



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

## Parish Listening Sessions Synod Summary Report

This form is to be completed by the Parish Delegates, drawing on all the group listening sessions and activities that have taken place in the parish. It can be emailed to [Synod@cliftdiocese.com](mailto:Synod@cliftdiocese.com) or completed on-line at [www.cliftdiocese.com/synod](http://www.cliftdiocese.com/synod).

## Parish Listening Session Synod Summary Report

Name of Parish and Deanery

Forest of Dean and Newent Parish

Name of Parish Priest

Barnabas Page

Name of Parish Delegate filling out this form

Fiona Mills

Contact Details of Parish Delegate 1

Telephone number

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Additional Parish Delegates – Name and Email Address

Jo Munn	
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Please provide a brief summary of your parish's listening session for the Foundational Question:

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”. How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish? How is the Holy Spirit inviting your parish community to grow in “Journeying together”? Where in these experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

- ***How is this journeying together happening today in your parish?***

Most participants felt that there was a spiritual sense of journeying together during the celebration of the Mass and other Sacramental and prayer services. However, at other times most experienced a distinct lack of journeying together and rather described it as ‘existing together’. Outside of the liturgical setting ‘journeying together’ was mostly experienced within the faith groups settings and church social functions. Lock-down exposed gaps in the way we care for others within our parish and effort was made to reach out to all.

- ***How is the Holy Spirit inviting your parish community to grow in ‘journeying together’?***

Over the past two years our parish was held together and through the promptings of the Holy Spirit making us aware, first of our own needs and then for the wider community. Promptings to provide online Mass as well as weekly reflections and Zoom Lectio Divina group were available as soon as it was possible to provide them.

Prior to lockdown the Holy Spirit could be seen at work within the laity through making Adoration and the ‘open church’ available.

- ***What experiences, in your local parish does this question bring to mind? What are the joys of your parish life?***

The number one joys mentioned, in order of popularity, attending the Mass either physically or online and the online Friday talks. Second to this was the people of the parish, the communion, both physical and spiritual of the Mass and other services. Individual faith and prayer groups, faith learning groups, Lent talks, sharing the faith in catechesis. Social events such as the annual fete, lunch club.

- ***What are the difficulties and obstacles to active parish life that you have encountered?***

Our parish is spread out in a rural area and has an aging community. For some it is not easy, especially during winter, to independently travel to Mass, prayer services or church functions. Our leadership, organisation and training of volunteers is poor, perhaps due to the geographical spread of the parish Mass centres.

Until recently the laity have not been encouraged to take on leadership roles other than those associated with the administrative running of the church. Consequently, the laity have not had proper investment in training and preparation for them to undertake the necessary roles to assist the clergy. Attending congregations also need help to accept the joint responsibility with the clergy in all areas of parish life.

0-1500 characters

## Core Question 1 – Listening

- ***How is God Speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst?***

Through reflection, in the still spaces and quiet places.

During the Sunday Mass and through the church community.

Through Scripture now especially thought the 'end times' as the world is in such a mess.

Through the little voice within, through nature, in tragedy. I argue with God daily.

Through work colleagues, other people, school children, news items such as homelessness. Hope within the dark days, in stillness.

Reflecting on my past and how I got to where I am today. Seeing God in the people and events of my life.

From the voice within and without, God speaks through everything, anyone and anywhere.

Through personal reflection, Scripture, the Church, the Pope, good people even of other faiths, faith movements e.g. Root and Branch.

He is telling us through all the pain and suffering of those around us that he is Mercy! Sin is the cause of suffering, but God will forgive us if we ask and seek his forgiveness.

The main voice of God is delivered through the regular homilies from our Parish Priest or Deacon. These interpret the readings from Scripture and enable us to act accordingly if we wish to follow the guidance. Hence the choice we have to make.

God communicates with us in answer to our prayers. He uses other people to give us signs that He is with us.

It often comes from leaving a space for reflection and honesty in it.

God speaks through the church, the Priest, through groups of discussion on our faith.

Communicating the word of God is our obligation to hear and act on.

Don't really understand the question. I think God speaks to us through the actions and words of other people around us. We need to always be open, looking and listening to others.

- ***How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the peripheries?***

The church does not want to recognise that through denying people Holy Communion that they are responsible for marginalising them and in doing so making the church exclusive to Baptised practicing Catholics. The church does not want open and transparent discussion on difficult topics which are a reality some deal with every day in family life. There is no opportunity for those on the peripheries to have their voices heard or to appeals against exclusion from the sacraments - they can just try another church/priest. The church does sweep some things under the carpet and ignores them, meanwhile people's lives are passing by. As a church we need to actively listen and use the opportunity to act on what we hear. Who decides what is heard and in turn what is acted upon?

We don't ignore. These souls are lost and in pain and need our prayers.

The pastoral guidance from the Bishop and the Church authorities is at a higher level than the parish homilies and usually more general but set the scene for our own lives. However, we must believe that such pronouncements are the true word of God.

He teaches us and shows us the way to follow.

Only in the places where I am not guided by my own needs.

I struggle with that question, I know I often ignore, or should I say I am not listening... it takes time but slowly I am improving...If there were more group discussions on this subject could we all learn from each other?

We see people having difficulties and become aware that we need to help in some way.

- ***What space is there to listen to the voices on the peripheries, especially cultural groups, women, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?***

Sometimes it is hard to listen to the suffering of others like migrants and easier to shut it out, but God speaks through their pain. We don't know any addicts or mentally ill but maybe through the SVP they may touch on it. I wish we could do more.

Are women viewed on the periphery or as outside of the Catholic Church? The church has marginalised women and gay people and put them on the peripheries as well as people whose marriages have ended through no fault of their own and are cut off from receiving Holy Communion. Does the church respond to asylum seekers? The church should be doing more! Excluding women from the clergy does in some cases mean that women's voices will not be heard by single male clergy without much female interaction in their lives. This can also impact on the children within a community.

Central to our faith is the Holy Eucharist and as our liturgy is mostly Sacramental those on the peripheries, not in full communion with the Church are, and feel, excluded even if they are physically present. Although we freely choose to accept God's law people find themselves marginalised through circumstances and most of the time not of their own making. Their voices may be heard at parish level but there is little that can be done apart from tea, sympathy, and prayer for 'the church' to hear them one day and let them in. *'Jesus said, "I come not to the good but to sinners." Everyone. Do not leave them out[side]. Unity means all God's creation.'*

If we had married clergy, it would help to breakdown clericalism. Our priests would have a more rounded view of family life.

We will always have the poor amongst us the solution is to pray for them, give money, contact the lonely by whatever means offer what support you can.

Within our parish, how do we know who those are who feel they are marginalised?

We are all created in God's image we should reach out more and pray for those who are in need. We should be looking out for one another.

Everyone is welcome in our Parish, and we will help in any way we can.

Limited access in our parish but the Diocese provides such opportunities if we wish to take up the offers. This is easier for those who live in Bristol.

In the media and through our interaction with those on the peripheries if we put ourselves in places where we can talk to them.

There is not enough space. Really, we should be out and about, visiting people's homes, being in places where the marginalized are. Our church buildings should be open and welcoming for people to walk into.

## Core Question 2 – Speaking Out:

<b><i>What enables or hinders you from speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in your parish and society?</i></b>
If concerned for others will speak up – with support through prayer and the Holy Spirit Hinders – saying things in the wrong way that might upset someone.
Hinders – lack of knowledge where you can go to give your opinions, to make your opinions heard If something annoys then wouldn't be hindered. Feels it is about the type of person that you – if you are confident, you would speak out. Doesn't feel there is a need to criticise the parish.
Questioned if not representing conflicting interests, then what is the point. There will be traditionalists, modern viewpoint. Hinders – concern that it won't make a difference to speak out.
If there is something to say, will speak out. Father Barnabas and other parishioners are happy to listen.
Enables – knowing people makes it easier to say what you are thinking Hinders – when moral issues eg euthanasia – fear of ignorance when speaking courageously in society. Can be hard to defend if the other person has more knowledge than you have.
Hinders – not wanting to get it wrong, having the knowledge to speak with courage, having the right words or language
Feel enabled to speak up because Fr Barnabas is receptive of different opinions; the Blaisdon community are confident to speak up; there could be a risk of being a closed community – feels that there aren't links between Blaisdon and other parishes.
Our society is telling us that we are very stupid if we believe in God. It has become harder to voice our faith as the reaction we get is often hostile.
Churches together services and events provide such an opportunity locally especially at Christmas and Easter and on special occasions.
The Holy Spirit enables.
I am never good at speaking and if I am challenged, I find difficult to defend my position, so I am in favour of action where I can.
For me its confidence which has been badly crushed over the years.
I try to do this as much as I can, but don't like upsetting other people, so am always wary and try to carefully consider what I say. However, there will always be people that don't want to embrace change.
<b><i>What space is there in your parish for the voice of people, including active and inactive members of our faith?</i></b>
Prayer groups, faith groups – lead by example and if there is an opportunity with friends or strangers (inactive members) to try and engage them in conversation
Is this about communication? Not many public meetings or opportunities to express. Mostly one on one conversations or grabbing Fr B or Bev. Discussions at home about services.
How do you define active and inactive? If someone is praying are they active or do they need to be doing something more active? Space=opportunity, there is always opportunity, does there need to be a formal forum – it happens on an adhoc basis.
Active – attending Mass; inactive – e.g. don't know where the church is – how do we create space for these people?
Growing up there were many different community parish-based groups linked to the church eg cubs, scouts, youth group, altar server. No formal consultation but happened all the time for example at parish events. This community aspect doesn't exist today, and we attempt consultation but we don't have an efficient means of consultation/communication. Feels that the church is worse now.
When arrived in the parish, feels there is a building of a community, there is hope that people can say what they think – there needs to be more of this to move forward. Inactive members – how

do you encourage people to be more active? E.g. suggestion box – not helpful if anonymous. Hopeful that we can build a community in the wider sense.
Don't know! Who labels people to be active/inactive? This parish is welcoming and there is opportunity to have a voice. With more community events could this welcome both inactive members and non-Catholics?
Some people don't come because they feel challenged by the Catholic church – how do you give those inactive members the chance to have a voice. Other Christian churches seem to find this easy.
Considering the lack of community events because there is a lack of people attending church within the local area. This is still evident in larger parishes. Times are changing, faith is less important and central in people's lives. If we took all the parts of FoD churches – could we then have a vibrant parish by coming together?
Tonnes, and we try to reach out to those who have lapsed.
Occasional meetings take place at which all parishioners are invited to attend and participate. Also, there are regular Pastoral Council meetings where elected representatives of each church can discuss issues as they arise.
It requires organisation which can be difficult to achieve.
There seem to be a big space but maybe no listeners or time to listen.
I think it is lacking we need more interaction
We try to encourage people to express their views but i am sure we don't do enough. Once the pandemic is over, i hope we can encourage more social activities, coffee after mass etc and allow mingling and getting to know each other. Inactive members of our faith - we don't really hear their voices but would like to. Not sure how to go about this. Maybe inviting views through the local press or invite to an informal get-together?

### **Core Question 3 – Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission and Sharing Authority and participation**

<b>How are the baptised members of your parish able to participate in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel? What hinders people from being active in your parish? How is authority or governance exercised in your local parish?</b>
Being involved in ministry of the church – taking out God's love eg SVP, often through small act of kindness, showing people that they are not alone. Hinders – people say they are happy to let other people do it, people are so busy being busy and do not stop to think, not aware of God being there. God is locked in the cupboard during the week – only happen in Church at the weekend.
Blaisdon quite good at supporting each other e.g. Advent and Lent reflection via Whatsapp daily, Advent retreat including people from the community. Feel that we can proclaim through our actions but not through our words. What is the definition of active – unclear. Hinders – shyness, reluctance, age, health
Through meetings, Mass, welcomers – sends out a fizz from the Gospel, home-visits Evangelisation could be a way of sharing God's message Hinders – lack of time, courage
We are members of a family – what part of the Gospel should we be proclaiming. We proclaim in the way we live, the parish and parish priest give us the encouragement Hinders – time, commitments, illness, being unaware. The example of Martha and Mary – is there place for both.
How does the church proclaim the Gospel? Through spiritual activity of the church through services, prayers etc . We would then have a better idea.



Hinders – what is the definition of active – practically, spiritually?
Reaching out, helping others e.g. asylum seekers, helping others, communications and caring Hinders – time and motivation
What does proclaiming the Gospel look like? We need a common vision.
Sharing the newsletter with reflections with others, retweeting, sharing the Good News Hinders – thinking everything has been covered already. Sometimes asking people directly to be active?
Have we asked children and young adults - feels the Church is out of touch with modern society; participation in the organised Church's mission at Newent, readers, flowers but mainly how we live out our faith and how we actively show we are Christian; why only the baptised? This should be extended and ask people to help; look for people who are willing to do things eg music (liven up the hymns), involve the youth to take part and have a role within the church - to have something to interest the young e.g. a Gospel choir. Use the buildings for purposes other than Mass though really difficult during the last 2 years due to Covid e.g. having coffee after Mass, films. Nurturing the young people e.g. preparation for First Holy Communion; Challenging when not allowed to sing to proclaim the Gospel due to Covid or no music; need opportunities for more Ecumenical working and sharing in the mission as well as involving and welcoming those of other faiths and none. Blaisdon community have their own community celebration weekly (approx. 12-14 during Covid, normally 20), monthly Communion Service - not backed by the Bishop. Music is a real strength and dynamic, taking Communion to the homes of some parishioners. Involved with Open the Book taking the stories of the Bible to children in primary schools. Passover Meal shared with wider community. Supporting CAFOD and asylum seekers holidays/GARAS/Newent family. Supportive on one another as a community. Better at supporting people who attend Mass. The parish isn't working well because there are too few people attending Mass and no young people, just keeping it going and nothing more. Need to consider why the parishes are diminishing - why aren't we attracting young people, is there a vision? How else can we promote the Gospel message? Do we need to join with others to be able to spread the Good News more effectively? Too inward looking currently - need to have vision from the Bishops. Live out the Gospel in our lives and when meeting other people - in actions and words. Participation through ministries of home life, work life, church life - we need to nurture each other and share ministries and have timescales and everyone have clear understanding of the ministries to have better understanding of the church, faith and one another. USE THE CHURCH FOR OTHER THINGS e.g. CHILDREN'S GROUPS. TURN THE COMPOST HEAP OVER TO LET THE AIR IN. THESE ARE NOT THE QUESTIONS WE SHOULD BE ASKING. PROBLEM FOR THIS COUNTRY - QUESTIONS NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE
There are plenty of opportunities but few who take them up.
There are opportunities to join ecumenical Open the Book sessions to take the Bible to primary school children as well as Churches Together events. Everyone is made welcome at Mass in each church even if they are not baptised Catholics. Preparation classes for First Communion candidates are held regularly.
We have a Street Prayer Mission but during COVID it hasn't been possible.
I don't know how but I think we should be an example.
By showing others in our behaviour, setting an example, being involved in the local community
Hinders - Not aware of parish council; time and people being busy in the parish, confidence to step forward and offer help and sometime don't recognise their own skills; many parishioners are elderly so physical limitations can limit participation; don't know what to join or what to help with; don't know where the gaps are; we need to ask people to help Language barrier, different cultural background; different time commitments.



Not clear about what needs to be done, not looking forward to welcoming new ideas, not clear about timescales of the commitment and what is required.

Age, time, reluctance to come to meetings. Conflict about the Church's stance to not give Communion to divorced women and non-Catholics.

Age, Covid, weather, not meeting face-to-face, need to encourage younger people, grandparents encourage parents and children, ask for their help, the people who have always done a job need to step down.

Age, health, lack of confidence, lack of being nurtured, lack of ownership to be able to step forward, don't feel worthy or good enough - need to be nurtured and invited with the children and families being support from birth and baptism through to confirmation. Many other issues of time constraints on families and need opportunity to participate in Mass as a family activity, something that is looked forward to. Lack of involvement with Churches Together as Catholics. Helpful if we are prepared to take risks and to be able to learn from others and to be open-hearted and open to receiving. BE PREPARED TO TAKE RISKS. BE COMPASSIONATE AND BE OPEN

Hinders - Age, work, family commitments.

Hinders - Personal lethargy mainly, also housebound parishioners who cannot attend Mass. However personal visits by Eucharistic Ministers enable these parishioners to feel part of the parish community.

Hinders - Commitments to work, family lack of spare time.

Hinders - Being busy on many levels, or not having energy for doing more...

Hinders - Various issues age range, facilities, those parishioners with the knowledge to teach, busy lives.

Hinders - Possibly fear of too much responsibility, taking on too much?

### **How is authority or governance exercised in your local parish?**

Parish Council including the Parish Priest; how many people know about the priorities of the parish council and what they are working on.

Concern about churches having to close due to reduced numbers;

Pre-Covid not much communication from the PCC except to deliver disturbing message about having Masses slashed in place of the sermon. No knowledge of them before this and little communicated after this.

Blaisdon is self-sustaining under the guidance of Father Barnabas, leading their own services. A tenuous connection with the PCC at Newent.

We are just surviving, trying to exist. Father Barnabas is doing his best, it is a dire situation. It is not effective.

Church Pastoral Council - wasn't aware this existed and didn't know what it does; this view is shared by many.

NEED TO LOOK OUT, GET OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY, BE PART OF COMMUNITY

KNOW THE PARISH COUNCIL

We are more of a community.

The Parish council make decisions, but all are welcome to join and help.

There is a Parish Pastoral Council who act as the elected body to advise the Parish Priest on appropriate matters which concern parishioners. However, the authority is vested in the Parish Priest in accordance with Canon Law.

Parish Council.

Parishioners try to do it in union with the priest.

Parish Pastoral Council

### **How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local parish?**

Communion from lay ministers recently out in the community, not aware of much happening in our parishes. No altar server during Covid times.

Parish Council and individual groups that have different levels of responsibility.

<p>Groups work very hard to help the church to run smoothly e.g. lifts for people Groups cleaning the churches, looking after children. It is hard enough to make up our team - with everyone 50 plus. How can we exist in the future as an effective community? Newent - readers, sacristans, ministers of the Eucharist, care group keeping in touch with people and supporting them but mainly an elderly parish who are just ticking along - need to engage and excite people again. More teamwork and co-responsibility - Covid has helped with this and people having to rally round and getting to know others. CLEAR TIMELINES OF MINISTRY FOR LAY PEOPLE</p>
<p>There are a few that we really depend on to make sure everything is running okay. Because nobody else is willing.</p>
<p>Through the Pastoral Council and via volunteers who can form teams or act individually as appropriate.</p>
<p>Questionnaires asking for input.</p>
<p>People who are happy to give time are there but it's a small number and often they have to take full responsibility</p>
<p>It's difficult to say but most of the same people do the same jobs.</p>
<p>Participation in all aspects of running the parish is encouraged in as many people as possible, and communication channels open. It works to a certain extent but could be a lot better. As ever, there are always a few people who do lots, and many who do very little. We try to have leaders and co-ordinators to bring volunteers together.</p>

#### Core Question 4 – Discerning and Deciding

##### **How does your parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions?**

Through the Church pastoral Council although not many parishioners are aware of its existence, who its members are and what its purpose is. The minutes are pinned on the noticeboards and available online but seemingly unread or unnoticed.

Through the priest at the end of Mass, Bishop's letters, newsletter, websites, questionnaires. Proclaim 15 discernment process, 2018 Questionnaire, *Inspired!* questionnaire 2021. Changes were made and welcoming, open church, signage, Lent talk topics and others besides but it seems that these changes are only noticed by those who they were relevant to.

Lots of questioners. By asking.

The Pastoral Council and the annual Parish Meeting (AGM ) are the primary methods for ensuring the consultation.

Questionnaires.

They are trying very hard through letters and questioners and inviting for meetings.

I think a lot of decisions are made with little inclusion, I dare say there are reasons for this.

Representatives from each church are encouraged to talk to parishioners and feed back to the PPC, and parishioners should pass their views this way. We have recently put out leaflets and asked for views - in print and electronically. Really, the best way is directly listening and talking with people.

##### **How does your parish promote participation in decision making within the hierarchical Church?**

The general thought was that the listening was one-sided rather than two-way, (Church to people). There are still many who are left outside of any communication with the church as they are unable to travel to the church and do not have IT skills to access to the online communications which were depended on, and grew successfully, during lock-down. Unless they receive a personal visit, they are cut off from the community.

**Does the decision making of your parish help you to listen to all members of the community, including those who are on the peripheries of parish life?**

How do we know if there is a need for a LGBT group in our community? There are a lot of people who feel they are on the periphery.

A church group in our Catholic community has taken a step slightly to the side in order to be more inclusive.

No.

I hope so.

I don't think so.

We hope so, but inevitably there are many who chose not to share their opinions. We don't tend to get to the people on the peripheries - and much less so since the pandemic.

**Core Question 5 – Celebration**

**How do prayer and liturgical celebrations, especially Sunday Mass, inspire and guide your parish?**

It is not inspiring, the music is awful, so it is not a joyful celebration, just another day. I long for something uplifting and truly celebrational, relevant to the modern-day life. Other liturgical celebrations such as Adoration, Benediction and Stations of the Cross just don't happen. I don't know if they would still have appeal currently, it is hard to say after two years of lock down. However, it has been important coming together to pray rather than at home alone watching Mass. The weekday gentle music is a welcome change to the badly sung Sunday hymns. Comparing with other denominations that have such joy and life in their worship and praise it is dreary.

Hugely! That's what we are there for!

Sunday and daily Mass where feasible are at the heart of the prayer life of the Parish. When the Parish Priest is not available then a Eucharistic Service is usually arranged.

Through the Holy Spirit. Good sermons encouraging people to discern how the Scripture reading is speaking individually to each person.

We just like coming.

Very much so in my everyday struggles.

I think this inspires us all greatly, coming together for group worship and just "being" together with a common aim. The preaching of our Parish Priest is often very inspirational.

Time spent in preparation prior to attending Sunday Mass for example praying Lection Divina has made the Gospel more relevant to my life, what is God speaking to me that week. Understanding the liturgy that Sunday Mass and what we are celebrating becomes more meaningful.

Sunday Mass was the most missed and appreciated online during lockdown. Although, it was 'ragged' (face masks, shortened, no hymns, makeshift pew arrangements etc) it was wonderful to see familiar faces in person on return.

The reflection within the newsletter has been missed as it provided an opportunity to share discussions with family or friends. A quiet Mass with space for no music is appreciated by those who need a quiet pause with Christ to recentre their thoughts away from other demands. An opportunity to be still, to pray, to find comfort in the familiar liturgy.

**How does your prayer life and celebration of the Mass inspire and inform your personal decisions and decisions in the parish community?**

My prayer life does inform my decision making in my life, it is structured. Some have joined other faith groups, even other denominations, outside of their own parish for Lectio Divina, Rosary, Night Prayer, spontaneous and other prayer groups online and in person.

Pray when important decisions are made. Online Mass during lock-down was not the same it was good to get back into church. I was lovely to have video Mass at home but good to get back.

I am not a person of prayer, but I do say formal prayers.

I need to go to Mass, to be quiet and think, it does affect me. Meeting others, welcoming others into the church.

Mass during lockdown was nerve racking for the priest not being used to praying and preaching to an empty church. Talking into a camera.

The community aspect of sharing the Mass helps prevent becoming insular.

The homily and Friday talks inspire me to think about the Word of God, we are lucky to have Barnabas! Knowing that we all get things wrong and are inspired to do better. Candles at mass inspire prayer for others a time to reflect on personal decisions. All the different types of prayer. It helps and reminds me to try and be a good Christian.

It would be difficult to engage in a meaningful prayer life without Mass on a regular basis and personal decisions as well as parish community decisions would suffer badly without it.

Through my personal relationship with God.

It inspires to be active and helpful.

I don't see the connection of this.

I pray a lot more now than I used to, perhaps because I need more guidance and strength from the Holy Spirit. I ask for help in decision making, listen, and wait for guidance to come.

**How does the parish invite all baptised Catholics, including our ethnic communities, youth, families and persons with disabilities and their families, into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?**

Some have difficulty with language issues and need help to understand written communications. For a few there are very limited numbers in the parish that they can communicate with in their own language. Others at least there will be some amongst them who are bilingual and will serve as translators.

A broader approach where Holy Communion was available to all people not just Baptised Catholics. Being outward rather than inward looking (Vat II)!

Married priests, women priests, younger cardinals in touch with the modern secular world in which the laity go out into. Equality.

Congregational lead church, dismantle the hierarchy, led from bottom up not top down.

Vibrant services – look to Africa! Embrace cultural differences and learn from them. Share our stories and the good in all with each other. The life of a parish depends on the priest of the parish and Bishop of the Diocese.

The importance of music to bring joy into sharing and celebrating. Equality.

Being outward rather than inward looking.

Those we can reach.

Hopefully this is the case although it is inevitably subjective!

We have laity who take part in the Mass as readers. We should encourage young people to participate, nurture the youth from First Holy Communion to bearing the offertory gifts and then progress to Altar Servers to Confirmation and so on. This would encourage young families to get involved in Church life and train them up to take over.

Some of our church community are not Baptised Catholics and as a result feel excluded to some extent. Cultural exchange, maybe some of the ethnic community could share their stories of their faith experiences or hold a social bring food from different countries, or music night...

Try to encourage by inviting people from the ethnic minority to take on a ministry. It would encourage others to become involved and bring fresh ideas.

Find out who are new to the area, some Estate Agents give out leaflets to home buyers of what is in the area, maybe had out some with church locations and Mass times parish website address in a flyer for newcomers.

By attending ecumenical services, we can learn from the non-Catholic Christians how to become more involved in the local communities within the Forest of Dean. We can learn about spontaneous prayer and different ways of doing things that may work better for us. Open the Book is very popular in schools, and we do have people involved in it locally. Messy church, craft sessions are a few fun ways to engage families.

We are very welcoming and have a large percentage of nonUK born parishioners.

The youth are much harder to keep.

They are bullied by their peers if they admit to belief in God. We know how hard it is for a teenager to stand out from the crowd.

Anyone who wishes to attend Mass is given a lift if needed and the churches are welcoming places where hopefully no-one feels excluded. Regular appeals are made for volunteers to participate through the various ministries (Eucharistic, Reading etc ) and for the important roles of cleaning, welcoming, church preparation etc.

Baptised Catholics are there if they want to be. It's personal choice if they want to join the " active life".

The congregation is very welcoming but there are not many new people coming, specially willing to be regular unfortunately.

As i understand it we are always open to new faces and encourage it. There is opportunity to share our church spaces.

I'm not sure we do enough of this, and feel this is an area we fall down in. We welcome those who come to mass, but do not go out and invite people to come. Perhaps a more active social media platform is the way forward? Currently we do not provide for young children and young people specifically.

## IN ADDITION...

### POST IT responses - from 2<sup>nd</sup> face to face Synod meeting 8.12.21

#### 1. How is God Speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst?

Interaction in life prayer/Scripture, reflection.

Listening to everyone.

“We need to respond” HOPE.

Communication with other people listening to voices of others.

God is speaking to us through other people not only in our own community.

God speaks through anger!

Look to Scripture to interpret how we should act today.

God speaks everywhere, through anyone, anything, at any time and in any place.

#### 2. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the peripheries?

Through the media, protests BLM, Women’s’ movements, Invictus games.

Listen with the Scripture and our faith in mind and look to act as Jesus would.

Homeless and poverty.

In the media.

Think – pray- do. Together. To enable all to flourish (John 10:10)

#### 3. What space is there to listen to the voices on the peripheries, especially cultural groups, women, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

www/streaming, social media.

If hearing is passive and listening is active, then must we actually respond in some way to what we hear in order to become a listener?

How do we know who feels marginalised in our parish/communities?

Church is not compassionate to those who fall by the wayside. They are excommunicated or denied the Sacraments.

Space is there all in God’s images (God’s people)

Making the time to find out more.

Be a good neighbour to all.

## **Anon. 1**

I would like to point out, I still remember the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

It points out that the Pope could be wrong on what he said, but in the matter of faith and morals he was infallible.

I remember a few years back, printed in the 'Universe' paper. The Holy Father Francis requested that the 'Trans' people should be taken into our church.

The cardinals voted against it, I believe. How dare they over-run our Holy Father the Pope?

Do not they think these souls, who have to parade themselves every year in marches to have their needs noted by the public. These being, to have given to them charity, friendship and open churches to kneeling in front of the Cross of the Body of Christ.

These people have souls to save not to laugh and sneer at.

Yes, join churches together but don't neglect our fellow brothers and sisters.

Jesus said 'I came not to the good but to sinners'. Everyone. Do not leave them out.

Unity means all of God's creation.

St Anne's Cathedral, The Headrow, Leeds, Yorks - Had Masses for the [transgender] people. Why can't Gloucester, Bristol open up your doors and advertise your invitation to God. Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

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CHURCH'S TOGETHER OPEN YOUR HEARTS

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## **ANON. 2**

Questions 1 & 2 - Mass on a Sunday as a very young person was always a duty. It was instilled into you at a young age that if you did not attend Sunday Mass, you would have committed a sin. Does this early teaching linger so that this currently makes one feel inspired? How does one unravel the early brainwashing? How do we move today's Mass into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with modern thinking to inspire the congregation of the parish? This is unusual for the Catholic Church – should we not look at the best of other religions to enhance our way forward? Historical traditions of the Catholic Church maybe do not now stand the test of time in modern society.

Question 3 – Covid has not helped after the last two years, although we feel that the enlightenment that we are all attempting to find goes back with difficulties before that. We must open our doors to encompass all parts of the parish and beyond. We've always had the feeling that the Catholic Church has its doors closed to anyone outside of the Catholic faith. We must be proactive within the parish in encouraging and welcoming all Christians into our open doors. In so doing we might start to live in the modern world and if necessary, take on board married clergy who will understand the problems that beset married lives – such as poverty and birth control. These problems do not always engender the spirit of God to those who have difficulties. Young people are not encouraged to participate in the services as they do not appeal in these modern times. For example: the music we use and the inflexible attitudes which they think we have towards them.

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### **ANON. 3**

We remember a question from our catechism "Why did God make you? - God made me to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him in the next." We see our membership of His Church as being primarily to help us to fulfil those aims.

Firstly, we think that the whole process has been tackled completely wrongly, in the typical hierarchical way that the Catholic Church has used for a very long time. If you want to know what peoples' opinions are then don't try to lead them through questions on topics that are of interest to you but simply ask what they would like to change. Conversely, reform has to come from the top. How is the hierarchy prepared to reform itself? Our list of topics for discussion would contain the following:

We seem to have forgotten that the main function of the church is the worship of God. More emphasis on worship and spirituality and less on sociology, please. We are fully aware of what Jesus quoted as the second commandment and try hard to follow it. It is, however, second not first.

Shortage of Priests - ways to tackle the current shortage of priests could include married priests and the ordination of women. More use of Eucharistic Services if necessary.

A less legalistic approach to what membership of the church entails. For example, more compassion towards church members in difficult circumstances. Leave it to individual conscience in things such as the divorced taking communion.

A greater emphasis on the parish as against the diocese. The parish is the backbone of our church, in most cases very ably led by the parish priest who is much more in touch with his parishioners than a remote bishop.

A greater emphasis on ecumenism, including shared worship. Being classified as Catholic is less important than being classified as followers of Christ, Christians.

We are constantly being told that we are a missionary church but not told what is required of us practically. Here and now, in Coleford, at a fairly advanced age, how are we to be missionaries? Do we not achieve this through how we live our everyday life, and in our dealings with our fellow human beings?

We have found that the questions being put to us by the formal synod process to be, at best condescending, and at worst demeaning and mostly irrelevant. Having been members of many parishes in many different places we have never felt excluded or unwelcome. Attendance at Mass should not be promoted as an obligation but as a joyful coming together for common worship. All are welcome and are made welcome.

### **ANON. 4**

Everybody can see that our Church is being rocked by a series of fundamental crises. At the macro level the sheer scale of child abuse by clergy over the last fifty years and the subsequent and continuing attempts at every level to cover it up and protect the abusers. Corruption at the Vatican. The divisive battle between supporters and opposers of Vatican II. The exclusion of women from active roles in the hierarchy. The restrictions on sharing the Eucharist with other Christians and those who are divorced. The treatment of the LGBT communities. These matters almost entirely involving the hierarchy impact on us all in the Church. The invitation by Pope Francis to journey together for renewal in a Synod is a wonderful and hopeful response, but it must involve true participation by a majority of the laity. The suspicion, very widely shared, is that there will be an attempt to convert this to only token participation with the real agenda determined by bishops and the Curia. I am trying to keep an open mind, but the questions presented to us for the Synod local discussions seem to be focused inwards on day-to-day parish operations and away from the controversial bigger issues. These are the elephants in the room, and they should be discussed as well. Not only that, there needs to be some visible acceptance of the laity's views in the conclusions that are taken to Rome.

At our parish level, the limitations on sharing the Eucharist and on women's' roles in the Church are particularly thorny issues that really concern my own congregation. There is also particular unhappiness with the changes of translation in the liturgy of the Mass, both the earlier one around 2010 and the impending revision of the Jerusalem bible. We feel that conveying the meaning of the original in a form appropriate for today's understanding is much preferable to concentrating on a literal translation and insertion of more archaic language. Why is this being forced on us and why shouldn't there be choice in which translation to use? I do feel these matters deserve much more discussion, recognition and a change in approach.

Another looming problem, especially across our own rural communities in the Forest of Dean, is the demographic imperative of aging priests without replacement and dwindling and aging congregations. Addressing Blaisdon specifically, one result was the removal of our regular Sunday Mass two years ago. An understandable decision in the circumstances but not one accompanied by discussion or agreement on what should happen next - the diocese's only solution being that the congregation should travel to another Mass centre on Sundays. The congregation opted instead for their own alternative, to continue meeting together at Blaisdon on Sundays. Preferably it would take the form of a Eucharistic service, but this is not permitted. The service held is organised on a shared basis and is quite well attended, joyful, lively and spirit filled. Thanks to the support of our parish priest, Mass is also celebrated once a month on a Friday evening. We are well aware this doesn't fit the current diocesan model for a retracting church, but it is something that others may want to follow. Does the bishop know about our choice? I don't know, but he should do if he is interested in what is happening on the ground at the moment. I think it's important to include discussion about church closures, withdrawal of services and how congregations can be supported to stay together. The existing policy of expecting people just to give up their community and travel further on Sundays to a different church, perhaps 10 or more miles away, in my experience just doesn't work for many. [Let's talk about alternatives that help to keep our faith alive and active.](#)

**ANON. 5**

**Section 1** There is not enough opportunity to listen to the voices. People's voices are not listened to by the hierarchy of the Church and there is no dialogue. Communication is poor. The Bishop does not reply to correspondence.

Women are not "on the peripheries"-they form 50% of the human race! This wording is an example of how the Church regards women as inferior to men.

**Section 2** Again, there is no mechanism for speaking up and being listened to. The Church is not open and transparent, it does not tackle difficult issues, and this attitude influences people in the parish.

**Section 3** The authority and governance lie with the parish priest. He tries to show he is interested in people's opinions, but maintains control. It is difficult for people to question or criticise the priest on a particular issue. Teamwork is so important and would greatly help in the parish, but the priest does not seem to realise this.

**Section 4** The Pastoral Council is the forum for listening and decision-making in the parish. However, it is difficult for other people in the parish to listen, speak and contribute to decision-making as we do not receive the agenda or minutes of meetings. I often feel I do not know what is going on in the church.

**Section 5** The church does invite children, disabled people and people from ethnic minorities to participate in Sunday Mass, which they do.

I would like to share my views on some other areas of concern.

### **Communication**

The Church has a "top down" approach and does not provide a mechanism for listening to and working with lay people in the parish. There is a lack of openness. Difficult issues are not spoken about or dealt with adequately.

Priests facing difficulties or struggling with their role are not given the pastoral support they need. There is no support structure in the Church. The Church should be about love and care for its priests and people.

### **Use of resources**

Some people in the parish have skills or experience they could contribute but these are not recognised. Permanent deacons seem not to be valued or used enough. They could have much greater roles. I would like married permanent deacons and women to be allowed to be ordained as priests. Many have valuable gifts they are at present not able to use.

### **Inclusivity**

The Church is led mainly by elderly celibate men who are not in touch with ordinary people's lives. Women are not regarded as equal. Some of the language of the liturgy is still not inclusive. Divorced and LGBT people feel excluded, especially when, through no fault of their own, they are excluded from receiving communion. Surely the Church should be about love and forgiveness.

### **Ecumenism**

Christian churches of all denominations are declining in the UK and we are a small minority. We should be sharing with other churches to proclaim the Gospel.

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## ANON. 6

### Section 1

How is God Speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst?

\*Through the fears expressed by so many committed, practising Catholics, that the Church as institution is becoming atrophied, sadly irrelevant to many both young and old, and dwindling numbers in our parishes.

\*Through prophetic priests who are of one in heart and mind with the call of the Holy Father to blow the cooling embers of Christ's Body back into flames (Karl Rahner). Pope Francis does not want another Church, but a Church that is **OTHER** (Pope Saint John XXIII Opening Address to Second Vatican Council).

\*Through a rising dismay at the inaction, pusillanimity, and lack of charisma of many, many bishops and cardinals around the world who have since Vatican II done little but sleep walk our Church into an alarming decline, tinkering with structure and rules, seemingly deaf to the Voice of the Holy Spirit, and a real fear of challenging anything promulgated over the last 27 years under two stifling pontificates. The late Cardinal Martini's call: **'Wake up, Bishops'** has gone unheeded.

How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the peripheries?

\* Through the despair, expressed by thoughtful Catholics in conversation and media, over some of the institutional aspects of the Church e.g. its defence of its reputation paramount at all times, its sharia- like enforcement of its man-made regulations punishable in many cases by being sent to hell, putting Canon Law above Human Rights and Justice, and before the healing compassion shown by Jesus to all broken humanity. (Logically, St. Peter must split his time standing at the Gates of Hell as well as at the Pearly Gates).

\* Through the encouraging faith in Jesus' invitation: **'Come to me. Do not be afraid'**. Whether bishops like it or not, the laity have heard God's voice in their hearts, and have lost their fear of church- made regulations, and are living in the presence of God, in a closer, more personal relationship with God, with minimum magic mediation through ecclesial officials.

What space is there to listen to the voices on the peripheries, especially cultural groups, women, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

\* **'Space'** should mean **a compassionate hearing (not merely listening) that leads to compassionate action**. This synod is not all about social work, platitudinous phrases about poor people, cultural, racial, social cruelty, saving souls, renewing the face of the earth, converting the heathen, increasing Mass figures, etc.etc.

Let us concentrate on being more Christlike models to all we meet, and leave the conversion of heart to the Holy Spirit.

Nor is it about passive listening. It is HEARING and reacting with Love, not Laws.

\*Bishops and cardinals are there to inspire and lead God's people, not as rule makers and enforcers. The Church desperately needs inspiring bishops to match the innate holiness, wisdom and courageous and inspiring leadership of so many of our parish priests. There are many charismatic priests in our diocese, and in our parish we are blessed to have one such. Where, oh where are the prophetic Oscar Romeros, Helder Camerras, Basil Humes of today? Silenced and emasculated by fear, chained by their palliums to the curial diktats.

\* Contrast this typical example in Catholic News: English Bishops Conference were recently deciding when to re-introduce the Sunday obligation to go to Mass!! What planet are they on? Listen and hear, Your Eminences, or Excellencies, or Princes.. We were children once, looking through a glass darkly, but now in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and in this Zeitgeist, we can make up our own minds responsibly to miss Mass or watch Mass whenever we want. It is our human right. Encourage by all means but oblige no..

**Bishops: we are not afraid any more.** Nor should **you** be. Please don't wait till you retire before revealing your real beliefs to the media, as so often happens. That is not honest..

\* Never mind 'social exclusion' referred to above in the question. What about the Church's use of **eternal exclusion** for those who have transgressed its rules? Is the Church God? St. Paul was more straightforward: Who can know the mind of God?

\* For centuries the Church itself has broken the First Commandment: Thou shall not have strange gods before Me. It has theologised to death who and what God is **and in the process given itself power** over the afterlife...all based on heavily redacted scriptural quotations from the late 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, and opinions and surmises of the Fathers, followed by accretions such as: John told Polycarp, who told Gregory, who told Iranaeus of Lyon ( who didn't want women on the altar), who told Athanasius -who, egged on by Constantius who wanted a stable empire to rule, narrowly won the argument about Christ's status against Arius (who was a revered and honest bishop),but who was then demonised and declared a heretic and who is now apparently still in hell..etc etc.

And poor St. Paul -he was at heart an adoptionist re. Jesus sonship with the Father. Where has the church put him?

\*We must not live in the past and ignore the Spirit re-newing the church.

\*There are, thank God, courageous, inspiring clergy who model Jesus for us and win over hearts and minds. We need many more top quality grown-up leaders.

So sad (but true) to see 'women' having to be included in the above list of the disabled, poor, marginalised, socially excluded.

\* **Women** are the heart of every parish in the world without them there would be no church, no red or purple skull caps, no children being led to love God and follow Jesus' way of love and compassion for all. **The Church must empower women at every level, it must cede power to the laity, otherwise it will grow cold and die.** This will not be Pope Francis fault, but ours- laity, priests, bishops and cardinals. Why should women need permission from men?

\* We **must** also bring up thorny issues like access to sacraments for good people who find themselves and their conscience at odds with Canon Law.

\* In her magisterial talk at the Bristol Synod **Baroness Helena Kennedy QC** spoke of a much-needed reform of Canon Law.

'Canon law should not run against the teaching of Christ'.

'Human Rights are often ignored especially in the case of women and their status in the Church'.

'Abusive priests are not excommunicated, but you will be barred from communion if you remarry after an abusive relationship and desertion of the abusive partner'!

\* The Church must include diversity and inclusion of views.

**'What touches all should be discussed and approved by all'**

'The Church needs a Law Reform Commission. The world has and is moving on. There is a systemic exile from the centre.'

'Sharia Law/Canon Law should not trump the legal rights of Christians.'

\* An important category which does not appear in this questionnaire: Space also for **laity**? They are not included in above list of safe targets.

\* **The role of laity : Vatican II We all share in the Priesthood of Christ.**

Sacraments are not MAGIC. They can be dispensed by any suitable person chosen with a simple laying on of hands and commission by the bishop, and 'ordained' by the community of the faithful laying on of hands (how solemn and impressive that would be).

\*No one needs four years theology to bury the dead, be a sympathetic listener that one can talk with and be assured of the promise of forgiveness of self, and reconciliation. The first solemn duty of every priest is to preach the Gospel. Bishop can anoint and commission anyone for any sacrament. The priest does not need to do everything.

\* It has always been the case that any lay person with the right intention can baptise; so why not also be a **witness** in the Church's name to matrimony, confirm in faith, and preside at the eucharist? Our new deacons are doing a wonderful job. All male of course but its a start.....

\*What does clericalism think about women's gifts and talents? Not up to the job? Not mentioned in the heavily redacted gospels much? Unworthy, tainted? **What have you got to fear from them?**

\* **Clericalism is a defective gene in the Body of Christ on earth.** James Carroll. American author and Journalist. Latest book: *The Truth at the heart of the Lie: How the Catholic Church lost its Soul.*

\*The combined pontificates of JP II and Benedict for 27 years smothered the voice and inspiration of Vatican II. If ever there is a sin against the Holy Spirit surely that qualifies. Both presided over massive clerical abuse that they must have known about.

\*JP II 'santo subito' appears to have been canonised prematurely.. There is a major scandal for the Church just waiting to happen. Please God it's resolved before the media really get going. It has now implicated Josef Ratzinger, and will surely go further to condemn Karol Wojtyla. His insistence on church law and 'tradition' is at present propping up the Far Right government in Poland and the erosion of civil liberties there. Not a great exemplar then. He did write some nice spiritual theological things.

## Section 2

What enables or hinders you from speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in your parish and society?

What space is there in your parish for the voice of people including active and inactive members of our faith?

\*Hindrances: Laity are simply not used to being asked, to expressing their real opinions - indeed any thoughts that are not the party line. Stop all this nonsense about the Deposit of Faith. It usually means the deposit of Canon Law which ignores Human Rights ie. to question and seek good reason.

In many parishes there are probably not a lot of people to discuss Church except the active ones who, with the priest, keep the show on the road.

\* How does one define 'an inactive member of our faith' above ? Someone who has fallen (lapsed) out of going to church, but instead might spend their free time actively performing corporal works of mercy? Jesus noted that those who say 'Lord, Lord' but don't help others won't get far. Many in our, and other parishes, of course do both.

\*What a shame that the spiritually healthy, but branded 'lapsed', could not somehow be invited to a space where they could hear and reflect on the riches and inspiring stories in old and new testaments. It would really cheer them up, encourage them. There are many priests who are brilliant at making scripture relevant. Sadly many bishop's pastoral letters are unctuous, full of religiosity, tedious and all the right phrases, but leave us completely untouched. Well-meant catch- phrases like 'Dare to Dream' sound inspiring, but how much better to 'Dare to ACT' and challenge our innate generosity of spirit to include all, 'sinners' included (especially Catholic sinners?)!

## Section 3

How are the baptised members of your parish able to participate in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel?



Why discriminate between baptised and unbaptised? What does 'proclaim' mean?

\* **Mission is to act and be as Jesus taught us.** Model the Gospel messages. Use words only if necessary. The idea of mission as going out and fishing for people to come to church is not the deal. (Jesus went to the synagogue. Incidentally He did not found a church. He was an observant Jew, but as his enemies pointed out, he was more often seen in the Red Camel talking and listening to real people with real needs).

\* Christianity only started after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. It was basically a Jewish break- away sect finding their identity. They had to change and grow. Church today **as institution** is not fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have to renew our identity continually. Nor is it really helpful to recreate the past. The Spirit inspires a New Creation and fills the hearts of the faithful. Let us admit our

mistakes and stop pretending the church is infallible, or telling people to pray harder for vocations. Faith is not magic. We really have to stop all this nonsense.

What hinders people from being active in your parish? or any parish.

\* There is little encouragement of personal investment and real ownership of Church. The young do not perceive anything that is 'theirs' eg a say and a platform in the liturgy, not just holding a candle or fetching things, or strumming a guitar: unlike the thriving, more evangelical, groups of 20-35 year olds who attract many young people to Christ, make them feel relevant and needed, and inspire them to help others with such youthful, attractive and contagious generosity. The liturgy is theirs.

\*The hard-working council in the parish, and other parishioners supporting in many ways, keep the place ticking over.

\* Why not lock our church on a Sunday and get out and demonstrate love and warmth to down and outs and feed the hungry, food bank, set psychological prisoners free of their mental burdens, etc etc etc... So much to do. Let's get out of the church building and INSPIRE others to be Christ-like by our quiet modelling Christian values.. Christians aren't just social workers, they change minds and lives too. Jesus was all for it: 'When I was hungry.....you gave me to eat' is more relevant than 'Let us pray for the poor and needy.. 'Lord hear us'.

\* Older age group, fewer numbers active in the parish, reactive more than proactive.

How is authority or governance exercised in your local parish? Doesn't this language say it all!!!

\* We are a dispersed parish community but good communication and leadership keeps us going during these difficult times. Not aware of authority or being governed. Are you thinking we should be?

\* The majority of our Mass-goers (sorry Freudian slip) are of the Vatican II generation and some of us feel disenfranchised and despairing that the last 27 years of two authoritarian papacies have left the Church stranded and in a parlous state. I believe the Holy Spirit is having one last go through Francis' call to synodality. If after all this so-to-say 'listening', our 'governors' refuse to hear and act, then we are all off to hell in a handcart.

\* **Dear priests - you are amongst us. Speak out for the laity as the Pope pleads you to.** Your superiors cannot start un-frocking or de-frocking you all - now, can they? There will soon only be a handful of priests left in 5-10 years.

\* The Spirit doesn't want any more prayers, pray harder, and priests will come . That is Santa Claus thinking.

Rather She is surely saying: **Wake up. look what you have got..so many committed spiritual catholics wanting to help and minister to others. Hierarchy - change your own antiquated rules and barriers or I am NOT coming back. Result? Church withers on the vine.**

**An informed, honest conscience trumps any oaths of obedience, or canonical regulation.**

How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local church?

\*People are happy to help, to read, special ministers, covid detectors, welcomers, cleaners, garden, etc. More could join the active ones and share the burden-especially men.

#### **Section 4**

How does your parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions?

\*Parish council meetings to which all invited. No rush to get there I have to say.

Do the decision-making methods of your parish help you to listen to all members

of the community, including those who are on the peripheries of parish life? \*This is repetitive..category error. Much the same matter as Section 2 above.

I don't understand this language...'those on the peripheries of parish life'???

This is 2022, not 1954. Most grown up Catholics don't have the 'simple faith' of the past. They are thoughtful and questioning. At the last judgement God will be so pleased we used our brains and tried to live as Jesus modelled, not blind obedience to often stultifying man-made tradition.

\*In our parish we all feel free to ask and suggest..less to question. We are not used to being consulted. See above.

#### **Section 5**

How does prayer and liturgical celebrations, especially Sunday Mass, inspire and guide your parish?

\* Mass brings us together, and although the liturgy is sense-numbingly the same, same words, same hymns, our PP's sermons on the day's readings enrich and prompt us to think and act. He is an inspiration and a spiritual guide much appreciated.

\* Why don't bishops show up in parishes more regularly to inspire us and lead us? St. Paul did and transport was awful in his day. They seem constricted by traditional Old Catholics, like the Westminster bubble, that they have to dress up and look like high ranking persons, and be addressed as eminences or lordships, or, God help us, Princes of the Church. Why can't you dress down? You might disappoint your close admirers or the Knights and Dames of St. Whoever, expecting pomp, but reflect on the world wide impact Francis had when he went back in ordinary clothes to pay his hotel bill after his election. With all this dressing up Jesus must be turning in his grave...no that's wrong.

How does your prayer life and celebration of the Mass inspire and inform your personal decisions and decisions in the parish community?

\*Celebration of Mass leaves many untouched and only half listening, through over exposure. Jesus said 'Do this in memory of me' but surely he didn't mean every day or every single Sunday. He was celebrating the Passover meal. That's why our Triduum is so significant...but many Catholics don't turn up because they think its just another rote Mass.

\* I talk to God every day, during the day..impromptu, usually saying 'thank you' for lots of little things and blessings. Not so much formulaic prayers, but emotionally uplifted by certain hymns and singing spiritual music by composers such as Bach and many modern works of a religious nature.

\*The Mass does little for me -too much the same. The time lag between parishioners standing up and sitting during the Mass is a good indicator of how many minds have drifted elsewhere and they suddenly realise where they are! QED.

God and I both know each other well now and I will be so curious and happy to meet Her/Him.

\*Incidentally, when will bishops stop this lunacy of tampering with the wording of the Mass and rewriting the Bible. Some seriously beautiful language is being hacked around. Who cares if Jesus used a cup, a beaker, a glass, a flask, a flute, at the Last Supper? All this suggests an exercise, albeit unwitting, in power, and 'Look. We know Latin and Greek... Calix means chalice', or whatever.

Jesus' Aramaic must have been perfect. Latin or Greek? .. perhaps His was not so secure.

How does the parish invite all baptised Catholics, including our ethnic communities, youth, families and persons with disabilities and their families, into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?

\*Repetitive question again, clothed in religious language. With a focus on getting people into Mass as the be-all and end-all.

Confusing language in questions again: The only Catholics I have met are baptised. How are you defining an 'unbaptised Catholic'? a Catholic sympathiser?

Everyone is welcomed in our parish, no barriers, non Catholics as well, baptised or not. Why not Muslims too?

**Before it is too late..**

**For the love of God- Bishops get a grip. Up to now you have been busy re arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. The church is sinking into irrelevance on your watch.**

**Wake up! Cast out your fear of the Curia. Pope Francis is sorting them out. God will hold you (and us all) in His loving Hands, to guide and heal us. Try trusting your gut feelings and be open and act on what the spirit is telling you, especially if it is against the current rules. The Holy Spirit doesn't 'talk' to us. She suddenly, or gradually, dawns on us enlightening the way. Refusal to hear your laity and priests, and act, is moving against the Holy Spirit.**

I have printed my response for easier reading. Why is there an instruction to **hand-write** these responses? Disabled persons might not be able to hand write, or indeed like Jay in the Repair Shop still learning to write.

To avoid any tampering of my response, or gatekeepers not happy with the sentiments honestly expressed herein, and discreetly discarding these, I am copying these answers across the parish to help

them reflect, and I will forward them higher up the hierarchy, to Westminster, and certainly to Pope Francis direct at the arranged address in Rome.

This is my own view on the Church today. Lots of other people will have reservations and disagree. Good, but it's out there for all to listen but especially to respond: **I hear what you are saying..** Thank you for taking the trouble to read this.

Francis wants to know what we **really** think. He does not want bishops to tell us, by engineering insipid and safe questionnaires, **what to think about.**

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