Our Good Friday interdenominational gatherings are wonderful. We need to have more of these. This might help get the young ones back.

RCIA. Need more work to keep them in the faith, not Bible studies, but socialising to help build up the Community.

Pretty simple. We need to reach out to those we have, our own people. I need to make an effort to make others feel welcome.

I'm proud to be Catholic. It's important that we talk about our faith. But our life has to match up to our words. People are actually interested in what we believe, we just need to share it.

Participation from people is lacking. We need more groups so people can participate so we get a sense of community. Eg, Youth group,

pastoral care, track down those that have left, as we grieve for them, but then get them involved so they feel part of the community. A whole Church involvement.

Sometimes I feel inadequate as I see a need but am unsure of how to approach people. Maybe if I could give them a rosary card and say I am praying for you.

Friendship takes a while and it's very important.

Group X

Number of Participants = 4

Journey as a Church is somewhat embedded in the universality of life itself. It is an experience of 'being with'. It denotes movements of persons segmented in the different stages of life. It goes from a small bubble to a larger community, towards a universal church, all in a singular timeline of being in communion with God, having a life in God.

This journeying together does not separate sheep and goats, does not weed out the unbelievers or the non-practicing believers who actually make up a huge component of this synod. Such reality is also where the tension of this synod comes into play. Journeying together demands 'strong leadership' and 'active listening' in which either side is of utmost regard. It puzzles many in asking: where is the fulcrum in between the two?

The group realises the need to bring Christ in the journey, in worship, in service. Christ is at the centre. Christ is also the direction. Somehow pathways might help to illuminate this. First is Prayer. There's no sense in church views if not coming from prayer. Second, intimacy with Christ, just as Andrew and the apostles, who developed a sense of trust in Jesus, left their nets and never left Christ's companionship. Third, conversion, that is, turning away from an old life to a new life in Christ. Fourth, community, a communion of people rooted in Christ.

The group is happy to do the synod and even if it was a small group, the insights were captivating. Everyone is thankful and thought that it should not stop at synod only. At these times when people are dwindling in their faith, let those who are inspired from the synod process, give spark to those in need of light.

Group X

Number of Participants = 7

Synodal Responses –

As we reflect on what has been shared, we sense that NOW is the time for renewal of our CHURCH - the People of God, faithfully living the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Woven through the reflections of the group is the experience of injustice and of frustration with the seeming lack of awareness by those who make decisions about the future of our Church with little or no consultation.

We strongly suggest a Participative Leadership model that is:

Non-Patriarchal

Inclusive of gender

Bi-Cultural i.e. Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti

Encompasses all ages

Accountable to those to whom it serves

Jesus preached the Good News of the historical advent of the Kingdom of God, which brings justice and peace to all human beings, and liberation to the oppressed. For the Catholic Church to cooperate with God's Kingdom, it needs to model its organizational structure, and its Canon Law, on those principles of equality and justice for all. The Church's Canon Law urgently requires renewing, both wholly and frequently, transforming it into a useful and accessible template, using the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights as its benchmark. (Bristol Text) .

Formation of ordained Clergy

The whole seminary structure needs revamping. Totally inappropriate for this time.

We suggest that it be Community based, with more emphasis on Scripture and Pastoral work.

Good solid theology is required as reflected in the recent Bristol Synodal Report.

Formation – Model for Ordained Ministry

The 'Launch – Out' Programme which operates in the Wellington Diocese, is an Excellent programme which entails a comprehensive process of Discernment. Includes Liturgical and Catechical leadership; Spiritual and Pastoral care and General Administration. The Programme is integrated, practical, and grounded in pastoral spirituality.

A Model of Shared Liturgical and Participative Leadership

St Paul's Rongopai in Auckland – an example of an Inclusive Community, again working well. Reflects Vat.11 'full and active participation of the faithful.'

A Further Possibility - with the need to be Creative in these 'Covid times:'

The Bishops' recent statement on accommodating the 'Traffic Light System,' and the dilemmas that this poses, highlights another possibility! Our Early Church began with gatherings in the houses of the faithful!! Why not, in this time of pandemic encourage the possibility of House Churches!

This could be the start of what a future church could look like.

Online Group X

Number of Participants = 6

'I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof.'

We talked about the powerful and unconditional love of Jesus Christ for us. We need to remind ourselves of this.

We talked about Communion and the meaning of Communion. We talked about welcoming all people. We could do it better. We talked about friendship, relationship is the core. We talked about getting to know each other more, about 'welcoming' and treating others how we would like to be treated.

This synod is led by the Holy Spirit, the themes of communion, participation, and mission stand out. We are the Church, the People of God, a diverse people, be not afraid. People are hungry for God, the importance of Scripture stands out.

We talked about young people in and out of the Church, attracting young people and them walking away.

Members of the group mentioned tackling clericalism - Priests on a pedestal - came up in the conversation. There was some disagreement about this point. The discussion on this was unfortunately short due to time constraints.

The process:

- Interesting and enlightening - diversity of views.
- Enjoyed the scripture reading. The scripture readings are ever changing but always relevant.
- Appreciated the diversity of opinion and experiences. Making sure people know how long it will take. It requires undivided attention.
- There is a lot of hope - the fact that we are having these groups is a reason for hope.
- It is good to hear of others' love for the Lord - we might have different ways of expressing it.

Group X

Number of Participants = 6

How do Catholics Journey together?

Mass, Sunday and week day Mass. Children from the school come. We get to know the community of believers.

Pray- individually, but collectively we do better.

Not very well. Turn up to Mass and often not prepared. How much do we support one another, eg, visiting the lonely, the elderly? Where are our youth? At some Masses we really feel the faith eg, life teen Mass, Filipinos Mass.

Many Catholics have left their faith.

In the USA, a heavy attendance at Mass, all ethnic groups together. In NZ, a very different kind of Church, rather lax.

Scripture reflections are very valuable, they help us understand our faith.

How might we do it better?

We need a missionary zeal to go out to bring Catholics back.

We need to have joy and show passion about our faith.

Continue to teach our Catholics so they know about their faith, what they believe and this will lead to joy and a wanting to share their faith.

Need more education around our faith.

To journey together, we need to appreciate other religions.

Acknowledge that this is hard.

The pandemic and the internet are thieves. They have taken our children away.

Hold events, youth groups, cup of teas after Mass, socials, Adoration, etc

Having a personable priest helps.

Pray more.

A lack of priests, maybe due to young men always busy and no down time to listen to God.

Group X

Number of Participants = 5

We are one people, by being part of the Church. "Follow me", Christ's call and invitation to us. Our Father in heaven unites us as one family. Yet our community is being divided, how can we counter this? By building our community, for each of us have been strengthened by our faith communities

there is a call for us be a part of this, together. There is a need for our Church leadership to walk alongside us. With walking alongside and building up our families and communities, vocations can stem forth. Also this will counter the loneliness and individualism evident today, both in our Church and world.

Group X

Number of Participants = 5

We feel we belong to our parish community, but wish to be more inviting and welcoming to others. We know that there are many others in our community on the peripheries who we wish to invite and include. We wish to share the joy of the Gospel, to be proud of our faith and having the confidence to share that. With this we feel will be able to invite others to see and be inspired whilst building up our faith and friendships. In faith conversations we can pray that eloquence will be given to achieve this. Helping those on the peripheries to overcome the fear of breaking the rules, we want to assure them, whether visiting or exploring the faith, to be comfortable in our community. Our rituals are deep and meaningful, with a deeper catechesis we can help welcome those returning or unsure to learn and grow in their relationship with God, us and the Church.

Group X

Number of Participants = 3

Why don't we see the marginalised, those from all walks of life within society, inside our churches?

The Church needs to be Open and Welcoming and Supportive - both inside and outside the walls of our church buildings.

How can we do that? We need to live our faith with the gifts we have been given.

The Church needs to go out - by doing good works and taking this warmth and joy out into places, to the people, not expecting people to come in through the barriers. Society has changed, how does the Church journey with society? Sometimes we do this well, sometimes we don't. This "Going Out" needs to extend to social justice and beyond - we cant be happy if our neighbours are suffering - no matter who they are (LGBTi+, youth, the poor, etc.) .

The laity need to be involved in decision making within the Church. This includes women, youth, all people across the board, at "grassroots" level like here in the synod. For this, we need education on our faith - for example having small groups that vitalise and support one another, making use of technology to enable this. Catholics need to become more than just "Sunday Catholics". People need to become more aware that they can help inside and outside the Church. How do we communicate, organise and empower the laity on how they can help serve others? Do we listen to those who we serve, those who are in need, as to what they actually need/want from us as the Church?

Review

Really good, talking about things is good. Good process.

Sometimes we forget the church is wherever we are, not just inside the church.

Enjoyed quiet time and reflecting.

Widened view listening to others.

Thanks to all involved

Group X**Number of Participants = 5**

How do Catholics Journey together? How might we do it better?

Through prayer. To be connected in prayer

Keep encouraging one another.

By going to Mass, Catholic women's League, cup of tea, etc., we share with one another and support each other.

Be open to receive the Holy Spirit.

A need to establish the Habits of Faith, eg, Sunday mass, prayer.

We need to do better with our youth. Maybe have some youthful Saint that they can look up to.

Show empathy.

Go out to people, greet them, hospitality.

Group X**Number of Participants = 4**

We talked about being together, participation, joining groups within the church, the beauty of diversity of groups in our church. We talked about schooling, we talked about engaging parents, this is something we seem to be missing, sharing the faith with this group. Interfaith, participation in terms of women deacons, married priests, women priests - some of the group felt uncomfortable with these suggestion, this was a point of difference.

If we do what we do out of love we are on the right track. We talked about Mother Theresa, St Therese of Lisieux. The simple things, our ordinary lives, with a consciousness of Jesus Christ is with us. The importance of evangelisation.

Caring for the people. Better understanding of people with different views.

We talked about the challenges and gift of diversity in culture within the Church. In particular we talked about the gift of Filipino people and their culture in NZ churches.

The Spiritual Conversation

-I found it really good. We missed having a cup of tea together afterwards. Sometimes controversial things come up over a cup of tea.

-I enjoyed talking within a small group. I feel comfortable and blessed and positive to be here. Very very good.

-A great privilege of sharing, the love of God and the Catholic faith came through.

Group X**Number of Participants = 5**

Overall

We are all the people of God, through our baptism. We have to know who Love is and to share this love with others. We want to be welcomed and to welcome, to belong, to give feedback, to encourage those in leadership, and to be allowed to live out our gifts. How do we showcase our vibrancy? How can we empower others in the church? How do we involve others?

Key themes that came up:

Leadership

We identified the need for leadership in our parishes in addition to the role of the priest in this regard. We need laity to be empowered and trained to lead liturgies so parishes are prepared for a possible future with fewer priests in the Diocese. We see value in a Church that draws upon the talent and creativity within it to offer opportunities for worship and education in the faith and leadership in building community. Use the gifts of parishioners in the Mass. For example, parishioners (men or women) who are competent and trustworthy to give a homily at times. Parishioners working at the leadership level need to be supported in their efforts. Return to the principle and practice of subsidiarity - decisions are made at the local level by parishioners together with the parish priest.

Managing Parish affairs

Larger parishes are able to employ reception and administrative support. Can some arrangements be made to assist smaller parishes? Priests have a role in overseeing parish affairs and as much as possible dedicate time to their sacramental role and to pastoral care.

Hospitality

Belonging and making an effort. The importance of acknowledging and recognising people by smiling and saying hello. An environment that makes each person feel special and good about belonging in the parish community.

At the end of weekly Mass, can we transition to community affairs? For example, acknowledge what has happened in the Parish during the past week and what is anticipated in the next week, which brings alive what may be in the Newsletter and helps build community. The Celebrant could interact with the congregation by for example asking who are visitors/having a birthday/having an anniversary. Some of this interaction could be better placed at the beginning of the Mass during the Welcome.

How we found being synodal

Collective engagement and thinking. It is affirming of our faith to listen to the thoughts of fellow faithful people; that is, to have input beyond our own 'bubble'. Language in the preparatory document is difficult to understand. The real value in this process is what can be gained at the local level as we live locally rather than at the global or universal level of our Church. Synodality means making changes to build more community participation in our local Church. Synodality is a fantastic opportunity to bring a wide range of people together, to discern where we're going and how we could improve our faith and actions. We could usefully practice synodality on a regular basis. We had no concerns about the silences and trust the Holy Spirit to come through. Wonderful to share openly. The facilitator made us welcome and no judgements were made. Nice to talk with others from different parishes.

Group X

Number of Participants = 6

The Synodal Process centred around the following ideas:

The need for greater spiritual leadership and the accessibility to formation and greater support for leaders within the Church.

Seeing the authenticity and witness of faith in others encourages us in our journey.

We need the Church to be welcoming and to assist people to find their role and place in the Church.

We journey together as a family and there needs to be reciprocity between leaders and laity to learn from one another. We must be a Church of action, not just words. Between different groups within the Church we need to be unified and focus on the mission that brings us together while also allowing for diversity.

Feedback:

Participants found the session to be fruitful, they found the question somewhat vague but agreed that sharing was enlightening.

Group X

Participants = 8

The Synodal Process centred around the following ideas:

The flesh of the Church, this is who we are, the flesh of Christ. We are a living Church. Participants agreed we must embrace the messiness of our own lives but also each other's woundedness.

Participants spoke about the Church as Whanau. We are diverse, we must be accepting.

Process - Participants agree the process was enlightening. Participants spoke about a greater appreciation of the process. Participants felt the process has begun but it needs to be done more often. The Holy Spirit can speak through this process.

Group X

OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

How do you feel we as Catholics are doing at walking side-by-side?

Not great. Mostly we are older people; our young are not with us. Many are immigrants from a different culture.

We are not walking side-by-side and there are no opportunities to mix in the larger group.

As a parish community we are divided into three separate communities, the 5pm, 8am and 10.30am. We have been further divided by the Covid restrictions when we are divided into vaccinated and non-vaccinated.

We do not feel connected; our church is the home group that we belong to.

Who do you feel is included/welcome on the church's local journey?

We are walking in small groups without real reference to the larger parish group.

Older parishioners feel included because they share a deep faith and are self-motivated.

There seems to be a disjoint between the schools and the parish.

Who is not included or welcomed?

We are not good at welcoming newcomers. There is no longer any opportunity to do this.

Those who have left the church, and the number is growing exponentially, have no real opportunity or invitation to re-join us.

There is no longer a functional parish council so presumably the parish priest makes all the decisions. We are not asked to contribute apart from money. We are therefore on dangerous, unstable ground.

OUR LISTENING

How good are we Catholics at listening?

Many of us are attentive but we are not good at turning listening into action. We listen at Mass and afterwards the message is often forgotten.

We do a sort of listening when we read Cath News, Tui Motu, Kete Korero and the parish magazine. These introduce us to differing views.

Older people are respectful of their bishops and priests but younger people do not hear very well in general as they have many other channels blocking the airwaves.

There is a big difference between listening and hearing. Listening requires our attention.

Who do we need to listen to more?

We need to listen to what young people are saying as well as those who are socially disadvantaged. If we don't make an effort to listen to these people, they will give up trying. We are supposed to be the church of the poor but very few of these people appear in our church.

What stops us from listening more carefully?

Maybe we don't want to hear because others' views are very different from our own.

Young people are taught to develop their own views and they often don't know how to accommodate views different from their own.

Those of us who are older need to think about who is going to carry on when we go.

OUR SPEAKING UP

How good are we Catholics at speaking up in public?

Apart from statements from the Bishops' Conference there is a deafening silence from the wider catholic community on issues such as social justice.

We seem embarrassed to say we are Catholics and that we have opinions on public issues.

Our public visibility is hindered by lack of opportunity.

We need to take every opportunity to explain our faith to others.

How do we say what is important to us as Catholics?

There is much internal dialogue but we need to speak to a wider audience.

We shy away from speaking about our faith to others. It takes courage.

What helps/hinders our public visibility?

Our bishops could take a higher profile on public issues.

Give leaders in our church a mandate to speak to media about Catholic views.

We fear retaliation.

GATHERING

Are our Catholic gatherings achieving their purpose for our people?

The main opportunity for gathering is weekly Mass. This has been severely limited by Covid and has been replaced for many by TV Masses.

Homilies and readings help a lot but as a community our experience is mainly private.

It is important that **inclusive language** is used both in the readings and the liturgy.

The bishops of Oceania must be allowed to approve a translation of the liturgy which is relevant to us.

Home groups are essential to help people to understand the readings.

How does our gathering for prayer including Mass meet people's needs?

We pray personally as well as communally. A deeply faithful person will have their needs met in both situations.

Mass can be a solitary experience for those who do not feel a part of things.

Praying together gives us strength.

How do they fail to meet people's needs?

Leading the prayer, the priest has the opportunity to make people feel a part of things.

The limits on attendance during Covid have caused a problem in our parish with people being turned away. A booking system would have avoided this.

OUR MISSION

Do we as Catholics take our mission to share the Good News seriously?

Many people in our parish do good work as volunteers, attending Mass and contributing money.

Many would agree in principle with mission but have difficulty in participating.

How exactly do we as church members spread the Good News of Jesus Christ?

We do this by living out the Good News in our lives. We can be open to explaining this to others.

The church uses social media to get the message out.

What stops us from being active in mission?

Embarrassment, hesitancy, afraid of confrontation. Do not want to be seen as Bible-bashers. Intentions are good but on a personal level we do not always follow through.

OUR CONVERSATION

As Catholics how good are we at conversation, both listening and sharing?

Why do we have one mouth and two ears? We need to listen more than we speak. We are inclined to think of what our response will be rather than listen to the speaker.

Our response needs to be guided by who we're speaking to. We can pray for guidance.

Some are afraid to speak out because they are ignorant in matters of faith.

How and how well do we as Catholics collaborate in our local communities?

We have no operating parish council so we have no way of letting others know our thoughts and feelings.

The only opportunity we have to speak with our priests is a very small window after Mass.

Our home groups are the only way most of us have to collaborate within the parish.

In what ways could we dialogue and collaborate better with others in society?

Catholics are a powerful lobby group but our voice is largely silent particularly in national forums such as social justice and economics.

Outside the Catholic context many of us find opportunities to do this e.g. on buses, our neighbourhood, in waiting rooms and with friends.

Maybe there could be a national communications strategy, drilled down into parishes and schools and implemented by all.

OTHER CHRISTIANS

How well do we as Catholics know our sisters and brothers in other churches?

There are very few opportunities in the parish to dialogue with others. Christmas, Easter, World Day of Prayer would be good starting points.

To those of us who are willing to do so, there are many opportunities that present themselves to discuss our faith and find out about what others believe. Arguing and point-scoring are off the agenda. This type of contact involves a lot of keeping in touch with what is happening in the wider church.

Why don't we do more together?

Lack of opportunity.

Parish Council not functioning.

Lay leadership lacking.

We have been impressed by the actions of Muslims in forgiving, and by Sikhs helping feed the hungry.

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY

Catholics aim to balance authority and governance with teamwork and co-responsibility. How well do we do this?

Very poorly because our parish priest is the decision-maker and it is very hard for the laity to be consulted and heard. Therefore, we have no power to influence the direction we are going.

How could we balance things better?

Parishioners should be consulted and looked upon as part of the team.

Team-work and co-responsibility are totally lacking.

Clericalism needs to go and the laity needs to be considered as part of the parish structure.

How do we encourage lay involvement, participation and leadership?

Open the doors and give lay leaders, women and men, training in areas where they have a chance to show what they are capable of.

Create avenues for collaboration.

Open the priesthood and diaconate to women. They have waited long enough.

OUR DECISION MAKING

Our aim is to make decisions by discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

How well do you feel we do this?

Consultation with the people is rarely, if ever, practised.

Decisions are made in Rome or by the bishops.

The people accept that the clergy is always right.

We are not aware of any method or process by which people in our parish can take part in decision making.

What methods or processes do Catholic communities use to include people in discernment or decision-making?

In our parish none of the above are evident.

Even when we had a parish council, communications were not acknowledged and no action was taken.

What do you think we should do to improve our efforts in this?

Allow people to have an input into decisions.

Different points of view should be welcomed and discussed.

LEARNING TO JOURNEY TOGETHER

All of us need to be open to change and ongoing learning.

To what extent do you find Catholics are open to change and new learning?

Many people are resistant to change and like to stay where they are.

Some of us are rearing to go. Just give us a chance by discouraging clericalism and allowing change to take place.

How do we as a catholic community form our people to listen, participate and be open to change?

If change is imposed it is unlikely that it will happen.

There will need to be an outreach to the whole Catholic community to prepare us to face a different future.

Have you found church leaders to be willing to listen, participate and be open to new ways?

No. Many priests are very resistant to change.

Bishop Steve was always very open and we appreciated his willingness to listen.

Some are still wanting Latin Masses while some are aware that there will be a cost to change.

Most priests are unwilling to even discuss the place of women in the church.

Learning refreshes, challenges and encourages enthusiasm.

The above has been approved by the whole group as being what was discussed and decided upon. We all realise that Covid has played a major part in the functioning of our parish. However, we believe that the future of the church depends on small parish groups such as ours, meeting to discuss scripture and the wider implications of our faith.

Group X

Number of Participants = 7

1. Emphasise the importance of listening.
Using the gifts of the Holy Spirit if I am not capable of doing something let others do it. The gifts are not found in one person alone.
2. Clarify the position of Deacons and Hospital Chaplains as regards the Anointing of the Sick in the absence of a Priest.
How to get sick/dying people and their relatives to understand that a blessing from a Deacon or a Hospital Chaplain is not an Anointing.
3. In our efforts to Journey Together how do we solve the division growing between vaccinated and unvaccinated parishioners.
What would Jesus do?
What does the story of the Ten Lepers tell us about Jesus? About the crowd?
4. Jesus proclaimed A New Commandment I give unto you.
Therefore let us leave behind the Old Testament Thou shalt or Thou shalt not and encourage the building of a close relationship with Jesus by removing the Sunday obligation and enabling the faithful to decide themselves which day

they will attend Mass.

Let us go surely because we love Jesus rather than we are obliged to worship Him. The guilt laid upon those who simply cannot attend Sunday Mass is surely the basis of much mental stress suffered unduly by otherwise faithful people.

Let us journey together, yes, but does it have to be on the same day in this changing world?

It may mean a whole new theology around the attendance at Mass!

5. When a group of people join together in prayer or Mass, either Catholic or Anglican or whatever, those attending in good faith should be able to receive Holy Communion together.

Never fear ! The Church will not collapse. It is built upon a rock!

Group X

Number of Participants = 7

How do Catholics journey together? How might we do it better?

Journeying together cannot be separated from being in community. Each one is drawn to communicate with one another. In the Church, while the Mass is the summit of worship, the community as a body, is still bonded with it.

Individuals however have different stages and backgrounds to this call of journeying. There are regular churchgoers, others not, but still everyone is part of this call without exemption. There are small ways to realise this like being in the same knowledge of faith, at least being close to it. This can be done better by being formed in faith together, in small engaging groups then communicating to a bigger community.

The formation and education in faith could increase the depth of relationships with others. In some cultures, faith is already imbued in them by their parents. This is similar to small formed families reaching out towards formed communities. Children are to be encouraged to be active in liturgical celebrations, so they grow in learning the traditions and instill the rudiments of faith. Sadly, children learn only their faith through the information they receive from sacramental preparations.

The pandemic makes it hard for many to come in person and many become vulnerable to isolation. Times like these are a call to go back to the basics, be formed, persevere in prayer, and share the Gospel of Jesus. It would also be a boost for the Church especially if the young, with their skills and energy, show their faith convictions by promoting in the digital media, God's goodness at work in them.

Group X

Number of Participants = 7

How do Catholics journey together? How can we do it better?

There was a quick reference to oneself as the starter of the journey. Instead of pointing out what others must do or should do, one may discern that the synodal journey is in the selfless act of love and kindness.

The journey does not require overwhelming ideals but an authentic appreciation of one's faith, nurtured in formation and prayer, as the main key to unlock one's ability to be of service to the wider community or parish.

On the one hand, the human condition sometimes could be overpowering versus the desire to serve. However, it is not about perfection. It is doing what is fitting for God, coming from the honest and genuine self.

The simplicity of being true to the self, breaks down the barriers of labels and opens up the capacity to reach out even more to the wider self. It is here where each one can offer a skill, a talent, to help in the building up of the Church journeying together. If someone has to offer, offer it, then move forward. In the context of parish communities or ecclesial groups, this harmony of working-giving-receiving-celebrating together, is what sustains the journey and makes it better each time. The best part, it is a collective collaboration rather than individual accolades.

The group admits that journeying with Christ and the Church is not easy. Generations in age and differences in ideas could be hurdles. The hope is, one could do better if one seeks God with love, seeking what is good, doing what is right.

Overall, the synod is a welcome process. It isn't after all a heavy discussion but an opportunity to be heard, to express oneself and not be judged on one's views.

Group X

Number of Participants = 6

What seems to be converging or emerging at this stage of our Spiritual Conversation?

- We all accept that there is need for change and that change is never very comfortable.
- We agree that the way we are journeying must change. At the moment we are not walking TOGETHER on the journey and that is a challenge for us. There is a difference among those who ARE walking—i.e., we are NOT walking TOGETHER. Some are walking DIFFERENTLY.
- Will gathering via Zoom be the way of our Church in the future—i.e., will having weekday Mass replace our usual 'physical' Sunday Mass be forced on us by the pandemic?
- What changes are we looking at—e.g., liturgical or something else? This may differ from parish to parish.
- I'm struggling to cope with the concept of JOURNEY, BUT there is a feeling of anticipation in me. Perhaps like Bartimaeus we need just to give it our best shot?
- I desire to see more friendliness and acceptance in our Church of one another.

Group X
4 Participants

1. Leadership. Parish Leadership team. Can't get it. Feel clericalism is at the top. Nothing will change unless this does. Would feel like we actually have say. Feel strangled. People are waiting but get disenchanted by having to ask to evangelise. Bottleneck. If we want to do anything, we have to see our parish priest - 9 times out of 10 he says no.
2. Women - often feel sidelined, men have the loudest voices. Equality - the Church needs to listen to women and provide opportunities for leadership.
3. Fellowship. Hospitality. Need to be like the early church - Other churches do this better. Small groups would bring people together. Protestant churches have more programmes - i.e. grief counselling. We tend to leave people. Thus church could help people better in difficult times in their lives. Hospitality - the same people stay, the same people leave. How do we welcome new people? Do we talk to people? Maybe we could talk to one new person after Mass each week. Need to be like the early church. Get lost in a big city church. Small parishes engage with community better. Thought to be given to location of events, of cups of tea, how are we welcoming new people by the location.
4. Re-evangelisation. Importance of re-evangelisation Got to start with each of us. If I can't change, how am I going to extend my faith to others. I can do more, rather than saving it to others.- more programmes - i.e. Alpha. Programmes held outside town are hard to get to.

Grateful to have a chance to share and to speak. Frustrating

Are we going to get anywhere?

It will take ages to change. Grassroots level - the change starts with me.

SUBMISSION – 2021 - 2023 SYNODAL PROCESS

Who are we?

We are a group of mature Catholic lay women who frequently meet as a Passionist Family group. We recognise and appreciate that this is a time of major transformation in the Church, and we present our submission with a love of the Church and with great hope.

We hope for a Church that is:

1. transparent in its structures at every level;
2. is totally inclusive of lay women and men, not just in an advisory role, but along with the bishop, have the authority to make decisions at every level;
3. collaborative and where co-equality is fostered, e.g.
 - inclusive language
 - shared authority that is accountable
 - equal membership through baptism;
4. reflective of contemporary theology that emerged from Vatican II in its sacramental life, Eucharistic language, and parish education programmes;
5. willing to address the issue of clericalism which contributes to people being disempowered;
6. aware that in Aotearoa New Zealand there are well-educated Catholic people who make their own decisions in all areas of life. Many are highly educated in theology, spirituality and pastoral ministry. Everybody holds part of the truth;
7. addressing the needs of the young church through listening and accepting their liturgical, pastoral and personal faith needs;

8. prepared to acknowledge its shame of past power and sexual abuses and working towards right relationships.

Community Group Synod Responses:

Number in group	7
Make up of group	1 South African 2 Scottish 1 Maori 3 N Z Europeans
Gender	6 Females 1 Male

- **that the greeting at the beginning of Mass and at various parts of the Mass be spoken in Maori as well as English to be more inclusive of all those present.**
- **that the Sunday obligation be dropped permanently in favour of a choice of attending Mass at any day of the week thus forming smaller community groups.**
- **That the gathering of World Youth every two or three years be reinstated as a way of enthusing our youth and encouraging them to know Jesus better.**
- **That the traditional practices of the Church e.g. Rosary, Benediction, Angelus and Grace at meals be given renewed emphasis in Parish life.**
- **that the Church be forgiving and supportive of divorced individuals by making the Sacraments available and accepting them as full members of the Church and Parish.**
- **That gay couples be accepted as full members of the Church and Parish. "Who are we to judge?"**

Submission to Synod compiled by 15 Prison Chaplains from across NZ

The Catholic Church in New Zealand holds the unique position of being the only religion which is specifically contracted to provide dedicated chaplains to prison. It is therefore in a unique position to take a leadership role in bringing all churches together to provide for people in the prison and when they are released. The church also has a powerful voice to speak into political circles and make an impact on issues related to the justice system.

The Church can and should be a prophetic voice within the Justice system. Hokai Rangī, the strategy of Ara Poutama Aotearoa is prophetic and entirely consistent with Christian values and would be enhanced if the Church were to publicly endorse and support the strategy. The six pou of Hokai Rangī:

1. Humanising and healing
2. Whanau
3. Incorporating a Te Ao Maori worldview
4. Whakapapa
5. Foundations for participation
6. Partnership and leadership

This strategy aims to prioritise the wellbeing of both the people who come into the New Zealand prison system and their whānau (extended family). Through this new approach, and working with Māori and all key stakeholders, the Government aims to improve wellbeing outcomes of prisoners and reduce the number of Māori in prison.

These same principles are entirely consistent with a Synodal Church. The success of this strategy can only be enhanced by Church endorsement

Sadly though this influence and position is not evident.

Although the chaplains are commissioned by the church, they then largely become invisible and the efforts of these chaplains goes largely unrecognised and the impact that they have in the prison is lost when people are released to unwelcoming and unsupportive communities.

There is no human punishment without a horizon. No one can change their life if they do not see a horizon. And many times we are used to blinding the eyes of our inmates. (Pope Francis 2019)

Prison ministry is a Corporal work of mercy. Currently this is largely applied only inside the prison. The church that demonstrates its commitment to those who have offended recognises that the transition time after being released is very difficult and provides a safe and supportive environment on release where families are reunited, where the person is welcome and supported in small groups based around prayer and food and where practical assistance is provide in adjusting to living in the world. Currently this is largely lacking. Examples for development are marae-based churches, Catholic Worker movement, St Vincent dePaul

Pope Francis in his address to Participants in the International Meeting for Regional and National Leaders of Prison Pastoral Care in 2019 stated:

“Today, in a particular way, our societies are called to overcome the stigmatization of those who have made a mistake because, instead of offering the

help and adequate resources to live a dignified life, we have become accustomed to discarding rather than considering the efforts that the person makes to reciprocate God's love in his life. Many times, once out of prison, the person has to deal with a world that is foreign to him, and that also does not recognize him as trustworthy, even going so far as to exclude him from the possibility of working to obtain a dignified livelihood. By preventing people from recovering the full exercise of their dignity, they are once again exposed to the dangers that accompany the lack of opportunities for development, in the midst of violence and insecurity.”

This describes accurately the situation in New Zealand. There is a need for education at all levels in this area of social justice. In particular the clergy can play a significant role in promoting the needs of people and enabling the establishment of groups to welcome and support paihere. To achieve this the clergy themselves require education from seminary level through to Parish Priest.

If there is a prison within a parish area the prison is part of the parish and all the people in it are parishioners. The parish supports prison ministry and the chaplain and assists with the recruitment and support of volunteers and the families of those in prison. It sources accommodation for those on release and assists in integrating them into small groups which are welcoming, inclusive, culturally appropriate and safe, and are based around prayer and food. The groups support the rehabilitative process and assist with reintegration to society and with reconnecting with whanau. This response will be made ever so much stronger if it is a combined effort among churches. Prison ministry within the prison is ecumenical and so the face of Jesus in the community would appropriately be a united one

As Christian communities we must ask ourselves a question. If these brothers and sisters have already served their sentence for the evil committed, why is a new social punishment placed on their shoulders with rejection and indifference? On many occasions, this social aversion is one more reason to expose them to fall back into the same mistakes. (Pope Francis 2019)

As a church can we put our hand on our hearts and honestly say we are doing the best we can for the most disadvantaged?



Synod 2023

For a Synodal Church:



communion | participation | mission

Collated responses from
Group X

In response to Bishop Steve's request that we participate in the journey of the Church toward the Synod of Synods in Rome in Oct 2023, we of [REDACTED] Community gathered on a number of occasions to reflect and discuss:

The Big Question:

How do Catholics "Journey Together"?
How might we do it better?

The Diocese provided us with the main themes as ten key questions as set out below. Large sheets of butcher paper with questions heading each page were left in the foyer of the church for a number of weeks, inviting people to contribute their responses. What follows is a summary of our responses.

1. Our Journey together

Jesus wants us to walk together, side by side.

- How do you feel we as Catholics are doing at walking side-by-side?
- Who do you feel is included / welcome on the church's local journey?
- Who is not included or welcomed?

When we say "our church" we mean "everyone in Christ", fellow believers, believers in his message of love, a lot more than just 'Catholics'. Some felt it should includes LGBTQI.

2. Our Listening

Listening is the first step - it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.

- How good are we Catholics at listening?
- Who do we need to listen to more? (Consider – women, young people, laypeople, those on the margins of society, minority groups, the socially discarded and excluded.)
- What stops us from listening more carefully?

Our particular church needs to listen to:

- our Rangatahi (youth)
- women, reflected in using inclusive language
- to everyone who is hurting, lonely, sick etc.
- to those on the margins
- to those (perhaps the majority) who no longer attend Mass, feeling they no longer belong
- to community, acknowledging cultural differences.
- To our priests, sisters, deacons who do the mahi to bring the Word of Good and God
- to God's ways and thoughts above ours
- to God's Holy Spirit
- corporal and spiritual acts of mercy

3. Speaking Out

Everyone is invited to speak boldly and courageously in freedom, truth, and love.

- How good are we as Catholics at speaking out in public?
- How do we say what is important to us as Catholics?
- What helps or hinders our public visibility?
- By evangelisation -> conversion
- Engaging in social justice
- Open healthy discussion in a safe environment [Alpha and Alpha+ have been wonderful for me].
- Being non-judgmental and open your heart.
- Bible study / discussion groups -small groups to regularly reflect on Sunday readings and Gospel. Asking "What is Jesus challenging us in today's Gospel?"
- By being willing to listen, really listen to one another. (How can we show to people they are really heard?)
- Encouraging our Christian contacts to contribute.

4. Gathering / Celebration

For Catholics, 'togetherness' is based on gathering to explore the Gospels (Word) and to break bread (Eucharist).

- Are our Catholic gatherings achieving their purpose for our people?
- How does our gathering for prayer (including Mass) meet people's needs?
- How do they fail to meet people's needs?
- By being there in person, seeing the celebration come alive.
- More shared liturgy where we are active participants.
- Sharing stories of where our church has come from -have a pilgrimage to places of importance.
- Show leadership and friendship -invite a friend.
- By uniting us in praise and worship of God.
- Recognising that the Mass is the ultimate form of worship, celebrating the ultimate sacrifice where Jesus gave his all, his life. Celebrate with all and acknowledge Jesus' gift of life and love.
- Prayer links us to God.

- Praying the rosary which begins with Christ, leads us to evangelisation and back to Christ.

5. Our Mission

Walking together enables us all to accept our mission to share the Good News.

- Do we as Catholics take this mission seriously?
- How exactly do we as Church members spread the Good News of Jesus Christ?
- What stops us from being active in mission?
- To bring people, especially our children, to embrace Jesus as their saviour and friend, by prayer in the home, speaking about Jesus to our children, good example, and by having vibrantly Christ-centred Catholic schools.
- To look and really see the face of the “other”, trying to recognise what is happening to them.
- Preach the Gospel to all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit -the Great Commission.
- To share Jesus’ love with all.
- To be Jesus to all -to those who know him, and those who do not know him.
- To bring all people to salvation -to save souls. (This world is full of lost souls, broken people because they do not know Jesus).
- Live a loving Christ-like life, and promote and support others to do this (a life of justice, mercy, compassion ...).
- Loving those in our sphere of influence -family, friends, work colleagues.
- Door to door -visit Catholics who no longer go to church.
- Inviting them to an event or opportunity to break the ice in coming back to Christ/relationship.
- To be love in action, not just word. Conversion should be our focus.
- To set examples of being good Christians to all.
- Offer the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- To “Belong/Believe/Behave” (mission -Alpha)
- To be love incarnate (Christ in the World) to a world at war (Ukraine) a world gripped by fear of a virus (Covid), and planet hurting (climate change).

6. Our Conversation / Dialogue in Church and Society

Genuine conversation requires perseverance and patience but leads to understanding.

- As Catholics, how good are we at conversation – both listening and sharing?
- Good conversation (dialogue) leads to collaboration – how, and how well, do we collaborate as Catholics in our local community?
- In what ways could we dialogue and collaborate better with others in society (e.g. in politics, economics, culture, civil society, and those who are poor or disadvantaged?)
- Through St Vincent De Paul, with love and respect.
- With the power and inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit.
- With Pope Francis mediating with governments to advocate for refugees and the poor. We as Catholics need to support him, get behind his pastoral outreach. (This is important as the perception of our youth is that the important work on peace, climate change etc is mainly done by others, not the church.)
- Catholic radio and TV.

- We need to be bold enough to speak the Truth; stand up, point out injustice, inequality, disrespect ... Would Christ stand in front of a Russian (or NATO) tank?

7. With Other Christians / Ecumenism

Walking with other Christians is essential to our mission to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

- How well do we as Catholics know our sisters and brothers in other churches?
- What do we share and how do we journey with Christians from other churches (denominations)?
- Why don't we do more together?
- When we share our faith in liturgy, focus on what we have in common, and get rid of exclusionist practices (e.g. communion -food for the wounded, not a reward for the "good").
- We must embrace diversity, rejoice with them in their successes, come to their help in times of crisis, embrace them as friends, and desire that they may grow closer to the Lord.
- With Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life as the centre.
- With non-judgemental love and respect, allowing God to do the work with our co-operation.
- With caution and prudence (beware of Solomon's mistake at the end of his life -false gods).
- By listening and dialoguing, meeting in faith sharing groups.
- By living a common apostolate, working together on topics of injustice e.g. prolife, helping us to understand one another.

8. Sharing responsibility / Authority and Participation

Our Church is all about participation and shared responsibility.

- Catholics aim to balance authority and governance with teamwork and co-responsibility. How well do we achieve this?
- How could we balance these better?
- How do we encourage lay involvement, participation, and leadership?
- Forming groups to strengthen our understanding of our faith.
- Belief in authority of the Pope, descended from Peter the Rock, authority derived from Christ, given to our Bishops and Priests.
- Team-work and co-responsibility -working together in Christ on the basis of "one baptism".
- Being true followers and believers in Christ.
- Participation of the laity in decision making.

9. Our Decision-Making / Discerning

Our aim is to make decisions by discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

- How well do you feel we do this?
- What methods or processes do Catholic communities use to include people in discernment and decision-making?

- What do you think we should do to improve our efforts in this?
- Need a parish council with elected representatives.
- More openness with decision making (not behind closed doors).
- Ask and pray -learn to hear how God speaks to us personally and collectively.
- Model early church apostles.
- Open, frank, but respectful dialogue and discussions.
- Bible study and prayer together before discussion.
- Create and discuss and discern as a group open to the Holy Spirit.

10. Learning to Journey Together / Forming ourselves in Synodality

All of us need to be open to change and ongoing learning.

- To what extent do you find Catholics are open to change and new learning?
- How do we as a Catholic community form our people to listen, participate and be open to change?
- Have you found Church leaders to be willing to listen, participate and remain open to new ways?
- Talking about how our faith is shaping the way we act in today's world. Hearing others' reflections and being open to growth.
- Praying and worshipping, talking and taking action together as one Body of Christ.
- Friendships with Christ and all whom we cross paths with.
- Staying connected to form ourselves through actions and being a strong community together, sharing Eucharist.

Group X

6 Participants

The Holy Spirit has asked **for our attention** to be **open** to change.

We already journey together with people, we have **met** in our community. We **love** being together with these people. “See how these Christians **love each other**”

It is of heavenly importance, to **live our faith, in and as a community** appreciating better what we already have. E.g. the Sacraments, in ways of working together for our parish/community and in society beyond. E.g. working bees, pro-life movements, St Vincent de Paul Society.

We are to **bring** everyone we know, **with us** to heaven.

To accomplish this, we need to **know** our touchstones i.e. our own gifts of the Spirit, our fragrance, and **be** the “smell of the sheep”

In order to grow our church we need to **grow ourselves in Christ**.

If we don't know our gifts or fragrance, we need access to assistance to **discover our own gifts** and then walk together with others discovering their gifts.

This path becomes the basis, on which an **evangelising community will grow**.

What do I need to **work on myself** to be open to this change?

What do **we as a community need to work on** for this change to come to fruition?