



The Synodal Pathway
of the Catholic Church in Ireland



DROMORE DIOCESE
UNIVERSAL SYNOD
APPENDICES
29 MAY 2022

Introduction: regarding the synodal experience (1-2 pages)

This is an opportunity to retell the story of the synodal journey. Take time to indicate the milestones, turning points, and especially the spiritual dimension of the journey (difficulties, surprises, etc).

Background

In 2017 a *Diocesan Strategic Working Group* (DSWG) commenced a scoping, engagement, and development piece of work as it was recognised that Dromore Diocese – the smallest in Ireland – whose clergy were reducing at a considerable pace, needed to plan and have a vision for the future. However during this period Dromore Diocese was affected by historical clerical abuse, attracting national media attention. This had a considerable impact on this work. However, the DSWG continued working on the visionary document which was launched in February 2020 (See **Appendix 1**). A month later the COVID-19 Pandemic happened. Unfortunately, the Covid Pandemic halted progress but three members of this group were commissioned onto the Diocesan Synodal Core Group (DSCG). They were tasked as part of this synopsis to examine that 2020 visionary document and see if it was still fit for use. DSWG final reporting recognised the need for robust values and mission to support the following themes –

- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Faith
- ❖ Structures
- ❖ Pastoral Care for the Clergy.

The DSCG concluded that the 2020 document and its themes were now more relevant than ever.

Universal Synod Journey: Dromore Diocese has had no bishop since 2018. Archbishop Eamon Martin has been acting as Apostolic Administrator throughout the synodal process to date. **Appendix 2** provides information on the history, location and current position of Dromore Diocese. The Dromore DSCG was formed in the summer of 2021. It is a mixture of laity and clergy. Due to the pandemic, nearly all the early meetings were held via Zoom. On 16 October 2021 the Diocese of Dromore launched their Universal Pathway at a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Martin in Newry cathedral and attended by representatives of the parishes of the Diocese. The core group members were commissioned at this Mass.

At the Mass on 16 October 2021, Archbishop Martin announced that consultation on the future of Dromore Diocese would be integrated into the synodal process, via an additional question: “*How would you like to see the future of the Diocese of Dromore?*”. In the event, answers to this question reflected a broad range of views: some felt strongly about the Diocese having its own bishop; others viewed the issue as irrelevant

to the concerns of their parish; some favoured total amalgamation with the Archdiocese of Armagh and some saw merit in attaching eastern parishes to the Diocese of Down and Connor. However, there was an overwhelming response that, whatever happens, Dromore should retain its own identity.

How have we harvested Information?

DSCG collaboration with the Archdiocese of Armagh was very important as it allowed us to share resources and to confer with colleagues from the neighbouring Diocese. We went through several iterations before deciding on the final six questions on which to survey opinions across the Diocese. (See Appendix 3). The synodal consultation ran from November 2021 to 17 March 2022. It featured:

- ❖ A website created and advertised through Parish Bulletins/Newsletters and those Parishes who have online presence. Questionnaires through the Synodal Pathway Responses Email addresses or paper copies made available within Churches & Parish Offices and forwarded through the Diocesan office. An online questionnaire (anonymous) through Google Doc Platform.
- ❖ All Catholic schools principals were contacted throughout the Diocese and invited to participate. A bespoke, online, multiple choice questionnaire created for the 9- to 13-year-olds. (See Appendix 4)
- ❖ An hour-long Parish and Community video was created for use by individuals, family groups parish groups etc. to assist them in understanding the Synodal pathway and completing the questionnaires.
- ❖ Three Orientation Meetings between the DSCG and Parish Representatives took place via Zoom and Face to Face during w/c 29 November 2022.
- ❖ Parish Groups/Committees had meetings either face to face or via Zoom.
- ❖ The Diocesan Youth Director, youth leaders and school representatives engaged with young adults, youth groups and schools.
- ❖ Meetings with Clergy and Religious Orders.
- ❖ We received over 700 completed questionnaires; the majority were individual responses but there were a small number that were collective responses from groups.
- ❖ A considerable number were received in paper form, handwritten. These were converted into typed text to allow sharing of information across the Core Group.
- ❖ Efforts were made to ensure that every response, whether in writing or spoken, was treated respectfully and carefully recorded.
- ❖ A 'Synodal Moment' with clergy and about 45 parish representatives took place on 18 May 2022. Archbishop Martin and the Papal Nuncio were also present. The purpose of the meeting was to brief

people on the conduct of the synodal process, reflect on the responses and, through prayer and discussion, discern the key messages.

Throughout the Diocese's synodal journey, prayer was so important in opening and closing meetings. The Synod prayer was reflected upon at the beginning of meetings and the Holy Spirit was called to guide us especially, *"Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions"*.

Body of the Synthesis: discernment of the collected contributions (6-7 pages)

This part of the synthesis articulates the response to the fundamental question of the synodal process (cf. Preparatory Document, n. 26), considering the thematic questions (cf. *ibid.*, n. 30, and *Vademecum*, n. 5.3) and highlighting the principal fruits of a discernment carried out during the synodal process.

1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road. In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

The strongest messages we received can be summarised as follows:

Women experience discrimination within the Church. There is no equality between women and men and people are struggling to understand why women are excluded and not treated equally. The role of women in the church is very under-valued, having to accept subservient roles and not being able to be ordained. There are limited roles for women in leadership and church ministry. People have experienced this; it is the strong feeling of many, including our Youth, for whom it was most prominent in their responses.

Clerical sexual abuse has left a legacy which is an open wound about which people feel deeply hurt and spiritually betrayed. Within the Diocese of Dromore people have lost trust in the Catholic Church due to the scandals and clerical abuse. They want no more cover-ups, complete openness, and transparency. The scandals have impacted on people's faith and alienated them from participation in church life.

Young People want an unconditional welcome and a place in the church. They want the church to be meaningful for them with contemporary ideas but feel the church does not recognise these. They want the church to come and meet them ‘where they are’, e.g. youth venues and activities (sports), the street. Young respondents cared less about the institution of the church - its rules and practices - than they did about their personal relationship with God.

Separated and Divorced Catholics have been marginalised and estranged from the church. They feel abandoned and unsupported by it. Mention was made of those with influence & money being able to get annulments while others were left hopeless.

LGBTQ+ people have also been marginalised and estranged from the church. They feel abandoned and unsupported by it. There is also a view that the church has compounded their problems. However, in pastoral terms individual clerics have been supportive.

Other messages ranged across the following:

- People appreciate the pastoral role provided by **clergy**, especially in times of need throughout their lives. Clergy speak of the privilege of being part of people's lives when people are experiencing difficulties.
- Many people feel that the Mass is central to their lives and are nourished by word and sacrament. They appreciate the importance of prayer and the comfort it has brought to them.
- However, there is a widely felt frustration about sermons being irrelevant, too academic and too long.
- Clerics feel frustrated at the amount of time spent on administration.
- There is a widespread view that clergy should be allowed to marry.
- Also that women should also be allowed to be ordained.
- People are conscious of the decreasing numbers and ageing of the clergy.
- They are very cognisant that we live in a world so focused on Mental Health & Wellbeing, yet we as 'Christians' are 'talking it but not walking it'.
- There are people who, during Covid, sensed that they were part of a world-wide universal church, appreciate how this was novel, interesting and the way it had to be, but they missed being in a community with people and welcome the return to church services and devotions because of the benefits of being face to face, where there is fellowship in prayer, social interaction and support from the community.
- There are people who express a desire to return to the pre-Vatican II Church and see the traditional church as the only way forward.
- Others have stayed with the Church because of their upbringing and educational formation. It is part of their lives, and they are content with how things are.
- There are people who through their Catholic faith have an unbounding love of Christ and welcome the safety & sanctuary and nourishment of the sacraments. And there are those who are selective in what and when they attend. They remember a time when there were 3 active priests in a parish. Thus, they have high expectations of the clergy and a lack of awareness that we have diminished numbers dealing with numerous parishes and all the responsibilities that involves. This lack of awareness is partly since they have never been informed about present day realities. (**Appendix 4** is a list of some of the Roles and Responsibilities which Clergy – Priests and Deacons- carry out).

- There are people who see the Church as an Institution and are not really interested in what happens there but have a real faith and love of Christ.
- A small number feel that the church hasn't a place in society as it is unforgiving and unloving and outdated and needs to move with the times.
- Families and carers of people who have additional learning needs feel unwelcome during Mass or at ceremonies; they receive little or no support from the Church community.
- Some people simply want the Church to remain the same.
- Many respondents want major changes in the universal Church and see this synodal process as the place to ask and even demand these changes in the teachings and in Canon Law.
- People are thirsty for the opportunity to talk about the significant issues, - e.g. homosexuality, abortion, drugs, alcohol - but feel there is no safe space to have open, frank but respectful dialogue.
- People thirst to hear the word of God to enrich their faith. They want to see a vibrant Church with more offered than weekend Masses. They want to see celebrations and community and refer to the community spirit within the GAA and how they seem to be able to get followers.
- People make continual reference to the importance of Youth playing an active role in the church, about how they are our future, their need to be nourished and encouraged with support, training and the right programmes to be made available.
- Education- there is a view that in the past, faith and sacramental formation took place in schools and schools took greater responsibility for preparation than in current times. Clerics observe that children receive their first Holy Communion and may not attend Mass again until their confirmation.

2. LISTENING

Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

There are occasions where listening occurs, creating interest, energy and promise but doesn't always follow through on what people expected. Guest speakers, 'experts' have been employed for parish events, but there are no established faith formation programmes. However, the Lectio Community have a very active and engaged membership with a strong sense of making the Gospel come alive. They are a community who are comfortable with, and who, exemplify Mission, Participation and Communion.

Respondents express a recognition that the Synodal Pathway has opened an avenue, given a voice and hopefully a listening ear to those who feel they wouldn't normally be part of the conversation. There is a strong expectation that something will be done with all the information. There are clearly people who feel on the margins, who are neither welcomed or included and insist the universal Catholic Church recognise the LGBTQ+ community and separated & divorced Catholics. There is a sense that there is no recognised space for minorities, the marginalised or socially excluded. However, there is a belief that those who experience poverty are well supported and attended by St Vincent de Paul, who have an overwhelming respect and are trusted by parishioners. There is a cry for authentic listening, active listening and patient listening. As Irish people we love to talk and are so busy waiting to get our word in, that sometimes we miss the kernel of information from the discussion. There is also the desire to get something done and moving with a feeling of uncomfortableness around the act of discernment and listening to the Holy Spirit. It is not something that we are used to, and reference was made to the hierarchy of the Church and a history of being told what to do rather than being consulted. The clergy clearly want active ministry and see the only way of creating a vibrant church is through the active ministry of the baptised.

3. SPEAKING OUT

All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity. What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

Transparency and openness are values that are not only expected but people have zero tolerance should it become apparent that they are missing. The case in point -Dromore Diocese in recent years and the impact of clerical sexual abuse. This is a Diocese with an open wound: *"The legacy of abuse has caused deep hurt and damage. Something has to be done to bring healing"*.

The Diocese hasn't got an active media presence but there appear to be systems and protocols in place when asked to make comment. *"We could explore more positive ways of using the media to nourish and strengthen the faith"*.

Most parishes within the Diocese have either a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) or a PPC in formation. This synodal process has encouraged people to speak out, and creating anonymous questionnaires gave people the courage to speak freely as was evident in the responses. Several people asked for suggestion/comments boxes to be available in parishes to allow people to engage.

4. CELEBRATION

“Walking together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy? What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

The Celebration of the Eucharist for those in active participation of Catholic life is paramount. People reflect on life during the pandemic and the sense of being part of the Universal Church through online presence but appreciate that, as we move forward, we need to be mindful that the virtual world is just that and there is a fundamental need to be actively part of the community that we live in. People who attend Sunday Mass state how it is important for their spiritual health and wellbeing for the week to come. However, they have high expectations of the clergy and thirst for homilies that reflect the gospel, several people asserted that homilies/sermons need to be relevant to life today and the clergy need to walk with the people.

While there is active participation in ministries, a number of programmes and pastoral support for people, there is also a begrudgery in some parishes that the same people continue to be involved. Thus, there is a demand for new people, new kinds of involvement and most definitely a need for training and support.

The first question asked was, “In what way is the Church important to you”. There is no doubt this was the most positively answered question with people sharing how important the Church is in their faith and family life. *“The Church is important to me because it gives me a space to reflect on my own personal experiences in relation to being a Catholic such as my family situation. It allows me a space to pray for loved ones especially those who have passed away. It gave me the opportunity to make my holy communion and confirmation which were important milestones in my life.”*

5. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptised from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

There is an overwhelming respect, recognition, and appreciation for the work of St Vincent De Paul and Trócaire. The outreach, hard work and social interaction with the most vulnerable parishioners is how many see real involvement and walking in Christ’s footsteps.

People would welcome family Masses. While this was requested throughout the responses, there appears to be a commonly held assumption that there is a cadre of people - clergy or perhaps a committee - who really need to be doing this.

Some people are remembering a time when a number of priests lived together in the Parochial House when, in actual fact, currently there may be a single priest covering several areas. The reality is that Dromore clergy have been reduced to a minimum. The realisation that all baptised persons are called and needed in the mission of the church is not recognised and understood. To make this a reality people need to be informed, educated and supported.

6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding. To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.? How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

Everyone was invited and welcomed to be part of the Diocese's synodal process through various communications and there is no doubt those actively involved in the church responded. However, as a Diocese we recognise that whilst the dialogue managed to reach some people on the margins, we only scratched the surface. In the responses there were people who shared best practice they had observed from other Christian denominations. Collaboration with the Archdiocese of Armagh as part of the synodal process greatly helped in sharing resources and ideas and provided support to the Core Team.

The key issues that were raised time and time again were

- ❖ the need to recognise the role of women,
- ❖ welcome of the LGBTQ+ community,
- ❖ the inclusion of married priests
- ❖ and how separated/divorced catholic feel ostracized.

Through the meetings and dialogue with the religious communities their love of Christ shone clearly. They express a desire to be part of the solution in how we re-energise the baptised that are sleeping and need a nudge. They are ready and willing to be educators.

People who have additional learning needs and their families need recognition and support from the Church Community. Other than a place of prayer, people want a place to talk with like-minded people.

The power of the cup of tea has been lost with Covid and people have continually stated the social importance of having a place to meet. They are requesting that as we move back to normal times, churches need to be opened for more than the celebration of Mass; they must also to be used for communities to participate in spiritual and private/quiet prayer.

7. ECUMENISM

The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

The South Down Ecumenical Clergy Group was established in 1968 to nurture good relationships with other churches. A genuine friendship and fellowship evolved across traditional divides. There was an annual dinner at the beginning of each year (pre-Christian unity Week events). Pre-Covid, that group met at least four times per year. The group now needs to be re-energised and perhaps some of the younger clergy brought on board.

Christian Unity Week is seen as the time where this happens, but there was no sense that beyond this week there is an active programme of engagement. However, some people welcomed the idea of walking together, listening to each other and sharing best practices.

We perceive ourselves to be self-contained and able to manage on our own. Across the Diocese there is respect for other Christian traditions and denominations and occasions of togetherness take place either through schools or communities. Holy Cross Monastery in Rostrevor is an example where the doors are opened to people of other Christian denominations with positive testimonies provided in their advertisement literature.

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

A synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church

(Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

This is very much a work in progress and differs depending on where within the Diocese you are located. Some Parishes have embraced the universal synodal pathway and are listening to the insight gleaned from the responses and working on this to help future planning. Other parishes are in formation regarding synodality and getting Parish Pastoral Councils up and running.

There has been sharing of information at some of the group meetings, but it is patchy and not cohesive. This is an opportunity that we need to embrace to ensure all the information is considered fully and for those people to feel that their effort was important and listened to.

Equally there is a need for clear governance structures, especially as several people queried finances within their parish and Diocese. There are many who don't know how financial governance operates in their parish and this leads to a feeling of exclusion and concern. We are aware that Dromore Diocese has clear structures and processes in place. However, clear communications on the financial positions of parishes and the Diocese should be published periodically on designated dates.

9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

Throughout the Diocese there are several established Parish Pastoral Councils, with a number being formed. The question on Decision Making elicited a number of themes, in particular –

- (i) **Listening-** with some suggesting monthly parish meetings, forums and the need for the inclusion of all people. *“The synod is an effective way to listen to young people- the outcome will demonstrate whether listening takes place”.*
- (ii) **Communication** – responses indicated a desire for greater clarity and openness about what decisions need to be made and when; the need for more explanation of the issues involved in making some decisions and the importance of the local Church having a vision and communicating it. The use of a range of media, especially on-line platforms was also viewed as important. The whole idea of ‘outreach’ and having a strategy for engaging the wider community was significant. The importance

of encouraging children and young people in the ways of respectful debate and discussion was viewed as essential for their formation. It was also important for young people to feel that their views mattered.

Priests – it was important that priests/deacons be actively involved in Parish Pastoral Councils and engagement with the people. However, some people perceived the Parish Priest as the sole decision maker and believed that there is a tendency for cliques or inner circles around some PPs. On the other hand, there was a desire for more lay involvement to support overworked clergy.

10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning. How does our Church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way? The Synod website provides suggestions on how to pose these questions to various groups of people in simple and engaging ways. Each diocese, parish, or ecclesial group should not aim to cover all the questions but should discern and focus on those aspects of synodality most pertinent to its context. Participants are encouraged to share with honesty and openness about their real-life experiences, and to reflect together on what the Holy Spirit might be revealing through what they share with one another.

At the Dromore Synodal Moment evening on 18 May one group made the following statement: “*While participation in the institution has declined, people still have good values and are motivated to do good*”.

The comment reflected the group’s discussion about the enduring life of the Church, quite aside from Masses and Sunday observance; that while many people may not be turning up, they are often living lives in accordance with Catholic values and bearing witness to the Gospel.

Throughout the synodal journey people shared their experiences of welcome and inclusion. The way a priest welcomes people at the start of Mass was viewed as particularly significant.

The Youth want to be with their peers and it was noted that youth groups that are well managed and maintained create a space for dialogue and listening. Community fun days and that time just before Mass commences and afterwards is where all age groups engage with each other whether remaining in the church or on its steps. To facilitate this environment and create opportunity for discussion there is a need to have a social place in or around the chapel. People of all ages requested respect and non-judgement. There has been an energy and interest created through this synodal process and it is vitally important that something will be done with this harvest of information.

Conclusions: next steps (1-2 pages)

The conclusion could indicate the steps to be taken in response to that which was recognized as the call (or the calls) of the Holy Spirit, highlighting in particular those points regarding which it is considered important to solicit the further discernment of the Church.

As a Diocese we need to take tangible action that demonstrates that people have been listened to but there are also a number of areas where further discernment is required:

Abuse and Scandals- there is a legacy of hurt and enduring damage and a demand for transparency and openness. There is interest in the idea of an annual date to be designated, with symbols such as candles in churches and liturgy to recognise the hurt that has been caused, seek atonement with God, provide reassurance about safeguarding and promote healing within the Church community.

Mass- the times of Masses need to be sensitive to modern times & community life. Example- some parishes it would be useful to discuss Mass times with the local GAA because of the demands being made on young people and parents. At Mass, music liturgy and the standard of homilies require significant attention. And the need for the church remaining open through the day was a matter of some comment. **Family Masses** - there was an overwhelming request for the availability of Family Masses and stories were shared how these worked so well in parishes. Suggestions to use local school choir on these Sundays and have the children, their families participate throughout the Mass.

The role of Women – there is a strong assertion of the need for women to be treated with more respect, accepted as equal to men and afforded the same opportunities for inclusion in the life of the Church, including its ministries and leadership. There is clear frustration with the hierarchy in this regard.

The Marginalised – the experience of LGBT+, divorced and separated people and their families in the Church is a matter of widespread concern. There is a strong desire for significant movement to recognise and include them.

Finances- some ambiguity and questions being asked on how they have been managed. In an age of greater transparency and accountability in wider society, the Church is viewed as old-fashioned and out of step. It is also failing to utilise significant expertise among the laity.

Charity and the tremendous work done by SVP and Trócaire remain strong points of the Church, helping to make it relevant and credible to many people.

Communication – there is a particular need to take forward the Diocesan Visionary Document (2020) which focused on the need to:

- *Clarify and communicate the Roles and Responsibilities of the Laity, Religious, Deacons & Priests;*

- *Develop a standardised & effective **communication strategy** within Dromore Diocese;*
- *Make **Parish liturgies** accessible through online streaming;*
- ***Communicate** all Parish Website Addresses and provide support to enable people to access the internet;*
- ***Create accessible** Diocesan/Parish Liturgical Calendars.*

Again, regarding communication, it is important to make best use of technology for e.g. online and Social Media platforms and to be cognisant of those people on the margins who are not getting the message. It is also time to think more seriously about how we engage with those with disabilities. In all these aspects, the new Diocesan web site should become a core mechanism for communication and engagement.

Engagement – open Churches and explore options for social engagement after Mass. Having ‘suggestion boxes’ in place which are managed, and the information actions and communicated.

Catechesis -Education and knowledge of Church teachings and ways in which to deliver this. In particular, starting with family catechesis.

Decision Making – the need to trust, train and empower people. Consulting and keeping people informed when decisions matter especially Parish finances and Mass arrangements.

Youth – Youth Programmes. *Appendix 6 & 7* shares some of the Youth responses.

Schools and their role in passing on the faith. The expectations that people have of schools is considerable- it is seen as the place where faith formation takes place.

Clergy – the synodal responses about clergy were diverse. There was widespread admiration and respect for the dedication of individual priests but a strong desire for better liturgy and presence. People value ‘authenticity’ in clergy and want them to be more in touch with the realities of their lives and accepting of them. There was also clear affirmation of the need for priests to be able to marry. For their own part, the clergy have a deep appreciation and gratitude for being part of people’s life journey from Baptism, First Holy Communion/Confirmation to the celebration of their Marriages and being with families at a time of bereavement. People would like greater clarity about the ministry and role of Deacons; their introduction has not been properly explained. However, it should be noted that the initial ambivalence about the introduction of Deacons some years ago has changed into a growing appreciation of their contributions in parishes across Dromore.

Governance of Committees -there is a perception of elitism and the same select people doing everything. There is a requirement for clear structures and strong leadership when it is needed.

Volunteering Strategy – the introduction of a Volunteering Strategy with clear structures, advice and guidance for those wanting to be involved for, e.g. readers could receive the diocesan training that was given some years ago. Individuals currently involved in volunteering/lay ministry could speak from the pulpit to encourage others to consider such roles.

Co-responsibility – Throughout the responses people referenced to “*They need to*” and “*They should be*”. A senior cleric pointed out that, for the most part, there is no ‘they’ other than the faithful themselves. The Diocese does not have a large cohort of staff. The Church, from Diocese to parish levels, requires the active participation of its people. Therefore, all of us need to examine how we enable, empower and prepare people and commission them into action where they are needed. *The above is only a sample of the information that was gleaned and Dromore’s rich harvest of information still needs time and resources to get underneath what has been said.*

Diocesan Pastoral Council - There are a few practical and tangible matters that Dromore could address and take forward. To ensure this would happen, there is a need for a Diocesan Pastoral Council to be established. Some of the activities – Communication, Liturgy, Family Masses, Publication of Financial Information - could be delegated to ‘Task and Finish Groups’ overseen by the current DSCG.

Finally, when we asked the people of Dromore Diocese to go and harvest information they responded admirably and for this the DSCG are very thankful. We also wish to record our thanks and appreciation to the 700+ people who responded. Whilst this is a high-level summary of ten pages, we have rich information, telling stories of how important Church is to people, not so important to some, what people want changed, the hurt that has been caused, where the Holy Spirit is working, hope for the future with people providing ideas/suggestions. We have started the journey and through journeying together, we have stirred an energy and ignited interest across our Diocese. It is a privilege to be part of this process and whilst there is much work to be done, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a love of Christ, like a winter garden that needs tending in Spring, so too can the garden of Dromore grow from a place where some of it is barren, scarred or well-matured and well-nourished to a place of great beauty and a solace to balm souls. With God’s help, we can move forward with real hope and confidence in our ability to create a place where people can walk in the likeness of Jesus, welcoming and including those on the margins to journey together as citizens of the kingdom.



The Synodal Pathway

of the Catholic Church in Ireland

**Dromore Diocese
Universal Synod
Appendices
29 May 2022**



DROMORE DIOCESAN STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP (DSWG)

VISIONARY DOCUMENT - 19 FEBRUARY 2020

VISION

We will have vital and vibrant parish communities that are sustainable for future generations. This Vision will need to be owned and communicated.

To enable parish communities to move forward in faith, hope and confidence towards this vision, we recommend the following Values, Mission and Recommendations:

Values

1. **Accountability & Leadership**
2. **Almsgiving**
3. **Called & gifted for each other and our Lord.**
4. **Confidentiality**
5. **Inspirational**
6. **Integrity**
7. **Kindness**
8. **Love of God and Love of Neighbour**
9. **Professionalism and Forward Looking**
10. **Respect – Dignity and Differences**
11. **Truth, Trust, Honesty and Openness**

As the Diocese of Dromore our values are at the heart of how we should act. We will always be respectful to each other, encourage others to give of their best and look after those who are in need of help and assistance.

Mission

Nourished by Word and Sacrament, we seek to become Christ for one another.

This is the Mission statement from Newry Cathedral Parish; it succinctly embraces the true mission of the Catholic faith.

The Cultural change is a desired outcome of the structures put in place. Recognition from the top that the culture needs to change. Also, part of the formation/training of the Parish Pastoral Councils will be in relation to culture and the changing landscape of leadership in the Church in Dromore.

Recommendation & Actions

The Archbishop will require a subgroup who will support and assist him to put in place a structure in the Diocese in relation to accountability. For the vision to be delivered there will be a requirement for commitment to uphold this structure and enforce/follow through on processes and procedures.

Purpose, Vision & Strategy - Positioning statement – EFQM 2019

An outstanding organisation is defined by a Purpose that inspires, a Vision that is aspirational and a Strategy that delivers.

The Vision of the organisation:

- Describes what the organisation is attempting to achieve in the long-term
- Is intended to serve as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action
- Provides, along with the organisation's Purpose, the basis for setting the Strategy.

The Strategy of the organisation:

- Describes how it intends to fulfil its Purpose
- Details its plans to achieve the strategic priorities and move closer to its Vision.

Additional Notes on Values

- **Accountability & Leadership:** Taking responsibility for and owning one's actions and motivating others to work towards a common goal.
- **Almsgiving:** Giving to others as an act of virtue.
- **Called & Gifted for each other & for our Lord:** Using one's gifts and talents for the up building of others and our Church in Dromore. Response to our Baptismal Call.
- **Confidentiality:** In order to build & maintain trust and to enable open and honest communication at all levels throughout the diocese, confidentiality is essential.
- **Inspirational:** providing or showing creative or spiritual inspiration. Making you feel full of hope or encouraged. To offer something valuable, uplifting which motivates others to bring out the best in themselves. To be inspirational is to lead by example and encourage others to feel there is something worthwhile to become and do.
- **Integrity:** the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.
- **Kindness:** the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate.
- **Love of God and Love of Neighbour:** Honour God & do to others what you would have them do onto you.
- **Professionalism and Forward Looking:** Behaving/conducting oneself according to the core values we are outlining and favouring innovation and development.
- **Respect:** a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements.
- **Truth, Trust, Honesty and Openness:** Involves being trustworthy, loyal, fair and sincere with a lack of restriction: accessibility, lack of secrecy or concealment, frankness.

Recommendations

No:	Recommendation	How will it be taken forward including by Ownership:	Time scale ST: 3-6 Mths MT: 6 -18 Mths LT: 3-5 Years
1	Pastoral Care of the Clergy 1: The pastoral care of the Clergy urgently needs addressed in accordance with the findings from DSWG work and liaison with the Clergy.	1. Archbishop Martin in discussion with the DSWG.	Meeting on 11 December to commence discussion.
2	Communication 1: Clarify and communicate the Roles and Responsibilities of the Laity, Religious, Deacons & Priests. 2: Standardised & effective communication strategy within Dromore Diocese. 3: Parish liturgies accessible through online streaming. 4: Communicate all Parish Website Addresses. Provide support to enable people to access the internet. 5: Create an accessible annual Dromore Diocesan Liturgical Calendar. 6: Create an accessible annual Parish Liturgical calendar	1. DSWG to produce clarity on the R&R. 2. DSWG will devise a communication strategy for Dromore Diocese. 3 -5. Diocesan Communications Group is established. 6. Parish Pastoral Councils	1. 3-6 months (3-5) 3-6 months 6. 6- 12 Months

3	Structures <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Archbishop establishes a Dromore Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC). 2. The Archbishop directs each Parish to have a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). 3. The DPC will have the responsibility of ensuring that every Parish PPC is supported to ensure we have a vital and vibrant parish community of the future. The DPC will put in place the standardised training for all PPCs, and appropriate training for those already in existence. 4. The Archbishop reviews the effectiveness of the diocesan finance council, to ensure a more decentralised approach to finances. 5. The Archbishop establishes a Diocesan Liturgy Council for the Diocese. 6. Create a manual handbook for each parish to provide key information on the life of that particular parish. 7. The Archbishop to establish Diocesan Building & Property groups in accordance with the Draft Report May 2019. 	<p>1 – 2. Archbishop Martin</p> <p>3. DPC</p> <p>4- 5. Archbishop Martin</p> <p>6. DPC provide standardised template for PPC to complete.</p> <p>7. Archbishop Martin</p>	<p>(1-2) 3-6 months</p> <p>3. 3-6 months</p> <p>(4,5,6) 3-6 months</p> <p>7. 3-6 months</p>
4	Faith. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Diocesan Faith Development Group encompassing all age groups. 2. Develop both Funeral Liturgy and Bereavement Ministry that is supported at a Diocesan level. 3. Establish a standardised approach for the celebration of Funerals within the Diocese for e.g. the engagement with Funeral Directors working together to ensure a consistent and uniformed approach. 	<p>1-3. Archbishop Martin</p>	<p>(1-3) 3-6 months</p>



Dromore Diocese

There are twenty-two Parishes and c.88k baptised Catholics registered across twenty-two parishes that are within two Counties: Down and Armagh within Northern Ireland. The Parishes are well served with both Catholic Primary (36) and Post Primary Schools (12).

There are five religious' sisters – Mercy Sisters, Order of St. Clare, Missionary Sisters Assumption, Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, Missionary Franciscan Sisters of Immaculate Conception and three Male Religious - Dominicans, Benedictines, SMA's. Each brings their own teachings to life and parishioners feel their support through spiritual places or through the words and blessings of those in consecrated life.

Currently the number of active clergy is eighteen (15 Ministering in the Diocese – 3 Elsewhere). Retired Diocesan Clergy is ten. Clergy of other Orders ministering in the Diocese is five. (i.e. polish, Neocatechumenics, etc.,). The Diocese has seven Ordained Deacons.

The Diocese lies in connection to Armagh Diocese & Down & Connor Diocese. Large population centres in the diocese include Newry, Banbridge, Craigavon, Lurgan and Warrenpoint. The bishop's seat (Cathedral) is in the cathedral church of SS Patrick and Colman, Newry.

HISTORY OF DROMORE DIOCESE

Our History -Foundation -The monastery of Dromore is believed to have been founded in the sixth century by St Colman (called also Mocholmóc), probably the first Abbot of Dromore. The first building was a small wattle and daub church on the northern bank of the River Lagan. The Diocese of Dromore was established through the reorganisation of the Irish Church in the late 12th century, possibly at the synod held in Dublin in 1192 by the papal legate, Múirges Ua hÉnna, Archbishop of Cashel. The diocese coincided with the territory of the Uí Echach Cobo, which later became the baronies of Upper and Lower Iveagh, and the lordship of Newry, County Down.

Post-Reformation - During the 16th century Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church lost control of the old cathedral in Dromore to the Protestant Church of Ireland, which was wholly destroyed during the rebellion of 1641 and rebuilt twenty years later.

In the 19th century, the Church chose the site of a new cathedral at Newry, the largest town of County Down, and a place of significant ecclesiastical importance as the site of an ancient monastery, situated at the head of Carlingford Lough. Work for building of Newry Cathedral begun in 1823 and was completed in 1829 by Dr. Michael Blake (bishop of Dromore 1833–1860) who had been Vicar-General of Dublin and the restorer of the Irish College at Rome. This cathedral was enlarged and beautified by Bishop Henry O'Neill, who succeeded Bishop Thomas MacGivern in 1901.

Under McGivern's predecessor, John Pius Leahy, O.P. (1860–1890), a Dominican priory was founded on the Armagh side of Newry, and a church erected. The Poor Clares, who went to Newry from Harold's Cross, Dublin, in 1830, were for many years the only nuns north of the River Boyne. The Sisters of Mercy founded a convent at Newry in 1855.

Abbey Yard in Newry marks the site of the Cistercian abbey founded in 1144 by St. Bernard's friend, St. Malachy O'Morgair, and endowed in 1157 by Maurice O'Loughlin, High King of Ireland. It is called in the annals *Monasterium de Viridi Ligno* — a name given to Newry from the yew-tree, said to have been planted there by St. Patrick, the Irish name being Niubar (and sometimes Newrkintragh, "the yew at the head of the strand") which is Latinized Ivorium or Nevoracum, but more commonly as above Viride Lignum.

DROMORE SYNODAL QUESTIONS

These were used in paper format and on the Online Google Doc Platform.

Take a moment to reflect on what kind of journey, in Church and in faith, you been on so far. You may wish to explore some of the following themes in your answers:

- *Prayer and the Sacraments*
- *Participation, Inclusion and Dialogue (who are we walking with and who might be feeling left out or ignored?)*
- *The role of lay people, especially young people and women*
- *Governance and Decision Making in the Church*
- *Our relations with other Christian denominations and people of other faiths*

In what ways is the Church important to you?

How can the Church welcome and include everyone?

How can people be listened to more effectively and encouraged to participate in decision-making within the Church?

How can more people be encouraged to participate in the life of the Church?

In your experience, how has the Church motivated you to share the love of Christ and help those in need?

How would you like to see the future of the Diocese of Dromore?

**Multichoice Questionnaire for 9-13 year olds - *This was issued through Schools.* Appendix 3
Cont.**

In what ways is the Church important to you?

- a) Special Events only – First Communion and Confirmation
- b) Sacraments like Mass
- c) Meeting family and friends
- d) Community
- e) Other....

How can the Church welcome and include everyone?

- a) Someone at the door saying Hello
- b) The priest welcoming you at the start of Mass
- c) Chatting outside of Mass on way home
- d) Other...

How can people be listened to more effectively and encouraged to participate in decision-making within the Church?

- a) Talking in groups with other young people
- b) Talking to youth leaders
- c) Other...

How can more people be encouraged to participate in the life of the Church?

- a) More 'fun' events
- b) More events with a meal included
- c) More events in Church during the weeknights
- d) Other....

In your experience, how has the Church motivated you to share the love of Christ and help those in need?

- a) Giving money to the poor
- b) Praying for those in need
- c) Youth events
- d) Other...

How would you like to see the future of the Diocese of Dromore?

Roles and Responsibilities of Priests and Deacons

- i. celebrates daily Mass,
 - ii. hears confessions every week,
 - iii. gives marriage counselling,
 - iv. provides pre-nuptial counselling,
 - v. gives spiritual direction,
 - vi. anoints and visits prisoners
 - vii. and the sick in hospitals
 - viii. and nursing homes,
 - ix. teaches *catechism* to children
 - x. and adults,
 - xi. baptizes,
 - xii. first confession
 - xiii. first holy communion
 - xiv. assist at confirmation
 - xv. liaise and organise with schools
 - xvi. witnesses marriages,
 - xvii. performs funerals
 - xviii. and burials,
 - xix. and cremations
 - xx. attends numerous parish
 - xxi. and diocesan meetings,
 - xxii. parish pastoral committee
 - xxiii. parish finance committee
 - xxiv. school board of governors
 - xxv. diocesan committees
 - xxvi. prayer groups
 - xxvii. prays privately every day,
 - xxviii. does spiritual and
 - xxix. theological reading, and
 - xxx. finds time to relax now and then with family and friends.
 - xxxi. And once a year, he's expected to make a five-day retreat
 - xxxii. in addition to doing his regular spiritual direction
 - xxxiii. and daily prayer.
 - xxxiv. Deal with complaints
 - xxxv. Listen to parishioners worries
 - xxxvi. Respect utmost confidentiality
- This list is not exhaustive*

Role of the Permanent Deacon

A Permanent Deacon is a man ordained by the Bishop of his diocese to serve the Church in a three-fold ministry:

The Ministry of Charity

He is particularly called to serve the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised. He may co-ordinate his parish's response to their needs, fostering and supporting parish groups and initiatives for those most in need. He has a special care for matters of social justice.

The Ministry of the Word

He proclaims the Gospel and sometimes preaches at Mass as well as presiding and preaching at funeral and burial services. He baptises and officiates at weddings, helping people to prepare for these sacraments. He leads the people in prayer and plays a leading role in the teaching and catechetical life of his parish community.

The Ministry of the Altar

He offers service at the altar at the Mass assisting the Bishop or Priest. He distributes Holy Communion at Mass, in hospital and in the homes of the sick, the housebound and the dying. He may coordinate the Eucharistic ministers and Communion visits within the parish. As well as parish ministry permanent deacons engage in a variety of other ministries including school, prison and hospital chaplaincy.

Candidates for the Permanent Diaconate must have the support of their parish priest and congregation and it is this community which they will serve after ordination. This means that they should be deeply rooted and engaged in their own parish and already be involved in works of service and exercising some leadership roles within this community.

The Permanent Diaconate is open to either single men over 35 who feel called to the celibate life or to married men over 35. Those who are married must have the support of their wife and family and accept that if their spouse should die before them they cannot remarry and would live in the celibate state.

Any candidate must demonstrate the necessary maturity and stability for this life-long commitment. They will be prepared to embark on four year part-time course of formation focusing on the four areas of spiritual, pastoral, human and intellectual development.

Most candidates will be in the world of work and continue to be so after ordination. Indeed it is the role of the Permanent Deacon to have 'one foot in the sanctuary and the other in the workplace'.

Above all, they will be men of faith and prayer with a desire to serve others for the sake of God's kingdom.

In what ways is the Church important to you?

Responses are grouped together under broad themes. Many of the responses occurred more than once.

Togetherness and Community

“I feel together with the all the millions around the world who want to seek out a lightness in their lives and profit from it,

Making a move above the selfishness that sucks us all into bad form.”

I associated the Church with forgiveness, acceptance and love. This is important to me as I believe these are all valuable things, it is very important to forgive others and yourself in certain times as well, it is important to accept others for who they are as well as to accept the things you cannot change. Finally, the word love, this relates to kindness, it is crucial we treat everyone with kindness and love in times of need.”

“The Church is important to me because it gives me a space for me to reflect on my own personal experiences in relation to being a Catholic such as family situation. It allows me a space to pray for loved ones especially those who have passed away. It gave me the opportunity to take my holy communion and confirmation which were important milestones in my life.”

Faith

- “Church is important to me as I feel it helps keep my faith strong.”
- The importance of the Gospel – the Word of God.
- The Church asks us to reflect on the Gospel story.
- The merciful and compassionate message of Jesus Christ and his forgiveness.
- A place to go to listen to God’s word and take home a message.
- When under hardship, turn to prayer.
- It provides a routine to my life. A place of prayer.
- It reminds me of my mother’s devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.
- The importance of family, community, tradition and faith practices.
- I feel loved by the Church and the community.
- I find solace in the love of God.
- The routine helps sometimes when abroad.
- It is my Sunday routine.
- I was born into a deep, faith-filled family – not fanatics but steeped in the Catholic faith.
- I love the ‘unity’ that binds us together worldwide.
- It is nice to go to other countries and the Mass is the same as at home.
- It welcomes sinners as well as saints. Rich traditions.
- Established by Christ over 2000 years ago, it has stood the test of time.
- Community and family; a community of Hope.
- The foundation of faith and means of salvation.

- It should be 'of the people, for the people' and, as Pope Francis said, a place of service, not of services.
- We receive the Sacraments from the Church.
- The Church means 'hope' for me after years of ill-health.
- It has given me hope and guidance to get through the darkest times.
- It gives me a sense of community and is a constant in my life.
- My faith protects me and guides me.
- Going to Mass and the Sacraments is my way of saying thanks to God for all his blessings, which are without number.
- It is important to me as a grandmother to pass on the faith for we all need the Church in our lives.
- The Church gave me my faith and morals.
- I know God loves me.
- The 'Church' is the community of people who gather there.
- Continuing to practice and pass on the faith to my family and school pupils is now my priority.
- The Church confirms me in my faith.
- Going to Mass and not receiving the Eucharist would mean nothing to me but receiving the Eucharist with Mass means everything.
- I hear the words of the Gospel every Sunday.
- I like the words of Donal Neary S.J. in the bulletin
- "It is a tradition to go to Church."
- "The Church is important to me as it gives me a safe place to express my beliefs with ease. Also going to Mass every Sunday with family creates a powerful tradition."
- "The Church is important to me as it is a direct channel from Jesus instructing me how to live my life and gives me the blessings of being able to participate in the sacraments which can be found in no other Church. The Church is my star of Bethlehem, so long as I can follow their light to the best of my ability even after I fall and fall again, I am forgiven comforted and embraced by her divine Lord"

Family

- "Makes me closer to my family. Gives me something to do."
- "The Church gives me a unique way to connect to God. Whether that is by myself for time to reflect and ask God for advice or support with current events, or whether it is with my family or friends and teachers during school. Attending Church is also a great way for me to connect with and spend time with my grandmother, who is very devoted to God."
- "The Church is important to me from a very young age. Being able to make your sacraments at Church and feeling being close to God. Church every Sunday is a time that we get to spend as a family out of our busy lives, we make the time to go to Mass. Not only Church but the presence of God allows me to feel safe in this world we live in."

Guidance & Need

- "I've always went to Mass since I was little and I've always been taught that when in times of need you should turn to the Church for guidance. The Church is important to me as it is a tradition within our family to go to 12 o'clock Mass every Sunday. I feel

as though Mass is a quiet place to think and reflect on your decisions and to also listen deeply to what the Priest is saying and try to resonate with it, therefore the Church holds an important place within my life.

- A few events have happened in my life and I always prayed to God through my tough time and in general.”
- “I have enjoyed the support of the Church at times of great distress. I know it’s there if I should require help. It gives me confidence to face whatever lies in front of me. The Church has changed greatly in my lifetime (70 yrs) but Christ’s message of love remains the same. I hold to that.
- “The Church is important to me as it holds tradition with my family. It is something all my family turn to in their time of need.”
- “I am severely mentally ill and the church stopped me from committing suicide.”
- “The Church is always there for me, I am very bereaved- the Church is where I can feel close to the deceased.
- “The Church gives hope, help and consolation through prayer and the sacraments. It is always there. God is always there. it fulfils a need for all age groups from the cradle to the grave.”

Discussion/Learning

- “Brings people together like one big family. Allows to meet and discuss Christ with others.”
- “It nourishes me spiritually. I learn more about my Catholic faith. I am strengthened spiritually by the example and commitment of other like-minded people. By sharing with others in Lection Divina groups I am enriched and further educated in Scripture and prayers, and I gain many trustworthy friendships. The witness of others is a significant important aspect of Church for me, by being able to attend retreats and days of prayer is another blessing.”

Priests & Structure

“When I loved one if ill at home or in hospital, the Priest is the one high on the list to notify. They are always ready to accommodate and help the bereaved when that person passes away. Visits to the home, prayers of the bedside, and their before the remains leave their home, before the funeral Mass. What would we do without this marvellous Church?”

“Provides a focal point for my devotion and faith. See it as the nucleus for setting the standards that we live by. Provides a structure that everyone can understand.”

Social, Family and Service

- We have also become more aware of other Churches and religious groups, Lection Divina, Bible Studies and many others. The Church can provide an unending source for developing and growing as a Catholic and a Christian interested in worldwide development issues, saving our planet, poverty, peace and war. The list is endless!”
- “The Church is important to me as a place of calm and reassurance during trying times. Church to me is the community and the people in service for each other.”
- It’s a community listening together but a community of strangers, alas.
- I loved the ‘Far East’ and ‘St. Patrick’s Magazine’ when I was growing up; they were like the Church’s window on the world.
- The Church reminds me of the transient nature of life on earth.

- It helps keep me focused on the worship of God.
- For me, the Church is a safe space to go to. I also experience the Church outside of the physical structure; there is freedom to talk to God; the Lord, for me, is everywhere: at home, at work, everywhere I go. Growing up we went to Mass and still do. However, now I feel a very strong connection and deeper relationship with God.
- The Church supports me in my relationship with God. For me the Church is a community which I share in, no matter where I am in the world. I am a proud Catholic.
- It is more important to my family than to me; I do not attend regularly.
- I was baptized a Catholic and continue to practice my faith, so it is very important to me.

Church and Mission

- “What do we mean by Church? Community of people supporting my faith. How we work within that. Sense of belonging when you are able you help and when you need it they help you. So many are a part- but they don’t help not just parishioners but in hierarchy- they have lost their way. Sense of community and commonality support and solace and fellow members. Life getting life of this – group with common belief.
- Greatest moments- times when people of the Church got together and tried to make a difference.
- Young parents brought their children to Mass.
- The candle lit vigil for the young boy (Polish) who died.
- More people committed to it, it would be more alive.

We don’t challenge our Catholics enough. It should not be about personalities. Good moment. Creative focus- people to experience a Mission a continuous Mission

“The Church has always been important to me and my family. Every occasion revolves around the Church, baptism, Holy Communion confirmation and marriage and lastly funerals. When in need prayer is my first thing I turn to and so far I have never been let down.”

Mass & Eucharist

- “It’s a source of comfort unbelonging in times of trouble. It’s a safe, quiet and holy space in which to pray. I like going to weekly and daily Mass as a way of keeping in touch with my Catholic faith. I like the spirituality of benediction and Eucharistic adoration weekly.”
- “I feel the Church is important to my family and I as we attend Church weekly, both of individuals and family. The Church is well kept and I would not like to see the Church closed because people are not independent. Unfortunately, since COVID-19 and Churches had to close to the public, this has made the attendance of services stop. However, in recent months and Churches reopening, it is good to be able to return to Sunday Mass and able to receive the sacraments.”
- “I enjoy attending Mass and take part in choir. It was important to me that I teach my children about their religion. I pray in time they will come back to practicing.”

- “At grassroots level it’s the sense of community. I also feel better after being present at Mass and receiving communion. I was glad of being able to take remotely part in Mass during lockdown, but I missed the physical presence.”
- “Our beloved Catholic Church has always been most important to me. Especially its Traditional Latin Mass with which I was brought up. Its teaching and preaching of God’s word which has dramatically changed since Vatican 2. We need to go back to this. People need to hear God’s word every Sunday. If we do not hear it, we forget it. Getting things easier does not encourage people to come into the church. If there is no strict rules and no lines to be crossed, then why do we.”
- “Foundation for my moral values. In the midst of all i.e., weakness/sexual deviations/abortion. etc. sense of belonging to wider community. Keeps Eucharist at heart of life-very important.”
- “It is my second home. With the availability of access to daily Mass and the Blessed Sacrament. It provides a link with the Catholic community and the priests of the parish. In addition, a place to offer my time and skills to the church. I’m proud to be a Catholic.”

“The Church, that is my Parish Church and the Parish Community is very important to me. The Big Church however has really little impact on me as it takes so long for change to happen.”

The importance of Church

“The Church is important to me because it gives me a space for me to reflect on my own personal experiences in relation to being a Catholic such as family situation. It allows me a space to pray for loved ones especially those who have passed away. It gave me the opportunity to take my holy communion and confirmation which were important milestones in my life.”

“It is fundamental to everything I am and do. Like the majority of Catholics my faith has been rocked to the core by the recent scandals which are still ongoing but I have to remind myself that my faith is still intact but the Church needs to regain the trust and respect of the laity. I feel so sorry for all those good Priests monks and nuns who have been let down and sullied by the evil clique who have been protected”.

Can I ask why Boris Johnston allowed to marry in the Catholic Church – he has been married twice before and his first marriage lasted 25 years? This is an insult to all those Catholics who have been refused the right to marry a partner whose marriage broke down through no fault of their own.”

“At the moment, the Church is not important to me. There is a lot of hypocrisy in the Roman Catholic institute. If I choose to believe in God and the Holy Christ, I don’t need to visit a large building and have a man quote out scripture from the bible to believe. I can have faith without the need for Money led ceremonies.”

Losing Faith

“My religion is very important to me because as a child I learned how to be a Catholic Christian. By living by my penny catechism. It taught me all about my God. I know to be a good Christian. The children today have so little knowledge about their faith. If we lose the children, the faith will disappear. So sad!!!”

Church and Duty

“Let me define what I mean by charge of the community of people who energise me and challenge me by the good example, to do good for others. This community is very important to me. Having had time to reflect over the past two years of restrictions, I have moved away in heart and soul from the old Church of pre-Covid; desperate to get numbers really up the aisle. Jesus began with 12, he had one breakaway but it did not cause him to lose Hope. The Church is important to me, thanks to my up bring in my family. We were taught to pray, be kind, generous, look out for others less well blessed. The Church didn’t always follow on along those lines with rules and regulations for the people of God and different standards for some of themselves. The Church is not all that important to me today, and its present form of governance.” Church isn’t really important to me because you can have faith without going to Church.”

The Church is important in a tradition way. The Church is a superstition.”

Choice

“The Church growing up has something that I was made to believe was important to me, however as I’ve gotten older, I don’t deem the Church an important aspect of life. I want to choose whatever faith I feel would best suit me.”

Poor Leadership and Disrespect

“Give access to the celebration of sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Many Priests have to bring the good news to people through their preaching on the way they live their lives in the service of God. In the past I would have looked to the Church for guidance. But given various events where the Code of Canon Law and Church documents appears to have feet preceded the teaching of Jesus. I don’t have the greatest confidence in the Church. Particularly in Ireland. Despite the often poor leadership, I have continued to practice. The Eucharist is central in my life and I acknowledge that the Church continues to confirm, affirm the centrality of the Eucharist. However, the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist has not always been protected, nor being given due respect. Why it is good that the laity were possible, making offering what would Jesus say about a fat charge for celebrating the Eucharist, a gift of himself so freely given.

Corporate Church

“As expression of love, decency, caring and moral pathway though life. Good people can do without an established Church. What extra -for me can be reassuring to be part of same-minded community. Want the peace, genuine spiritualism can give. Too often feel that the working Church has lost this. It has become too wrapped up in the corporate world.”

How can the Church welcome and include everyone?

Responses are grouped together under broad themes. Many of the responses occurred more than once.

Welcome & Inclusion

- ❖ Does welcome and include everyone – emphasize that no one will judge you
- ❖ “I would like to think everyone already feels welcome and included in the Church but maybe hold a Mass or a meeting for people who may want to start practicing their faith more.”
- ❖ The Church already says Mass in different languages. One in which I am aware of is Polish. This allows people to feel included. Celebrating different cultures
- ❖ Church does welcome all. Safe space for all.
- ❖ “The Church does welcome and include everyone. I think in this day and age it is more a personal commitment for people to regularly attend.”
- ❖ The Church is doing a good job, a lot of good work being done
- ❖ “Yes, all are welcome no one excluded, it is very comforting to belong to a body of Priests and people who are steadfast in their belief and dedicated to serving God. No matter what time of day or night, a Priest never complains about being called upon, to serve and I would imagine it’s not only in our Diocese but elsewhere as well.”
- ❖ We all have a vital part to play in welcoming each other – welcoming committee
- ❖ The Church welcomes everyone as soon as you come through the door
- ❖ “If people want to be welcomed, there are plenty of opportunities for that example, the Parish bulletin, Parish Info, Online, parish office, et cetera.”
- ❖ “It can welcome everyone by making everyone feel the same, safe, loved and protected.”
- ❖ Greet people on the way into mass - cup of tea after mass
- ❖ “The doors to Church should not be closed to anyone as we all deserve a second chance. Through prayers and activities everyone can also be welcomed.”
- ❖ Pastoral council/ushers welcome people at mass – welcome packs for new parish members
- ❖ “Covid introduced the web cam that helped the housebound to connect with the faith of the church the way the radio did in the past. - Online Mass “I think the church is doing a great job at connecting with people who cannot attend in person.”
- ❖ Need for social gatherings e.g., cup of tea after mass etc.
- ❖ Create ‘cups of tea’ occasions after Mass so that newcomers and ‘non-natives’ can get to know the local community.
- ❖ Include elderly parishioners over tea/coffee and a chat after Mass.
- ❖ Learn from other countries.
- ❖ Invite speakers

Role of Women & those on the Margins

- Need women priests – involve more women in general
- Needs to adapt and change with the times e.g., “Being more including and sympathetic to the LGBTQ+ community.
- Changing their views on Marriage of Priest and allow women to become Priests”
- Accept homosexual marriage – Respect the LGBTQ+ community
- Need for women priests – “The vow of celibacy should be optional not compulsory”

- More women in key roles
- More welcoming of other faiths – “Welcoming people from other religions and all ages”
- “Unfortunately, the church cannot be all inclusive when there is restrictions on women’s role in the church.”
- Create more communication with the ‘on-line community’.
- Widen horizons.
- Include women.
- Women must have access to all seven sacraments and not be barred from Holy Orders.
- I think the Church needs to provide more opportunities to encourage women to take active roles in the Church; I don’t mean organizing tea parties or cleaning the chapel – but in roles equivalent to deacons. Women are great organisers and can generate great community spirit and will create activities and an atmosphere which are attractive. P.S. I say this as a 63-year-old man by the way.
- Clergy need to speak words of welcome clearly and sincerely to all those living on the margins (e.g., immigrants; gay & lesbian; people with HIV) who will, in turn, spread the word.
- Be inclusive of LGBT people and other groups who do not feel welcome.
- We should have a discussion about gay people.
- I have a large group of friends from the LGBTQ+ community. I feel they have been disillusioned by what happened in the dark past of the Church, i.e. abuse. My friends are beautiful souls but angry at the past. If not already taking place, could the Church approach the LGBT+ community in venues they attend and have an open discussion? I will continue the discussion with my friends when meeting them. I also think that same-sex partners should be allowed to have the sanctity of marriage.

Abuse

- ❖ Hierarchy needs to accept responsibility for abuse /apologise for the hurt caused – “People at the top who covered up, turned a blind eye, should have resigned. They are still there”
- ❖ Needs to have an annual day of atonement where the Church recognises its faults

Clergy

- ❖ Priests should go into local schools
- ❖ Priests always include everyone in their prayers which helps people feel included
- ❖ Church could do different services – “for example a sermon on forgiveness, stress, fear etc. More in depth: Extracts from the bible and hard-core Christian Values.”
- ❖ Deacons/Nuns easing the load on Priests
- ❖ Make sermons shorter
- ❖ Homilies need to be more relevant to modern life
- ❖ Be less formal – titles and clothing worn by priests etc.
- ❖ Priests need to be more “people friendly”
- ❖ Priests mental and physical health should be monitored, and care given where needed
- ❖ Priests now more willing to go into non catholic schools e.g. Special schools and participate in celebrations

- ❖ Priests need to think “outside the building” and members of the congregation appointed as those who welcome needed. – “no effort is made to engage or become acquainted with the people they are meant to serve”
- ❖ Priests need to be more “visibly connected” to all parishioners – online presence needed – outside Churches speaking to people
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- ❖ Priests do not have time to visit parishioners etc. as there are so few of them
- ❖ “Might be more welcoming if priests were permitted to marry. “
- ❖ Conflicting rules from parishes/priests to parishes/priests
- ❖ Allow the priest to be more ‘in the community’, among the people
- ❖ Hear the priest being more welcoming and inclusive towards the marginalized
- ❖ Allow priests to be human beings; let them socialize without judgement
- ❖ Make sermons relevant.
- ❖ Make sermons more ‘people friendly.
- ❖ Send people home with a message.

Participation & Involvement

- ❖ Being a reader, altar server, choir member etc. helps include all
- ❖ Teams of parishioners taking responsibility for various tasks e.g., Baptisms, New Parishioners etc.
- ❖ Being part of choirs, altar societies etc. helps people feel included
- ❖ John Paul II awards, Alpha groups, Children’s masses
- ❖ Be involved in activities in the community like fun days, sporting events, group activities etc.
- ❖ Host events for people of different cultures – foreign nationals, travelers etc.
- ❖ Let the laity have more participation in the Liturgy
- ❖ Allow people to talk from the altar. On perhaps 1. Their own spiritual journey 2. Things like homelessness 3. Helping people with unwanted pregnancies. Make the Church alive! With people. (Not so fixated on whether people are straight, gay, married, divorced etc. etc.)”
- ❖ People who want to introduce new ideas or just need to be heard should be given a platform within the parishes to be able to do this.”
- ❖ Begin from ‘the bottom-up’, welcoming everyone.
- ❖ Do something positive to get people talking.
- ❖ Help the community to get to know each other over tea.
- ❖ Does the suspicion of ‘blow-ins’ in the community reach Church culture as well?
- ❖ By demonstrating that the Church welcomes and includes everyone rather than just saying it. e.g. the separated; divorced; homosexuals; all ‘sinners’.
- ❖ Streamable Masses were helpful during ‘lockdown’ as it meant people could still practice their faith and could be in contact with others.

Families – including the influence of

- “In my personal experience it was my family member who encouraged me to attend. Since then, 3 years ago, I’ve felt that it is a peaceful and calming environment that allows me a moment to not worry about stresses that are ongoing in my life. I think

that people should willingly attend and not feels pressured, so they enjoy the experience.”

- “By going from a young age it turns into routine and helps to form who you became, becoming a better personI myself was a part of the choir which made me more included within the Church community.”
- “From a young age my mum has always take me to Church. My granny is a very religious woman who influence my mother in a positive way to actively partake in Sunday Mass. This tradition has passed from great granny to my granny to my mum to me. Therefore, I have always felt welcomed by the Church my entire life.”
- Make it more child friendly
- Mass needs to be family friendly – different languages
- Children’s ministry e.g. separate developmentally appropriate gospels with older teenagers etc.
- Children’s Music/Drama will bring parents/grandparents.”
- Sound proofed section of Church for families
- Include children who made first communion in other services and ways to encourage their families to keep coming to mass
- “I was so very pleased to pick up a copy of The Kids Bulletin at Mass on Sunday. I believe this type of inclusion and reaching out to families and children is the only way forward.”
- Need children’s liturgy and family mass – “make the gospel more interesting by personal experiences that people can connect with”.

Buildings and facilities

- ❖ Church buildings open longer hours
- ❖ “All Churches should have a building or access to one for meetings, social events talks, charity fundraisers, youth clubs,.....”

Church Belief/Practice

- ❖ Remain faithful to teaching of Christ
- ❖ “Fundamental beliefs shouldn’t be diluted to pander to modern society.”
- ❖ Bible study groups needed
- ❖ Church needs to go back to basic teachings
- ❖ Get rid of a lot of the man-made doctrine in Canon Law
- ❖ Work with other faiths
- ❖ Need more retreats
- ❖ The process of discernment is critical
- ❖ “It needs love and laughter, forgiveness, a place we can go to it to be renewed, help and not made to feel bad.”
- ❖ “The celebration of the Sacraments beginning with Baptism provide opportunities for welcome and inclusion.... Welcome is given by the kindness and consideration of each person in the congregation towards the other as a brother or sister in Christ.”
- ❖ Bring back traditions / “Has to move away from traditions and embrace new ways ideas”
- ❖ By living the truth of the Gospel message.
- ❖ Bible – outdated and old views

Acceptance

- ❖ Accept people from other faiths.
- ❖ Accept people from all races and nationalities.
- ❖ Accept abortion.
- ❖ Be respectful of all genders female, male or others.”
- ❖ “Accept abortion may be an option due to circumstances e.g. rape. Many women feel judged.”
- ❖ Be more open
- ❖ “Christ had love for all and accepted all so surely the Church should follow Christ’s ideals and become more accepting of LGBTQ+ community and others” - single mothers, drug addicts etc.
- ❖ “People with disabilities and people with dementia should be given needed attention and appropriate ministries.”
- ❖ Support people with broken marriages
- ❖ An exclusive NOT inclusive attitude – people excluded from sacraments – “I am the product of a broken marriage, I didn't leave the marriage, my wife did. I am now in another relationship with a woman I love but I can't receive the Sacraments...how can the Church make me feel welcome and inclusive.” / “Involve everyone “
- ❖ Need to give blessings/sacraments etc. to 2nd relationships
- ❖ “I find it very difficult to reconcile the Gospel of love of everyone with a structure that is possibly the last sexist institution in the western world.”
- ❖ Mention mental health week/Pride month etc. “it could however be mentioned during mass that homosexual people are welcome to attend mass and visit their local churches if they wish.”
- ❖ “In countries where there is no pro-life pregnancy centres, I believe the Church should step up and provide support for these women so that they will have everything they need to choose life for their baby regardless of whether they are religious or not.”
- ❖ Church needs to stop being judgmental – “The gay/straight issue shouldn't even be an issue in our Church. If we are all meant to be made 'in the image and likeness of God', then what is the issue? I don't think God ever made a mistake - we are as God meant us to be.” – “Accept the LGBTQIN+ community Allow abortions Allow gay marriage Allow women priests Allow priests to get married Allow gay/transgender priests Modernise bible Allow divorce”
- ❖ Church is stale and self-serving
- ❖ Church needs to stop being judgmental
- ❖ Need to give blessings/sacraments etc. to 2nd relationships
- ❖ Need to include all cultures and disabilities
- ❖ The welcome should start with children – youth clubs/bible clubs/arts and crafts, include children in liturgy
- ❖ More open minded, not judgmental and understanding about sexual preferences.

Youth

- ❖ Use language that appeals to youth
- ❖ More communications to get everyone involved
- ❖ Youth centres should have a Chaplain

- ❖ More activities to appeal to children and youth and include their parents
- ❖ Have a designated person to go into schools and give presentations as to why Church is important and that all are accepted
- ❖ Include children in the choir.
- ❖ Don't be judgmental about crying children.
- ❖ Be more child-friendly. We need to be more inclusive of children
- ❖ Have children's events at Christmas and Easter.
- ❖ Have young readers.
- ❖ Sunday School, for a brief time after Mass, while parents chat.
- ❖ Get youth involved.
- ❖ Bring Church teaching into schools.

Communication

- ❖ More visible socially – use social media as outreach
- ❖ Promote volunteering opportunity.
- ❖ Need banners/advertising on Church gates – “why do we not see banners with Come Inside, visit and pray - adoration in progress Come Join us - parish retreat Come inside - Hear the word of God, Bible Study time Come Home- sacrament of reconciliation in progress”
- ❖ “It is important to tell people during mass, via parish websites, perhaps via social media, via leaflets etc. that every human being is welcome in the house of the Lord and that if one wishes to attend mass or visit church they will not be turned away.”

Finances & Governance

- ❖ Church needs to declare assets and use these funds to pay restitution for abuse – not use Parishioners offerings
- ❖ Transparency
- ❖ Committees need to change regularly – not always the same people
- ❖ Elect parish committees rather than select
- ❖ Stop covering up past mistakes

Outreach

- ❖ Visiting the sick/housebound
- ❖ Congregation all need to be welcoming and inclusive – we are all the Church
- ❖ Arrange meetings for various age groups where people can share their talents and offer services to Church
- ❖ Use everyone's talents and Listen to the people
- ❖ Celebratory masses for community/sports events
- ❖ Sunday schools, scouts, guides etc.

How can people be listened to more effectively and encouraged to participate in decision-making within the Church?

Responses are grouped together under broad themes. Many of the responses occurred more than once.

LISTENING

- Include Church members — discussion groups/suggestion boxes (and checked regularly!) Draw members from various townlands/parish societies to ensure representation.
- People are less inclined to engage if they don't feel listened to.
- Have 60% of parish councils made up of women and young people
- Reach out to the poor to give them a voice
- People should feel comfortable to speak their mind in Church
- The Church should spend more time in silence to allow people to speak to God in the quietness.
- Focus groups for communities to gain views of the local people (AGM?); collaborate with MLAs
- Monthly parish meetings, advertised in notices/bulletins
- I feel we are listened to as I have been involved since a child
- The Synod is an effective way to listen to young people — the outcome will demonstrate whether listening takes place
- Learn from other religions
- Quarterly bulletin surveys to draw out the silent opinions
- Be pro-active rather than re-active.
- Monthly, facilitated feedback meetings with parishioners
- Forums to air opinions without being on a committee
- Decision-making at meetings open to all parishioners
- Not all priests encourage pastoral councils as they feel their power is questioned
- Follow-up is necessary when parishioners have input in decisions
- Questionnaires and surveys will not renew the Church; go deeper, attentive to the voice of Christ, heard through listening to others
- Pray for enlightened, guided, committed men and women.
- Use of social media
- The child abuse scandals must be acknowledged for how they've harmed the Church. Do the hierarchy 'get' how angry people are?
- Who are the parish council; how do we approach them?
- Call people in small groups together to pray: 1) pray; 2) listen; 3) expect the Holy Spirit; 4) record what is shared. It's not all about good ideas and opinions
- Pastoral councils are an important medium between people of the parish and the Church
- People who are not regular churchgoers often have real reasons of concern which should be considered
- Develop a sense of ownership among people; Vatican II on the full acceptance of the People of God
- The Church can come across very middle-class which is off-putting
- LISTEN; LISTEN; LISTEN; LISTEN.

- Church needs a clear vision for the path ahead taking account of the teachings of Jesus, society today, and hurts of the past
- It isn't possible to have ALL decisions in a parish taken by ALL people. What is necessary is people of expertise, along with the expertise of the clergy, and humility to listen
- Develop the skill of listening, asking good questions, allowing vulnerability with each other, all through the common bond and communion of baptism

COMMUNICATION

- ❖ Let us know what decisions are to be taken, e.g., prices of graves, status of parish property.
- ❖ Explain the rationale of decisions made
- ❖ Have open meetings of pastoral and finance councils
- ❖ If the Church changes and is open about changes, it will be much better, as in Christ's time
- ❖ Give parishioners information on what is planned and seek initial responses to inform direction
- ❖ Have a vision and communicate it to the people
- ❖ Help priests whose first language is not English
- ❖ Be open and honest about financial difficulties
- ❖ Being thankful for financial contributions goes down well.
- ❖ Do workshops to explain the Mass and everything we do in Catholic religion without knowing the meaning of.
- ❖ Use a PR firm to advertise
- ❖ Develop a feeling that we are part of a worldwide Church: news about Pope and development in his thinking
- ❖ Open conversation and workshops with all. I am currently attending the 'Alpha' course. 'Alpha' is amazing, but I am hungry for something when it is finished. I am encouraged to share my learning with work mates and parents I work with.
- ❖ The Church should be less hierarchical; clergy should be on the same level as the people.
- ❖ How can people have a discussion to air their views or ideas unless parishioners meet regularly?
- ❖ There are little to no opportunities for people to have a say – they are simply not asked.
- ❖ We need a space to open up discussions between clergy and community, e.g. coffee after Mass, to share ideas.
- ❖ Send ideas to the people of the Church; send ideas via email; look out for ideas over a cup of tea after Mass. Maybe once a month ask people for their views on decisions that have to be made.
- ❖ A proper parish website, with a youth element and a facility for webinars and discussions.
- ❖ Social Media is the key: that's how young people connect today and is a great way to garner public interest, albeit with safeguards.

OUTREACH

- Bring news of the Church out to the local community
- Hold small community events that bring people together

- Talk about Church/parish/faith in school more
- Open the churches for community events
- More presence of priests in community
- Presentations on drug-taking and suicide
- Clergy should mix more with people, at bingo, tea after Mass, living among the people as neighbours
- Encourage food banks
- Reach out to the generation lost through clerical and church abuse and failures
- Show equality and welcome by sending Christians out to the community, actively demonstrating a Christ-like gracious attitude.
- Church needs money and function but must never be run as a business
- Encourage parents to start mother/toddler groups, or youth clubs
- Church community on campuses is a welcoming place for lonely students

CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

- Send young people on leadership training courses
- Give lead roles to young people in technology, social media & planning projects
- More activities for younger children
- Take opinions of young people through schools
- Schools can be a venue for parents to meet clergy with questions/issues
- After-school groups/clubs focusing on faith, supported by parish
- After-Mass groups for young people to meet each other
- Youth Council
- Respectful debates with teenagers help to show the Church listens
- Let young people see their views are as important as everyone else's.
- Schools need to teach more religion, including questionnaires and discussion groups
- Make prayer relevant, interesting, inviting, feel-good and full of love
- Youth retreats on mindfulness and mental health. Youth cafés to create safe spaces
- Christian-type X-factor to encourage young people use their skills while discovering the person of Jesus
- Be familiar with help centres for people with special needs, including mother & baby centres; young mothers and fathers.
- Visit youth clubs and schools to understand needs.
- Youth need a forum to appraise what is offered them and to develop better systems.
- Visit the schools.

ROLES

- ❖ Rotate membership of pastoral councils and have an active priest
- ❖ Train pastoral council members in personal relationship with Jesus
- ❖ Let everyone know that roles in cleaning, singing, ministries of Word and Eucharist are open to all who volunteer. Ask people rather than wait for volunteers.
- ❖ More activities to make the Church more interesting. More volunteering opportunities
- ❖ Voices and talents of women are being wasted; the powers that be are dragging their feet while other churches have women deacons and ministers
- ❖ Women in administrative roles to the highest level
- ❖ Increased numbers of deacons (men and women) for injection of life into parish
- ❖ Congregation needs to attend regularly and give generously to upkeep of the parish
- ❖ Members of parish councils should be made known (and minutes of meetings)

- ❖ Need lay leaders willing to pass on expertise.
- ❖ Ordain women; no barriers set by males clinging to power for themselves
- ❖ Terrible missed opportunity not ordaining women in the new deacons
- ❖ Committees/groups should not be formed unless the members are allowed to be involved in decision-making
- ❖ Have a mature conversation around what roles and decisions lay people can best participate in. Maturity and flexibility required on part of lay people that while they can contribute, they are not decision-makers, and not every suggestion will be acted on.
- ❖ A means of lay participation and decision-making should be fostered
- ❖ Pastoral councils should be more visible in parish and take the lead for priests who are busy
- ❖ Encourage all Church groups to membership training and reporting their activity
- ❖ Emphasise people's qualities more
- ❖ Clergy and laity should seek roles, including decision-making roles, from the point of view of service
- ❖ Avoid a hierarchy of important people

WELCOME

- Homosexuality should be more welcomed as many religious gay people do not feel welcome
- Treating everyone equally would be a start to participating in decision-making
- How can we involve people if they are not interested?

DECISION MAKING

- Decision-making in the Church doesn't interest me.
- Ask people what they think of a decision before it becomes final, especially when contentious (e.g. compensation).
- Priests should be more willing to take on parishioners' points of view
- Accept lay people in day to day running of the Church, leading by compassion, generosity and kindness
- Cease the influence and control of Rome regarding the day-to-day running of the parish
- Involve qualified retired people to help priests with day-to-day Church matters
- How do we know what decisions we can participate in and which we can't?
- Consistency and transparency in decision-making, favoring not just the elites and wealthy (citing Boris Johnson's marriage)
- Priests select people they know too often — invite all parishioners to take part
- Transfer financial decision-making entirely to lay people
- Decide things in a democratic way
- The Church has not wanted to act on views if they oppose the vision of the Church; so how much would those making decisions engage with the people?
- There are many levels and areas of decision-making
- Real decision-making has never been offered to the ordinary member of the congregation. I doubt the Church and priests would accept what lay people decide.
- Be informed when decisions are imminent.
- Give women a decision-making role in church governing, politics, business. Other churches have all benefit highly by making women equal.

- Having a suggestion box in church where people could put their ideas and suggestions in.
- So far as we understand that neither clergy or laity can change doctrine or dogma, but can be encouraged to promote said doctrine dogma.
- This can be more difficult. People may be reluctant to do so as it makes them more accountable for what can go wrong. It is always easier to blame someone else, need to work on the sense of community.
- Parish group meetings. I thought the meeting with our priest for the communion parents was very useful.
- Be more directly involved Such as questionnaires like these /informal gatherings. Church needs to provide opportunities for feedback, Informal chat.
- I think that the parish council could be a very important part of parish life.
- I personally do not feel excluded from the decision-making of the Church. It would be more than my ability to make a contribution it limited. However, priest within parishes is maybe under time pressure to cover essential services & are not able to spend time communicating with people outside of church services. For example, schools sport clubs. This could create the pathway for bringing members of the Community into church decision-making.
- Ask for written feedback and ideas. Informal time after mass to talk with the priest.

CHURCH BELIEF/PRACTICE

- Have a more modern view on rules within religion
- Read the Bible
- Abandon older thoughts and beliefs to encourage more people to become priests: priests to marry; women should be allowed to become priests
- Issues in today's society
- Treat co-habitation as normal
- More opportunities for confession
- Allow suggestions for the homily.
- Change music to gospel hymns
- Allow lay people, women and young people included, to give homily
- While change must happen, keep respect for the Mass and sacraments
- Pre-sacramental meetings not just for baptism but for First Communion and Confirmation
- Complete courses in order to receive sacraments in order to re-engage parents
- Make scripture alive, a living word; Jesus is alive and well! The Bible is for everyday living
- Why is annulment acceptable, but divorce is not?
- People are no longer interested in personal confession; the answer is general confession
- Sermons about St Paul's letters and the love of Jesus do little to inspire enthusiasm
- Establish in people the truth about sin and forgiveness, the power of the Church in helping us to eternal life. This will encourage people to be part again and want to help.

CLERGY

- Let priests have a life
- Not enough priests
- Clergy should be seen to interact with people, not only when celebrating the sacraments
- Get away from priests making decisions without consideration of the people
- Lack of vocations and few young priests hampers the Church's ability to reach out.
- If you do not know your priest, who in the Church is listening to you?
- Priests should be more inclusive in community centres, schools and children's lives to help mould their faith.
- Priests need to go back to the tradition of visiting families in the parish; get to know your parishioners in their own environment.
- Clergy need to go out more into the community.
- The clergy need to let go of control and power, listen to the people. I have felt in the past the clergy kept us at Arm's length & didn't really want to get to know their parishioners, not all clergy behave like that, with a lot of very good clergy. Dromore diocese have had a very bad press because people were not listened to and treated right in the past. I feel so sorry for good clergy who have been very hurt by all of this.

How can more people be encouraged to participate in the life of the Church?

Responses are grouped together under broad themes. Many of the responses occurred more than once.

“The love of Christ motivates us”

To fully participate in the life of the Church, we need to take responsibility and in doing so fulfil scripture... “I came that you may have Life and have it to the full”

Key Findings:

- **Encourage Families and Children**
 - **More involvement for Youth**
 - **Empowerment of Women in the Church**
- **“Welcome”**
 - Make Church welcoming
 - Clergy need to know their flock
 - A ‘welcome at the door’
 - Let the priest meet the people after Mass
 - Make it a ‘happy place’ – no favourites
 - More inclusive of Minorities
 - Polish Mass a good example of pastoral care
 - Inclusive language for those with
 - Dementia
 - Intellectual disability
 - Those who are ‘non-academic’ – sermons can be difficult to understand
 - ‘Autistic area’ (former ‘crying rooms’ may be suitable)
 - Welcome ‘Newcomers’ to the parish
 - More support for refugees
 - If they feel ‘Welcomed’ they will want to feel involved
 - **Welcome Events – Outside of Church building**
 - Coffee Mornings
 - Offer Breakfast mornings - tea after Mass
 - Mother and toddler group
 - Fun, social activities for young people
 - Parish BBQ
 - Book club
 - Inter parish events
 - Cross community events
 - Support groups - Bereavement ministry, family support
 - **Some people DO NOT feel welcomed**
 - LGBTQ community
 - Separated / Divorced individuals
 - “Welcome back Mass” to those who have previously felt excluded

Children & Families

- Needs life colour and warmth, too traditional. Modernise make the ceremonies family friendly.
- Children's liturgy to be in all parishes
- Go into school to promote parish community (respondent gave email as willing to do so)
- Formation offered to young families in preparation of the Sacraments
- Children will bring their parents/ family along
- Need volunteers with talents to help in administration.
- Need people to give money for services rendered.
- Organise events to encourage people to attend, e.g., Alpha for visibility of church, Picnic in Garden.
- Organise a Lotto but a parish manager would be needed.
- Encourage family involvement
 - Family participation at Mass - A Joyous 'Family Mass'
 - Volunteer to clean / look after church
 - Family Prayer
- **Youth**
 - Young People need to feel they are welcome in the Church- *'they are the Church of today and not the future'*
 - They need a more active role
 - Formation required post confirmation
 - Employ a Pastoral worker in the Parish with responsibility for youth
 - Acknowledge existing programmes
 - JPPII Award is excellent to get young people involved
 - Follow up required for young adults, post JPPII Award
 - Need 'something' for young people who are less academic
 - How do you recreate at Parish level the experience of young people at
 - VAKS – Volunteer at Knock
 - World Youth Day
 - Summer camps - returning to parish can be 'flat' after such a positive experience
 - What is being offered to Youth is not relevant
 - More contact between the chapel and the schools to have the children involved in the Mass, readings, prayers of the faithful and carrying up gifts, giving classes different weeks to be involved.
- **Greater involvement of Women in the Church**
 - Why can't women be Deacons?
 - Why are women given 'lesser roles'
 - *"Most volunteers are women in my Parish, that is putting men off"*
- The Church needs to have women in more important roles not necessarily as priests. Today's young people will not accept the position as it is. Already we see the Church forgotten about after the Sacraments. There is a lot of competition for the attention of the young – we need their help to keep the Church alive and relevant.
- **Ministry**
 - **Personal invite from Priest** – if asked personally to feel 'needed/wanted'
 - ALL Clergy must be open to laity involvement

- Need to be aware of co- responsibility... they need to be an active member of the church
- Ask people to share their 'gifts'
- We have a Church of 'old people' - we need to get young people involved
- Ministry not for 'select few' – too many 'cliques', frustrating same people 'doing everything'
- Terms of ministry- not committed for 'life' – Refresh committees
- Ministry to acknowledged at Diocesan level for volunteers 5/10/25 yrs.. this acknowledges extraordinary commitment and can be motivation to others
- People only feel 'Ministry' is for Mass goers
- Descriptor of Ministry and expectations
- Training must be provided
- Difficulty in recruitment due to data protection - an 'open invitation' may attract the 'wrong volunteer'
- **Church**
 - Better Communication / transparency
 - Mass and Church need to be relevant
 - Become more humble
 - Openly and reservedly acknowledge the past
 - Regain trust, and this will encourage participation
 - Church more daring: offer young couples' space for childcare; space for the homeless; active engagement with Laudate SI – beautifying church building / grounds, eco friendly
 - Embrace technology - more than websites... Facebook/Twitter/ Instagram
 - Make being Catholic - 'Cool'
 - Community activity - food banks; fundraising
 - Open Parish Meetings – similar to AGM... not just meetings for Pastoral Councils
 - Have a 'complaint system' - people need to feel listened to
 - Use church property to shelter the homeless / refugees
 - Update outdated Church teaching so that it is more inclusive: Surrogacy; IVF; Contraception; Abortion; LGBTQ
 - Publicise the names of all committee members

Finance & Outreach

- Less secrecy about finances. Be 'on the level' with people about money.
- Get more people involved in reading at Mass and giving out Holy Communion.
- Invite more people to join the choir and get everybody singing.
- Fund-raising to paint the church.
- Make sure that money coming in goes only to the Church.
- Create an organizational chart, including 'who looks after what'.
- Do we have to have the same structure to Mass every Sunday? Why can't women be included?
- Every parish should have at least one deacon to support the PP. I realise they are not in plentiful supply.
- The Church needs to involve itself actively in local community life, e.g. the local football club; community association; book club; men's' shed. Take a cue from successful local politicians who invariably are very active in local community life.

- Social events which highlight that God is present everywhere; church buildings can have a solemn atmosphere
- **Clergy**
 - Consider opening vocations to anyone who feels the calling, irrespective of gender or sexuality - Allow married priests / Female priests / **Female Deacons** / openly gay priests
 - Priests are exhausted
 - More support – Care for our priests
 - Priests need support each other - not operate 'freelance'
 - Need to stand back and hand over responsibility
 - Lay Administrator could relieve priests of administrative duties, so they can focus on their flock
 - Free up clergy to do their job.
 - Delegate jobs, need for parish administrator •
 - Get into the community
 - Visit homes again esp. the housing estate
 - Go to where people are at - the GAA (have a Mass there)
 - Harness 'community engagement'
 - Nuns / laity could visit the sick
- **Liturgy**
 - There is a lack of 'joy' in the celebration of Mass
 - Mass needs to be relevant – no boring sermons
 - Sermons can be very long and not relevant
 - Priests to provide copies of homilies – it can be sometimes difficult to understand non-local priests.
 - 'Retreat' for carers
 - More 'energetic choir' *"Use the 'big choir' like the US and get the place rocking!"*
- **Catechesis**
 - Catechists in every parish
 - Faith needs to be 'cared for'- at any age
 - More lay people trained in Catechesis
 - Let lay people share their 'life experiences'
- **Evangelisation**
 - What does Church life mean?
 - The elderly are benefiting from online Mass
 - We are being 'sent' at the end of Mass - this should be the 'call to participate in the life of the Church'
 - 'Divine Renovation Programme' suggested for Parish renewal

In your experience, how has the Church motivated you to share the love of Christ and help those in need?

Responses are grouped together under broad themes. Many of the responses occurred more than once.

“ by listening to the word of God”

“Through the teachings of the Church and opening our hearts to all in need on a social & personal level.”

Key Findings:

- **Encourage all to listen and hear the Word of God**
- **Families and Children must be at the core of the church life.**
- **We must enhance the feeling of Community**
- **It is in giving we receive – We all must help each other.**

- **“Listening and hearing the Word of God”**
 - Reflect on how Jesus lived his life and try to live like Him.
 - Become involved in Prayer ministries –e.g.: Alpha programmes.
 - Open our hearts to the teaching of the church
 - Seeing the power of prayer in people’s lives
 - The central message of the church will remain the same.
 - We need to be continually receiving power from the Holy Spirit
 - it is only the Holy Spirit who can form the loving, serving character of Christ in us
 - The children liturgy group helps people to get involved more in the church.
 - Parish Centre faith programmes help with motivation
 - Renew and to revitalise this precious treasure resides in the Word. “Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life”(John 6.63). The Lectio experience is one where we are never static but always being called to grow- we are forever pilgrims on the journey. We passionately share this offering of Synodality with the hope that all will find in it new life, new hope and a new and exciting future for the Church of tomorrow. Lectio Divina, for a greater understanding of the Gospel.
 - Need for Spirit led renewal following Vatican II
 - Pope Saint John XXIII announced “ throwing open the windows of the Church to the wind of the Holy Spirit.”
- **Family**
 - Seen as the introduction to church life.
 - Primary motivation comes from parents and catholic education.
 - Mass and the sacraments were always encouraged at home.
 - The church had little impact – it was all down to parents and family life.
- **Community**
 - we need to bring the church much more to the community

- the church provides a sense of community, and it does remind us of the importance of each human being
- it offers a Sense of belonging and Willing and encourages us to give something back to the church
- “The church for me is my scaffold “
- “The church provides me with such a strong sense of community and belonging which is a life line for me personally.”

• **Helping Others**

- “Love one another as I love you.” This should be the main doctrine of the modern church. And helping others less fortunate than oneself.
- The church has given us Christian values and taught us empathy
- The church has taught us the importance of sharing love
- live by the greatest commandment of all “love thy neighbour as you would love thyself.” As long as this commandment is promoted throughout the church people's attitudes and perception will change.
- Through our bible and the learning about Christ we are left in no doubt that our life in this world is not about us alone but about us together as one. We are one family living in one big village.
- The church can provide the foundation for morals. It can promote the love of neighbour and teaches us to be selfless
- I would question the use of the word ‘Church’ in this question.
- The word ‘church’ presents a difficulty with connotations of buildings; institutional hierarchy and clericalism. ‘Church’ needs to mean ‘people’. Service follows logically from that.
- We can’t rely on the priests alone to spread the faith; the community needs to step up and evangelise as well. Encourage people to join organisations or at least to be charitable.
- Sharing with other Christians – being part of the bigger picture.
- Has the Church motivated me? It probably comes more from my own faith rather than the Church, but: better sermons; more information about how we can help those in need.
- We need to be brave to get out there and try to involve more people.
- Financially, by gifting the SVdeP and implementation of the Beatitudes.
- Each of us needs to be on a personal journey with God which is then reflected in our day-to-day living.
- There are many willing people who would like to help if only they knew where they were needed.
- We don’t actually need to join an organization to simply help our neighbour and live our faith.

• **Sacraments**

- The Mass in particular as well as the sacraments and the traditions of the Church have acted, and act, as a kind of guiding light in life.
- I am very dedicated to prayer, Mass and the Sacraments
- I have become less active during Covid but would normally go to mass weekly. I am motivated by evening Sunday Mass and would go to Armagh for their mass on a Sunday evening
- How you are living is just as important as attending Mass, if not more so.

- **Volunteering**

- Church gives us the purpose to reach out to others and teach others our experience of church and God
- Calling with the housebound, the sick, the cut off, bringing a friendly smile
- involved in church work because I was asked by people who were already involved. I was being called to help. I was nurtured and guided by people that I trusted and respected.
- I have recently been motivated to work in my own parish as my own sons felt distanced and isolated from our parish. If my children were feeling this other families were too
- I was a Legion of Mary member during my teenage years and visited the aged and infirm
- I travel to Lourdes as a helper
- I was a member of the Legion of Mary and found that it was a model lay organisation comprising prayer and works of service

- **Charities**

- Help those in need by donating to church charities.
- Tremendous support and appreciation shown to SVdeP and Trocaire
- Fundraising to help the charities
- Raising awareness of the work done by the charities.
- Realise the work carried out by the Missions.
- GAA got youth involved in delivering meals and shopping during Covid 19.
- It's very difficult to say how the Church has motivated me to share the love of Christ when there is little/no evidence of the Church engaging in the same; there are exceptions, e.g. the Peter McVerry Trust in Dublin.
- I think the Church could do more to help those in need; it's left to the people; lead by example; open the Church to the poor; soup kitchens; collections for good causes, not just Church funds.
- **How people are not motivated by the Church**
 - The church and people in it still look after themselves and their cronies
 - not realistically anymore feels I do that bit myself
 - It doesn't because old morals/traditions are not as prevalent to young people in society as they used to be
 - The troubles created a cultural identity around the idea of being catholic that is no longer relevant
 - My relationship with the Church and God can only be described as love/hate. It sometimes feels like God was having a laugh when he created me. A lonely furrow and a lonely furrow for many.
 - The fall out from the sex abuse scandals
 - The abuse scandals have deeply hurt the Catholic Church. We love our priests. The lay people have been fed very immature notions. the clergy, can stop feeding us 'baby food'. That is why so many are leaving our church.
 - I have more faith in the people. the hierarchy will hang you out to dry. we need to know that higher ups have our back. The Parish priest needs to know they have support. The church pretends they support you - The institution let guilty men go free.

- Media seen as having a big influence on how people think about the Church e.g. coverage of abuse scandals and instances of individuals being 'denied' the services of the Church.
- NI troubles have been painted as 'religious' but it was not the Church that was involved in the troubles.
- That influence of the Church has now sadly receded in society both through changes in society and the knock-on impact of the Church's role in historical abuse scandals.
- The church is failing because for too long the message has been about fear and not love
- I have always felt that my sexuality means that my public espousal of the faith only degrades the faith in some way. I have been quite embittered for years by my being “objectively disordered” and “intrinsically evil”.

If you had a 'word' with Pope Francis?



“What made you commit your life to serving God?”

“What is your favourite verse in the Bible?”

“Be more open”

“Would you like to Modernise the Church?”

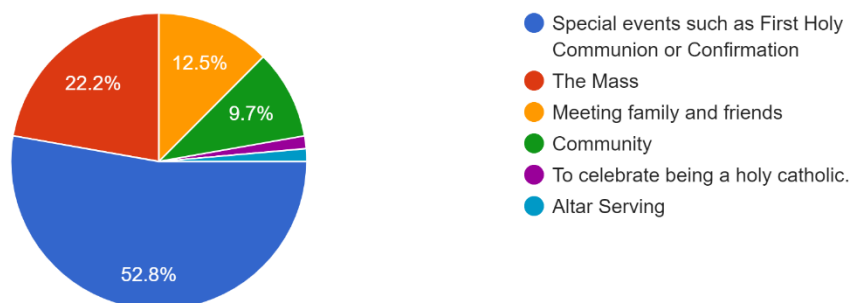
How can we 'modernise' the Church?

- **Change rules**
 - **Allow Priests to marry**
 - **Women as clergy**
 - **De-centralise the Church**

RESPONSES TO THE ONLINE MULTICHOICE QUESTIONS FOR AGE 9-13

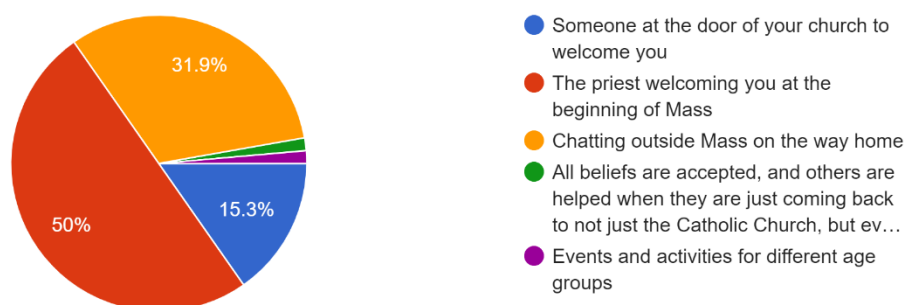
In what ways is the Church important to you?

72 responses



How can the Church welcome and include everyone?

72 responses



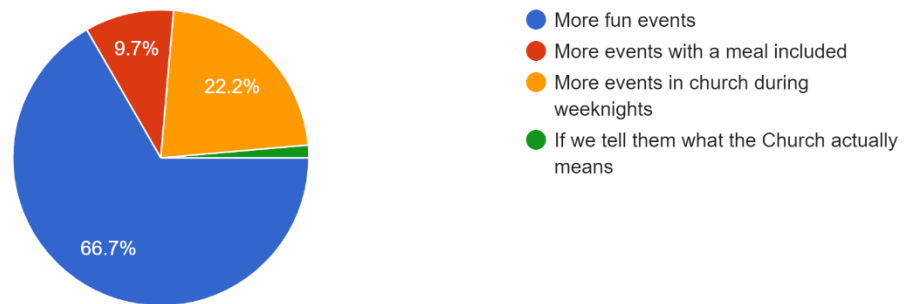
How can people be listened to more effectively and encouraged to participate in decision-making within the Church?

71 responses



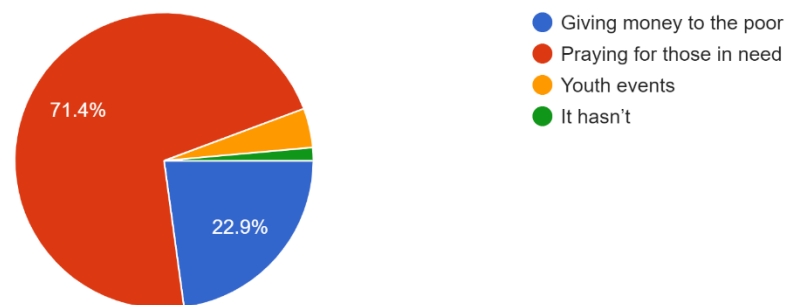
How can more people be encouraged to participate in the life of the Church?

72 responses



In your experience, how has the Church motivated you to share the love of Christ and help those in need?

70 responses



Synodal- Youth Summary (Age 9-13)

Questions 1,2 & 4 were answered by 72/72 respondents of the questionnaire. Question 3 was answered by 71/72 and Question 5 was answered by 70/72.

52.8% of respondents said Special Events only- First Communion and Confirmation is how the Church is important to them. Followed by sacraments like mass (22.5%), meeting family and friends (12.5%) and community (9.7%). To celebrate being a catholic and altar serving were additionally provided.

50% of respondents said they would feel more welcomed and included if the priest welcomed them at the start of the mass. 31.9% said chatting outside of mass on the way home followed by someone at the door saying hello (15.3%). Events and activities for different age groups (1.4%) and all beliefs are accepted, and others are helped when they are just coming back to not just the Catholic Church, but every church, and they are not judged immediately for their previous actions (1.4%) were additionally provided.

66.2% of respondents chose talking in groups with other young people to be a factor in how people can be listened to more effectively and encouraged to participate in decision making within the Church. Followed by 28.2% saying talking to youth leaders. 1 person suggested the following, events are hosted with teenagers and young children, as they are the next generation to drive us along and another person suggested idea boxes.

66.7% of respondents chose the option more fun events to encourage people to participate in the life of the church. More events in Church during week nights (22.2%) and more events with a meal included (9.7%). 1 person suggested if we tell them what the church actually means may encourage more people to participate in the life of the church.

1.7% of respondents said the church has not motivated them to share the love of Christ and help those in need. The most popular response was Praying for those in need (71.4%) followed by giving money to the poor (22.9%) and youth event