

St. Mary's, Saltcoats

Synod Encounter

Pope Francis invites every baptised person to work – or ‘walk’ – together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to build today’s church.



A SYNOPSIS of THE ANSWERS TO THE SET QUESTIONS

Creator Spirit, come and visit us, fill our hearts with your love and inspiration so that through our baptism we may copy Jesus in bringing the Good News to the poor, to prisoners freedom and to those in sorry, joy.

QUESTION 1

THE FIRST STEP IN WALKING TOGETHER IS TO REALLY LISTEN TO ONE ANOTHER, WITHOUT PREJUDICE OR PERSONAL AGENDA. WHEN WE CAN LISTEN LIKE THIS, WE MAY HEAR GOD'S VOICE SPEAKING TO US THROUGH OTHER PEOPLE.

How are we already working / walking together?

How can we do this better? Who is getting left behind and why?

How well do we listen, especially to people who have different views than our own?

How can we better listen to young people, women and minority groups?

The general feeling is that we are working / walking together reasonably well. Various parish organisations continue to carry out work in the parish and continued to work during the pandemic.

Some people had concerns that data protection hindered some bereavement contact. Concern was raised that it was the same people who were invited / involved in doing things. Greater personal invitations would be appreciated.

There was recognition that the church in the modern world was very different than in previous generations and change was essential.

Some concern was expressed about only men can be ordained to the priesthood / diaconate.

Reaching out to the disadvantaged / marginalised must be a priority if we are to be a church routed in the gospel. Several expressed concern that many good things happen in the parish but better communication was essential.

A large number of people felt that the young people were not getting enough support, recognising that this was a very difficult task in an increasingly secular world.

Greater use of technology was welcomed / recognised, allowing the sick, housebound and care home to be part of the extended community but recognising that not everyone has access to the required technology.

Father God, through the Spirit of unity and of grace, you unite us all in one body, through communion in your holy Eucharist, so that in giving thanks always to you for the gifts we have received, we may be able to witness to the beauty of our vocation as your baptised people.

QUESTION 2

THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST IS AT THE CENTRE OF OUR CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES, AND FORMS THE BASIS OF OUR “WALKING TOGETHER”

How well do communal prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire us?

How well do we allow and enable every member of the community to participate?

Several responses highlighted young people - how do we encourage them etc. - one suggestion was to re-introduce a Mass predominantly for the youth (previously held on a Sunday evening) where the youth read, prepared the music, etc. Caritas was mentioned - could this be extended in some ways to primary schools. Similarly it was thought that more of an effort had to be made to involve others (it was always the same people) - how do we encourage people not to be 'afraid' to offer their services - an example was for presentations to be made on the various ministries/organisations within the parish.

Several comments on COVID - restricting attendance, involvement etc though very positive comments on the live streaming which it was felt should continue. Some comments on people in nursing/care homes being excluded from the Eucharist.

Some comments on those who want to come to Mass and then go home - don't make them feel left out versus others feeling part of the community.

Some differing views on what coming to Mass meant to some people e.g. for some it was a time of peace and personal devotion while others were uplifted by being part of the whole community (especially for those who lived alone).

Sound system was mentioned - sometimes difficult to make responses due to not being able to hear properly. Suggestion that words be put on the wall.

One comment on the difficulty of having general liturgical celebrations - rosary, exposition etc with only one priest to cover both parishes.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon us your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised us to the new life of grace. Sustain us, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give us an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen.

QUESTION 3

EVERY BAPTISED PERSON IS CALLED TO USE THEIR NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL GIFTS AND TALENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND MISSIONARY SERVICE OF THE CHURCH.

Do we understand what this means? What stops us from giving our gifts and talents to the Church?

How does the Church 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.)?

While the concept of using our gifts and talents was well understood there was a question over the meaning of supernatural gifts - didn't all our gifts and talents come from the Holy Spirit? Several responses suggested that there was an element of apprehension/fear in volunteering, there was also the time factor. Sometimes it was easier just to let others get on with it, though it was acknowledged that wider participation should be actively encouraged with training/support being provided if required. 'Cliques' should be discouraged. There was a lot of community spirit where people were using their gifts without realising it.

There needed to be more awareness of groups who were working in/supporting society - e.g. SVDP, SCIAF, Mary's Meals, Justice and Peace, etc. Maybe some kind of presentation outwith Mass. It was acknowledged by those who did volunteer that it was an honour and a very humbling and joyful experience which gave a sense of achievement.

Reference was made to Data Protection which limits information being exchanged with respect to the sick and the bereaved and in turn limits ministering.

As always young people were mentioned - how do we support/encourage them? Could families undertake roles? The clergy and laity should acknowledge the good work being done. While it was clear that church and schools work together this was not so well understood in other areas. Within our school community there was an awareness of social justice, human rights, caring for the environment etc.

The role of women was mentioned - women clergy/deacons - laity could take on roles traditionally undertaken by the priest. How do we support those who express 'unfashionable' views on the church, politics, etc.?

Lord, I ask that you would give me the patience and understanding for the situations I have in front of me. I want to do the right thing and make good choices. Open my mind and heart to your ways and let me be guided by your precious Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 4

DIALOGUE REQUIRES PERSEVERANCE AND PATIENCE, BUT IT ALSO ENABLES MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

To what extent do diverse peoples in our community and other Churches come together for dialogue and how can this be improved? What particular issues (in the Church or in society) do we need to pay more attention to? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

We as a Church Community are not particularly diverse. We need to try to be more inclusive; by reaching out to other denominations, having more inter church dialogue, services e.g. Songs of Praise. Should we approach other Churches and find out how we can work together more.

We need to be much more aware of the diversity in society e.g. the LGBTQ Community.

We need to do something about the “male domination” in our Church – half the population are women, yet the Church is governed almost entirely by men.

A lot of people talked about encouraging young people to “come back” and catering better for children. Helping people feel included at Mass, young people, the less able and gay people. We need to “liven” our Liturgy.

We have not to forget the elderly and we should make an effort to bring them to Church.

We need to do more “outreach” so that we can be a beacon in our local community.

Holy Spirit, lead and guide us in all things, teach us through the gentle promptings of your voice. Give us grace to recognise your still small voice and the wisdom to discern your spiritual nudges.

QUESTION 5

A SYNODAL CHURCH IS A CHURCH WHERE EVERYONE PARTICIPATES AND EVERYONE SHARES RESPONSIBILITY. SYNODALITY, THAT IS JOURNEYING TOGETHER, INVOLVES ONGOING LEARNING, AND BEING OPEN TO CHANGE.

How do we promote and develop lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people? What fruitful experiences can we share of lay leadership? How can we develop them? How well do we promote participation in decision making and how well do we make decisions together in order to include everyone? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment? What training do we need?

‘Older’ generation slightly overwhelmed by the idea of taking responsibility - as they always did what they were told.

Strong feeling of women being involved in more ministries in the church locally, and more widely, e.g. as a Deacon.

Lay roles needed to be defined and explained (with training provided if necessary). Current lay ministers could explain their roles - perhaps at the end of Mass/at a meeting in the hall.

Parental responsibility must play a part in encouraging young people to attend Mass and therefore become more involved.

All generations should be involved to encourage young people, but also to convey that it is not only young people who could be altar servers for example.

Positive comments on how fulfilling/humbling taking part in ministry is.

Buildings/finance etc. could all be done by lay people thus allowing the priest more time to be spiritual leader.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth.

Thank you so much to those who took part in the Encounter. Each individual response is on its way to the Diocese.

If anyone has any comments suggestions after reading this booklet we would be happy to hear them. Please use this page to record your comments and leave it at the back of the Church. Thank you.

YOUR COMMENTS/RESPONSES