

Synod on Synodality

- Notes from the Holy Family Parish consultation sessions

As you contemplate the notes from the sessions:

1. Consider the common themes that come out of all the discussion sessions
2. Consider the themes that should be our priority to address
3. Consider possible solutions for the priority areas

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Summary of discussion – Synod COMMUNION No. 1 Session

Date, Time & Location: 10 February 2022, 9 - 10 am, Presbytery.

1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.

Question 1.1: In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart?

Question 1.2: How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

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- One parishioner exhorted: *“I listen to my inner voice – something pushes me to wake up early to attend mass – something within motivates me. It is not so for my children who are further apart from the Church.*
 - *The young generation is self-sufficient – they have good jobs and they handle their hardships their way. They feel no need to attend church. Some live their faith, but they do not practice it. Pray for the youth.”*
 - What moves us along the Christian path is PRAYER: PRAY-PRAY-PRAY.
 - Listen to the word of God. Actively listen.
 - **Divine renovation ministry** should be considered and instituted to make the parish come alive.
 - Building connections is important. Let’s take the parish from “**maintenance**” to “**mission**”.
 - Some elderly parishioners cannot walk to church and they miss out on worship.
 - Church attendance after mass should be followed by socialising, fellowshipping and possibly studying the word of God also over a drink and refreshments.
 - Some have grown cold along the way and have become insensitive to the needs of the Church. We have to work towards the kingdom.
 - **Covid-19:** We have to find ways to move forward in the aftermath of Covid-19. Covid-19 has changed a lot of Catholics. Many are even more reluctant to participate now.
 - We have to bring people back to Church.
 - The Catholic “Alpha Program” can be a vehicle to bring people back to the fold.

Summary of discussion – Synod COMMUNION No. 2 Session

Date, Time & Location: 10 February 2022, 9 - 10 am, Presbytery.

1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.

Question 1.1: In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart?

Who are those who “walk together”?

- Those with strong faith & have surrendered to the Lord
- Those that share their celebrations and sad news.
- Those who attend a baptism, 1st Communion or a funeral

Who are those who seem further apart?

- Those that don't have or priorities their faith
- Those that are influenced by society where they see religion and faith as not trendy
- Those that have experienced grief or disappointments have turned away
- Those that think “I can pray and believe in God anywhere” see no need to attend Church
- Lack of faith foundation at schools
- Some believe but their belief is conditional
- Those who believe in their intellect and science and say the stories in the Bible don't make sense or are unrealistic.

Question 1.2: How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

How are we called to grow as companions?

- Prayer – We need to pray for our family and friends to reconnect with their faith. Praying at home can be a visible act for children to see their parents praying for them.
- Be a role model – Pray and care for others is a way to promote our faith. Live in a good way.
- Share our stories – Be bold about sharing our faith stories. When has faith helped us overcome hardship or allowed us to experience joy and peace?
- Notice and approach those who are on their own – sometimes someone at church may be on the verge of leaving, but by greeting and connecting with them we could unknowingly be the reason they stay.
- Be invitational – just invite your friends to come to Church and Church events with you. Sometimes if you invite 2 friends, they'll have each other.
- Greet people we do not know after Mass.

What groups and individuals are left at the margins?

- Those that don't have a strong foundation. Sometimes God hasn't presented to them yet.
- Those that wait until there is bad news.
- Those that feel that they don't have time.
- Those that have been disappointed by the Church (e.g. abused).
- Those that rely too heavily on science and their intellect.

Summary of discussion – Synod PARTICIPATION No. 1 Session

Date, Time & Location: 13 February 2022, 4-5 pm, Presbytery.

1. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.

Question 1.1: How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken?

Question 1.2: How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?

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- Engage in such a way that everyone understands and feels appreciated of their role in the church, and not like the old ways of the leaders doing this alone
 - Provide a medium for God to act through by reaching out to others and helping those who need support – either at mass or in daily life
 - Comments: People are often busy or have other priorities and this makes it hard to create community engagement after mass
 - Start with small actions & gestures that will inspire others to continue the chain – which turns into something big. From greetings to listening and offering emotional support
 - Don't try to convince people (whether intentionally or unintentionally) to participate in church by appealing to reward/punishment/obligation. But rather explain and share why we go and let that convince them voluntarily
 - Solicit small contributions from each person in community based on what their strengths are (synergy)
 - Comment: Some parishes/communities are very elderly while others are younger. We have to learn from each other's methods to enrich our demographics
 - Conduct community activities/Outreach – it is not just about enriching faith but also daily life (health/social/psychology)
 - Cannot be too pushy in preaching
 - Apply Christianity in daily living – show through lifestyle actions towards not just family but strangers
 - Participate in opportunities/community events (like this synod)
 - Start participation in “small steps” and later move to “large steps”
 - Be an example of the gospel to others – inspire others
 - Interact with each other after mass instead of just going home straightaway (if possible)
 - Show care/kindness even through small things like greetings to strangers at mass
 - Volunteer your time for church activities
 - Pray to be guided and enlightened
 - Appeal to community to act together
 - Remember the “Parish vision prayer”
 - Pray for people in the community
 - Live gospel in daily life

- Encourage/help children to engage when at mass (readings, etc.)
- Be an example & provide inspiration to others to do so through volunteering works
- Participate in the aspects of mass/church community (choir, youth outreach, etc.)
- Care/attend to those in need (sick, elderly, etc.)
- Even if you can't do much, can do small acts like welcoming/greeting people at mass – form a community spirit / psychological
- Pray for family/friends/community/strangers
- Sharing food/socialising/caring outside context of mass – as friends etc. Remove barriers of distance, language, prejudice, social anxiety.

Summary of discussion – Synod MISSION No. 1 Session

Date 17 February 2022, 7 – 9 pm, Small Hall.

1. 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.

2. DIALOGUE IN CHURCHSHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate.

Ecumenism – Empower & educate parishioners to engage more in “mission”. We need to go out there with our faith and engage with people.

- Increase our knowledge of God’s word to back up our faith when we engage in “mission”.
- Church needs to be guided by the Holy Spirit. We need guidance.
- Learn how to react and engage with other religions.
- Ask ourselves: “What do we have in common?” Build on what we have in common and
- then engage in dialogue.
- We have lost the desire for dialogue. We need to listen to our neighbours

Digital Platforms - Understand what a “modern” community looks like? E.g. How can we make use of digital spaces/platforms to conduct “mission”?

Conflicts & Disagreements - Learn how to avoid conflict and how to deal with disagreements. Jesus came to bring a sword. Do your best to follow him.

- You cannot talk about religion with many people.
- What do we do if people push back?

Prayer and Opportunities - Prayer is a big thing in “mission”.

- Opportunities are priceless.

Summary of discussion – Synod MISSION No. 2 Session

Date, Time & Location: 17 February 2022, 7 - 9pm, Small Hall

Question: What areas of “mission” are we neglecting?

Although other questions were discussed, the group focused mainly on the question: “**What areas of mission are we neglecting?**” The group tried to identify the gaps (‘cracks’) in our “mission”.

While the parish itself is a diverse community, with people from different cultures sharing with each other, doing a lot of things, there is a perception amongst the group that we could all be more welcoming.

The challenge is on how to open the church/parish to more people in the area, to reach out to people who used to participate in the church but somehow have fallen out and no longer attend. We do not have a visiting group that would enable us to reach out to the sick and elderly, to people who have become disconnected during the pandemic and are content to ‘watch’ mass online or on TV. How do we get these people back into the church community?

How do we welcome people, get people reconnected to each other and to the church? The pandemic has made a lot of people lonely: a lot of disabled people are isolated; people in nursing homes and detention centres are isolated. What is the church doing to help these people? Are there any carer groups in the parish visiting these people? We need to reach out to people, to fire them up, but not to attend to their needs in a way that makes them lazy (that is, “not to give them fish, but to teach them to fish.”) We have a moral duty to help others, but not in a way that makes them lazy. We have no community extension programs. What kinds of a community are we, or aspire to be? How do we live our faith in the community?

There seems to be a global lethargy amongst Catholics. Is it because the church has become so big, so content/complacent, that we no longer feel the need to reach out? Charismatic churches are welcoming: they tap people on the shoulder to say, “Come do this”, to volunteer. Do we have spiritual mentors to guide young people career-wise, so they become active members both inside and outside the church?

Our emphasis should be a pairing of **scriptures/evangelisation** to **actions/works**. The church is not only about **theory** (the scriptures): **belief/faith** should exist side by side with actions. Are we overemphasising the scriptures and neglecting to put the scriptures into action?

The church is/was a moral compass/voice in the world. However, increasing secularisation has meant that the church has shut down in the defence of issues such as abortion. The church needs to speak more, to speak about justice more, and to reach out in a Catholic way. When the church is attacked in public, nobody speaks out on behalf of the church. Where are our church leaders? Shouldn’t our priests and bishops be speaking out more in the public space outside of church?

There is a disconnect between **the scriptures** (on the one hand) and **action/works** (on the other). Is it all just talk? For example, where would this synod listening meeting lead to —is it all just talk that amounts to nothing concrete in the end?

Summary of discussion – Synod MISSION No. 3 Session

Date, Time & Location: 17 February 2022, 7 – 9pm, Small Hall

1. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

Question 1.1: What hinders the baptised from being active in mission?

- Fear
- Lack of knowledge on theology
- Competence
- Lack of cultural empathy
- Submissiveness

Question 1.2: Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church?

- Create an environment of like-minded people for guidance
- Be welcoming. (Unconditional – love one another as I love you)
- Communicate through your actions e.g., showing compassion
- Have a burning heart

Question 1.3: What areas of mission are we neglecting?

- A hierarchy that attends to the needs of the church (faith community) e.g., female deacons, pastoral associates

Question 1.4: 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.)?

- Get to know people before you go deeper. Everyone has a role in the church.

Question 1.5: How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way?

- Accountability and transparency

2. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Question 2.1: 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?

- Create safe environments for dialogues to happen, especially on sensitive issues
- Build communities where there's a culture of dialogue and discuss communities' issues like gender inequality, inclusivity, ex-prisoners integrating to communities
- Telling stories in faith communities – The road of life. Community members sharing & exploring their personal lives.

Question 2.2: How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed?

- Difficult to address divergent visions if we do not have the tools to do it.

Question 2.3: What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?

- LGBTIQA+

Question 2.3 What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation?

- Nil in our parish. Need to start dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation.

Question 2.4 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?

- Pay attention to inequity in our society – have/have nots.

3. ECUMENISM

Question 3.1 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?

- We have much to learn on how we engage the youth, perhaps learn from Hillsong Church.
- Learn from the Anglican Church – walk with Mary.

Question 3.2 What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties?

- Learn from Pope Francis – who am I to judge?

Question 3.3 How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

- Create dialogues in parishes and share personal experiences of life. Share those experiences in masses, news bulletin, and social media.

Summary of discussion – Synod COMMUNION Alpha 2021 Group

Date, Time & Location: 10 February 2022, Pavilion. Not provided for submission

Round 1

- Gobbledygook
- Love love love
- Speaking out - old message "hell fire"
- Difficulty re truth / bigotry
- Not let us promote disorder
- Follow scriptures
- Pray
- Fatima
- Hard to get support from parishes when seeking information about Catholic faith
- People need to understand Eucharist - explaining
- Was referred to YouTube by a parish!
- Some parishes welcoming
- Found community online
- Trust lord more at this time
- Instead of science, medicine
- Media against church
- More opportunities needed for people to speak and share - Q& A sessions - differences are not opposing. Lack of shepherds
- Need to speak up
- Promote a culture to encourage the skills needed to lead in many ways
- Bishops role
- Speak to priest after Mass
- At rallies - people appreciated presence of churches
- We don't know each other -interconnection
- We look diverse - but it is diversity of backgrounds, not a diversity of levels of society, the community needs a strong Parish

Round 2

- Listening - listen to God - what positive does it bring
- Leaders - presence of the priests - neglected - putting it onto us to fix it.
- We are the body of Christ
- Working together - so powerful
- Evangelise within
- Special call to broken
- Holy Spirit guides the church
- tradition - pray, we need to step up, be bold
- Need each other
- Leadership - strong, inspire, to get lay people moving
- Needs at home. Outreach.
- Mission is important- holy spirit - focus on mission - if we all speak, so much stronger Process is platform for us to express views.
- Evangelising
- Can be simple - small conversations, contacts
- We are the hands
- Relationship
- Proclaiming
- Forming new disciples
- Have courage for roles

Individual Submission by Parishioner - Synod All Three Topics

Date, Time & Location: 7 March 2022.

The Church hierarchy in Melbourne are ineffective leaders:

1. **ETHICS:** The leaders have been hauled before Government Commissions into abuse by clerics within the Church, to be reminded of their ethical responsibilities. However Melbourne's Archdiocese continues to put the Institution before victims. Last year after a 15 month unnecessarily protracted dispute, and trauma to the victim, it suddenly gave the victim, \$AUD 1.75 million plus costs!
2. **FINANCES** are the private bank account of the Archbishop, with no transparency or accountability. Cardinal Pell used \$23 million (AUD) to furnish his Roman apartment.
3. **DECISION MAKING** is by the Archbishop and one or two others in a closed room, with no transparency or accountability. There is little if any consultation or collaboration. The reason given is "well it is not a democracy" Presenters with worldwide reputations such as Sr Joan Chittister and Father Richard Rohr are forbidden to preach in Melbourne.
4. **PLANNING:** the bishops commissioned an independent investigation (over 10 years ago) into why only 10% of Catholics are engaged with parishes, and promptly shelved it. Instead a small group of men came up (with no consultation or warning) a highly criticised program called "take the way of the gospel"
5. **GOVERNANCE:** the Bishops 2 years ago commissioned a report into improving Governance called "take the light from the Southern Cross." All 208 pages have not even been circulated or discussed Lay people are willing and capable contributors but have little or no role. The Church will only grow when leadership becomes collaborative with transparency and accountability.