

When I taught high school religion, I could've used Jesus' warning on my students: Don't let your hearts become drowsy! They were easily bored, with the topic (not me, of course).

I wonder if that could that be a reason why we're seeing fewer people in our church pews: hearts drowsy with boredom? Maybe.

It could also be due to a decrease in the general population, and in the Catholic population, as well as people moving to live elsewhere.

Then there's the pandemic. People got out of the habit of Mass in church, deciding that they were fine without it, or fine with watching it on a screen, at home, in their jammies.

Another reason for fewer people in the pews could be the growing number of *nones* – not women in a convent, but people who, when asked what religion they belong to, say: none.

Empty pews could also be just because people today prefer services be delivered to them, rather than leaving home to access them, whether that's religious practices, or eating out.

We can't do much about most of the reasons for empty pews, except if it's because people are spiritually bored. Then the remedy is on us, and we have to do more than just show up.

How can we attract and retain Church members? Our Synod on synodality aims at engaging people, even those who've left, in a conversation about how to be the Church Jesus wants...

As well as the Church that people need, meaning, a Church that supplies, or at least has the potential to supply what will attract and satisfy people, spiritually-speaking.

I have my own ideas of what that is, for example: answers to life's big questions; a sense of belonging; and support for living quality relationships – help out, give to, share with others.

What are your ideas? The synodal process invites you to speak, promises you'll be heard, and taken seriously, all of us together determining how to be the Church Jesus wants...

And the Church that people need. The synodal process also engages you to be part of the solution, not the problem, at least by being kind to others, joyful, and loving to the poor.