

Synodal Response.

The next stage of the Synodal process is underway. We held a prayer meeting on the 12th January to discuss the responses to the questionnaire. We have received 20 written responses and 10 attendees at the meeting. The summary of these is outlined below. We welcome any and all feedback to the responses, which will be presented sometime between 24th January and 18th February, via an online meeting, with the Archbishop of Southwark. If anyone would like to make an online submission the closing date is the 18th February.

The questionnaire invited us to explore three main themes but some people felt that the themes and how they were presented, highlighted how out of touch the hierarchy are with the local parishes and lay people. It was felt the wording alienated some and that the content didn't approach the issues the Church are undergoing, such as the historic child abuse cases throughout the Church. There were conversations around the introduction of female Priests and doing away with the vow of celibacy. It was felt there was a general feeling of apathy around Catholicism leading to a lack of involvement and attendance. People who had completed the questionnaires and attended the meeting were worried they were wasting their time as their concerns fell outside of the themes and they were unsure if they would be listened to. They are keen to receive some feedback from the Archbishop and Bishops.

Participation

It was noted that Covid restrictions have resulted in a drop of numbers, particularly children and young families. There were many suggestions to aid participation including coffee mornings, parish council, quarterly magazine, Annual Fete, social media presence etc. It was felt the young and lapsed were least included and this could be tackled with community activities, social gatherings, helping hands group among other things. There was a suggestion made around celebrating the churches 30th anniversary this May and inviting all the community including the school. We also discussed involvement with the school and how to deepen it. It was felt that this could begin with contacting the headmistress or the governors to discuss the next step with them (Covid restrictions allowing). It was also noted we could invite people to Mass via the Action Forum (a free local pamphlet delivered to every house) and that we could hand deliver cards, including the Mass times, especially at Easter and Christmas.

Communion.

Many felt the opportunity to access Communion at St. Augustines was excellent and that we should continue to pray for others to return to the Church. We need to improve on reaching out to the lapsed, we hope to remain welcoming and maybe by being included in the Action Forum and with the delivery of the Easter/Christmas cards we could make a start. The Adoration of the Host on a Friday is greatly missed by some, although it is recognised that Father Adams cannot currently offer this – it was queried whether extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist may be able to offer some assistance. There was talk of how to develop more of a community – possibly with coffee mornings and/or toddler/baby groups, maybe one group to accommodate all.

Mission.

The mission of the Church was listed as spreading the Good News with love, help and support for one another and that this could be shared within the Diocese with more 'get-togethers', communication and pilgrimages. There is a lot of fundraising within the Church for various charities but we could do more in the wider community.

There continued to be an overwhelming acknowledgement for Father Adams' hard work and commitment to the Church.

People were keen to voice their opinions and look forward to seeing the draft submission due between 14th and 25th March. The Diocesan 'synthetic' document will be submitted to the Bishops conference on 8th April 2022.

Emma and Roger.