

SYNOD 2023
 FEEDBACK FORM ABOUT THE GROUP DISCUSSION

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

(Please complete this form clearly)

Name/Type of group (indicate parish)	English Martyrs Reading	
Dates of meetings	Jan 26 th -Feb 16 th	
Particular details that you wish to be noted	13 group sessions plus 20 individual responses	
Number (indicate males/females)	30 Female	30 Male
Age range	21 - 92	

I. THE JOURNEYING COMPANIONS

How can we be more welcoming as a Christian community?

Church/Diocese : “The Church is people, not buildings”. Some feel it is a ‘boys club’. Let’s welcome the gifts of everyone and reach out to those who feel excluded eg: people who are divorced, remarried, LGBT, suffer physical or mental illness.

Parish : Encourage all to be responsible for welcoming others. Develop Inclusive parish events and resume Welcoming Ministry & Name Badge Sunday.

2. LISTENING

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

Diocese : “Listening is only effective if it is a two-way process”. Encourage more feedback after this exercise. Be open to groups wanting different liturgical styles

Parish: Fund-raising took priority over this Listening exercise!

Invite open conversations with those close to us, those who have chosen to leave the Church and, especially, those who have no connection to any church..

3. SPEAKING OUT

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

Bishops must openly acknowledge the damage caused by sexual abuse scandals & consequences for all. Don’t just ‘protect the institution’.

Many feel they cannot speak out. More open communication and involvement is essential. We need to provide a forum to share responsibility and tasks, for airing the thoughts of the people and to encourage active participation in caring for the needs in the local community.

The Closer to Christ campaign and the way it was rolled out without any consultation has caused resentment. The Synodal Process has not been clearly explained and has been rushed.

4. CELEBRATING

How might we celebrate better the Liturgy in our parish?

Church/Diocese Mass is a treasure for many Catholics, others find it boring. The language in the Mass and sermons is often a barrier. Make the language more comprehensible. Explain the context of OT readings Some wanted fewer readings.

Parish Occasionally invite different parish groups and ethnic communities to lead and prepare Sunday liturgy and hospitality. Involve children and young people more.

Restore Gospel reading to centre of church.

5. CO-RESPONSIBLE IN THE MISSION

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

Diocese: No real collaboration between the clergy and the people in this process at either the diocesan or parish level. This form limits the range of responses.

Lack of understanding of what mission is or how to do it. "I left the religious education of my children to the school and the priests." Need to develop idea of mission as shared responsibility.

Parish: Too little time to work together on this process. Most Mass-goers remain puzzled re Synod even after 4 weeks of Homilies.

6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

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

Church/diocese: Work with Diocesan Caritas to promote and support parish initiatives.

Offer support to married couples through the challenges of living their vocation in the world.

Parish: Find out and address the needs of those inside and beyond the parish. We need better communication and promotion of existing parish and diocesan activities. Develop parish facilities and include needs of local community in social activities. One young group said pre-Vatican II Church was more outward-looking.

7. WITH THE OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

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

Church/Diocese: Consider pain of mixed marriage couples who cannot share Eucharist.

Parish: Promote and encourage participation in local inter-church (and inter faith) activities. Develop friendly personal relationships with clergy and congregations. Initiate, and join, seasonal prayer and study groups and support joint projects caring for the poor, the environment etc.

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

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

Church: Vatican Curia seems an obstacle to necessary reform. Questions often arose about continuing need for clerical celibacy and rules for admission to priesthood and diaconate.

Diocese/parish Current leadership teams invisible. They don't communicate.

Many commented on the need for effective structures of participation such as Pastoral councils to enable greater shared participation in the life of the Church.

9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

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

Diocese: Videoed pastoral letter is effective.

Diocese / Parish: Lack of transparency and accountability was a recurrent theme. People do not have a voice in the parish where every major decision is taken by the priests without consultation.

Parish: Many requested the return of a parish council, annual financial reports and higher visibility and accountability of the Senior Leadership Team.

Clarity needed about appointment processes. Suggest time limited membership of councils to facilitate busy parishioners to take part.

10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

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

Diocese: Bishop, priests & people to develop an openness and willingness to break down barriers in thinking and use accessible language. Do not be afraid of each other. Have open dialogue. Trust the Holy Spirit.

Parish: Develop more small groups such as Emmaus, house groups, young adults, married couples, etc who can get to know and support each other at a deeper level.

These synodal conversations, limited as they were, have already helped in this process.