

Parish & Community Synthesis Form

How to use this form

Thank you for your generosity in taking part in the Synodal Pathway in the Diocese of Westminster. Please use this form to tell us the story of the process in your parish or community. This will ensure we can include your experience within the diocesan synthesis that we'll prepare for our Pre-synod Diocesan Gathering on 19th February. We hope to be able to tell the story of the synodal pathway across the diocese, so that together we can discern what the Holy Spirit might be saying to the Church in Westminster. It will also help us make our formal submission to the Bishops' Conference, for the national and international stages of the synod process. Please note, we will not be identifying any particular parishes or communities. Reference to anything within your synthesis will be anonymised.

Including extra information:

- As well as completing this form, you are welcome to send any notable examples of the 'Group Session Record Form', 'Share your thoughts Form' or 'Simple one-to-one / group conversation form'. These can be included to emphasise particular experiences or insights which enriched your synodal pathway. However, please ensure that you also synthesise these experiences using this Synthesis Form.
- You are also welcome to include a small number of high resolution photographs of any walls of post-its / flip charts, which help illustrate your synthesis. Please ensure that the writing is 'in focus'.

Deadline: Please return by **21 January 2022** to Deacon Adrian: adriancullen@rcdow.org.uk
If you are able, we welcome your Synthesis to be returned earlier.

Name of Parish or Community Our Most Holy Redeemer & St Thomas More (Chelsea 2)

Name(s) of who compiled the synthesis Patti Fordyce

Email address pattifordyce@hotmail.com

Date of Submission 20/01/2022

How many people took part in your synodal process (please estimate if necessary)

Approx 10

How do you think the participant(s) in your synodal pathway would describe themselves – tick all that apply:

1. Committed to Faith, Regular attendance at Mass and participates in community life
e.g. Member of pastoral council/ attends prayer group/reader/volunteer
2. Committed to Faith, Regular attendance at Mass
3. Faith & Church have some relevance. E.g. Occasional Attendance at Mass
4. Culturally Catholic but Church has little relevance
5. From a different Christian tradition
6. From a different faith community
7. Person of no faith

There are five sections – please try to complete them all.

1) What was the story of your synodal pathway in your parish/community?

- What were the main steps you took?
- What was done to engage as participants and to reach out to the peripheries?
- Approximately what proportion of people in your active parish/Church community participated in one way or other?
- Were there any groups of people whose participation was especially noteworthy?
- Were there specific groups of people who did not participate for any reason?

We chose a date for an initial meeting. We advertised it in the parish newsletter (which is also published on the parish website) for several weeks, as well as issuing an invitation to take part in the notices after all Masses. We also made it clear that anyone who wished to do so, whether they were able to attend a meeting or not, could make a written contribution either via email or by putting something through the rectory door; if there were sufficient interest, further meetings could be held. Approximately 2% of the parish community took part in the meeting. No parents or young adults took part.

2) What experiences of ‘journeying together’ were shared?

- What experiences of ‘journeying’ during the pandemic were shared? What insights did this reveal?
- What experiences were shared more generally of the Church ‘journeying together’? What had brought joy? What had caused pain or sadness?
- Who did people feel were missing from the Church community? Did participants share anything about the Church’s experience of journeying with and including others beyond the visible Church community?
- Was anything shared about how the parish/community works together or how co-responsibility is put into practice?

Reflections on journeying together during the pandemic included:

“Not much uplifting – more panic”

“The locking of the churches during the first lockdown increased the sense of isolation”

“It was surprising how much I missed the Eucharist – the novelty of watching Mass via live stream wore off quickly”

“The opportunity to ‘attend’ Mass in other parts of the world, as well as to take part in the TLM from various places, mitigated the sense of isolation slightly”

“Praying the Rosary daily with Cardinal Comastri in St Peter’s kept me going”

“It was almost like preparing for First Holy Communion again – it rejuvenated my faith”

“It felt as if we were all Islands”

There was a note of acceptance: “it is what it is”

It was noted that new ways of evangelising had emerged, pointing to potentially reaching more people; catechism classes had continued via Zoom

Examples of joy:

It has taught us what it means “to be Church”

Coming together again when churches re-opened

Examples of sadness:

Awareness of so many people being alone

Greater sense of loneliness/separation

The exclusion of over-70s from volunteering opportunities when churches re-opened after the first lockdown was a source of pain and sadness to some

The lengthy prohibition against receiving on the tongue was a source of great distress to those affected

It was noted that many older parishioners and families had not returned to attending Mass. In a parish with a significant expatriate population, it was difficult to know who was still shielding, who had returned to their country of origin, who had sadly not made it through the pandemic and who had simply stopped practicing the faith.

Participation

Who is part of “our church”? (Everyone)

Is the use of the possessive pronoun (as above) too limiting?

The Church is not just limited to the local church

We need to be more inclusive

Need to look for lapsed Catholics

Need to be more united

Who is missing?

Lapsed Catholics forget that “We are the Church”

Our job is to help them reconnect

We need to listen to Jesus – too many other voices/interpretations

“What would you like Jesus to say to you?”

3) What experiences were shared about the Church’s priorities for mission?

- What did people wish to celebrate about how your parish/community lives its mission?
- How did people feel included in the way the parish/community decides priorities for mission?
- What areas of mission did people say were being neglected within the Church?
- In what ways did they see partnerships with people beyond the Church developing?

Temptation to self-congratulation

Need to look for opportunities to interact with people we don’t normally (opportunities to interact at all have been severely limited)

Need to be aware of how many people have no neighbours

Discussion of the importance of the role of witness

Possibility of using the (excellent) choir to open doors to casual visitors

As the Church's mission depends at present on the work of priests, the opinion was expressed that seminary training should be reformed to give seminarians a wider and deeper experience of how people live.

4) What was most significant about the whole experience?

- What did you notice about how people participated? What attitudes or feelings stood out?
- What was particularly significant, surprising or unexpected?
- What topics or issues gave rise to diverse points of view?
- Which stories or real-life experiences were especially moving and why? (Please anonymise – we only need a sense of the experiences shared.)
- Which experiences seemed to have strong resonance? Which experiences were mentioned less but are significant?

The emphasis on listening was embraced by all, to the extent that there was very little dialogue

Following the opening prayer and introduction, there was a lengthy period of silence, which prompted one participant to note an initial familiar reaction: a sense of being admonished to "be quiet"

Several welcomed the opportunity to come together, share experiences, deepen faith and love of God

One expression of interest in becoming a "more active" parishioner

One participant thought we need to be bolder in our proclamation of the faith, not "watering down" the truths of the faith in order to seem more welcoming/accommodating, noting that young people find doing so "patronizing"

One asked "When was the last time you invited someone to church?"

One welcomed the opportunity to learn more about the synodal process and promised to continue to pray for it

5) Overall, what were the fruits that the Holy Spirit has brought about through this experience?

- What dreams, desires, and aspirations for the Church were expressed by participants?
- Were there any particular issues that the people felt the Spirit was inviting the Church to pay more attention to?
- In what ways did you sense the Holy Spirit inviting your parish/community to grow in synodality?
- Based on what was shared, what steps might your parish/community feel called to take in their journeying together?

"We need to know our faith better"

"We need to learn to communicate to others our joy in the faith"

"Strong catechesis should be at the heart of more of our activities"

"I dream of a Catholic Church in which its unity is expressed in respect for the diversity of its rites and rituals: in which Eastern Rite and Latin Rite Catholics learn more about each other's worship and understand each other to be members of the same Church; in which

those who find worship most meaningful in Latin or the vernacular, in the Novus Ordo or the Usus Antiquior, can be equally free to exercise their preference and understand themselves to be equally loved children of God.”

“As Catholics we can demonstrate to others the joy of our faith by the way we live our lives, interact with others demonstrating that the love of Christ informs all that we do.”

Optional: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Including extra information:

- You are welcome to send a few notable examples of the ‘Group Session Record Form’, ‘Share your thoughts Form’ or ‘Simple one-to-one / group conversation form’.
- You are also welcome to include a small number of high resolution photographs of any walls of post-its / flip charts, which help illustrate your synthesis.