

St. John's, Stevenston

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?

Some expressed that we are doing our best to walk together in an increasingly secular society. Many people were concerned about the lack of young people attending but recognised many did admirable activities in the community. Better recognition of the gifts of the laity would be appreciated.

It was thought that the Church must accept the growing number of divorcees and homosexuals who wish to be part of the Church but feel currently ostracised and shunned. The gay community were getting left behind.

Some concern about the parish needing to be more welcoming, loving, caring and understanding. Greater knowledge of parish groups, function and membership would be welcomed.

There was a recognition that the Church in the world of today had to change and be more listening to the needs of the people with true respect and patience. Action to attract younger and lapsed people back to the church was required.

A more flexible approach to modern working practice was felt necessary. Some concerns about the role of women, given that only men can be ordained to the priesthood / diaconate.

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 FOR OUR “WALKING TOGETHER”.

How well do communal prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and guide our sense of community?

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

Some people felt inspired and uplifted while others suggested that particularly young people found it boring. (Do we need the up and down?)

Examples of attendance at Christmas/Easter celebration of the sacraments where people came together and enjoyed being part of the community - why is this not evident every Sunday?

With regard to the second point - how well do we enable every member of the community to participate - while it was recognised that more laity involvement was necessary, sadly there was quite a bit of negativity in the responses - particularly of people not being made to feel welcome/accepted/being actively discouraged to become involved by those who do.

Some comments on changing times/different world we live in today - too many distractions etc. - was the liturgy relevant? How do we encourage young people?

In the past when requests were made for more people to come forward there was a poor response from parishioners.

Being ‘scared’ - being laughed at - not good enough, etc. discouraged people from volunteering.

Lay opportunities for involvement, e.g. reading, only open to those of ‘our religion’ yet some non-Catholic people attend regularly - if we are to be ‘inclusive’ why can they not be involved?

Church led praise with choir/cantor appears to create a greater sense of community.

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.)?

It was generally understood what this means but there are barriers to participation. Firstly there is a need for us to properly outline what is required. People are reticent to come forward because of shyness, fear of rejection, lack of confidence or fear of being judged. Some groups appeared “closed” to new members. Some people thought there was a lack of encouragement. There is also a feeling that we have little to offer.

We as a church are very good at supporting good causes such as SCIAF and our schools. Ecumenical activity in Stevenston is good, in fact before the pandemic the churches “walked together” literally through the town. We need also to reach out to those not of the Christian Faith.

We need to have more compassion as a church community. There are many good causes. We could follow Pope Francis’ lead on the environment for example. There was a genuine feeling that most of us could be involved more. With the right guidance and better communication people felt that they could become more involved in the life of the church.

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?

It was generally felt that although we have good relations with other churches in the town we do not come together very often, ecumenical services have been poorly attended. However there was a real desire to reach out to the other churches and to the whole community. Maybe a common cause such as the war in Ukraine could unite us. We are better at coming together for foodbanks, Advocacy Services, furniture stores.

We need to follow Pope Francis example when it comes to divorced people and those who are gay.

Could we have a look at how we reach out to the rest of the Community in Stevenston – maybe an Outreach Group?

We need to make people feel more welcome. We need to be less judgmental. We need to improve communication so that as many as possible know what's going on.

There should be more involvement by lay people in Church governance and Administration.

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.

What fruitful experiences can we share of lay leadership and how can we develop them?

How well do we promote participation in decision making?

How can we as a community grow spiritually?

Many examples of lay leadership already taking place (both in the liturgy and in the community) but others need to be encouraged to share their talents more readily.

If we want a church in the future we need to take ownership of it and not leave it to the priest. Fewer priests currently and in the future will make more lay involvement necessary.

Many more people could be encouraged to attend the Sycamore Course for example.

Current ministers could explain their roles which could encourage others to volunteer.

We need to include more lay people in decision making. Update on what is taking place/who is doing what, is necessary with regular feedback, at an AGM for example.

Quite a bit of emphasis on personal prayer/ask the Holy Spirit to guide us.

We could be a more inclusive community. We need to be more positive against all the negativity we see in the world around us.

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