

SYNOD 2023
FEEDBACK FORM ABOUT THE GROUP DISCUSSION

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

(Please complete this form clearly)

Name/Type of group (indicate parish)	St Joseph’s Parish Newbury Berkshire
Date of meeting	Different Meetings held during February 2022
Particular details that you wish to be noted (e.g. ecumenical, school, university etc)	Includes feedback from St Joseph’s Infant & Primary School, Newbury.
Number (indicate males/females)	Up to 30 adults approx.
Age range	25-75+ Years

I. THE JOURNEYING COMPANIONS

How can we be more welcoming as a Christian community?

- a. ‘Greeters’ and ‘Welcomers’ at entrances also handing out Hymn Books, newsletters etc. Identify new arrivals. Perhaps hold a periodic ‘Welcome Open Day’ for newcomers? Regular coffee, social events etc. Appoint area parish reps to feedback issues to the parish as a whole.
- b. Greater accommodation of groups i.e. families; children specific areas; areas for older parishioners; for other nationalities and those with English as second language (themed parish meals with their cuisine?); disabled groups.
- c. Innovative ways of nurturing inclusivity - interaction with other RCs in the area; music for younger generation (Taize); better use of IT.
- d. Non judgemental approach regardless of gender, race, divorced status.
- e. Greater regard for women’s role in the life of the Church.
- f. Cultivate the art of honest sharing. This is a healthy feature of First Communion, Confirmation, and RCIA programmes but could helpfully be learned in other aspects of parish life. This can make us vulnerable but ultimately helps increase our faith.

2. LISTENING

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

- a. Genuine open listening (having encouraged conversation on religious matters i.e. faith, death,) – listening does not necessarily mean accepting. Action should be within the foundational principles, teaching, of the Catholic Church.
- b. Recomposition of parish councils in every parish to oversee social care; organise trips; arrange music; arrange parish gatherings; be a listening hub to give voice to feedback where needed.
- c. Increase outreach to other faith communities, vulnerable groups – homeless, soup kitchens etc.
- d. Be open to sharing church/amenities with other communities.
- e. Access Catholic press (The Tablet etc.), papal teaching, and websites more – including diocesan media.
- f. Themed gatherings at our diocesan Cathedral. Learn about the diocese’s functions and work.

3. SPEAKING OUT

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

- a. Watchful eyes and listening ears. Nurture trust with one another, which gives green light to sharing discussion of faith, or lack of it; Christian values etc.
- b. More gracious and respectful response to other points of view – remembering all faiths carry something of God in them.
- c. Parish Council as forum for ‘speaking out’, including additional means to comment on issues –

perhaps via parish website, and IT?

d. 'Growing Together in Christ Course' introduced by Portsmouth Diocesan Pastoral Assembly in 2005, and 'Go out and Bear Fruit' diocesan consultation in 2006 gave parishioners chance to discuss and feedback on issues. Both were made easier to deliver as the diocese provided supportive information including suggested timetable, prayers, and presentations.

4. CELEBRATING

How might we celebrate better the Liturgy in our parish?

- a. Review and reach out to those unable to receive Holy Communion – i.e. remarried divorcees.
- b. Reactivate children's liturgy during Mass.
- c. Investigate means to nurture adult formation – informative liturgy; discussions on the liturgy and our faith – perhaps focused upon Lent and Advent; parish retreats; study days.
- d. Encourage concise homilies that are accessible and explain the readings.
- e. More accessible hymns.
- f. Greater participation of younger people; disabled.
- g. Training or 'away days' for certain ministries exercised by the laity.
- h. Encourage prayer group; scripture-based discussion groups; innovative aspects to the liturgy (parishioners lead Stations etc.?)
- i. Review timings of liturgy/worship.

5. CO-RESPONSIBLE IN THE MISSION

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

- a. Clergy/lay working cooperation should improve (possible impediments: clergy ignorance of church history, Vatican II, hierarchical power structures in the Church, excessive clericalism).
- b. Better means of feedback needed from clergy back to the diocese.
- c. Greater support needed for Parish Priests by parishioners helping out in key areas: admin, safeguarding, general organisation, cleaning, stewarding, Catholic support groups etc.
- d. Utilising retired or professionals to teach others (e.g. IT for the elderly classes, classes to gather socially i.e. French; 'knit & natter') – would allow priest to establish stronger contacts with people.
- e. A Parish Secretary would ease admin burden and help improve lines of communication.
- f. Utilise more any Religious/Orders resident in our area.
- g. Further improve parish hall facilities to encourage wider usage.

6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

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

- a. Stronger intercommunication between parishes, and with other non-Christian faith communities, utilising shared newsletters, links on websites, improved websites, visits, to highlight one another's events and activities, and to learn one another's history and traditions.
- b. Further release clergy from the weight of admin responsibilities in order to free them up for greater outreach – i.e. more parish secretaries and admin support staff!
- c. Greater involvement in the concerns, issues of the local community – which could then be reflected in liturgies/prayers/ discussions.
- d. Invited speakers to inform about the Church's mission, its charity initiatives, and key current issues e.g. the refugee crisis.

7. WITH THE OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

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

- a. Retain strong links and interaction with 'Churches Together' in local areas so as to better share information and links to ecumenical community activity. We all have much to learn from other

Christians and other Christian traditions! We need, however, to retain our core identity as Catholic Christians. A 'Parish Hand-book' to share with others?

b. Good ecumenical cooperation particularly in the realm of Justice and Peace; social issues. More occasions of shared, collective worship – perhaps sometimes at high-profile events like shows, sports fixtures etc.

c. Dioceses and bishops need to be much more aware of the close ecumenical clergy cooperation in bodies such as hospital and military chaplaincy where practise is streets ahead of the parish clergy environment.

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

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

a. Respect the laity and acknowledge them fully as the People of God who have the responsibility to live out the priestly calling of the baptised. Less clericalism, sense of status and entitlement among church hierarchy.

b. Ask for more volunteers to support the church activity and identify the particular expertise of individuals so as to utilise their gifts in key areas. Could they comprise a parish trust or council with a fixed term in office so as to ensure continuity when clergy move on, but not allow excessive time in role so as to avoid domination of personal agendas indefinitely?

c. More inclusive gender language included in the translations of the liturgy to reflect the spirit of Vatican II.

d. Allow women priests, and allow priests to marry. Alternative viewpoint: priest to be males only in recognition of the model given by Christ himself.

e. Recruit more overseas clergy where local needs cannot be met.

f. Offer more educational input outside of Mass to help personal formation and increase interest.

9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

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

a. The current consultation arising out of serious discussion involving differing viewpoints will help in explaining what a 'synodal style church' is, and hopefully will inform how decisions are made in the future, including the transparency, methodology, and accountability of how decisions are made.

b. Discussion and consultation must always be prayerful, patient, transparent, shared, and respectful allowing for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to take things in new directions.

c. Such tools as the Diocesan Yearbook which now contains very helpful detail about diocesan structures and practise should be even more widely disseminated.

10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

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

a. More prayer, study, self-education. There is a profound need for the introduction and development of a national formation programme embracing church teaching post Vatican II. It would need to be ongoing, online, professionally produced, properly funded, and supported by parish based discussion/dialogue forums. We need to be equipped in order to participate meaningfully.

b. Organise gatherings that can be delivered in each parish to facilitate this synodality (by means similar to 'Growing Together in Christ', and 'Go and Bear Fruit' – previous diocesan initiatives.)

c. By such means encourage discussion and listening unfettered by rules or previous precedents. Respect all input, and ensure patience to allow the discernment of the Holy Spirit.

d. Focus more on faith formation of the young. Where no Catholic secondary schools exist locally, 'after school' activity might be church-centred, rather than school-centred – utilising skills of volunteer younger or retired professionals, or university students outside term-time (i.e. those who

could establish a rapport with the young).