

Summary of feedback from Synod Follow up Morning 12th March

1st Listening session.

How did you enjoy the Synodal process of reflecting on Participation, Communion and Mission?

**Having read our Parish response to the synodal listening process, what are your thoughts?
How did you feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit?**

Overall the feedback was positive and people felt the process was beneficial for us as a parish. Many said that they hoped the report would become a source of renewal, action and encouragement for the parish. It was widely agreed that the sharing and listening method would be a good model to continue with and should be the basis for communication at future parish meetings.

The report to the Bishops was considered to be a true reflection of all that was shared on the Synod Parish day. When reading the report people felt as if we were speaking with one heart as a parish. It was good to hear the views of others and find so many shared concerns and so much consensus. Having an opportunity to talk freely about the challenges that face the church: real care for our existing clergy, the role of women, shortage of priests, married priests and deacons, clericalism, charitable outreach, the role of laity, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays, the centrality of the Eucharist, our common priesthood through baptism, losing our youth, sacramental programmes, regaining a sense of real fellowship and community in our parish. Discussion about these pressing issues was enlivening, timely and welcome. It was for some the first time they had really been able to talk freely about those subjects. After the corrosive effect of Covid on the life of our parish the synod has provided an opportunity to rebuild our community after the pandemic. We need to be no longer clouded by covid but start living in spite of the dangers.

Inaccessibility of language was raised as a concern. Some of the language used in the resources for the Synod reflections was found to be unfamiliar 'Catholic speak' - the meaning of terms like the 'common priesthood' were hard for people to understand or relate to. Concerns were also raised that those who had attended did not represent the demographic of Frome or the parish. We are a much more ethnically and nationality diverse parish (30 nationalities at last count) than the group that attended on the Synod day and the follow up meeting. It is felt that we should be doing more to try and reach out and encourage these parishioners to see themselves as part of the parish and attend these sort of meetings. The point was made that people don't join in with things that they don't see themselves reflected in. This is something we should be looking at going forward. Holding the Parish Synod Day on Saturday morning may have prevented families with children from attending. Additional evening sessions would have provided an opportunity for them to come. The report had made for hard reading for some especially with regard to the poverty of our outreach to young people.

A new focus on being open to the Holy Spirit speaking among us will it is hoped allow for the breakdown of old mechanisms and institutional ways of doing things that no longer serve us well. A new emphasis on lay people initiating activity in the church rather than expecting the parish Priest to lead everything was welcomed. We each need to focus on the presence of God within us, as a body, a family of faith and from this place of renewed faith reach out to others. When the clergy and institution of the church become the focus of our faith we lose the true focus which is to 'Follow Jesus'. Faith is not something static and fixed, we are to be 'Gods chosen people' not 'Gods frozen people'. All those who are baptised are free to initiate new 'works' in the life of our parish and that the main areas to focus on are: community, formation, and outreach locally.

2nd listening session

How do you see the parish mobilising to begin to action some of the things raised in the report i.e charitable outreach, youth etc?

Would you like to continue to meet together as a parish to listen to one another and use what comes out as a basis for a plan of action for our parish going forward? What new

structures can we put in place to continue to journey together as a synodal parish? How should we go about the process of decision making and action in our parish going forward?

It was queried by one parishioner - who is the person responsible for getting things done in the parish? Do we have the right people on board to get things done?

Personal responsibility and 'having agency' to get things done was a main theme of the 2nd listening session. It was noted that it is always the usual few who serve and get things done in the parish and that this must change. It was suggested that if someone proposes something that they would like actioned in the parish that they themselves should embrace what it is they are proposing and action it themselves. We should no longer expect others to lead the way - rather than moaning about improvements you would like to see do something about it yourself. We are the people - there is no one else.

Concern was raised that there is a danger of thinking that our parish consists only of those who are at Mass physically or on-line. It is important to include those far from the church in our thinking. Someone noted that when they were living in London the local Catholic Church did a leaflet drop to let locals know the church existed for them. A volunteer team to deliver leaflets would be needed if we decided to do this. The Caritas "See, Judge, Act" method of discernment was suggested to enable us to consider how best to approach the needs of our community and outreach. It was established that the local Hope Van no longer runs an outreach effort in Frome and that the Frome Churches Together group FACT was also no longer in existence.

It was suggested that as the Pastoral Council was no longer running that a new Parish In-Council should be established. Where as in the past a small number of people were members of the pastoral council the new In-Council would be open to every parishioner to attend. It was agreed that this general assembly of parishioners should aim to meet once a quarter. This meeting should not be chaired by the parish Priest. A convener would be needed but other than this the meeting would be as free as possible. Anyone can come and put forward a proposal and be part of the solution. Whilst there is a place for the nuts and bolts of Parish life - for 'arranging the paper clips', the emphasis of a general assembly should be on developing the community and the spiritual life of the church

It was pointed out that we need people willing to lead and to coordinate action in the parish and we need to decide where to start. All initiatives will need to be advertised to the parish via announcements at Mass, the newsletter and personal invitation. People need to work to their strengths - to ask what God is calling them to do or get involved in.

Suggestions arising from the 2nd sharing session:

Greeting people personally as they come through the door at Sunday Mass

A return to singing at Mass

Tea and coffee after 11am Mass

Formation of a parish Caritas group to oversee charitable outreach

Outreach should be local - no need to reinvent the wheel but to align ourselves with groups already up and running in Frome like The Food Bank and Active and In Touch.

A Catholic book group

A parish children's ambassador to liaise with schools

The organisation of a parish social/quiz over Easter

A meeting once a month to support catechises

A 4-6 weekly formation/catechises group

A quarterly General Assembly - In-Council for all those in the parish who want to attend.