

PARISH SYNOD REPORT

(A feedback form has been sent to the diocese for consideration at the Rome Bishops' Synod in 2023)

Over a period of 6 weeks in Jan/Feb 2022 the parishioners of Our Lady and All Saints, Stourbridge, travelled together on the Synodal Pathway, growing closer to each other and to God, trying to discern His plan, for individuals, the Church and the future of the parish. It helped people to express some of their deepest feelings, listen attentively to each other and find inspiration for creating a growing, thriving community as we come out of COVID.

Our thanks go to Fr Philip and the small enabling group, who organised, ran and recorded the meetings, and above all to those who contributed. They were praying and/or attending, giving generously of their time, and speaking openly and honestly, in the groups or by individual written responses. All comments have been faithfully noted and will be used as we move forward in our on-going synodal journey. It is the beginning of a process where we learn to know better God's will and continue to carry out Christ's work in our parish.

There were 12 parish meetings, 6 group meetings (166 people), plus the schools, and 44 personal replies. The topics of Communion, Participation and Mission were all covered with illuminating, wise, challenging, hopeful, occasionally critical, mainly positive comments. The love and devotion that most parishioners have for God, the parish (including the Priest), Mass and the Sacraments, other services, the friendships, fellowship, pastoral care and outreach, were very evident. The building is appreciated, but there was much sadness about the absence of social activities in the Parish Centre, and a real anxiety concerning the lapsed, and the non-attendance of families and young people. Better inclusive welcoming, communication, more appropriate liturgy, improved liaison, and adult catechesis were all advocated. Care for the poor, needy and the planet is essential.

A deep and meaningful spiritual experience is at the heart of our pilgrimage, with our brothers and sisters, towards our destination which is God Himself. More opportunities to enrich this were requested and examples were given of good practice in the past: prayer groups, devotions, a Mission, retreats, bible study, talks, visits to shrines, having an open church, were all mentioned.

Everyone who responded did so because they wanted to be involved. This could be an on-going process through the setting up of a Parish Forum or Council, which would then be able to consider all the different areas which have been highlighted by our discussions so far, and also identify issues which need resolution. An outline of how our synodal journey of prayer, discernment and action could progress in the future, and possible topics to be discussed, follows.

1. Consultation - Parish Forum or ?Council
2. Spiritual Life - Non Eucharistic worship - Adoration
 - Retreats, pilgrimages - Rosary/Prayer groups - Sharing faith stories
 - Bible study
 - Open church
3. Pastoral Care - Using peoples' gifts
 - Accepting, non-judgemental, inclusive Church
4. School Liaison - Links with schools
 - " " parents
 - " " students
5. Creating Community - Social activities
 - Craft/hobby groups
6. Youth Work - ?Development Officer
7. Communication - Website - Whats App - Annual Parish Report - Keeping people informed
 - Open-ness and engagement - Zoom meetings
8. Worship - Music/church bell - Children's Liturgy/Masses - Readers/Ministers/Lay Training
 - Welcomers - Penitential Services - Language
9. Catechesis - Adults (Explaining Church teaching) - Children
10. Wider Community Links