For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

Diocese of Northampton

Synod Responses

Prayer for the Synod

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance
lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together
to eternal life and not stray
from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.
Amen.

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Introduction

The Synod Process

Our diocesan processes were inspired by Pope Francis' homily on the opening of the Synodal Path, and focussed on encounter, listening and discernment. We wanted to encourage the use of spiritual conversation as a tool across the diocese to enable people to share their stories, their wounds and their dreams. The process was mostly lay led, and most of the listeners who came forward for training were women. 93% of parishes engaged in the process, albeit sometimes in very small numbers. A common concern among listeners was that their excitement for the Synod process was not reflected among parishioners, especially with the Omicon wave before Christmas. Some parishes struggled to get anyone to come to a group session, while in other places listeners were surprised at the numbers taking part. At the same time, we recognise that this process is not a statistical survey, but, as the Handbook for the Synod put it "First and foremost, synodality denotes the particular *style* that qualifies the life and mission of the Church…in this sense, synodality enables the entire People of God to walk forward together".[1] So although some of the numbers were small, we hope that this would be the beginning of a synodal way of being for our diocese, and that we would engage more people into the future. The spiritual conversation method produced many generous and warm encounters, with a sense of being inspired by the Holy Spirit. People said they had never before spoken about what it meant to them to be Catholic, and some parishes have asked for more resources to continue the conversations. This response from a listener was typical: "Not always a good uptake in a large parish, but the quality of feedback was amazing"

Outside of parishes, Synod listening groups were held in schools, confirmation groups, over coffee, and in prisons. There were groups for priests, deacons, the disability group, women in ministry, diocesan staff, the religious communities and young adults. An effort was made was made to reach beyond our usual communities to those no longer attending Mass. In total there were 57 parish responses, 13 schools, 42 groups, and 87 individual responses, with an additional round of listening and discernment which happened at our Diocesan Synod Gathering. The process revealed often polarised positions, with the majority for change, but with strong voices for more traditional perspectives: Latin Mass v vernacular, clerical v lay involvement. Despite this, people still feel a sense of belonging as in a family. Quite a few parishes have not wanted to wait for diocesan or universal Church encouragement to start to address the issues raised in their listening exercises. The process has emboldened us to use substantial times of Scripture reflection, silence and discernment in meetings. We hope to promote this further through the diocese.

There is an executive summary of the Synod responses, the Diocesan Synod Report, which can be found on the Diocesan Synod webpages at https://northamptondiocese.org/for-a-synodal-church/.

[1] Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches, 1.2

Parishes

Cathedral and St Aidan's, Northampton

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
Please find below our response so far to the questions posed by the Synod Gracious Listening activity in bullet point form from the Cathedral & St Aidan's. ** denotes a number of comments received on this item.
Offering people an opportunity to reflect and submit their thoughts and ideas has been well received.
Our next meeting to take this forward in our local parish is next Monday although we have already made some immediate obvious improvements as a result of some of the feedback received.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Faith in God **
Awareness of Gods love /God within us**
Love**
A privilege
Belonging to the Universal church**
Living the original teaching today with God in us.
An ability to trace our faith back to Jesus. **
Being baptised and strengthened by the sacraments/Rosary.**
Loving our neighbour and being aware of others needs**
Living humbly **
Keeping commandments
A sense of Fellowship family & community **
Attend mass/connect/worship/ Celebrate the Eucharist**
Reading/study/discussing the bible** Guidance /Moral compass/meaning to life in spite of our weaknesses. **
Comfort in times of difficulty **
Hope of resurrection & everlasting life in Christ Jesus **
Relationship with God & others **
Practice our own spiritual journey** Tackling difficult political issues/social justice. **

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Vatican II reforms
Role of laity**
Mass in vernacular
Catholic social justice policy/common good**
SVP/Cafod/pilgrimages **
Leadership to the world **
Embracing technology eg live streaming **
Welcome **
Wisdom - makes us think
RCIA - discuss beliefs
Dedication of clergy **
Sacraments **
Inclusion **
Hub - variety of mass times & clergy Support when unwell
Equality for all
One of the great charities of the world**

Peace & security
Music is uplifting
Covid guidelines /welcome back recently. **
Masses throughout the week** Community work In Prisons /hospital /schools
Forgiveness and compassion to those that cannot follow teachings.
Belonging
Coming back welcome - if been away from church
Leadership from pope and clergy** Safeguarding (now)

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Child abuse scandals **
Being Upset/hurt/abused or bad experience as a child - traumatic experience **
Need to be more inclusive of Divorced/LGBT**
Support for young people **
Address not being part of local community
Need More involvement with schools **
Provide group meetings for carers/ isolated **
Explain mass more to children
When priests talk as though catholics are superior.
Negative reference in mass to Muslims Need more inclusion of minorities/outcasts
Reliance on small group in parish and other parish members not approached enough to get involved **
Untimely communication from leaders at local level has sometimes led to ideas not growing.
Contraception review re AIDS & abortion is needed. **
Not baptising a child as parents are not regular church goers requires a review
Do more for lonely & frail**
Not moving with digital age.
Inclusion of diversity
Where is mission work… here.**
More adult catechesis
More evening masses/groups in weekday for those working
More Evangelisation
More teaching/bible study grouos required
Hard to make friends if you are new More encouragement for existing congregation.
Better communication and sharing of best practices in and between parishes.
When people turn away we don't follow to see why.
When family are sick in hospital being directed to nursing staff to access our faith seems cold.

What is your dream for the Church?
Involve catholic schools more Consider Married priests
Lead in the world.
Consider permitting cardinals to be members of the House of Lords Welcome recent writings of the pope and synod activity ongoing.
Greater use of social opportunity in new Cathedral centre.
More consideration to those that do not live up to the ideals of the church.
Seek unity with all Christian faiths ** Continue to strive for inclusion ** Focus on less well off in society ** Priest treats everyone the same.
To be one with the world.
Love each other as one body Understand differences and enjoy our brothers & sisters.
Discussions to develop faith and attract lapsed. **
Give youth a feeling of relevance** More interfaith work **

Inspire people.
Reach out in our community/unify Make more of half our population - women.
Respect other faiths God and each other.
Greater honesty.
This Synod form/process is a sign of promise & hope for the future!
Welcome those that feel outside the church walls **
Sustain the commitment made by children and parents in sacraments but never seen again **
Review around the marital status of priests
Encouraging deacons both men and women
A missionary church. How many know that's we are the biggest aid agency outside the UN.
Inspiring laity to lead more in the wider community.
Focus on climate change and poverty
Small weekly improvements through faith.
Carers /housebound feeling included. Encouraging and attracting others to the faith.
Engage with people on their level
Be in the news for the right things. People in the community stepping up.

Christ the King, Bedford

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
How the Synod process was promoted:
• Parish monthly gathering
• Announced at weekend Masses
• Parish newsletter and Synod noticeboard in Church
• Questions x4 on reverse of Newsletter to take away for personal or family reflection and return the completed responses

Who took part in the Synod Process
• Small groups weekly 3-4 sessions - Mixed groups 3-4 people per session
• Saturday after vigil Mass x 4 sessions 4-6 people per session
• Grandparents group 7 people
• Young people) 3 responses
• Confirmation class 6 + 3 adults
• Individual parishioners and families – church goers) 9 responses to questionnaires
• Individuals/families Kerala community) 4 family responses
• 'Walkers for Health' (age group 60+) Mixed denominations (8-10 people)

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
• Belonging to a global Church family, in relationship with God / the Trinity
• Baptism gives us our belonging ,members of the Body of Christ
• Stability and teaching the faith, scripture, tradition,
• Tempest tossed church, always with troubles, Jesus says, "Courage, it is I" MK.6.50
• Precious gifts of faith and love / God is love not fear
• Very difficult to pass on the faith in today's world, helped by example and witness of daily life
• Giving and receiving support, spiritual and practical, prayer, comfort in times of trouble

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
• Preparation for Mass and the Sacraments, welcoming all
• Getting people together- for Mass, and organisations
• Charitable work, Cafod etc, care for humanity in need – love of God and neighbour
• Friendship and love one another – outreach
• Liturgical seasons encourage prayer and growth in faith
• Adoration time, prayer and spirituality/ constant presence of the Sacraments
• Leadership – maintaining basic Christian truths, moral guidance, speaks out on world issues, opposing tyranny and honouring martyrs
• Catholic education system

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
• Interest in ecumenism is poor. Also, GREEN issues
• Collaboration with other churches (even Catholic!) is poor
• Need to embrace the gifts of young people
• Interest in spiritual formation is weak / passive – Vatican 11 opened up the Church not implemented, but led to vulnerability
• Compulsory celibacy for priests is not good/ also Clericalism
• Judgemental attitude re sex, gender and gay people not always welcomed
• Harsh rules on birth control, divorced and remarried people
• Very low profile in local community
• Never a sermon on GREEN issues

• We need to more out-going and inclusive/ can be closed to today's world re technology/social media
• Difficult to engage with other immigrant groups/ cultures
• Genuine fear of "split" in parish re Mass (Latin v English)
• Gaps of faith between parish, schools and families, need of strong links with schools /families etc
• Laity not trusted enough or involved according to gifts and talents eg. re could be empowered to help with funeral services/evangelization-encouraging lapsed Catholics
• Need to connect with the earthly as well as the heavenly

What is your dream for the Church?
• As Christ's Body -to be One united, holy, apostolic and visible church community following the teachings of Vat 11.
• Emphasis on a prayerful church community, formation of the laity and sharing with those training for the priesthood to stay in touch with the real world.
• A welcoming church for all, as 'drop-in centre' - outreach to those on the margins/ lapsed Catholics/ divorced/those with disabilities/lonely. Work closely with and share with other denominations, other faiths and cultures and share resources / venues.
• Don't be afraid of making changes– growth of the Body of Christ, place of women in the Church, eg. deacons
• Reconciliation regarding the scandals in the church.
• Parishes and Diocese needs to go GREEN – Climate change, solar panels on church roofs, trees to be planted
• Welcome and promote outdoor social activities eg: carol singing/ 'mulled wine walk'/ park walks
• More social awareness, open church – offer 'drop in' times, for lonely, lapsed, ecumenism
• 'Field hospital' image of Pope Francis – cooperate with local medical centre/ local authority activities
• More forward thinking- encourage youth to take a lead- eg cadets of Our Lady- Suzi
• To be more open, ecumenical and inclusive
• Support vulnerable families and 'blended' families

Christ the King, Milton Keynes

Process Used:

Parish exercise during masses on consecutive Sundays

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be a Catholic means belonging, being part of a wider family. The Church is a foundation that brings purpose to my life and a source of comfort and support in difficult times.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Church has been good at pastoral support and in reaching out to the marginalised and disadvantaged. During the pandemic, the local Church showed it was able to respond quickly to changing situations by providing live streaming of masses. The restoration of the Permanent Diaconate - although there is still exploration and development of the role of the Deacon to be undertaken

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The Church has not dealt well with the handling of the abuse scandal, where at times it has seemed that it was more important to the Church to protect the perpetrators than to protect and support the victims. There is a lack of engagement with the Church among the laity, leaving tasks to the very few volunteers. This may be the result of a lack of structure promoting the involvement of the laity. The Church sometimes gets bogged down in tradition - seemingly for the sake of tradition itself - which has potentially stifled growth.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A time of true unity within the Church itself and with other Christian communities resulting in the creation of a truly loving and caring community. A time when all are fully welcomed and feel welcomed, irrespective of their age, sexual orientation or marital status.

Church of The Holy Redeemer

Process Used:
We held a meeting and went through all of the responses, looking for common themes. By process of elimination, we came up with a definitive and representative dialogue from the many conversations we held with our parishioners.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Community and belonging
Governed under one shepherd The Pope
Being a Catholic give me a sense of identity of being a Christian
The universality of the Church
Because it's the Church formed by Jesus Christ
Enjoy being Catholic - Fullness of vision of God
Attending Mass and receive Holy Eucharist
I feel involved spiritually and its straight forward
Forgiveness of sins
Consistency
The freedom, Support
Everything about the Catholic faith, ways of life (relationship with own family)
Fellowship with others at Mass
Togetherness, Inclusions
The Mass and Adoration - listening, singing, praising and worship
Meeting with different groups of people
Commitment to prayer – Always encourage me to pray
Various Church seasons: Lent, Advent
Having the Saints- Mother Mary as Mother of God and ours
Being able to learn and continue to learn to follow Jesus's way of life, the Catholic way of life and the good things the bible teaches us
The teachings on repentance and forgiveness
The time the priest gives to us as a person
The purpose of church, I love caring for others
A diverse community united by faith
Going and serving the church gives me fulfilment in life
It remains relevant even during times of great change
Meeting our needs
Feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit
Feeling loved, respected, being heard

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Continuity of Papal leadership unbroken for 2000 years
Checking and reminding governments of non-Christian laws or policies
People converting to being Roman Catholic
Change needed from the top
Humble listening; more welcoming of those who are different
Consistency
Roman Catholic schools keep the faith and Catholic way of life
The Church talks about the gospel and getting to know Christ
Catholic traditions are maintained, e.g., May and October Mother Mary's dedication

Clergy always cheerful and welcoming
We have Saints and Martyrs to intercede for us
Very helpful in prayer and encouragement in difficult times
Provision of last rite to the dying
Very good with accountability
It's universal and the Catholic Church is the same
Given education to lots of underprivileged children
Very respectful in fulfilling and following orders
Church has a good community spirit
Welcoming/friendly
Supportive/listening/action
No pressure on money
Support people in need
I love praise and worship, love for one another after Mass meeting
Support sick people
Performing the rituals
We have good buildings
Good order - hierarchy
Involvement of missionaries
Encourages families to be together
Gatherings Eucharist invitation
Pope Francis brings hope
Teaches in many ways the Catholic way of life
Makes me feel better going to Mass on a Sunday
Provides both a source of knowledge of the Divine and loving compassion
Ministries and groups are good and thriving

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Not allowing babies/children born out of marriage to be christened
Priest to be given a choice of whether to get married
People should be allowed to decide on contraception
No introduction of routine to new members
Sometimes the Church can read more bible verse not dictate
Encourages religious sisters to do sermons
Scandals (abuse) in the Church not investigated and responsible people not accountable for their actions
Staying interesting
Motivate the youth or youth involvement
Should be stern in addressing homosexuality
Local issues in the Parishes to be addressed in a timely manner, not to allow escalation to the community of the Church
Doing more for the poor since they have lots of money
The Church should stick to the values of the Bible and not go with what the world is dictating
Should get more women involved and recruitment of women priests
Should be sermons relating to up-to-date happenings
Poor leadership
Improve outreach to other Christians and people
Need for more priests - now critical
We still tend to be a little insular and isolated from the people of other faiths with whom we share many ideals

What are your dreams for the church?:
Change needed - from the top, humble, listening, more welcoming of those who are different.
To grow the numbers of Catholic members, throughout the world making the Catholic Church a more forceful light in the darkness.
To maintain Catholic values and morals
No female priests
Not to be double minded
Encourage younger generation to remain in Church after First Holy Communion – teaching children to build foundation
Children to be taught Catechism in detail and have a structured Holy Communion/ Confirmation Programmes
Togetherness
Tell other stories about the Bible
To be a listening body that reaches out to the voiceless countries
To influence people with power to do the right thing
To be the pioneers of oneness that all may come to the Catholic Church
To have a Church that is inviting, welcoming and inclusive to the worship of God
Many people to follow the Catholic faith
See more women involved in the Church
Priests to be approachable
Homosexuals are welcome but must follow the Church
Never to allow same sex marriage in Catholic church.
Not to allow same sex to marry. Not to allow men to become women
Maintain Christian values
Should not change for society
I would like the church to be a place of mutual collaboration where everyone can experience God's love through our hospitality supporting each other and to follow Jesus and do God's work on earth.
For the Catholic church to survive for the next 2000 years.
Everybody to be able to speak out to the people and share ideas.
Have more young people to join the priesthood as numbers are declining.

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Haddenham and Our Lady of Light, Long Crendon

Process Used:

This is the submission from the Church of the Good Shepherd in Haddenham and Our Lady of Light in Long Crendon. Both parishes are small and are served by the same priest. We held listening sessions after all three masses one weekend, with two groups after each of the two masses at Haddenham and three such groups after the one mass at Long Crendon. In addition there were 9 written submissions from people at Long Crendon who could not stay for the listening session and did not want to submit directly on line themselves. I have attempted as far as possible to retain the original voices, so that many of the words are quotations, even if not presented as such. There was clearly much repetition and I have tried to avoid that whilst still demonstrating the strength of feeling on some matters.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

We felt that answers to this question would be encapsulated in the responses to the others and so did not focus on it separately.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Broader church: Holiness: We're here to become holy, not just good people, to know and love God as present in this world. By bringing to our attention canonised and beatified men and women the church inspires us to follow their example, by spreading the faith to different areas. The church introduces us to God; it provides an opportunity to pray together, and it helps us to see God in everyone around us and to experience charismatic renewal to develop a deeper understanding of our faith. Our journey of faith is a vocation to learning about the faith and gospels; the church has supported me through my entire religious journey, understood all my problems and helped me in my spiritual life. Moral guide: The church provides a framework rather than a set of rules, an anchor, a reference for life situations, the church gives me everything in life; it makes paths in life clearer, thanks to the church, the bible and the 10 commandments, it helps me to strive to do better. Our physical churches are important safe places of calm and reflection, if it were not for those who built and maintained the churches, I would not have my faith. The accessibility of churches and mass during covid and the provision of virtual masses throughout the world and here was a great spiritual support. The church has provided stability and comfort through times of crisis and lack of faith, a lifeline. The sacraments are significant to all of us as they help and guide us; mass is the lynchpin of the church and regular frequent mass attendance strengthens faith, hope and love for the people around as. We also particularly appreciate confession, (and that there is less emphasis on punishment and guilt now) as well as communion being taken to the sick and the last rites. We find funeral masses very comforting and positive. Ritual and liturgy are important to us as they provide a structured format for our worship, and the big feasts of Easter and Christmas particularly enhance the spirit of community. We appreciate the universality of the church, that wherever we go in the world there is a catholic community and mass, a home from home. We appreciate being part of a welcoming community, with the opportunity to meet like-minded people; the people are the church, and the church brings people together, striving to make everyone feel welcome. In some ways the church has embraced inclusivity. Some see the church as welcoming and open to answering questions when people want to join or return to the Catholic church. One parishioner spoke of how becoming a catholic was the most wonderful feeling of coming home. Many of us like the opportunities to join with other churches and feel we are blessed with good parish priests. We appreciate pilgrimages, especially to Lourdes which can be transformative, particularly for young people, and value the chance given to disabled people to make a pilgrimage. Looking after disabled people in general, and seeing things through their predicament, are seen as strengths by many. We are grateful for the art, literature, architecture and music over the years given to us via our faith

which enrich me as a person and feel that the words and music written for the church over the centuries help us to focus on what is important. Many of us appreciate all the Pope does, attempting to return to the Christianity taught by Jesus, apologising for clerical sexual abuse to those affected by it, his readiness to speak out on key topics, travelling and reaching out to everyone, and his merciful approach; we wish he were more supported rather than denigrated. One parishioner thought that the papacy is the most important thing in the catholic church and another particularly mentioned John Paul II, and his efforts towards ecumenism. We value Catholic education and see it as especially useful in today's rather godless society. We equally value the church's charitable works, delivering help and aid where needed through the church's missionary organisations and charities such as CAFOD. One parishioner raised appreciatively the amount of charitable work done in Ireland by the church and expressed anxiety about the future of this with dwindling numbers there. One person particularly appreciated the impact of Catholic Social Teaching. Local level: We are all really grateful for our supportive, kind and loving parish, we have a really good thing here which we should not take for granted. We see the importance of our friendly local community and what we have already established and see that the parish is working hard to make a family. We really value having weekly Sunday mass. We have good communication and a welcoming atmosphere due to our diligent parish priest and a nucleus of willing helpers. Our good, holy parish priest is available when needed, listens to people, is good with them, supports the sick and needy members of the parish. He also preaches good sermons, from the heart, providing relevant and spirit-led teaching. We are so grateful for the streaming of masses during the pandemic and that weddings, baptisms and funerals went ahead even when numbers were restricted. In general, the quantity and quality of our services are excellent; the spiritual grace of the lovely masses. The good quality of our baptism and marriage preparation was also commented on. We appreciate the architecture of our parish churches which are not over-adorned.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Broader church: Where did we go wrong? Many of us are horrified by the sexual abuse crisis and apparent indifference towards the abused. The continued news of clergy being involved in abuse and the lack of transparency make it difficult for us to discuss with to people outside the church, who rightly see it as a scandal. It seems the church has wanted to protect the institution more than abused individuals. Bishops, including Pope Benedict, should not have covered up sexual abuse by priests and moved offending priests to other parishes. We feel shame at the denial, that it should be acknowledged more robustly by the hierarchy, that therapy should be offered by the church to the victims, that priests should not be absolved from the responsibility of paying the relevant penalty in society, and that an act of contrition for these acts should be embedded into our liturgy. Apologies and financial compensation are not enough; the church needs to show love and justice and act quickly and openly. Many people raised the church's attitude towards divorce and annulment and expressed great personal pain. One parishioner said that being refused a request their wedding in church following a divorce put them off the church for years. A lack of mercy is shown towards those who remarry after getting divorced under difficult circumstances, including domestic abuse, and then are denied the sacraments and not able comfortably to practise their religion. It was felt that there was no obvious person with whom to discuss these difficulties, as there can be conflicts with priests over this matter. It is important for the church to protect the sanctity of marriage but also to be merciful. More than one person expressed unhappiness at the apparent double standard that Boris Johnson was allowed to remarry in church. Several expressed unhappiness with the hierarchies of the Vatican, the dominance of conservative, male and often misogynistic clergy who ignore the views of the majority. It is seen as too rigid in its structures and processes, too political and detached. It was suggested that there is disfunction, if not corruption, in the administration of financial matters within the church, a lack of transparency and accountability which is damaging to people's faith. Some felt that the church is greedy, prioritising the sale of properties to raise funds over the needs of the parishioners whilst new church charities are set up regularly making ever

greater demands on our wallets. Several expressed unhappiness at the church's attitude towards same sex relationships, feeling that it does not empathise with or show love towards gay people, who have been made this way by God. There was a feeling that communion should be available to all and that campaigning against gay marriage is unkind, unloving and unchristian as it is expecting them to live solitary lives. More than one person felt that the church's attitude to contraception should be reviewed. At my marriage class at the Oxford oratory we had a strange lecture from a woman who linked taking the pill with cancer, aids and depression; this pseudo-science meant my husband was put off the church and an opportunity was missed as this was his first and only interaction. Marriage preparation in general was felt by one to be not right, with some information not conveyed in a way to encourage continuity of mass attendance. The shortage of priests worried many. It means that people die in hospital without access to the sacraments. The priesthood needs to be more attractive, and more pastoral support should be provided for lonely priests so that they can have a social life. The requirement for celibacy should be reviewed: priests should be able to answer the calls of vocation to the priesthood and to marriage. Priests should be allowed to retire at an appropriate age and the current lack of younger priests makes this difficult. It was suggested that the church needs to be more discerning in its recruitment of candidates for the priesthood: it was seen by one as too easy for paedophiles to become priests. Allied to this is the issue of women priests which was raised by more than one person. The church needs to be more open to the role of women generally in the church, as it was in the early church. Some felt that we are not governed well at diocese level, that there is often a poor choice of bishops, people with little spiritual insight only in it for personal advancement, that money is wasted on the trappings of the office, and on making more dioceses where there are too few people. It was regretted that bishops are not ready to speak out on matters of importance in current affairs. The stilted English of our current liturgical prayers was raised and that fact that we have been singing the same hymns for 60+ years with ancient English and biblical references not always understood by the congregation. We need more suitable and inspiring English liturgical music and new hymns with beauty in words and melody. While our traditions and rituals are appreciated by us, they can be misunderstood by newcomers and are often off-putting; perhaps explanation sheets for adults and children could be available on entering church. Many expressed concern about the lack of youth attendance at mass. The relevance of coming to mass is not clear to them; we are not welcoming to and have not created a community for younger churchgoers and helped them integrate. More discussion and support are needed for parents and children. The church has lost the way to inspire young people to search for understanding of the will of God. Low mass attendance was worrying in general, and one felt that there are too many classes and meetings for new followers which scares off young people. Equally it was suggested that our evangelisation is not good, and that we need more life in the spirit. The church does not always feel inclusive: not allowing people from other Christian denominations to receive communion was mentioned, as well as the need for more special assistance to those with learning disabilities, who can be challenging in crowds but who should be accepted and given the blessing they deserve as God's children. It was felt that there was a lack of communication from the cardinal and bishops during lockdown. One person suggested that we have lost a sense of sin and felt that more regular confession would be beneficial. It was noted that in Poland some priests are only interested in money and there is a double standard: you might be told that you are not able to do or have something unless you pay for it. It was felt that the church doesn't teach its leaders to teach everyone and that although the church is more relevant than ever it is not being projected well in the media. One felt that the Pope should speak out more and another commented on people's attitude when they see the Pope, that they rush to greet him disregarding others. Local level: Despite what had been said before, a few felt that there is a lack of community and fellowship here and that we do not grow together. Concern was expressed that decisions made by the Northampton Diocese have and will have financial impacts on the diocese and on many parishes. Sadness was expressed that the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is not offered more often. One said that they felt children had been reprimanded for not toeing the line. One pointed out that,

other than the parish priest, there is no obvious person in the parish to contact when you are in distress.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Broader church: We should be asked to focus on hopes rather than dreams, as hope is a theological virtue and dreams are a secular idea. We should be spirit-led in our lives and in our worship: we should follow Jesus in his openness to everyone; we should be the true bride of Christ, and be more prepared to talk about God. We need to create a different type of church, to provoke people to look inside themselves: we can do something as individuals, not just relying on the institution of the church. We should be more reverent, humbler, poorer, less fixated on committees and focus groups and have fewer rules and regulations. Churches should become an integral, and central part of the communities they serve again, and should be truly inclusive, accessible and welcoming. We hope that the church will be there for future generations and that people will join our community. We hope that we can be less archaic and keep up with our ever-changing society, but still hold onto our beliefs without the need to change them too much. We should not view all change with suspicion and dread but seek the best whether old or new. We should show a greater respect for the earth and the life on it created by God. We should be welcoming gay people into the church and educating members of the church who oppose them.
We would like to see more mercy and understanding of all people, including those whose lifestyles are different from our own. We should place greater emphasis on the sacraments and allow people to receive them when they want them, particularly those whose marriages have broken down. There should be a greater emphasis on improving accessibility to confession: bishops and priests should reaffirm the sacrament of reconciliation which should be less about guilt. We cannot be saved until we repent; reconciliation is consoling and life-giving. There should be more openness in the church, reflecting the best values of truth and honesty, respecting others, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. We should lead by example by not exploiting the vulnerable and young, showing love and care for all. Those who lead should be willing to admit mistakes and rectify them quickly. We would like to see the church deal with issues such as clerical abuse more honestly, in the way that Jesus would expect. Many felt that there should be a review of clerical celibacy and that we should work towards a church with women and married priests.
There should be greater lay involvement in the church with priests having more support. Priests should be holy and spend an hour a day before the Blessed Sacrament. We should have younger cardinals, not a conclave of very elderly men, and there should be clearer communication from the top. We would like to see the Pope being supported fully in the Vatican. We should reach out to youth, with youth pastors, more youth events that reach beyond Catholics, more groups for young people for activities which will interest them such as sports, and retreats for youth in modern spaces. The church should use IT more to engage with young people. We wish for greater ecumenism: we are all worshipping the same God, no matter how we do it. We feel that people, both those receiving and those administering the sacraments, should believe that it is alright for people to attend other churches. Equally being married in other churches should not viewed as a sin. It was suggested that we return to the church as it was before the Council of Trent. More than one person said that contraception should be allowed which in turn would lead to fewer abortions.

Local level: We love our physical church (Our Lady of Light): we do not want to lose our beautiful and unique building as a place of worship with its great little community. We should have a discussion to see how we can improve liturgy and fellowship for children, possibly having children being taken out for part of the mass for a children's liturgy of the word which relates to their lives. Many said that more needs to be done to attract young people and keep them interested although it was acknowledged that this is easier with larger congregations. We would like more events at Long Crendon, such as regular confession and a prayer group. Many hope that we can connect with and support each other more. We need more communal activities in addition to praying and singing. It

was suggested that it would be good to have a reflective process like this happening annually at the local level. These questions sound like a survey, but Pope Francis has said he doesn't want this - a better outcome for these listening sessions is not the Synod, but continuing these meetings and discussions at local level. We hope to work with other Christian churches in the community but not leave this to our parish priest. It was suggested that there should be more stations of the cross for meditation. It was suggested that the altar rails should be reinstated.

Divine Mercy and Our Lady Queen of Poland - Local Polish Catholic Mission in Slough

Process Used:

Within our parish, we chose the process of a dedicated evening led by our Parish priest and ten Listeners to which all were invited to participate. We started by gathering together with just the Listeners and our Parish Priest to discuss the proposed questions and the Pope Francis' concept of the Synod. We all agreed along with our Parish priest to slightly adapt questions 3 and 4 as we felt these better reflected the needs of our parish. We started our evening in our church in a prayerful atmosphere with the Word of God, a reading from the Book of Revelation. Our parish priest then gave us a catechesis following which we split into groups led by two Listeners. Each group started with the Prayer of the Synod and then spent time contemplating the questions and then allowing each participant to answer while the other group members exercised gracious listening. Finally, we all spent time agreeing which were the key responses which we discerned together and wanted to submit as a group. These were then collated by all the Listeners, who in turn spent time collaborating and discerning the responses which best represented all those received. Prayer and the Word of God led our discernment throughout the process. NB .We decided to slightly amend these questions from those originally proposed in order to communicate with our parishioners in a way which was deemed more appropriate for our parish by our Parish priest.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

• Belonging to the Church whose head is the Pope. He is the only one man on Earth who has an absolute power to take any decision he feels is best for the Church and based on what the Holy Spirit tells him. He shows me what path we should go. • Being obedient to the Pope, their clergy and most important to the word of God. • Having an open heart to the word of God • Accepting and carry my one's cross every day as our Lord Jesus did • Belonging to the community that leads us to understand God's words which sometimes might be difficult to understand or accept • Belonging in the community, to one, holy and apostolic church • Preaching the word of God everywhere • God is most important to us • Putting the word of God into practice, showing with our lives that, despite sins, we can strive to be better • To have a relationship with God. A man for who the truths of the faith are not a burden. A person who is the Light to others. A man who inspires others to love. • Putting God and His commandments first • Appreciating the Sacraments • Accepting what God has prepared for us, trust in Him especially in difficult moments of our lives and despite any hardships we might face in our lives.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

• Open to everyone, no matter how sinful one is, there is always a place for them in the Church. The Church still stays and draws people in, opening doors and making everybody welcome. • The clergy – majority of those bring a lot of good in people's lives and have helped deepen their faith • Is progressive with certain rules yet still constant with the main truths of the faith. For example, the Church has changed its position regarding people who are in the non-sacramental relationships. The Church has become more open to them and make them feel like they also belong to the community, who once could feel like 'outcasts' • Spreads the Gospel • Initiates various religious formations where people can grow their faith • Allows people to worship God in the Holy Sacrament • The Church gives the gift of the Eucharist • Fights for young people and works for them with their problems, sows a seed from an early age, provides meetings, gatherings • The gift of the Sacraments • Offers a community, local and global, a sense of belonging. • Helps us understand the Sacraments and the truths of the faith. Teaches us how to mature our faith.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

WHAT SHOULD WE STOP DOING IN ORDER TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT? • Stop fighting and arguing over who is the best within Church groups, movements and communities. •

Stop getting involved in politics. • Stop being too politically-correct, 'dumbing-down' or 'soft-soaping', avoiding difficult subjects which are nonetheless key and fundamental to our faith. • Stop attacking or undermining our priests, be it openly or surreptitiously, as this is damaging. • Stop distracting from Christ and His ultimate sacrifice as this should be at the centre of everything. • Stop keeping people in the grip of fear and punishment. • Stop church-going from tradition, habit or a sense of propriety alone. • Stop de-valuing the priesthood. Priests should stop trying to be 'friends' with their parishioners but focus on being a strong, stable shepherd to their flock. • Stop moving priests around to different parishes in the light of gossip or unpopularity. The hierarchy should defend and offer support to these priests instead. • Stop covering up misdemeanours of priests, instead bringing them out into the open and being truthful about difficulties within the Church. • Stop diluting our faith by assimilating and giving precedence to other faiths or secularism. • Stop being judgemental. • Less bureaucracy allowing priests and clergy to have more time for the people. • Stop trying to 'entertain' the faithful at the cost of the true meaning of our faith. • Stop trying to limit the length of the Mass. • Stop any kind of segregation or separation - the Church should be universal for everyone. • Stop focusing on trivial details in the liturgy and worship or the material aspects of faith • Stop focusing on the structure of the hierarchy.

What are your dreams for the church?:
WHAT KIND OF A CHURCH DOES CHRIST WANT FROM US? • A Church in which we are taught the Word of God. • A Church which is a beacon of light and carries this light out to the world. • A unified Church. • A Church with Christ at the centre. • A faithful Church. • A Church which contemplates and is in awe of God and Christ. • A Church which reaches out to its lost sheep and doesn't give up on them; which can reach out to people who are losing or have lost their faith. • A Church which gives witness and ignites faith and passion in others. • A Church which shares the experiences of faith of its members. • A Church which listens to what Christ wants. • A Church which is focused on building unity from within and not arguments amongst its groups, movements, communities etc. • A humble Church. • A courageous, unafraid Church of strength, stability and safety - an oasis of God's calm, peace and reassurance in the midst of today's chaos. • A Church which shows the world the true image of Christ. • A Church whose mission is to spread the Good News of the Gospel. • A Church which loves - love should be the foundation of everything as we build our faith and hope on love. • A Church which evangelises - not necessarily through trained catechists but through ordinary people who are not afraid to give witness to their faith and live it. • An open and accepting Church which is prepared to draw all in and not dismiss anyone or make them feel unwelcome
Local Polish Catholic Mission in Slough of Divine Mercy and Our Lady Queen of Poland

Guardian Angels parish at St Joseph's church in Aylesbury

Process Used:

• A questionnaire was distributed after Mass, with diocesan synod questions 2, 3 and 4 amended to focus on our parish (Guardian Angels) • Two meetings were held to consider the four diocesan questions and have listening conversations. Key themes were identified.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
This question prompted a lot of thought and was difficult to answer. We realised that many of the suggestions that were made during the listening conversations could apply to any of the Christian denominations. For example: loving Jesus; finding peace in the presence of God; Jesus giving us a foundation for our spiritual existence; knowing that God is with us and expects us to follow the teachings of Jesus; having faith that God has a master plan for us and the world. A major theme underpinning the conversations was that Catholics are Christians first and foremost. Like all Christians we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Several participants said they were comforted or proud to know that this belief is held collectively by a worldwide community of Christians from different denominations. However, comments were made that the sharing of beliefs between Christian denominations, and the differences between religions, is sometimes not understood. For example, one participant said she told her hairdresser I'm a Christian', and the hairdresser responded by saying 'Oh, you're not a Catholic then. The themes that emerged that were thought to be unique to us as Catholics are: • We encounter Christ in the Eucharist in a deep and meaningful way. While the bread and wine 'define us as Christians' and 'bind us together with our fellow brothers and sisters', the Catholic Eucharist unites us with Christ. • We have a great sense of belonging to a universal Catholic Church and proclaiming the same beliefs as other Catholics, for example, when we say the Creed. • We choose to continue giving ourselves to Jesus and have the conviction that it is the right thing to do. This involves more than just accepting the choice many of our parents made for us as children when they had us baptised. It involves accepting we have responsibilities and obligations in living our lives as Catholics. For example: being actively involved in our Church at local level to the best of our ability; speaking out against injustice and discrimination; participating in mission within our families and local community

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The themes emerging from answers to this question can be separated into two main strands: those that apply to the Universal Catholic Church and those that apply / applied to our local parish Church, Guardian Angels. Universal Church • The second Vatican Council made the Church more meaningful and relevant to worshippers eg the alter now faces worshippers, Mass is said in the main language of the worshippers. • The Church hierarchy has become more accessible. Church leaders used to be authoritarian and distant. However, priests, bishops and the Pope are now more visible and accessible. As servants of God and the people they are generally more approachable and down to earth • The laity are now more involved in the life of the Church. For example, roles have been created for deacons, Eucharistic Ministers, Readers, Children's Liturgists • The role of women in the Church is changing, though gradually • The teachings of the Church provide us with a good sense of what is right and what is wrong • There has been some adaptation in the Church's teaching. For example, greater emphasis is now placed on God's love for us and His forgiveness rather than sin and retribution; there is more compassion and support for Catholics whose marriage is breaking down; the rules on fasting before receiving Holy Communion have relaxed. • Greater emphasis is now placed on Christian unity and on encouraging collaborating with other churches. • Catholic schools are valued for the quality of education and also because they provide children with a solid understanding of Catholic traditions, teaching and ethos. Parish Church The main theme that emerged about the Church at parish level is the nature of the relationships between Guardian Angels

parishioners when based at their own parish church. This was exemplified repeatedly by words and phrases such as welcoming, friendly, community, togetherness, warmth, feeling valued, affection and respect for each other and appreciation of one another. Examples of statements include: • At Guardian Angels church we were a warm, friendly community who looked out for each other, like a family. • At Guardian Angels church we had close community; we were there for each other; we helped and assisted others that were disabled and less fortunate. • The people within Guardian Angel's parish genuinely seem to care about, and for, each other. • We had a deep sense of belonging 'one in Christ'. • We had meetings to which all members of the parish were invited and included. Many of the comments were made in the past tense as participants' identity as a 'Guardian Angels parishioner' appears to have weakened since our base moved to St Joseph's church. The attempts to maintain communication at parish level especially during Covid and during the time leading up to the closure of our church, were valued by several participants as were attempts to keep us together as a parish. This can be summed up in a comment made by one parishioner: I appreciate the amazing efforts of members of the parish to keep us together as a worshipping community. I cannot thank them, and those that still come to our mass, enough, for keeping us going as Guardian Angels. There have been some excellent opportunities for Guardian Angels parishioners to learn more about our religion, develop a stronger relationship with Jesus and to share our love for each other. Some examples of these are: being taught by inspirational priests or lay people; participation in Lent courses, prayer group, bible study group, men's weekends, pilgrimages, catechism classes and many joyful Parish social events. It was thought that these have all contributed to spiritual growth and helped bring about personal change. Guardian Angels parish has participated in some valued collaborative events locally with people from other Christian denominations. Examples of this are running joint Alpha courses with our local Anglican church and participating in the inter-denominational 'On the Move' missions in Aylesbury. However, there is scope for further growth and development in working with other churches locally.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The closure of Guardian Angels parish church and hall was the main experience many participants identified as not having gone well. Many comments were made about how the closure was handled, especially the poor communication and lack of consultation from the diocese. For example: there had been a major failure of communication between the diocese and the parish; we had the mat pulled from under our feet at Guardian Angels, everything imploded. There is a clear sense of loss resulting from the closure of Guardian Angels with comments about the loss of our base, the loss of identity as Guardian Angels parishioners, and the loss of many of our parishioners to other parishes since our move to St Joseph's church. These losses were clearly compounded by the loss of Guardian Angels' parish Priest who had served the community well for 27 years before his retirement. The falling numbers of people who attend mass was another key theme. The Covid pandemic has crystalised what has been happening in the Church for a long time - people have stopped coming to church. Some participants commented that the Church was too traditional and not relevant today, especially to young people. Others said they found some of the rules and restrictions imposed by the Church unhelpful. For example: divorced Catholics who re-marry cannot receive the Eucharist and feel excluded; the ban on the use of contraception and the high termination of pregnancy rates. Some participants spoke about their anger or sense of shame arising from their experiences of dealing with authoritarian or judgemental priests. For example: a priest refusing to bury someone because they did not attend church; a priest refusing to baptise a child because the parents were not regular church-goers; a priest in Ireland refusing to issue a 'letter of freedom' to enable a Catholic parishioner to marry a non-Catholic. Several participants mentioned the issue of child sex abuse within the Church and were critical of the way the Church had responded to this in the past.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Our dreams for the Church can be divided into three strands: the Universal Church, the Church at

diocesan level and the parish church Universal Church • To retain its current members and encourage those who no longer practice their faith to return to the Church (also applies to our parish church). • That the Church actively listens to the reasons why people do not come to church. • That greater consideration is given with regards to married clergy. • That women in the Church are treated as equal to men. • That the Church works more closely with families and schools to support them in nurturing the faith of children and young people. Our religion and its expectations must become more relevant and meaningful to children and young people. • For the Church to demonstrate a greater social conscience and speak out about present day issues, such as the treatment of immigrants and on-line bullying. • For the Church to acknowledge instances of physical, sexual or emotional abuse by anyone holding a position of authority within the Church. For the Church to hold perpetrators to account and to seek the forgiveness of those who have been abused. • That work is undertaken to achieve Church Unity for all churches • For there to be greater debate about inclusivity within the Church. For example, the Church to review its teaching on the sacraments and divorced church-goers who have remarried, unmarried women with children or people who have entered same sex civil partnerships. • For the Church to review its teaching on the use of contraception as this may help lessen the number of pregnancies that are terminated Diocese • That communication is improved with parishes in the diocese. • For there to be greater transparency concerning parish finances at diocesan level and how money is spent. Parish • For Guardian Angels parishioners to stay together and worship in our own church, with our own Parish Priest, as the Guardian Angels parish. • For our identity as Guardian Angels parish not to become lost at St Joseph's. • That we achieve re-growth in our service attendance numbers following Covid and the move to St Josephs church. • For the Children's Liturgy classes to recommence within Sunday Mass. • That we start to publish our own newsletter again and create a good website • To have better communication with all parishes within our town. I've felt welcome at St Joseph's and feel God is saying to me 'now's your chance to become more integrated' with the other Catholic churches in town • For all members of the parish to feel included and become actively involved in the parish as far as they are able. • That we have opportunities to engage in prayer and fellowship with other members of our parish; to attend Bible study classes under the direction of a Priest, deacon or spiritual director; to attend workshops and retreats. A participant made the point that: Mass attendance offers basic spiritual maintenance – that alone is not going to set anyone on fire'.

Holy Child & St Joseph, Bedford and Our Lady of Ransom, Kempston

Process Used:
Three groupings were held in the parishes of The Holy Child & St Joseph, Bedford and Our Lady of Ransom, Kempston; namely, Open parish meeting, Parish Forum and Parish SVP Conference. We trying to organise a meeting with prisoners in HMP Bedford. This report will be sent seperately if it can be done.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Opinios were: The person of Jesus Christ. Gospel values. Certainty in the faith. The sacramental life, especially the Mass. Theologically challengeing. Rich tradition, culteral, pastoral, theological. The Apostolic succession giving that certainty of teaching and which gives a feeling of comforting permanence. The family aspect of Church life which welcomes everyone. Made up of saints and sinners. A sense, therefore, of belonging. Helps to make sense of our lives. Its universailty. A strong moral code we try to live by, giving direction to our lives in the world in which we live as we strive towards eternal life. Being part of something bigger and that feeling of community and security within the family of the Church.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ and gospel values. The missionay work of the Church throughout the world.The sacramental life of the Church which is essential to spiritual growth and a remedy for our woundedness. The emphasis on personal prayer and formation of prayer groups and new religious movements both lay and the consecrated life. The election and papacy of Pope Francis. He is contempory and caring of the marginalised and forcibly demonstrates this in reaching out to communities. He is an influential voice in the world on many themes including poverty and climate change. We have been blessed with several popes this past century who were holy men and good moral leaders. Social out-reach via various charitable organisations and structures. The support and encouragment of the clergy in this. Very strong on social justice and moral issues despite hostility from secular quarters. The Church's charitable work throughout the world in the fields of education, family life and health-care and community projects. The promotion of marriage and family life as essential to a healthy and stong society. Pilgrimages to various shrines has always been a popular pratice in the Church and remains so , reminding us that we are, as a Church, a pilgrim people.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The Church's response to sex abuse scandals. This has seriously undermined the role and influence of the Church because of the dreadful pain caused to the victims of these crimes. Things are slowly improving but the damage caused to the victims and the Church's reputation will be long-lasting. Financial improprieties at the Vatican have also tarnished the Church's standing. Can be viewed as too judgemental and not as inclusive or welcoming as some other Christian denominations. Maybe not so able to engage with young people to help them maintain their faith in today's society. The Church's stance on artificial birth control has been widely ignored. Not enough being done to address matters of human sexuality i.e. pre-marital relations, contraception, gender identity, same-sex relations, divorce and re-marriage. These matters and the Church's teaching on them are leading people away from the Church or not fully participating in its life. Work needs to be done on the relevance of Church teaching on these matters in today's world and generation. Clergy do not always offer enough relevant support to their congregations to feel confident in living and witnessing to the faith. There is not enough challenge by individual priests and bishops which allows wrong or bad practices to continue. The continuation of the Latin Mass should be curtailed.

What are your dreams for the church?:

Re-focus on the things that really matter in the life and teaching of the Church i.e. the person of Jesus and his gospel. Emphasis on the spiritual life through prayer and sound teaching (catechesis). Promoting a sense of the sacred e.g. prayerful silence in church and respectful behaviour. That the Church may continue to be a way of life that informs our daily lives and to be a sign of hope, light and joy; a place of refuge, a sanctuary from life's problems and increasing activity. A place of rest and peace where we feel embraced, wanted and loved. Where we also look out for each other in our journey through life. That the Church becomes a reference point for moral and ethical issues. That the laity be given more involement paricularly where there is a shortage of priests. That Pope Francis be given time to implement his mission. That women be given much more authority (responsibility) in the Church even if it means re-structuring the Curia. That more men may respond to the vocation to be a priest. To become a more dynamic, engaging and attractive Church where people can find joy and fulfilment and a sense of completeness and become joyful disciples of the Lord. To see more young people remain in the Church and offer things for them to maintain their faith. The promotion of chaplaincy in our schools and universities, hospitals and prisons. To increase opportunities for Eucharistic adoration as a way of coming closer to the Lord and high-lighting the centrality of the Mass. Teachers of the faith must love the faith if it is to be taught effectively. It is not just an academic subject but a way of life. A Church that is strong and robust but always gentle and compassionate, understanding of the human condition.

Holy Family and St John the Apostle

Process Used:

Ten people attended the Parish synod. Each of the question areas on the participation card were addressed. Detailed notes were taken by one of the parishioners and will be forwarded to Bishop David.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Inclusion To support those in need To be part of a worldwide family

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Reaching out to those in need e.g. the poor, the sick, the bereaved, locally and over the world Provides moral guidance The Sacraments

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Not meeting the needs or wants of different groups e.g. some would like a Latin mass, some would like a livelier experience The reliance of leaving the management or organisation to Priests and Deacons Hiding/ covering up truth e.g. the abuse scandal, the unmarried mothers scandal. The church acting as a business. Previously to make a decision they used to pray to the Holy Spirit, then draw lots. We are not good at sharing the Good News. Not engaging with some people in society e.g. young people There should be a variety of events to make people feel welcome The lack of public Catholic speakers/ role models

What are your dreams for the church?:
That there will be more lively services with more praise and worship To be more welcoming/ inclusive

2nd Submission

We held two meetings - the first was a general parish meeting advertised in the bulletin for anyone who wanted to take part and the second was a women's group within the parish. These are listed below, a paragraph apart. Please note that I have also emailed both of these feedback documents to the Synod teams also (before discovering how to upload the responses) my apologies for any inconvenience caused.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Everything, sense of happiness, lost without it. Extension of family around the world, we are part of the world FAMILY & feel safe by being part of the family. Being inclusive, hearing & seeing, learning from other faiths & accepting others. Converted & feels that if not a Catholic you're a heretic. Faith is very important & people feel at home in church. A vision beyond religion. Church can obscure Jesus but a real love for Christ & personal relationship with God comes from being Catholic. It's more than a faith, it's a community, a family. There's a level of closeness we experience that we don't experience in any other area of our lives. We can experience support in times of great need; illness, death of a loved one, family and life struggles. We can experience shared prayer. The feeling of praying together is very powerful and comforting. Being prayed for is equally comforting. We can share our faith not only with each other but with people outside of the church. We do it in a simple way by showing kindness/ doing good deeds while wearing a crucifix or simply saying, God bless We have the Mass and the sacraments which we are part of and we very much appreciate.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Setting everything up, the organisation/admin, helps us to reach out. Sacraments Parish – sacraments, Charities around the World. Church leading us well & can be exciting, if we allow it to. Morally good grounding for life We have the Mass. It is something we have always had and it keeps us going. It is everything to us. We have our priests who hold us and work so hard. We appreciate the opportunity for regular adoration within the Church. Providing us with this opportunity allows us to meet with Christ in a very intimate way. Nothing can compare to this. We feel welcome and comfortable in church. Some of us have left the church for a while and have felt welcomed back when we returned. We really appreciate the sacraments that are offered to us. That we can receive the sacrament of the sick when we are weak and sick and when we approach death. A beautiful gift and a huge comfort. We really appreciate being able to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Although it is a spiritual experience we find is so therapeutic, being able to share experiences, stresses, concerns and struggles with a person who is sympathetic, non-judgemental and helpful (our priest) . We are not always enthusiastic about going to confession but we very much appreciate being able to feel that sense of freedom and a new start that we get after receiving this sacrament. We appreciate the homilies within our own church, we find them spiritual and uplifting, but most of all we find them practical. We can use the reflections from the homilies in our daily lives. They help us. Fr Andy tells us how he prays when putting together his homilies and asks God to guide him. We can feel that when we hear the homilies. We appreciate that this Synod is not a reflection on the time of the pandemic. However; we discussed our church's response to the pandemic. Parishioners were treated with sensitivity. It was devastating when we had to close the church doors but we appreciated the online Masses. We very much appreciated the opportunity to go to Adoration before Mass had started up again. Some of us attended and enjoyed the ' Life in the Spirit ' courses.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Scandal over abuse, children taken away from single mothers – accept mistakes & not be so secretive & dishonest. Dumbing down the liturgy – not allowing Latin masses- why? Polarising & alienating people Feel restricted & subdued. Doesn't feel joyous (Holy Spirit should be leading us & tell us what to do. We're planning for what we want & is it right? Feels like business. Without the power of Christ we cannot do anything) The scandal that some priests brought on the Church .No real apology. The damage that it has done to the Church and to the many good priests and clergy within the Church. We discussed how we feel the Church views people who could be perceived as different. We discussed the Church being judgemental at times. Mission: Our thoughts are turned to those outside the church walls

What are your dreams for the church?:
Everyone is welcome – being inclusive. We lack community. Not enough prayer groups, or outreach groups. Huge parish hall & not enough groups happening there. Involve the laity more, not just Priest & deacon led work, we need to empower lay people. The Church to discover how to present the Gospel as Good News – make it life changing. We need to be evangelising. Dream to have different types of mass, for different groups & less polarisation. See life in the Church every Sunday. See passion & love for the Lord. Rather than bringing people 'back' to the Church and bringing the young 'back'; we discussed the idea of creating opportunities for people to meet Christ. How can we do it? We don't know but we do recognise the importance. To flourish in our Church we discussed having Rosary groups. We discussed how other denominations have opportunities for both parishioners and people outside to have an opportunity to meet for tea and coffee within the Church. Providing a deeper sense of community and maybe a chance to meet the Lord. Can we make our churches look more attractive with flowers, pots and hanging baskets. To make the Church more welcoming but even more importantly this would reflect our love for our church. Could churches create a display board featuring a focus on the church seasons; interesting facts about a saint, Prayers , other church topics. This may encourage people's interest and curiosity.

Holy Family Church, Langley, Slough

Process Used:

Face to Face Groups and on-line groups

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

What are your joys/celebrations of being a Catholic? • Pope Francis • Being part of a community • Being part of a worshipping communion of believers • Joy – being part of a worshipping community • Sense of belonging • Still feel part of a community when in isolation. Find it hard to get back to regular attendance at church. Find it comforting that I am able to pray alone. • An opportunity to reflect on the gospel. • Praying in a consistent way. • So happy to be part of a happy parish community. • Being part of a family. • Sense of belonging to a worldwide community. • Gives an anchor • Celebrations • Global awareness of important issues: CAFOD • We are welcoming • As a woman – I feel involved and welcome • Holy Family is welcoming • We are communicated to at Holy Family in a non-judgemental way/ accessible • Never feel judged • Engaging all my senses in the liturgy • Sharing and experiencing the love of God • To be part of a worship community • Express ourselves/Kindness • Having a place to go in times of strife • Spending time in harmony/conviviality together • Music! • Our diversities, ages, children, races, etc etc • Prayer • Global – I can go to Church in any Country • The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist • Being inclusive • Participation of the Young • Being member of global family • Pray as a community, belong to a community, Catholic people and friendly and helpful. Meeting other Catholics make you see how much you have in common. • Diversity of interpretation • Belonging to a community • Less triumphalism • Church – increases your faith. Joy depends on who's leading the service. • Peace within yourself • We love coming to church it's very comforting. People are 'always there'. • Social teaching makes good sense • Caring community • The faith in knowing that praying always helps – even a small prayer! • Moral guidance • Family • Believing in afterlife • The Mass, The Sacraments, The Clergy/Religious, The Community Of the Church • Remembering the May and Corpus Christi processions • To continue and depend our faith and pass it on to our children • Bring free to come on weekend every time is convenient to us • Not strict • Family bonding is Catholic • Learn how to be a good person, have empathy for all people. • Accept all people with their religion and views • The real presence • Respect to learn and grow in confidence • Enjoy the mass, the Sacraments • Welcoming of all our cultures • Being part of a community that teaches good values and moral structure • The welcome • Holy Family is a welcoming base • Homilies are interesting and short • Family in Christ • Enjoy being involved in the Church • Solace in the Catholic Community • Place to belong – our Church is welcoming • I feel welcomed by God • Fr Kevin knows us • Structured journey throughout the year • Inclusivity • Celebrating outside cultural celebrations • Sharing knowledge and ideas • Being part of a worldwide community • Worship in my chosen community • Love, support, care • Celebration of mass • Feeling part of a community • Finding peace and comfort in times of anxiety • Being part of a caring group with the same values as I have. • We can laugh and cry together and feel included all the time. • Celebrating Mass as a community • Being involved in the Mass – singing/choir, psalms, prayers • Having different/special days to celebrate throughout the year. • Real presence of Christ at the Eucharist celebration • Sense of belonging • Same Mass everywhere in the world,. • Welcoming community • The real sense of community • Community & support • Charitable approach to all irrespective of wealth, race or position in life • Being able to take part in mass all over the world • Feeling special • Pope Francis speaking out and challenging world leaders • Social action – local, national & international • Establish purpose and direction in life • Being Christ focused… • Being able to commune and worship God through beautiful music • Eucharist • Knowing I have a Church family to give support • Community • Fellowship • Family • Community • Belonging • Prayer • My Catholic friends! • Art & Music • Care for the communities in different churches • Church History • Basic meaning in life • Sanctity of life • Identity • True faith • Richness of diversity • Unity in diversity • Holy Communion • Eucharist • Going to Sunday Mass • Good news • Sacraments – Eucharist • Learning • Singing in the choir • Same liturgy • Human dignity • Joint prayer • Pope Francis •

Inspiration to be alive • Sharing my faith with the children • Mother Mary rosary • Papal leadership • The Sacraments • Celebrating Mass • Mass • Joy of Mass • Relationship with Jesus • Universal • Faither • Faith in balance with real life • Fullness of love and life in Christ • Love • God's love • Sense of community (8) • Feeling Safe • Incentive to pray • Giving hope for the future • Helps me to calm down and face reality • Knowing I belong to Jesus • It means everything • Deepening my faith • The Church is a world family (3) • I am proud • Freshness of Pope Francis What are the difficulties/challenges you experience being a Catholic? • The challenge of Latin versus English liturgy • Sharing my beliefs • Lack of Diversity • Busy life to find time • Maybe not consistent from Church to Church • Dependant on the priest – maybe too much! • Is the LGBT community accepted! • Women and men should hold equal status managing the church and its decisions • Are Divorced people accepted • Not as open with colleagues about being a Catholic as some are atheist and are quite aggressive • Woman are not yet given equal status • No women priests and deacons • Not develop role of women • Welcome everyone e.g. divorced, LBGT, etc • The rules for baptism, weddings, holy communion and confirmation differ across the world, should be the same. • Engage with youngsters • Why mass in Latin again in some churches in some countries? • Prayers are said the same way. • Lack of inclusion • Lack of understanding by other faiths • Catholics leaving our church • Mixed faiths • Not many are joining the clergy/religious life • Not so many understand the Catholic church • We are welcoming but too reserved • Our children are not holding the faith • New generation like my boys, worry that they may not continue the responsibility and obligation of going to church every Sunday • Divorce • Parish priest • Marriage • School/Church • Clergy numbers too low • Temptation • Getting involved in the wrong environment • Church is not open all day to visit and pray • Accepting gay marriages • A lot of persons lose their faith – they spoke bad about Catholicism • Disabilities – coming to church, more access to priests and religious occasions • Satisfaction/comfort in church. • Disabilities to come to church – accessibility to hear, loss of concentration, noises, children screaming • It's difficult with today's children, many do not understand why we go • Somethings that were done in the past that was generally criticised – abuse by priests and nuns • The church is sometimes seen as too rigid and dictatorial • Marginalising people – divorced, gender, unmarried couples • Rules made by men in the past • Dogma can be helpful to a level! • Inequality of women • The wealth of the Vatican • Our Catholic arrogance can get in the way! • The stigma of abuse • We still need to get past this [stigma of abuse]. • The future of the Church! • Other young people that may not be Catholic or know much about it, sometimes have preconceptions or criticisms of the faith. • Priests are not as accessible as they used to be. • We are a minority on the bigger picture. • We are destroying the planet – the Church can do more! • Women priests/nuns and equality before God • Feeling guilty about forgetting to pray • Feeling inadequate on the knowledge of the Bible • Explaining to children about LGBT matters • Confusion about sexual orientation • Sacrament of Holy Communion for divorced people following domestic violence • Feeling threatened by extreme religious fanatics of many religions • Sorrow that our children reject our faith • Holding in anger, frustration and guilt and being afraid to…talk • Excluded & marginalised people (e.g. divorced, gay people) • Lack of priests for future • Role of women • Confidence to share our faith with other people (we are a bit passive – compared to other faiths/religions) and winning more young people in our community. More vibrant young community. • Engaging with children/young people so that they want to take part in worship. • Hierarchy • Lack of support for people with personal difficulties • Engaging everyone • Focus on negatives – thou shalt not • Lack of understanding for those who are outside the 'norm' • Old fashioned ideas • Not acceptable to speak out • Lack of a proper journey for children & teenagers • Mostly women working/supporting the Church • Roles of women • Great with the Mass goers but others can feel excluded due to Church's rules • Misunderstanding • Not teaching and changing the deposit of faith • Divorce • Pleasing the world instead of saving souls • So many resting Catholics • Abuse • Not worthy • Damaged reputation • Counter cultural • History negativity/reputation – Cruelty – Nuns • Church's small voice • Being different • Comparison to other faiths • Minority • Hierarchy (male dominated) • Access to priests and feeling comfortable to talk • Perceptions of close mindedness •

Overtly expressing faith • Disconnect with modern life • Secularised environment • Encouraging younger children to enjoy church • Bad press • Language in 'Red Mass' missal • Having to justify my faith • Losing young people (2) • Cultural differences • Engaging with people of other faiths • How to encourage people to return

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
What does the Church do well? • Feeding the poor, visiting the sick, burying the dead i.e. showing acts of mercy to the wider church community • Welcome people to mass • Acts as a source of comfort • Supporting communities needing help/development • Framework of a way of life • Involvement of the young i.e. Altar Servers and Reading • Teaching – locally and through the Vatican news – Angelus and teaching from Pope Francis • Caring about issues and speaking out • Teachings and format of mass – global approach • Move to more technology to attract youth • We can see the Church community is getting more involved for the betterment for our future generation • Welcome people from all walks of life if they want to love God • Respect and behold traditions • We really endorse the Synod • We need to market what we do well • Peace and harmony in community. Everything we can help and do towards the Glory of God! • Provide opportunity for gathering and prayer together. Celebrate all the different feasts such as Easter, Christmas, fasting during Lent, marriages, christenings, confirmations. People joining the Catholic Church for the 1st time. • Very accepting to people who want to be Catholics! • Diversity – all nationalities together. Feel as one faith wherever we go. • Pomp & ceremony • CAFOD fulfilling the Beatitudes • Leadership in our church is strong. • We the Church look after others in our community, giving help and support when needed. • In our church there are many different backgrounds and all are accepted and valued, even if they do things differently to ourselves. We value their differences. • Promoting education – schools, colleges and university. • Foodbank, CAFOD • Promoting love and understanding within the Church community and outside (outreach work) • Multiculturalism & equality amongst all – a model of how society should run • Lay ministry • International mass to promote diversity • Oct Rosary in different languages. • Synod – listening • Bible study – Jerome Group • Online mass • Sharing in the Eucharist • Different Sacraments available • Large engaged congregations at masses • Celebrations – baptism, weddings, funerals, Christmas, Easter • Bringing people together in faith • Bereavement support • Welcoming/Baptism • Communication • Guidance • Support of Third World countries • Accepting people of all kind (marriages) • Helping them (in difficulty, educate them) • I can come to church even if I can fully participate (take the Holy Communion) • In this religion I don't feel brainwashed • The Universal Church supports the suffering world through its charities and missionaries • The Church offers hope in a way not understood by other Christian faiths through the Sacraments • The Mass – real presence • The life of Celibacy • The support to people – Charity • The Sacraments • Patience in the face of criticism • Oneness of the celebrations • The schools • World of the Religious • Our Pope • Catholic Schools – good moral values • We see God through others • Our Synod is giving us an opportunity to speak. • The Church is Global – we know what to expect in all Churches as Catholics. • Give us a grounding and a platform to nurture yourself in • Pope Francis connects us together • Mass is the same everywhere • Becoming a little more liberal • Starting to communicate/focus on mission better • Acceptance of voluntary assistance • Pope Francis speaking out • Sacramental observance • The idea of this type of Synod • Mix of community and richness/diversity that brings • Pope Francis – Leadership Prophet • Giving the world Pope Francis • Pope who understands people • Pope Francis pastoral not rule based • Staying open! (Churches) • Returning to worship • Fratelli Tutti • Missionary work • Missionary work • Moving towards mission • Education • Praying for the world • Praying • Online liturgy (Ministry) • Welcoming • Organising parish communities • Gathering • Reaching out to community • Openness to other faiths • Education & Health • Liturgy/Celebration of the Eucharist, CAFOD, Foodbank, • Church involved in Education and Hospitals here and in the developing world. Missionary work. • The Church appeals to the senses 'Smells and Bells' Visual, Auditory etc... Making Mass an immersive experience • Reaching out to other religious groups • Helping the needy, Foodbank, CAFOD, Night Shelter etc… • Gives

clear guidance on morality and ethical issues, focus on importance of kindness and aspiring to live in a way consistent with Christ's teachings. • Welcoming people no matter their ethnicity • Keeps spreading and teaching God's Word. Approachable • A wonderful, welcoming, diverse Church Community. • Involvement of laity in a diverse number of Church Ministries, Reading, Eucharist, Choir, Music etc. Inclusive, celebrates differences in culture and provides opportunities for development of prayer and meditation. • Reaches out to people in times of need. Shows compassion. • Brings people together from all walks of life. Brings out and sees the best in me. • Maintains tradition, has never responded negatively to critics, Charitable organisations, this Synod and Universality. • The priest asks us to encourage other people to come to church. I Love its traditions. • Engenders a sense of community and belonging. • Wherever I am I feel part of the global Catholic Community. We celebrate well, not just Mass but important occasions. • Good Liturgy, often strong leadership. The Universality of the Church and its wonderful traditions • Lively • Prayer Groups • Celebrating feasts • Caring • Diverse community (4) • Privilege to belong • Good at trying new things (2) • Meeting new people • All age groups • Involvement of laity • Sacramental programmes involving families • Sense of welcome and belonging • Well organised • Respect each other • Moving with the times (2) • Interesting parish • Welcoming children

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
What does the Church not do well? • I am not aware of the Catholic Church involvement in prison ministry. Both the Catholic and the wider Church needs to work on showing hospitality • Making provision for LGBT groups e.g. the mass for gay people was stopped by the Catholic Church making them feel even more excluded from the community • Dealing with safeguarding issues – although this has been improved recently • Welcoming strangers – I am probably speaking from my experience of working in Anglican settings • It's not relevant in some areas of life • Not inclusive especially in different parts of the world • The goal of the Church is to transfer the modern world but it seems to be more focused on becoming more like the modern world – worldly. • Needs to move with where we are in 21st century, some ways are stuck in the past • Women priests • Needs to be more relevant to the needs of younger people • Married priests • We need to message to young people that they may leave but it is fine to come back • Advertise the Catholic Chaplaincy at Uni • Create newsletters for the Uni students • The church needs to explore unconscious bias • The Church needs an open dialogue about equality • In terms of negative impact, we feel that the younger generation is more at a distance, especially worrying point for our future kids. • Embracing people of different sexualities. • The Church needs to embrace and discuss inclusiveness • Not flexible in bending with traditions • It's a pity we have no Sisters • Let's discuss Women Priests and Married Priests • We need to really have a dialogue about how we keep young people involved in the Church • We need to build the Youth Movement • We need to help better how to come back • Involve the laity more • We need to get Tech savvy and do better online marketing • Depends on priest or server – can have meaning or you switch off • Don't agree with women being ordained • Nuns – should be able to say the Mass. • Not traditional enough also not modern. • Catholic guilt especially if rules are broken • Rules should be worldwide • Bad attitude towards people who are not Catholic • Non Catholic cannot receive communion • Some of the older members of the Church's governing body are very set in their ways and don't want change. The Pope will have opposition. • People with sexual orientation problems feel rejected by the Church. • Evangelism/sharing our faith needs to be promoted by clergy. • Unconscious bias – against women by some priests and laity. • Youth Ministry needs to be promoted to keep our young people in Church. • Women's role in the Church – need to be part of decision making council. • Spiritual leadership & sharing the good news. • Not addressing important issues – role of women, child abuse, gay people's acceptance in the Church, living together before marriage… • 'Losing' so many young people after confirmation. • Excluded groups (divorced, LGBT, etc) feeling that the Catholic Church is not for them • Women deacons • Be more welcoming • Catechism to be explained • Scandals • The word to be given ??? Encourage more reading of the Bible. • We need to link better

with nature and the planet • Help young people defend their faith • Bring back Church Gardens and do Gardening and stress things in our Community • Include the Youth much more in the faith • Talk about the issues that the young will face leaving school • Make children important • Make our Churches welcoming and places for children and young people • Do something about recruiting clergy. • Poor access to priests • Women Priests are needed • Women as Priests would be good – update the Church! • Ensure that we educate children within their faith • Extend Ministries for Women • Bring back societies and groups for the Youth • Big youth events should come back • Face issues of World poverty • Link more with other Churches • New Day experience for our Youth • Give the Youth a Voice – a Chance to speak! • Special Mass for Sunday for Children • Bring the Schools together for Youth Masses • Very poor at reaching out to people on edge or who have left • Welcoming all? • The Church community is only Church goers • Not embracing Francis enough • Looking after the infrastructure of Church (buildings and community locations) • Recruitment of clergy • Targeted communications towards teens • Not being strong enough in defence of policy or actions • Excluding women from senior positions • Not ordaining women • Role of women – Deacons? Priests? • Slow to change • Not communicating well with other parishes and Diocese • Promoting a positive image • Dialogue with other denominations and faiths? • Having control only by clergy • Speaking out for refugees • Not speaking out enough – injustices • Men in leadership • Moving with the times • Women Ministry • No voice for women in decision making • Consistent • Youth ministry • Speaking in Churchy language – communication • Evangelism • Divorced etc included better • Rules • Evangelising • Getting out into community • Reaching all communities • Supporting good education at home and worldwide • Using the full range of skills amongst lay people • Too many people feel outsiders • Not always keeping to safeguarding protocols • Shouldn't delve into politics or politicised issues • People come late to Church and some are not prepared for their ministry. • Often churches operate as individual entities. Open criticism of other churches. • Being silent when socio-political chaos invades society. • The church can be seen as not important in society. • Not great at getting young adults involved after they leave school. Most don't want to go to Mass or have any involvement. • Priests should be able to Marry. • It would seem that priests need help in dealing with pressure and needs of diverse communities. Maybe wrong priest I wrong parish with wrong community. • Priests sometimes want to do things his was or by himself. The church is very slow to move. Some churches are not welcoming. • The church could do more for marginalised people i.e. Divorcees. Some (not all) priests do exclude these people. • Some Priests should never have been ordained. • Sometimes factions can be created in Christian communities. • The Church can be narrow in its views. • People have been shunned because of their sexuality. E.g. Gay people being unable to marry or be christened in the Church. Abortion and contraception ruling. • Not great at evangelising, sharing our faith. Unconscious bias by laity and some clergy. Lack of women leadership makes things restrictive. • We don't publicise what we do, perhaps thinking we will be frowned upon. Some events not mentioned in our church when they are mentioned nationally or even in our community. Not good at including LGBT or the divorced, Tackling concerns such as the Child Abuse scandal. • Slow to address scandal and abuse. Still very paternalistic and authoritarian. Slow to develop role of women Deacons. Not recognising birth control and making couples feel guilty when they wish to limit their family. Not allowing people who have been in abusive marriages to remarry or be in full communion with the church if they remarry. • Explaining to others why I belong • When I can't get to church • Lack of belief in the world • Distraction of social media (2) • Hard to believe certain doctrines • To adhere to obligations • Respect other religions without sounding too strong in my own • Past scandals • Being hated in certain parts of the world

What are your dreams for the church?:

What are your dreams for the Church? • To see a more diverse representation in the Catholic church e.g. in the leadership, saints, rosary books and holy communion cards, and other images so that all may feel welcome and belong • To see the Catholic parishes joining in Racial Justice Sunday -

reflecting on human diversity and thanking God for all that He has made in humanity as well as working together to end injustice and ignorance through prayer and action • That people continue to follow the teachings of the Church and get comfort and solace despite the difficult times we live in • A place where our young feel loved and safe • That the Church recognises new ways to allow men and women to act as leaders in the Church. • That young people find a place for themselves in the Church • That the message of the Church is discovered and lived by all • That there is open dialogue across the church hierarchy • To make provision for the elderly and vulnerable who are not social media and technologically savvy as we have experienced during the pandemic as well as being more creative in reaching out to children • To encourage daily use of the rosary • Where we are able to share our views without offending • To ensure that all views are represented in the Church • That women have a more leading role • Where everyone is welcome regardless of their past • We have a Sunday evening mass again • Where we are proud to being non Catholics • Where people don't see a divide in the congregation • To not be afraid to dig deep and talk about things which seem hard and difficult because in Christ we find true reconciliation • That those who have 'left the faith' feel able to return and be welcomed back • Where no one is judged • Where everyone feels welcome regardless of their own dreams • Everyone matters not just the clique • Those who feel discarded are warmly welcomed to the Catholic communities • Priests to marry • Proper midnight mass • All priests to be allowed to marry, not just the few as now • More liberal and understanding for the younger generation to want to come to Church • Married priests • More flexible rules. Acceptance of other faiths, etc • That all can have communion even if not Catholic. • Inclusive of all people and cultures • Acceptance of difficult situations. Do not judge. • More of a belief in angels • I'm happy as things are. I'm a simple soul, very little complaints. Now too old to bother. • Women to be more involved in organisation for such things as timing of masses and other services. • Women to have a greater role in the government of the Church, not necessarily as priests • Parents controlling children – silence during mass, no talking and screaming • More lay people to administer the sacraments. • Bring in music and songs (hymns) from different countries such as African community with its rhythm and song. • I would like the Church to be more outgoing and happy with different people attending. • Priest to visit parishioners and bless houses like before • Only one faith in the world • That all may live in peace and harmony and free from want and war • To see more younger people interested in the Church, Christianity and trust the hierarchy structure. • Heaven on earth • To have female or married priests! • For young people to embrace the grace of God and the joy and beauty of coming to mass • For a wholly inclusive Church where nobody feels marginalised • Focus on the positives, not on making people feel unworthy, guilty, excluded. • Paying less attention to the rules and regulations of Catholicism, more on bringing people to experience God's love and presence. • Catholic unity amongst different churches and communities, to bring together different factions (strict rules in one church, lax rules in another). • Masses to have love and joy at the centre of the celebration through song, prayer, drama, dance…. • Young people to be at the centre of the Catholic Church in leadership roles. • Women in leadership roles. • Evangelism/sharing our faith – encouragement for all the faithful. • All to be encouraged to use the gift of the Holy Spirit irrespective of race, gender or age – as was given to use through same baptism (make & female). • Youth Ministry. • For one of the priests to be a girl instead of having both of them being boys. • They could do some video calls. • Father Kevin can do some more presents when he thinks we're allowed. • More girls instead of boys • The same amount of girls and boys • No guilty people or they won't follow the rules. • Have women to also do some more stuff and let women do things just like the boys if they are sick. • Priests allowed to be married so they have the help of women. Some are already, so make it universal. • Try and make all people feel included, whether divorced, gay, unmarried parents, etc. • Encourage more men to become priests so we don't overwork them. • Have women Deacons again to help with parish work. • Feeling equal and accepted just the way we are. Although we are different in our thoughts, minds, upbringing we all love God! And God loves us back unconditionally. • With the Lord's guidance and support and prayers and His mercy, many of us (people, parishioners) can see and have a moment of awakening to reject wrongdoings and be

forever thankful to one and only, our beloved. • More leadership roles for women in the Church. • Involved in decision-making – more seats for women at the table. • Ordination of women in the deaconate vocation. • Development of Youth ministry & active participation in liturgy. • Father in the Heaven! I wish for our Church and RC Leaders to follow with set of rules, love and passion and understanding….for us (the listeners), and then I hope the acceptance of forgiveness to ourselves! • More young groups (children) • Singing, listening and talking (like mini Synods) for showing we are loving Catholic followers. • A growing Church which encourages our Youth • A church which grows and develops with large events and pilgrimages • Make the word of Jesus true all around the world – Hope, happiness, love • A place of inclusiveness, a place to teach and guide the next generation • Having Mass in a forest • More people feel welcomed into the Church, be more inclusive! • A more inclusive church – accepting all. • Be more comfortable for children. • End cliques – welcome all • A church that keeps talking planet, poverty, all people • Catholic church at the forefront of social action at every level • Parish church seen as active and central to local community • A church of equality • Everyone feels a part • Parish is a place that is welcoming to absolutely everyone • Active young people leading • All age groups are represented and co-exist • Church as a vibrant community for every age group • The Church is a pillar in society • A 'love' focused Church • A church bursting at the seams • A church where people are knocking to get in! • Modern – communications, ideas, processes • Catholic church perceived as a voice to be listened to worldwide • The Church has sufficient marketing of what it is, does, and can be for all • The Church takes ownership of its policies and can explain these • Celebrated worldwide • Wider acceptance • Changed Church • Compassionate listing Church • Keep listening and let the Holy Spirit guide us • Everyone welcome • Equality for all • Evangelising – sharing our faith • Welcomes lapsed back home • Joined with other churches • All faiths united in Christ • Decision making by Women 50% and Men 50% • women formed to lead community • Laity more involved and encouraged • Ordained women priests • More lay people involvement • Open up leadership to the whole community • Young women and men leading (fully involved) in liturgy • Women leaders • Women in leadership/decision making position • Update of canon law on Eucharistic welcome • Women Deacons • To reach / love the poor, marginalised , excluded • Youth – dream of them being more engaged • Many opportunities for people to share their faith stories • More Catholic Schools/Places of education

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Great Missenden

Process Used:
Small group discussions after weekend Masses

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
A sense of belonging – A Church that goes back to the apostles and Jesus, worldwide, with a sense of purpose and meaning providing time for reflection, a sense of belonging worldwide, being part of a loving, Christian parish community feeling wanted and supported knowing that help would be there if needed. Community is critical with an obligation to support all. To be a Catholic means living in a Christian way, to love and care for neighbours, giving purpose and meaning to life, having time for reflection, shared faith and purpose, with a framework of moral guidelines around my family relationships. It means everything to me as He loves me and everyone with a sense of structure for my life. I feel safe in the love and help of God. Called to a higher sense of morality; the mystery, which might differ from the majority with a sense of the spiritual and embraced by the doctrine. There is a belief in forgiveness and loving ones neighbour, of having Christ's moral challenge to love others and serve God at the centre of life. It is something you live during the day with the belief in life after death, with Jesus coming into me and becoming part of me in the Eucharist. Catholicism gives a strong anchor, it's part of my life, always there. It's part of my ID, the same as my name, my inheritance, a gift and in my DNA. The Catholic Church has a long ancient tradition, it's always there with 2000 years if continuity, with robust moral traditions, a steadying influence and it would be difficult to manage without it. I'm confident in whatever Church I go to, with familiarity with Mass and the Sacraments especially on being pardoned, to give focus to my personal life and community. It is comforting to have a formal organized means of worship, participating in Masses and communicating with God. It would be difficult to live without it. Both my parents were Catholics, so it's always been there, I missed it at college and then came back later. When I found the Catholic Church, it felt like I had come home. Having grown up in the former Yugoslavia it meant opposing the Communist dictatorship. It means keeping the tradition. Vatican II changed my life when the ecumenical council of bishops came together. Thank God for Pope John XXIII. I can't imagine not being a Catholic, other Churches just don't resonate with me. I would like to influence others to join with Christian values, to reach out to other Christian religions and try harder for reconciliation, to engage more with young in schools, to have youth clubs which are not limited to Catholics. Q1a What have been the joys and difficulties we've encountered? The Parish through Fr Alessandro has shown openness especially in his way with the young people. He, together with the deacons, are a huge asset to our parishioners, they provide a reality check with real-world experience and perhaps a different perspective in terms of spirituality and connection with the church. In the past we were blest with really beautiful liturgies for example watching before the Blessed Sacrament on Maundy Thursday which was very heavenly. This splendour gives you connection to God. We think we need a renaissance of beauty of services like this. I experienced joy when a non-Catholic brought me back to Church, by reconciling religion and science for me. My daughter stayed in the Church largely as a result of another parishioner who encouraged her and enabled her to become a Eucharistic ministry. The sight of 46 youngsters (5-12) who used to come along to this parish every Friday after school for RE classes; and hearing a child to her parents saying, I'll pray for you. Sadly, we see the other side of the Catholic Church as too exclusive and tainted with financial scandals and immorality. Pro-choice Catholicism exists. The Church has confused too many people over its teachings and moral orthodoxy. It pains us that priests act as mini-dictators in parishes and there's a lack of consistency from priest to priest. Covid has had a negative effect on our parish specially that our church is no longer open in the daytime. Sharing of priests is proving too difficult as well. We lost a lot in terms of devotions to Our Lady, Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary which we believe should be reinstated. A lot of children are not going to Church anymore, so we need to do more on this. Q1b What insights do these reveal I have moments or whole periods of uncertainty. I come to church not because I'm

certain of my beliefs but precisely because I'm unsure of my beliefs though the Holy Eucharist helps. Its ok to have doubts. I am honoured and humbled to have an intimate relationship with Jesus. I have occasional moments of encouragement: very occasionally things happen that are difficult to explain and unlikely to happen and in the context that they've happened in, which makes me take them as encouragement. We need to pray and listen, to practice Jesus teaching, including visiting the poor in spirit. It helps me to see the best in people not the worst, reminding us to love our neighbour and be forgiving. It encourages me to develop the best version of myself, whilst realising that the imperfect me is enough. It's the journey of discovery and development that is important for love. Being a Christian gives a wider perspective. Community spirit is critical. It is difficult to meet other people's expectations of being a Catholic. I married a non-Catholic in another church and felt I always had to defend my faith. My children were baptised but did not go to Catholic school but the Catholic faith classes for children at IHM in late 1970's led to a rediscovery of faith.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The IHM Parish in Great Missenden is a little community of people where you can receive warm welcome and express spirituality. You can find these manifest in many different ways like the spirituality, through the music, SVP's caring for parishioners especially the sick. In the past we had a thriving parish prayer group and it would be good to reinstate this. Here there is good access to sacraments and strong lay participation. When I arrived in Buckinghamshire, I did rounds of the local churches. Then when I came here, I had a strong feeling of peace and serenity. For me it was the closest thing to St. Edmund Campion that I could find. I feel part of the community, and this has been particularly noticeable over the past three years. In the past, nobody talked to me, now I come down to coffee and socialise. I feel that the parish has done a great job in fostering inquiry and openness, community activities, promoting communications and socialisation through the after-mass coffee morning and mince pies and carols evening during Christmas time. During the pandemic, the parish hasn't forgotten the parishioners specially those who are unable to attend live mass. Fr. Alessandro has done a lot to pull things together with the support of Keyna and Deacon Peter. The livestreaming of mass has helped enormously in these challenging times and more recently, I am grateful for the Services of the Word and Communion when Mass is not available. It's amazing that this small parish has produced 5 permanent deacons over the years. They help in many ways like supporting the parish activities such as Parish Missions, Lighthouse, SVP and Emmaus House – Acton Homeless Concern and of course, sharing Eucharist. Perhaps this was brought about by the strong foundation laid by the Sacred Hearts Fathers (SSCC). The religious spirit given to my son in the past has been greatly appreciated, sadly, he doesn't go to church regularly now but I hope he will return. I hope the parish will continue the children's liturgy as they are the future of the parish. In the past there was also a sense of hypocrisy where a relative was rejected because of being divorced particularly in the light of recent events. Nevertheless, this is a parish of volunteers which is its strength. A PPC that works together for IHM and St Columba's. A diocese that provides national representation and guidance at times of national problems. Lastly, the universal church is doing well as it provides leadership on an international stage, a voice on international affairs and a unifying approach to global issues. While IHM has a thriving Catholic community, there are also some challenges and difficult experiences.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The approach of the Universal Church is anachronistic regarding the authority of clergy and curia and enforces celibacy of clergy, while failing to acknowledge the role of women. It compels Mass attendance, which takes away from what Catholicism offers. The Catholic Church hierarchy is badly out of touch with its people, with other Christian denominations and with the times. It assumes to itself a right of overly filtering the Gospel message. Being a Christian has a wider perspective than is presented by the hierarchy. The Church is perceived to be too exclusive. It has lost a lot and we need to get back to devotions to Our Lady, Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Confirmation at 11 presents

difficulties with youth being far too young. On a parish level there may be no activities for young ones and no provision for youth and those post confirmation. It is sad that many children don't go to church anymore. The congregation is getting older, albeit still strong and Covid has had a massive negative effect on this age group. Within communities we could be more welcoming and accepting to other Christian groups. Diocesan leadership is present but not seen as very relevant, seemingly only passing on dictats from the curia. The perception is also that the universal Church protects wrong-doers and needs humility for wrong-doing. Abuse has made the Church a mockery and there was great anger at letting the prime minister get married in Westminster Cathedral and not responding to laity's concerns regarding this. The Church is perceived as corrupt, with scandals, immorality and financial mismanagement. This makes it difficult to explain our Church's failures to non-Catholics. Too many people have been confused over its teachings and moral orthodoxy. However it has successfully resisted some of the worst excesses of modern life. The Church needs to see beyond canon law which inhibits the law of love. The Church needs to stand up to evils in society like abortion. On the other hand, pro-Choice Catholicism exists. It is quite hard to share a priest and some priests are mini dictators in some parishes and there is a lack of consistency from priest to priest. There are difficulties with some priests. The perception of some groups in the laity presented difficulties with particular priests, with elements seeking to break things apart. That being said there should be more lay participation with training for the laity.

What are your dreams for the church?:
We desire a broad Church with more priests, with married priests, as former Anglican priests are allowed to continue to be married. A greater role for women, beginning with women deacons, then women to be included at the upper level and a universal Church where any appropriate person can be a priest, bishop or Pope. Our dream would be for a Church that represents and includes all ages and genders, with no restrictions to re-marriage and the blessing of gay marriages. We recognise the need for Canon law to be relevant to the twenty first century. Our hope would be for a Universal Church where the goodness and wisdom of the hierarchy is recognised on the international scene, where authority of leadership is justified by wisdom and love, which relates to the laity and not just scholarship; a Church which includes two important traits: Grace and Faithfulness. We look for a Church where there is a feeling of the spirit moving in the congregation. Our vision is of a Universal Church where sacraments are relevant to the laity and a source of blessing, truly exemplifying goodness, truth and beauty, keeping at its heart what Jesus would say and do, with conversion in the heart of the listener. We seek a Church that is inclusive, especially to those currently denied the sacraments, with the introduction of RCIA for non-cradle Catholics. We recognise the need for a welcoming community which is inclusive. The joy of worship should be evident as we build an active community, developing the social aspect of the Church. The community should be able to join in services, receive sacraments and offer their abilities. A priority should be to involve youngsters and to seek ways to welcome people in their 20's and 30's. Could there be more devotions: benediction, Rosary, First Fridays and consider whether we confer sacraments too early and consider confirmation of children at 16. The role of the diocese should include parochial development and represent the Church in the media. The diocese would increasingly provide more training and formation for the laity and endeavour to make the Church more relevant, bringing it into schools to show its relevance to their future. There should be more support for the clergy, with home visits from the priest available and more accessibility of the priest, with the disclosure of their mobile phone number and email address. We desire that all Christian churches be united from the top down with the unification of all Christian churches.

Our Lady Immaculate and St Ethelberts

Process Used:

Announced to Parish at mass Forms with 4 questions left for parishioners to complete and submit in box provided in church Formal session advertised and held mid January (approx 50-60 attendees) All responses are supplied via following notes

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

COMMON THEMES: 1. The Belief in the Word of God and the Eucharistic 2. Acceptance of the Teachings of Jesus 3. Belonging to a Community of likeminded people 4. Strong Faith in God 5. Sacramental Observance 6. Part of a Universal Church • To be a catholic is to follow the precepts/teachings of the church with Christ as the Head of the Church and we the lay people who make up the church. Attending Sunday mass and on days of obligations. Going to regular confession. Teach our children and impart to them teachings of our Catholic faith. • To be a Catholic is to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour who dies on the cross for our sins. • To believe what we say when we recite the I Believe at mass. To read the word of God: Seek his face and read his book (To seek the face of Jesus Christ and read the word of God – The Bible). To believe in the salvation story. • Being a Catholic for me is to be part of a community where we all come together during prayer / mass / song • A way of life – to hear Sunday mass, Holy Hour, Rosary • To practice good deeds, to have someone/somewhere to go to when you have problems, feel sad, feel happy etc • Proud to be a Catholic, the church which was instituted by Jesus Christ. Following the footsteps of Jesus Christ. It is universal. • It means that I am a child of God looking forward to increase my faith under the guidance of the Pope and all the entire Bishops, priests and all other members of the church. • To be an ambassador of Christ • To follow the 7 sacraments of Christ since it's a universal church • Live a life worthy of going to heaven • To be a Catholic is to remain faithful to God no matter what even when we're going through difficult times when we're going through hardship • United and connected as a family • Way of life and being part of a community • Celebrate the mass together common belief • Way to live a life to go to heaven • Universal and belonging even if language different • Live a good life in or out of church • It means a lot to me, I feel blessed in getting baptised soon • I feel I have changed my life and turned to God • To see God in my daily life • To do things the way God wants us to • To have faith in God • To enter God's kingdom which is a long path • To spread God's word and fulfil his mission • To love others • To be baptised • To follow the ten commandments • To be humble cause Jesus chose the simple / humble and follow up to the end and not break the relationship with God • I believe that being a Catholic is a way of participating in God's mission to spread the Word. • We are practicing our faith through attending mass, practicing prayers, reading the Bible, to practice good morals etc. • Being a Catholic makes me believe that I truly belong in this massive community. It makes me a part of them and also shows I am a part of the long road / path to enter God's Kingdom. • To be a Catholic to me means that I have a free life on Earth. When God sent Jesus down to earth to take away our sins so that we may have a free and holy life on Earth is the purpose why I am a Catholic. • To be a Catholic means to have faith in God and to follow the teachings and morals said by Jesus and the messages in the Bible • To believe in God • To be baptised and attend church • Community and belonging with people who have a strong faith in God • Celebration of the Eucharist • My faith, its direction and a pattern for how I can live my life daily • Focuses my faith and is a reminder of what and how God would want me to be and how I should act and be in my life • Family – Starts you on the road • Community / Parish – Another family that you grow with spiritually • Personal growth in faith, particularly in troubled times. • I am grateful to be born a cradle catholic because I am very proud of my catholic faith. It is a true religion founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ. • I feel proud that Jesus is there for me in every walk of life. • I feel proud that I belong to the church founded by Jesus Christ • Unfortunately we catholics tend to still think of our faith as a private matter and seldom share any experience of it. • Each day to say with genuine sincerity, Here I am Lord, I come to do Your will. To think tof God's activity in us and what he is saying to us. Am I living up, this day, to my promise to do his will. • To reflect often on

how we are so blessed to have the true faith – the sacraments and the Mass. Can we share this faith with others? • Being a Catholic for me is to be part of a community where we all come together during prayer / mass / song • A Way of life – to hear Sunday Mass, holy hour, rosary • To practice good deeds, to be someone somewhere to go to when you have problems, feel sad, feel happy etc • Proud to be a catholic the church which was instituted by Jesus Christ. • Following the footsteps of Jesus Christ • The church is universal • It means that I am a child of God looking forward to increase my faith under the guidance of the Pope all his entire Bishops, Priests and all other members of the church • To be an ambassador of Christ • To follow the 7 sacraments of Christ since it's a universal church • It means to belong to the Universal family of love and understanding presided upon by his Holiness the Pope Francis in Rome • Love • Family • Trust • Change Life turn to God • Real sense of God's presence in daily life – sharing with others • Being a child of God – God is your life • Strength in my faith, traditional ethos • Me as a Catholic is the underlying structure and ethos of my daily life • Embracing the word of God and whenever necessary applying this in my life • Sharing in the Eucharist of God and growing by adopting the sacraments • Sin of pride in being a Catholic and having the richness of my beliefs and my ability to deal with daily tasks together with our God

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
COMMON THEMES: 1. Observance of mass and sacraments 2. Cultural diversity but together in one faith and belief 3. Parishioner Involvement 4. Charitable support 5. When we pray together but also socialise as a community 6. Support for the catholic development of our youth • Our Parish has been conducting regular / weekly Friday Holy Hour services (1st Friday of the month). We are indeed privilege=d as there are other parishes who are not open to accommodate this. • The Sacrament of Reconciliation in our parish is held on a regular basis. This is not being done in other Parishes and we are blessed to have the opportunity to go for regular confession. • We are glad that Confirmation/RCIA classes/programmes are being conducted by our Parish at St Ethelbert's which helps the church community to grow. • Baptisms too are held on a regular basis in our parish with the appropriate guidelines given to parents and god-parents. • We thank our Parish Priest, Fr Francis for placing an additional service at a short notice for all Souls Day (in 2021) in the evening, which enabled those working to attend the evening service. • We are grateful for Fr Francis accommodating our request for a short Holy Hour service on New Year's Eve in spite of it being a hectic week for services on 31st Dec/1st Jan & 2nd Jan, alongside the blessing received by the parishioners with the Blessed Sacrament on New Year's Day. • Sense of appreciating other cultures, i.e. Zimbabwe Choir, Goan Choir, when people speak in their own language to pray during mass • Charity work Catholics do Globally • The Openness of being Catholic to belong / never be alone within the world • Laity participation in the Liturgy • Involvement of Parishioners • Formation of the Laity groups in the church • The involvement of the parishioners to participate in different types • It makes the church become a Universal Church • The idea of 7 sacraments of the church • Worship • Praise & Worship • Church Participation • Diversity of Church • A few years ago the church had an outside barbecue. This was very successful because of the organisation. Tickets were made and we raised money. Food & Drinks were sorted and everything was great. • Helping people especially the sick • Diversity of cultures and different groups allowed to be themselves • Saying prayers in different languages • Different families and groups participating in the church activities • Not putting a defined financial burden on anyone • Equal participation • Respecting other faiths • Every time I come to church I feel happy I pray and talk to God • I am happy because the priest of the church always has time to talk to me • The mass is always good • The priest has time to listen to people • Every one in the church can get involved • Being a community • Make everyone feel welcome • The priests as well as Jesus's teachings to help us make and become a better person • I believe that the beauty of the music / choir helps us the congregation to help participate within the mass as well as making the worship of God more joyful and alive. Additionally, the decorations add to the point of mass being joyful and alive. • Not only that, the morale this church has after / during Covid-19 is truly inspiring after facing all the hardships as well as seeing the development of this church. • The

readings of the old and new testaments and the holy gospels helps me understand the journey that I should follow. • Festivals in the church • The Church does well in making the experience in mass smoothly and make everyone feel involved and that they feel comfortable during the time in the church. • All age groups are involved • Direction now given by the Pope, Clergy has been more positive and reminder of how I should behave • Support for personal issues in my life and how I can cope • Sacramental observance • Parish: Bring our services through the year together • Improving participation and collaboration • All the activities done by the church to people so they grow spiritually. • The Church reaching out to the needy through their charitable works • Hearing homilies that invite us to think about how we can apply the Word of God in our daily lives • Small groups could come together to share our thoughts about the readings or scripture that touches us. • Sense of appreciating others cultures, i.e. Zimbabwe Choir, Goan Choir, when people speak in their own language in prayer during mass • Charity work Catholics do globally • The openness of being Catholic to belong / never be alone within the world • The laity participation in the liturgy • Involvement of parishioners • Formation of the Laity groups in the church • The involvement of the parishioners to participate in different types – • It makes the church become a Universal church • The idea of 7 sacraments of the church • Cafod, Canton, The homes for the elderly, the schools set up by the Catholic Church and many other institutions as living examples of the way the Church is doing many things well • Giving back schools etc • Holier services / adoration • Preparation for confirmation / holy communion / participation in RCIA • The priests make time for everyone • Keeping the traditions • Move to a deeper & better explanation of the scriptures • Hold Good Mass – especially the singing • The education of children and their joyous participation in the sacraments and catechism • Embracing people from all cultures and nationalities as part of the church being no different • Involvement of lay people in all relevant areas of the church learning from their specific skills and trying to grow the church community • Support for anyone preparing to receive sacraments • Charitable giving for those not as fortunate & not necessarily Catholic • The Church hold on to its values irrespective of whether they are culturally popular or not • The Church supports people in difficult times offering solace in the word of God and the knowledge of God being omnipresent and with us at all times

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
COMMON THEMES: 1. Respectfulness of the church and its doctrine 2. Churches rules on marriage, divorce, abortion and LBGT not explained or keeping up with development of society 3. More freedom for Clergy and Women Priests 4. Not supportive enough when scandal has hit church 5. Rules of church seem old fashioned and not reflective of modern life 6. Administration of sacramental preparation • Lectors: A Parishioner who wishes to join / become part of the Lector team must have received the sacrament of Confirmation, after which the person becomes a full fledged member of the Catholic Church (completing the sacraments of Initiation). We have noticed that there are candidates who have not yet received Confirmation and who are readers. This should be taken into consideration when preparing the roster/rota. • The reason we have mentioned the above is because all lectors must attend the training programme (as per the requirement of the Parish). This training is conducted by the Diocese of Northampton. This training is very informative and enriching, which enables the lector understand the Liturgical Church cycle as well as providing information on other aspects on reading the Liturgy of the Word. • Dress Code for Lectors: We have noticed at the Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve masses, the Lector wore an off the shoulder dress and the other a short dress. We believe that reverence should be given whilst reading the word of God. The Lector should be dressed appropriately with shoulders covered and dresses below the knee. • We have noticed that recent Lectors selected have not attended the Lector Training Programme. • Age for Confirmation Candidates: We request for our Parish Priest to insist those enrolling for Confirmation for the next batch should have completed / turned 13 years of age or above. i.e. the child should not be 12 years of age turning 13 during the course of the Confirmation Classes. The reason being the child should be mature enough to understand what is being taught. •

Attendance: Confirmation / RCIA Classes: We shall be grateful if our Parish Priest (Fr Francis) makes an Announcement stressing the importance of attendance at the Confirmation / RCIA classes. As per the schedule that was distributed at the onset of the Programme. The reason being a lot of preparation, time and effort is spent to make the teaching easy for the child to understand. • Holy Communion: Due to the Covid situation Holy Communion which is now received on the palm of our hands, an announcement should be made that Holy Communion must be consumed immediately in the presence of the priest / Eucharistic minister. Holy Communion should not be taken to the pew to be consumed as this happens in other parishes. • Seating for Lectors / Eucharistic Ministers: A suggestion for those who are serving as Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers at any of the services should be seated in the first bench of the church and this should be reserved for this purpose. They should not be seated elsewhere. • Catholic rules / thoughts on idea of divorce / abortion / marriage (To recognise that in some instances it should be allowed) • The difficulty that comes with marriage: when you might want to marry someone of a different religion its not allowed in the Catholic church. • St Ethelberts: The church isn't open as much outside mass time when I wanted to pray. • A split of the elderly community and young community (I gre up within this church since birth and had followed my Grandma in learning / participating in the church's activities. There wasn't any younger people during my time who joined functions that took place in the church. Although I didn't mind being part of the elderly community's worship, it would have been nice to have more people who were similar in age). • When people go up on the altar when mass has just started – I feel this is disrespectful since mass has begun. • I had opportunity to light the advent candle when I was younger although I had no part in the Altar servers, choir etc. Fr Paddy gave me the opportunity to do something that was normally done by the inside catholic community – I wish more opportunities were given like that. • More Bible knowledge of readings • On going teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic faith. Not much detail given during confirmation sessions • More involvement of the youth, Youth are running away to Pentecostal churches because seems more involvement and enjoyment • Go Along with the World Changes • Let us involve youth • We are human beings, do we make errors that we learn to forgive • People are not being reprimanded when they are wrong • Priests have been distant • Stand on marriage and divorce • Stand on marriage for priests • Not fully utilising the full skills of members • More time needed for priests • I got diagnosed with schizophrenia • I am a mental health patient in the community • I spend a lot of time in hospital • I was an addict and now in recovery • Minor distraction – when readers read too fast and we are unable to follow • Minor distractions such as reading faster ahead of the congregation. When reading therefore all getting lost and losing participation in mass. • Difficulty hearing readings • Receiving both body / blood of Christ? • Feeling accepted in the church • Participating • Signing the forms to enter confirmation • Minor distractions such as people not reading at the same time as others. You can feel lost or confused while praying. • The Church is slow to accept negatives and publicly manage repercussions of when the church has been less than open or well behaved. • The church has not kept up as quickly with this changing world • Acceptance of those people who have had issues that conflict with church doctrine (e.g. divorce, LGBT, Defence of those abused) • There are limited number of people willing to help and get involved • Some services (for example reconciliation) as a group have not been well attended • No Parish Hall means that we are unable to get together as a parish • Deanery / Universal Church: We go down the road of having / discussing various topics. Some people spend a lot of time perusing initiatives but nothing comes of them. • I have not encountered any negative experiences in my church • I would suggest that the church should reach out to the young, the youth and impart to them the knowledge of the Bible. • There should be more Bible study especially when young children are preparing to make first Holy Communion. • The young should be strictly taught and explained the Bible till they reach adulthood. • Thank God the days of sermons breathing out hell, fire and damnation are over (and no word of God's Love) • Making Children – my experience – fearful of failing to answer the Bishop's question prior to confirmation. I can still remember the question but cannot remember being confirmed – such was the relief • As an 8 or 9 year old, I had to fight off a sexual assault on me by a neighbour. I

couldn't tell my parents and never did. • Catholic rules / thoughts on idea of divorce / abortion / marriage (to recognise that in some instances it should be allowed) • The difficulty that comes with marriage : when you might want to marry someone from a different religion it's not allowed in the catholic church • ST ETHELBERTS: A split of the elderly community and the young community – I grew up within this church since birth and had followed my Grandma in learning / participating in the church's activities. There wasn't any younger people during my time who joined functions that took place in the church. Although I didn't mind being part of the elderly communities worship it would have been nice to have more people who were similar in age. • When people go up on the altar when mass has just started. I feel it is disrespectful since mass has begun • I had opportunity to light the advent candle when I was younger although I had no part of the altar servers, choir etc. Fr Paddy gave me the opportunity to do something that was normally done by the inside catholic community – I wish more opportunities were given like that. • More Bible knowledge & teaching • Ongoing teaching of the catechism of the catholic faith. Not much detail given during confirmation sessions • More involvement of the Youth as youth are running away to Pentecostal churches because seems more involvement and enjoyment • Go along with the world changes • Let us involve the youth • We are human beings so we make errors. Let us learn to forgive • I cannot remember any • Previously less of a community • Communion not always consumed at the altar • Fear of God being main part of sermon instead of the love of God • The church has been very slow to react and respond to criticism meaning that it appears as if it does not care or is ambivalent • The response to marriage with people of other faiths or no faith is difficult for many to understand when they are asked to participate in preparatory training • On issues like abuse or abortion, the church has not spoken out sufficiently • In explaining the Church's position on matters, it is very difficult to see what the view of the church is. This makes is impossible for priests or relevant people to offer anything other than their opinion (which may be conflicting with church opinion) • The church expects everyone to be aware of their Catholic duty but this is taught once during childhood in catechism. These elements of Catechistic learning should be reminded to all Catholics on a regular basis. This helps with education of children and an understanding of what catholic practice and belief principles should be. • The church has been very quiet on the subject of female clergy and needs to take a stand and explain what and why this is not being addressed • The church seems to have many more female organisers than male which is making it harder for men to participate in events, themes or practices which have been developed in a more feminine fashion • The strength of the church in society seems to have disappeared as the church has little influence in matters of daily life struggles and opinions are diverging from church belief without knowing what the church policy is.

What are your dreams for the church?:

COMMON THEMES: 1. Embrace modern technology and support for Catholics online 2. Modernisation of approach and make church attractive to both existing and new people 3. More participation of women in Church's organisation 4. Church will have more influence on a Global platform 5. That as Catholics we can bring together everyone for a greater good 6. To have the church as a safe and warm place for anyone to feel comfortable in / with • The Church Website can be updated with pictures / photographs of special events that take place in the church viz Easter / Christmas / New Year / First Holy Communion / Baptism / Confirmation / Ash Wednesday / Good Friday. This will enable others to view the events that take place at our parish o E.g. No of children Baptised / No of Children Confirmed • Youth Ministry: Does the parish have a Youth Ministry in place? If not, can this be initiated? • Bible Study: Can this be arranged at the Parish level? • Wedding Anniversary Mass: We propose a Sunday each month to be dedicated to all married couples celebrating their wedding anniversary in that particular month. This can be done for all the masses on that particular Sunday, allowing couples to attend the 9 / 1 6:30 mass • Room for Confirmation Classes: Can the parish arrange for a room to conduct Confirmation Classes • Tenure for Eucharistic Ministers: We propose that the Parish Priest should implement a fixed tenure for a Eucharistic Minister for a period of 3/5/6 years thereby giving an opportunity to other parishioners who wish to

join this ministry. • Church Maintenance: Who does not wish to come to a beautiful church? It is very sad to see that a beautiful old church like St Ethelbert's has not been maintained cared and loved over the years. We hope to see a beautiful, well kept church in the years to follow. • It is sad to state the pews, benches, kneelers, carpet, flooring, heating, walls peeling etc are in a very poor condition and we look forward to receive support from the Diocese of Northampton to restore and refurbish the parish of St Ethelbert's. • Mass Co-Ordinator: Appointment of a mass co-ordinator is suggested to oversee the entire mass functionality, i.e presence of Altar servers, lectors, bell ringers, Eucharistic ministers. • Eucharistic Minister Training: Those parishioners who desire to join the Eucharistic Ministry should attend the training programme conducted by the Diocese of Northampton. • More Community functions to take place, i.e.church gatherings for food, games, other fun events. • More input to help Slough community, i.e. more things like the giving tree presents for the homeless. • Less segregation between old / young community in this church • More support during grief for family members immediately after a person has passed. • To see women taking some leading role in the Liturgy, e.g. Female Priests / Reverend • Go with modern changes and technology • Involve children because they are the future church of tomorrow. • More of the community to be involved • Community involvement and more fun • Infiltrating normal life through work and school fun • My dreams for the church is that it will become a place where everyone will feel safe and expand our community. We will have more church gatherings and events so that we can worship together as one • Women Priests • I would like to make poverty history • I would like to help in church as much as I can • I would like to join a monastery • I would like to do as much as I can to help out in church • For there to be more of a sense of community • More people to come closer to God • That all jews believe in Jesus and come back to the church • In my opinion / hopes and dreams for the future is to have more participation from all, the youth as well as the adults. For example, this could mean a youth group to help deepen our faith in God and inspire us to become better people in society today. Also I believe that building itself could brighten up meaning that the walls could be painted / re-plastered statues cleaned and making use of all items in the church to make serving God more beautiful. • Spreading God's word to everyone • Re-decorate the church for years to come with God's Blessings • Giving Faith to People who Need it • For most people to come closer to God and put their trust in him and believe that he is the only true way. • More activities for the youth to participate in to get them more involved in the church. • Have the kneeling pads / seating to be renewed • Having the statues cleaned and look new / fresh • All people will have a strong sense of belonging • The church has a much greater voice in the direction taken in the world • The church has a better presence in this world and promotes itself as well as explaining doctrine and church policies. Our Bishop was instrumental in explaining some issues which is exactly what all church members should know and be able to explain themselves) • For Our Parish – To continue to grow both as a community and participation • For Our Parish – We all need to get involved and help take part in building our parish • Universal Church – That it may grow and be strong. That our faith may strengthen each other • My dream for the church is that one day the whole Universe will acknowledge that our catholic religion is the only one and the only true religion founded by Jesus Christ. • My dream is that one day there will be more vocations for priesthood. More youth will receive the call for priesthood. • My dream that the church grows bigger and people of all walks of life will be under one roof, i.e. the Catholic Church • That it becomes known again as see how these people love one another • Love eachother by our actions, words thoughtfulness • That we become united as the Body of Christ • That we become a visible community of worship rather than individuals – we are after all the people of God. • More community functions to take place, i.e church gatherings for food, games, other fun events • More input to help the Slough Community, i.e. more things like the giving tree presents for the homeless • Less segregation between old & young community in the church • more support during grief for family members immediately after a person has passed. • To see women taking some leading role in the liturgy. E.g. female priest / reverend • Go with modern changes and technology • Involve children because they are the future church of tomorrow • We Catholics are invested by the Church and our faith as propagators of our

beliefs and I think we are too shy nowadays to proclaim our faith and to defend it against people who do not believe the same way as we do. We must find the courage to continue to proclaim God's works and the Church's too. • To be an active participant in the church • Modernisation but not at the expense of tradition. • More community development – different cultures coming together (prayer meetings) • Bible Study classes – discussing scriptures • Wedding Anniversary masses • Energise more people to visit • Improvement of church website • For the church to embrace technology and create a significant online presence • To consider a collection of catholic policy documents explaining the church's view on everyday problems. Some are easier that others (e.g. Abortion is straightforward to explain but view on marriage / divorce is difficult to explain) • For the church to be open in all areas embracing how people live and understanding how diversity can be supported even if not part of the ethos of the church • For young people who have been so keen in early life, to find an ongoing relationship with Catholicism as they start out in life and witness each of the hurdles towards happiness that they encounter and for the church to be there to support at all times • The Church should be stronger in how it presents itself to the rest of the world and in particular to those who are being persecuted for their faith across the world. • The Church will actively market itself in order to promote faith and attract new people. The figureheads in the church should be acknowledged as world leaders and have a voice to match • The understanding of the sacraments, the Word of God and the doctrine of the church must be sufficiently transparent so that there is less room for criticism from those wishing to knock the church.

Church of the Sacred Heart, Flitwick

Process Used:

Approach 1. PPC conversation 2. Small subgroup formed 3. Briefing and appeal for inputs at all Masses 4. Pamphlet prepared and issued at all Masses and copies made available in the Church 5. Information printed in the weekly bulletin Parishioners were invited to share views in several ways: • Drop-in session at the church where views were shared and recorded • Email to the parish secretary • A phone line was provided to take any feedback • And direct response to diocese was also offered Responses 1. Two Focus Groups were formed at the drop-in session and good conversations and input received 2. We got ten email submissions 3. The phone line was used only once 4. Feedback themes from recent parish conversations were also considered and included Questions 1. An independent group was appointed in Southwark to gather this information – why was this not done in all dioceses?

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

I Belong 1.Community – parish and worldwide Being part of the worldwide church, Mass wherever you go, included wherever you are Active member of the Body of Christ, the church in the community, using my gifts for God's glory Good Caring and Thoughtful Church buildings – potential to be more than a place for Mass, a place of welcome, part of the community 2. Connected/ Identity It means to belong Whole life part of the Catholic Church Can take Church for granted having been brought up in the faith Rules and structure to guide and live up to Shared values 3. Faith To be sure of God's promises and eternal life. Grace through the Sacraments Love through the Liturgy and Sacraments Supports me in many circumstances Help through prayer Spiritual guidance, leadership and education 4. Questions How different is being Catholic to being a Christian?

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

'People will forget what you said, they will forget what you did but they will never forget how you made them feel.' Maya Angelou 2003 What went well 1. Spiritual Life / Values 2. Dedication of Clergy and Laity 3. Good Works • SVP/ Visiting • Food bank • Christian Unity • Climate Change • Charity and education in developing countries 4. Life Moments Matter Best at 'life events' – marriage, baptism and death and preparation for death. Support through illness 5. Welcome/ Inclusion Welcoming is strong, but sometimes hard to break into a parish on arrival Involving laity in parish management and parish secretary 6. Pandemic Use of modern technology in communication enabling the community to worship Helped me is to know the names of so many of our parishioners and they know me.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

'People will forget what you said, they will forget what you did but they will never forget how you made them feel.' Maya Angelou 2003 Even Better if 1. Management of Allegations The way the Child Abuse Allegations were handled has damaged the Church in particular in its lack of transparency and its tendency to 'close ranks' and take a position of denial. 2. All People Matter The experiences of divorced and re married – long standing issue – process for annulment Treatment of LGBT+, 1 in 5 people are gay, but the Church condemns this huge number of people. If God is said to love them why doesn't the Church love them The Youth must be catered for / Lack of focused youth ministry The church does not recognize the huge contribution made by women – role of women was strong in early church – women feel side-lined – how can the Church's current model survive with so few priests – need to ordain women 3. Lack of consultation in with and in parishes 4. Clerical power v laity – many man made rituals 5. Position on Contraception Most young women today use contraception.

What are your dreams for the church?:

'May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you may know the hope to which he has called you.'

Ephesians 1:18 1. Grow and Flourish To see a Church that grows in numbers but more importantly in the Spirit and his gifts. That the churches would have real spiritual direction if the running of them taken away from the priests For the Church to survive things have to change. The parish priest model in particular as our priests get older. Paid roles will be needed to sustain parishes Management skills of many priests to manage parishes lacking – shouldn't be doing these jobs. Our priests need more support. Laity need to be involved in all levels of the organisation from the Vatican downwards We need to be outward looking rather than inward looking. We need outreach /to be doing more, focused projects that give people opportunities to contribute That we will always have enough priests to keep our churches open and be able to celebrate Mass regularly My dream for the church would be full of music 2. All people in the Church Recognition that many people have been hurt and disaffected because of the rulings from the Church. Recognition that all groups need targeted and dedicated support. That the old men at the top see that women who are +50% of the church should be able to take a more active clerical role. Greater parity for women / ordained roles within the structure To make greater provision for the 1 in 3 people whose marriages break down. To make everyone welcome and feel valued especially the LGBT community who feel rejected by the Church. Church attendance is not 'cool' for teenagers, many of whom stop attending. We need to make it 'cool' again somehow. Youth worker for the pre-teenage and teenage groups for parishes (possibly shared with other Christian churches) A community of all ages, who all feel valued members of the community, The body of Christ Support for the partner in marriage that is not the Catholi

Parish - Church of the Sacred Heart Flitwick - The formatting of the submission is lost by cutting and pasting into the boxes, a version in word was also supplied to Avril

Our Lady Help of Christians, Luton

Process Used:

Our Lady Help of Christians, Luton Parishioners at three separate tables (J, K, M) were asked, following a discussion, to discern three answers for each question:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
J God's blueprint on how we should live our lives. J The Mass, the Eucharist - Jesus is the bread of life. The Catholic Church is like a tanker that gracefully sails a straight path, remaining faithful to the teachings of Jesus and of the Church and not being seduced by the fads of the world. J Catholic should mean that we are evangelisers – spreaders of the good news of Jesus, but we aren't very good at it. K Our Church, our faith is as established and willed by Jesus. Catholics have the perfect form of worship of God. Our strength and security follow from these. K Catholics are the hands, feet, eyes, ears and body of Jesus working and striving towards holiness. K Catholics are called to mission at the end of Mass - to evangelise. M Community – part of the Catholic Church – be there for each other in good times and bad. M Community – everything – to bring people together on Sundays and at other events. This Communion helps us to grow in holiness. M Faith – being guided by the holy spirit.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
J The Mass being celebrated every second of the day throughout the world. God being continuously glorified. Also, the Sacraments and Eucharistic Adoration. J The Rosary – Mary mother of God, mother of our church. Catholics obeying the fourth commandment by honouring Mary. J Catholic Charitable works, outreach. A huge blessing to the world, but sadly rarely recognised. K The Mass in different forms is a blessing and helps to reach out to more people. The Novus Ordo Missae works for many, but the traditional Latin Mass seems to help deepen the faith of others and fits in with a long tradition within our Church. K Catholics taking education, healthcare and knowledge to the world. K The Magisterium keeping our Church faithful and leaving no room for misinterpretation as in the excellent Catechism. M The Mass – the central part of our faith. M The Sacraments and prayer in our church M The Mass, worship and events bringing everyone together.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
J Catholics don't always seem to exhibit joy and happiness. More prayer is needed to the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds to the hope within us. J Catholic education doesn't result in keeping youngsters active in our church. What are we doing wrong? Also, for adults' depth of knowledge about our faith seems low. Catholic leaders should be approaching every activity on the assumption of little knowledge and explaining everything as if from the beginning. J Catholics are not vocal enough in defending persecuted Christians around the world. K Catholic children soon stop coming to church. In many cases they get baptised and receive Holy Communion and then disappear. Surely this must mean poor catechising. Pour material available for Catechism. K Our Priests are overburdened. They should only be dealing with the Sacraments. They need a team behind them to deal with other matters. K The failure of the Church hierarchy to stop heresies and scandals. For instance, the Synod in Germany needs to be told that what they are doing is wrong. The fact that the Catholic Church tolerates it to be easier for a Muslim to get in to a Catholic school than it is for a Catholic who has to jump through hoops such as providing a baptism certificate and other documents. M Poor communication – needs a lot of work – with parents of children being catechised, between groups, between parishes. A welcome pack for new parishioners. If people don't feel involved and valued, they won't volunteer. M Catholics not being involved with evangelisation but expecting our Priests to do it all. Everyone can evangelise in different ways for instance at work a Catholic could ask colleagues for the names of their deceased families and friends

to pray for in November. M Failing to reach out to youngsters and keep them involved. Failing to facilitate sacraments to those that work such as Confession on a Saturday.

What are your dreams for the church?:
J We live in an anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Church, won't listen culture. Our church to find ways to get the secular world to grasp all the good we do and hence sow seed to draw people into the church. J Our Church hierarchy to speak out with more confidence and pride of being Catholic. J To build up our church with succession planning and charity work K We need a vocal church speaking up for persecuted Christians throughout the world. For instance, in India the persecution of Christians by Hindus is a disgrace. Our Pope has a powerful voice and he should use it. K We need more tolerance and Unity in our Church for example the different rites in our church should all be valued especially the traditional Latin rite of Holy Mass and sacraments should continue to be cherished and allowed to continue without restrictions. K To set the world on fire with love and truth. M To provide proper welfare to our Priests – to look after and support them. Priests time to be on Pastoral needs only M Church administrators to deal with all non-pastoral matters M To harness the skills – use the talents – of parishioners.

Our Lady Help of Christians and St Lawrence, Olney

Process Used:
A series of meetings open to all

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
The importance of communion and community and having a shared experience of the Faith: the parish/Church is a family where we can find our roots. The heart of the Faith is Jesus and His Real Presence in the Eucharist. For converts/those who have returned to the Faith, their Faith was something they had struggled to get to; the welcome of the Church, attractive Faith-filled personalities had been important. They were in a wilderness and in the Church they find truth and peace and light, especially loving the beauty of the Mass. Some still struggle with elements of the Faith but see its overall value. They love their Faith. Some were unsure of the value of the Synod process and how our reflections can have any impact; others welcomed the opportunity for reflection and discussion. The Church is not a democracy but is by nature a hierarchy – this is a good thing as it gives cohesion to our Faith.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Church speaks with authority – this is often very much needed, even if it isn't always comfortable. The teaching of Pope John Paul II was highlighted as clear, personal and thought-provoking. The sense of Christian community in the parish helps people feel welcome. The relaxation of some of the stricter rules (e.g., fasting before Holy Communion reduced to one hour) was welcomed: some had dreaded Mass in English but have found it helped the Mass to become more real. Preparation for the sacraments is now more meaningful and the deeper sense that our Faith includes our whole life. The stewarding in this period has developed a greater welcome as people arrive. The Mass is beautiful and the fact that we can have time to prepare for Mass is valuable. Livestreaming of the Mass in our parish meant so much during the lockdowns. Zoom meetings in the parish for catechesis and reflection and prayer were very welcome. There is a keen sense of the support to the wider community through charities, food bank and the commitment of our parishioners: the Church has become much more engaged on this level and in the wider community (involvement in the Remembrance Sunday Service in Olney was highlighted as well as ecumenical contacts in the parish).

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Sometimes the Church appears to speak too rigidly on unpopular moral issues. There is a lack of connection between sacramental preparation and subsequent attendance at Mass. There has been a lot of lapsation among Catholics and we are not making strong efforts to reach out to them. There is an issue with the lapsation of the young especially of teenagers and there does not seem to be much to help them keep practising their Faith. There appears to be a lacklustre approach to ecumenism. The Synod in Germany was an issue of worry for some and a sign of disunity in the Church.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Some wanted a more inclusive sense of the Church, with the laity playing an active part in the Church's life. Others wanted a clearer presentation of the Church's Faith and how to live it in daily life. Some wanted to see more young people and families return to Mass and to have an active involvement in its celebration in various roles including singing, music, serving, reading and welcoming. There was a desire to improve our outreach throughout our parish and to use different means of communications – publications, internet, personal contact – and to continue to develop ecumenical relationships, which could also help to promote care for the environment. There was a sense of wanting to develop our spiritual lives so that we can pass on our Faith in a living way: prayer and the Mass is where the essence of our Faith is. We want to bring God, our Lord, into everything

we do. Perhaps a parish Mission can be planned. A prayer group would be valuable. We can learn to be open to people, listen to them and their stories. We need more priests and so we need to pray for more vocations.

Our Lady Of Lourdes, Aylesbury

Process Used:
We invited parishioners to participate in the discerning process, for three consecutive Sundays after each Mass.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
1. Sacraments. Participating in the sacramental life of the Church. Blessed by being baptised into the Catholic Church. Being able to receive the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus weekly, even daily. Coming to God in the sacrament of reconciliation and experiencing His' mercy and acceptance. Having every help for one's salvation. 'Confession is critical to my faith' 2. Community. The feeling of belonging and being part of a worldwide church family, which welcomes everyone and is united in its teaching of the Gospels, creed, sacraments. traditions, and deep reverence for Our Blessed Mother. 3. Liturgical and prayer life. Having a wealth and rich tradition of prayer and liturgical worship. From private prayers to communal worship. Being able to offer prayers for others through the participation of Holy sacrifice of the Mass. Being guided through the liturgical seasons, such as Lent, to come to a deeper, personal relationship with God. 4. Fundamental to a right way of living. 'The Catholic church has influenced the way I live my life' We can trace our origins right back to the first Pope, St Peter. A rich heritage. 5. Converts expressed the positive role the sacraments, vocations and frequent prayer have played in their lives. 6. Sharing the Faith. Putting more effort in to convincing young people, especially one's own children, of becoming Christians, by word and example.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
1. It shows consistency in its teachings, not wavering in the face of a changing world. 2. It is missionary reaching out to people, addressing their needs, and making a difference to lives. 3. It is universal, being globally recognised. One can go to Mass anywhere in the world. One feels at home. In any Catholic church. 4. It is caring by standing up for people's rights and supporting causes which offer protection from conception to death. 5. It is Sacramental ensuring our faith is nurtured throughout the whole of our lives. 6. It respects and celebrates our youth. 7. It has a worthy head in the Pope who leads by example – reaching out to other world leaders and promoting the gospel. 8. Its education system is highly respected. The setting up and running of hospitals and Catholic Aid agencies such as, Outreach to the poor, CAFOD, ACIN, SVP.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
1. Looking after her priests. Failing to check in with them and therefore they are sometimes left to suffer mentally, physically, and spiritually. Not reviewing the formation given to them so they understand it is their duty to implement the Church's teachings. 2. Passing on of the teachings of the church. Not made aware of new encyclicals. Lacking in opportunities for times outside of the Mass for explanations, sharing or reflections, 3. Music in the liturgy is tired it needs energising. 4. Takes a long time to instigate change. Needs to react to what is going on in the world. Overly bureaucratic. 5. It does not offer a great acceptance and support for those groups who are deemed vulnerable. 6. It was noted that the People are the church, but the laity do not take responsibility for initiatives or changes which will promote growth and improvement. The assumption is that the priest will do it. 7. Does not develop a strong sense of community and offer opportunities that encourage parish groups to flourish. 8. Disappointed at the historic handling of child abuse. Lack of guidance for parishioners as to what constitutes a safeguarding issue and how and when to report it.

What are your dreams for the church?:
1. A new Pentecost. The Faithful needs to co- operate more and more with the Holy Spirit, allowing

the Holy Spirit to lead it and receive divine grace through prayer, mortification (dying to self on order to serve) and holiness of life. 2. The Catholic Church needs be more welcoming to people, even its own parishioners. Ecumenical and open to other Christian communities for fellowship and growth; uniting on shared beliefs. Humility is key in every Christian, and the church hierarchy must be exemplary in demonstrating it. 3. The Church will find new strategies to re-engage and energise parishioners. Encouraging parishioners to be forthcoming and innovative in providing and organising events and activities that draw all parishioners to become active members of the Catholic Church. 4. A thriving community. Comprising of small faith and fellowship groups geared for specific ages and needs; whole parish praise and worship events and worship events aimed at specific ages and charisms; parish missions. All to promote and invigorate the life of the community. 5. The key to the progression of our Church is the inclusion of young people. Strategies need to be put in place to ensure that the youth feel welcome and a part of the Church. They must be encouraged to take part in church events for an example, youth masses, youth retreats. 6. Leading on social issues. Providing outreach, support, and a haven for those in need. Actively praying for such issues especially for life issues. 7. Families encouraged to pray together. Praying together must not be in the church only, but also at home. Promotion of the 'Domestic Church'. 8. Better communication at every level within the Church. Improved channels of communications. It is hoped that the church hierarchy will take forward the objectives of this synodal process in encouraging consultation and listening to the voices of the people at grassroot levels.

Our Lady of Lourdes, Milton Keynes

Process Used:

Parish groups with three sessions after three masses

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
• Joy of understanding what it means to be a Catholic • Knowledge of God through the church • Learnt what is means to be catholic through the Charismatic Renewal. Brought knowledge about God • Joy of being in a family. Difficult living life to the fullest because all the commandments • Good to be a catholic because the church preaches the word. • Joined the Charismatic Renewal which gives joy. • Church teaches us how to live. Challenge not living up to the expectations. • The church is universal • The church has stood the test of time • The church bounced back well from the covid restrictions • The church is not proactive at reacting to allegations against it and the Leadership. The silence can lead people astray. • There is absence of a community of care. People don't know when others need help. • Need to follow up on new members and build a community of care. • The priests can show more interest and involvement in the church community. • The church should intensify youth development. • The catholic church is rooted in history and spirituality • Feeling of emptiness when unable to attend mass. • The importance of Eucharistic items e.g. candles to us as individuals. • Community building during and after mass • Attending church on Sundays • Praying to God the Father, Son and Holy spirit – Trinity • Confession of sins. God forgives. • Sacraments: adhering to the Mass – Eucharist – Last supper (do this in Memory of me) being beginning of the formation of the church • Solemnity /peaceful manner of worship • Reverence to Mary (availing herself to be used) • Catechism- teaching our young ones (traditional) • Privilege to be Catholics because we were born and bred in the church. • Praying using our rosary because it gives us peace. • Be firm in our belief, being able to stand for the church. • Encourage Charismatic Renewal activities through teaching and being proactive. • Intensify our individual Bible readings. • Faith in God; Prayer • It is very important for me to be Catholic: the joys of praying for the things I need and want in my lifetime. • Some prayers are hard. • We ask God to heal the world. • We need a proper church not a school and a Parish Hall. Waste of money to rent a place for a church • The difficulties of having more faith. • A Christian under the guidance of the Pope and the principles and doctrine of the church • Part of a church that is diverse but united in Christ • Stereotyped by church scandals, persecution in some parts of the world and public perception of being conservative or old fashioned • Helping each other and getting help in/from the church • Mixed teachings on social issues • Maintaining and passing on the faith

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
• During the covid-19 pandemic, the church has done so well with the online services, they manage to bring us together. • Good leadership, high structure of the church, gives some kind of confidence (

Individual - provision – Identity) • Availability of our leadership, easy access when we want someone to speak to. • We were doing well before in our church in Coffee Hall. • We are doing a bit more than before in this church than our old church. • This church is like a family; people look or ask about you when you are not around. • The activities in this church bring us together as family. • As Christian it shouldn't be difficult to forgive one another. • Respect • Convenient • There is oneness in the Catholic church • Sense of community • Derive happiness in communion and community encounter • Listening to the gospel from priest gives happiness • Church creates a community that brings people together / cares for one another /makes Eucharist available to the home-bound • Introductions of the Catholic Charismatic renewal has helped people with their prayer and retained some church members • Doing well in humanitarian activities • Providing liturgical services • Telling the story of God. • Delivering the mission mandated by Christ to evangelise, catechise and

sacramentalise – continuing Christ's mission • Bringing diverse communities together in faith • Welcoming all in faith • Guiding us to be Christians by faith and not in name only

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
• Need to have more priests for the church. • Priests don't know me now. Before we used to have one priest and he knew me. • People don't feel welcome • The leadership didn't listen to us before they closed and sold the old church building. Parishioners went out of their way to seek funding to keep the old church building, but this wasn't listened to. • Members of this Parish want to know the reason why the old church building was sold. A not valid answer was given to us. Our hearts are bleeding. We've been ignored. • The members of the Parish feel that they have been betrayed. Because of that we lost members of the church. • We lost our identity as Parish within the community due to not having our own church building. • The Pope should come here himself if the leadership of the church will not listen to us • Before the cluster we used to have our own priest, now we have different priests who schedule their time every Sunday. The cluster system has not helped most people. • We need our own church building. Members are still happy to help to build another church building. • Some people are committed to the church, it needs to be appreciated • The homily should be more practical and developed around a theme for people to reflect on. • The priests do not have time to engage with church members • Need to stop selling the church buildings. • We don't follow up with new members to aid the growth of the church • Because we currently meet in a school and don't have a church building, parishioners are not able to access the church or the Tabernacle for personal devotions. • Lack of interaction due to time constraints. • Not integrating new members; not showing concern for individuals including young people • No formation programmes for young people after confirmation. • We need youth engagement in the church in a structured way - from childhood to youth. • Evangelisation within the church and outside the church to be guided by the Holy Spirit. • Church politics/factionalism/sub-groups which can undermine the mission of the church • Financial burden with too many levies and other financial obligations on church members through sub-groups/societies. Such financial initiatives can start with good intentions but end up burdening members especially the financially vulnerable. • Losing the spirit of Christ through some church activities and risk making the church just a bureaucracy. • Practicing faith by rote in the church and some masses are sped through like a ritual – need to inject the heart of worship back into the mass. • Children of Catholic parents leaving the church during the teenage period. • No follow up for families in difficulty. • Difficult getting young people to serve and to participate in church activities • No support from priests in terms of follow up. • Not supporting each other. The human side of the church and interaction needs to improve.

What are your dreams for the church?:
• Build a strong youth ministry based on a strong Christian teaching. • Parents praying for the youth to grow in their faith. • The youth should be encouraged to participate in church activities. Youth motivation through activities and teaching. • Reintroduce Sunday school for our young ones • Modification of the order of mass to suit the modern day. Catholic church should introduce activities in mass to attract both the young and old. • Church building limitations, need bigger space to gather more people. • Church should be welcoming to others and everyone • Everyone should feel at home in the church • Parishioners must do more to grow the church • We need help from all church members • Encourage our Catholics to read the bible • People are not sensitive, so we need a church that is built on team spirit • Reflective church • We need a team zeal to grow the church • Create a platform for our lady of Lourdes for Rosary • A church that is unified and diversified • Announcement of all activities of church every Sunday to allow all people to participate and engage in weekly activities. • Allowing church members (children) to take part in sermons. • Organising church programmes and handing over some duties to children

Our Lady of Peace, Burnham

Process Used:
We had small group discussions, also people completed sheets with the questions on them and returned them to the parish, some responses came in via email. All the responses were collected together and then 2 of the team met and produced the final document. Question 1 wasn't circulated separately, the answers came from replies to the other 3 questions.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To believe in Christ and live according to the teachings of the Church, acknowledging the Pope as leader on earth. Mass, sacraments, universal Church.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Welcome to all/Community: Many people feel welcome, the community is caring, it was a safe haven during the pandemic, friendship and sense of belonging, both worldwide and locally. A sense of identity and stability. The Youth Club in Eton Wick was the best experience. Good organised response to the pandemic, adapted well (live streaming, distancing, reception duties) and quickly, involving volunteer parishioners. Wake up call for the Church to be prominent and help each other in the wider community. Enjoyed Fr Joe's men's group. Able to support/direct people who need support/extra help. Suspension of obligation during Covid and ability to watch live streaming. We have good support in our catholic schools. The catholic church in our local area (Slough) is well known for its excellent charity work in the local community, particularly with the homeless. Charitable & pastoral support for poor both locally & worldwide e.g. SVP, Cafod, Pro-Life etc. (over 60% of people mentioned this). Rosary & other parish groups, encourages laity involvement. Priests available for the sick & dying. Education: Our church organises bible studies (not everybody knew about them) and is a focus for communal prayer and devotions. Catholic schools have a good reputation and families strive to get their children into them because of their high expectations of morals, behaviour and their community feel. Keeping deposit of faith safe – sacred traditions/magisterium Mass and the Sacraments: Worldwide Mass & all the sacraments, incl masses for sick, children's liturgy etc. Brings people together. We personally encounter the Body & Blood of Christ and are helped to grow closer to God. Provision and preparation for the Sacraments – Baptism, Reconciliation, FHC and Confirmation. Music makes Mass joyous. Suspension of obligation during Covid, stopping sharing chalice during Covid Anyone can come. Clergy related: Varied types of priests (rule bound/open), chaplaincy. Wonderful priests who give example and encouragement to live our faith (in our parish). Spirituality: Adoration, retreats, bible studies, mission with the Sion Community followed by a post mission prayer companion. Based on the bible & teachings of Jesus explained to us by clergy and great communicators. Have a good understanding of who and what we believe. Open to many ways of praying & worshiping God (quiet/musical – all kinds) but with stable framework and clear moral expectations. Gives a way to live your life well. Our faith gives us hope our prayers will be answered, it keeps us grounded. Communal prayers and devotions, listen and respond to each other. Charismatic renewal flourishing.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Welcome to all/Community: Don't do enough for the divorced/separated. Not obvious that people are welcome. Older people feel lonely, isolated, Covid made it worse, it's easier to watch livestream from home. No connectivity amongst people, don't know each other's names. Those who have moved away are scared to come back – feel lost and alone. Nothing to help those with mental health problems. Judgemental of those seen not to measure up, - the divorced, LGBTQ people, shift workers who don't make Mass regularly. Not a place of compassion. Folks too set in their ways – too many individuals who like to be in charge of groups, no chance of changes to Readers. No fellowship after Mass. Ecumenism: This has been neglected lately especially in our parish. The general public do

not understand what it means to be a Catholic. There is a lack of understanding and misconceptions from other denominations. Church of England accepts Catholics to receive communion but not the other way round. Education: Too many rules, rigid, very narrow viewpoint, priests following the rule book, we should live by 'what Jesus would have done', more flexible, less judgemental. Not enough mercy, love and acceptance. Not enough said about the Kingdom of God, no proper teaching and explanation of the bible/scriptures. Any formal instruction of the faithful is limited to preparation for the sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Learn from other faiths how they work with their youth. Fail to engage, nurture or encourage young people. Not enough activities/programmes for young people – these points were very prominent. Different teachings are creeping in. Lack of consistency in teachings, priests saying different things leads us to form our own opinions. As a parent of an autistic child the church fails to meet my child's specific spiritual needs. Dependent too much on the schools to play the part. Too much importance given to political issues, what is the church doing on a practical level about sustainability? Mass & the Sacraments: We are not allowed to stand during Consecration if we are unable to kneel and so we have to sit down, but I am genuinely in awe of what happens during this sacred moment, I believe in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Some people don't like confession. It's a church rule, not a rule from Jesus (in its current format). We don't have general absolution but it would help people to come back and give them the strength to carry on; one person said do away with individual confessions. Comments – Too much emphasis on how we sin, sin of contraception to be abolished; noisy before Mass, easier access to Baptism, more engaging services, need uplifting music. People should go to Mass when they can and because they want to. Mass is too fast and not reflective enough. Active homosexuality no longer to be considered a sin. Canon Law should be modernised. Lack of diversity in Leadership. Clergy related: Varied experiences with priests, some foster unity and belonging and are more open, some are traditional. Pre-pandemic - Bishop was wise providing a young Parish Priest with a second priest, we were listened to much better, it was a happy place. Not enough priests. Don't recognise role of women in the church, especially round decision making, need more women in all aspects of church life. Respect and recognition to come directly from Rome. Priests should be offered Spiritual Directors. Priests have no experience of work or family life and so can't relate to people with understanding. Difficulty understanding clergy who are not from the same culture. Personal renewal is lacking, teachings should not only be dogmatic. In a 24/7 secular world – too much consumerism and social media. No retreats with international or renowned speakers. Not enough speakers, retreats, missions. Church needs to re-evangelise itself. Spirituality: The church is too formal and lacking in understanding. We are not seen as evangelical We don't promote unity and love in married couples Abuse: Clerical abuse of all forms wasn't acknowledged or dealt with quickly and robustly enough. Not enough accountability, too much power. Too many girls/women have suffered judgementally re sex/marriage. The church has been grossly negligent, arrogant, lacking in humility, ghastly, horrendous, in denial, criminal. Protocols no use unless honoured. The abuse damaged the body of the Church and penance should be done. Pope Benedict should be stripped of his title and so should every other abuser in the Church. In the rest of the world they would have lost their jobs at the first suggestion of abuse, they should not be above the law. Parish: Too much emphasis on collecting money. No regular accounts published and no minutes of PPC meetings. Badly organised, fragmented, groups in isolation, territorial, divided, no accountability financial or otherwise. Money spent on vestments and chalices when we badly need the car park resurfaced and a meeting hall. Parish Priest has too many responsibilities outside the parish should be focussed solely on the parish. Some people less able to hear – large space & different accents. Should divest some wealth to help those in need (not all agreed). The church has been closed during Covid, it should be open at all times. Need new benches and to tidy up the church, name in bold/big letters, lighting. We have no Parish Mission statement and don't know what is planned for the future.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Welcome to all/Community: To be able to discuss things with other people (like in the Men's group). More parish events. Extra activities to bring people together. Theatre trips and outings for less able and older folk. To become a community rather than just individuals. Share meals regularly, building up each other. After Mass have gatherings, talk to each other, tea/coffee with conversations and questions, also during the week. Original model of community in Acts – caring/sharing/helping financially and with food. We need to publicly show our love to those who do not feel welcome. To be a place of compassion and love, more friendly, more inclusive, less condemning. The parish to be more welcoming to people of all genders, races, creeds, abilities, personalities, divorced, gay, unmarried and all sinners. Embrace everyone regardless of background or who they are. A more relaxed, more informal and understanding church. Pope Frances already embodies many of these characteristics: humility, compassionate, non-judgemental and we need to practice these. 'Resting Catholics' should be welcomed back without judgment and no one should be excluded because of the way they self-identify. To continue to reach out to everyone and have more pastoral care – teams that could be called upon as Priests are too busy with their heavy workload. A forum in which groups come together to share experiences, outline needs and formulate plans of action in harmony to maximise on their strengths – 'may they all be one.' Priests to be more friendly to parishioners. Ecumenism: More contact with and more openness to people of other Christian traditions through St Andrew's Shared Church and Churches Together. Holding non-Christian events to attract non-Catholics. I dream of Christian Unity and the power it brings if we work together on major and minor issues. We hope for reconciliation between all faiths by reaching out to other faith Communities. More Eucharistic hospitality. Education: Explain and teach the Bible more. To understand the sermon better and 'take home' learnings from the scripture. Re-education, have the teachings of the church explained and be accessible to young people and to adults. To be a missionary church we need to understand our faith better so we need more adult faith formation and more bible study. Re-evangelisation of the baptised. Let's be more like St Paul and welcome all into the love of Jesus. Regular periods of instruction outside of mass itself, to give us the knowledge with which to sustain and defend our faith and to fend off widely held heretical beliefs. Use of modern tools (Bishop Barron Youtube, Scott Hahn EWTN, David Pawson's introduction to the Bible series on TV and Youtube. Mass & the Sacraments: Have Masses in other languages. Consider other special groups for Mass e.g. family and children General absolution should be the norm...individual confession for those who need/want it. Reintroduce Benediction. Easier access to Information about the annulment process and more understanding of divorced people, especially if it was not up to them that the marriage ended. To focus on helping all children who want Holy Communion to have it, as evangelisation should start from an early age - children missing out due to deadlines seems ludicrous. To have the children more involved in the Mass – say readings, have a youth Mass, youth rosary groups. Have young people in CWL, SVP etc. Clergy related: More priests. That we foster a community which encourages new vocations to clerical life so we don't run out of priests and nuns. Make celibacy optional. Married priests, women deacons, women priests, women bishops. Decision making at all levels should include women. Of the many people with these dreams there was one person who did not agree. Spirituality: Centrally organised pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome, Lourdes, Fatima and Medjugorje with local contacts and pick-up points to help parishioners to travel more easily. To be seen as more openly evangelical, bringing more people to Jesus and not to be frightened of this primary mission of the church. Laity and clergy working together to bring the love of God to everybody. To encourage each other in the practice of our faith. Dreams shared with parishioners and testimonies of Catholic faith – but not from same folk. Vision and example of sharing / caring church at all levels, instituting the Gospel's teachings – love one another as I have loved you. Teaching on meditation. The importance and power of prayer. That the church will not be an empty building, converted into apartments, but that the church will be full of spirit and vocation that the Holy Spirit will renew the church, our society and the world. Reform Canon Law. Abuse: Worldwide – for it to have the courage to admit to wrongdoing and sinfulness (abuse by priests and

ordained people) and to make public steps to correct, discipline or punish transgressions. For the church to set an example to the world of awareness, humility and repentance. While great strides have been made towards healing survivors, more help is needed. Parish: To have a parish mission statement and know what is planned for the future. Clear objective to make the parish united and committed. Need to make the parish structure sound. To have Parish Council and Parish Community meetings and minutes of them , a quarterly financial report and to know who are the members of this council. Repaint church interior possibly by volunteer parishioners. Improve parish web-site, more pictures, more inspirational. Churches in a Deanery need to combine resources. Parish Facebook to have more than endless mass streaming– maybe masses could be confined to YouTube. Planning - fewer instances of events clashing. Communication and helping each other across ministries. That the various organisations that work within the church, work together to maximise their strengths – 'may they all be one'. For the church to remain open. Locally: kneeling facilities at OLOP to be improved. Creating a safe space where there is a non-judgmental dialogue around the subject of abortion, drug and alcohol abuse etc.

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, Yelvertoft

Process Used:

Normally only about 25 ish attend this rural Church (wooden shed). I was allowed to make 2 announcements at mass and handed out about 20 flyers inviting participation. I only had 4 responses. I send them all the info from the website and what I had gleaned from the 3 webinars. They then thought about their responses for a week then we had a hybrid meeting at my house 3 here 1 on remote. It lasted about 1.5 hours. Then everybody was sent a draft bits added. Interesting it was all very amiable and generally all came with the same conclusions . A little bit of difference with the sermons(1 person) Turnout was disappointing but if we went for 5 it was about 15% of the congregation. Daventry had separate meetings.Yelvertoft did not want to travel to Dav hence my place which was central.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
This was a difficult question to answer. We felt part of a community traced back to Jesus but we were definitely part of a minority group viewed with suspicion by outsiders. Some of this relates to the abuse scandals and some to general ignorance. We did not hide the fact we were Catholics but were met at the best with apathy. This could be due to the general demise of Christianity.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Does not bend the rules to fit in with societies viewpoint. (this can be 2 edged see below) • Helps those on the margins. • In some parishes the various clubs IE SVP/Scouts Guides • Does its best to ensure Sunday mass is available to all in spite of shortage of priests . • Safe guarding is improving. • Charities such as CAFOD do an excellent job

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
• Dealing initially with the abuse scandal this rebounded very badly on lay people. • Sermons do not relate to real life. It is all very good talking about the scriptures, but they should be related to todays living. Far too many sermons go over the heads of people. How many remember the sermon? • What relevance does the Pope's latest intervention in respect of banning Latin Mass actually relate to today's world.? It gives the impression the Church is more interested in regulation than dealing with real problems.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To become more in touch with its parishioners especially through sermons as this is where most of the contact is made. The sermons should also try and engage children so they want to go to mass, not to be dragged there. • As there is a shortage of priests consider married priests not only from the Ordinate but from within. This would give a deeper understanding of life and its challenges. • Why not have female Deacons? Remember once Girls were not allowed to serve. Now they are accepted. • Should divorced people be excluded from communion/ for every except with special dispensation. • Use social media much more to put the church in the public eye and explain its relevance in todays world • Get the priests to visit the Catholic schools and say mass at least once a week or the Deacons or Chaplains to hold a service.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Wellingborough

Process Used:

A total of 74+ participants responded to the Synod through a few individual conversations and seven different group conversations. These were open to all and took a variety of forms: • 3 x 1 hour conversations after Mass; • 2 x 3 hour afternoon meetings; • a written enquiry with a group of rarely attending Confirmation parents; • 1 hour conversation after Adoration with our charismatic prayer group; • individual conversations with members of the travelling community; • 90min evening session with ten under 18s (mainly altar servers); • 2 hour conversation with choir members. The main process used was the spiritual conversation.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

What does it mean to you to be a Catholic? Community. To be a Catholic is to be part of Christian community with a sense of belonging and shared beliefs. Our community is very diverse, but we have our faith in common. Being part of the Church family helps us when sometimes our own family is in disunity about faith matters. Belonging (togetherness) is important- we are not alone. It's all I've ever known. It is home. Journeying together. We are making an important journey together - a journey of faith and of self-discovery and ultimately of Salvation. The journey can be a struggle, but faith is all the more treasured. There is a wide variety of experience, but all going in the same direction. Jesus guides us, making us ready and aware of others – to help, forgive, pray. Being more involved in the church and participating helps us to grow. It is a learning process and a way of life. The Mass Almost all groups commented on the centrality and sacredness of the Eucharist. Faith. Even if we don't understand everything, our faith is really important to us. It is always there in me – like the writing through a stick of rock. In prayer we try to discern what God wants for us individually and as the Church. We feel humility that we have the freedom to pray and friendship with God. Love is basic to everything we believe. We are lost without faith. We feel a hunger for the Truth, the truth which stands out from all the worldly rubbish we encounter. God is someone to talk to – he doesn't judge you. We read scripture and try to be more like Jesus, giving and serving. The body of Christ literally means us. It's about friendship with Christ – that I can trust him and go to him and be sure he is listening. The Holy Spirit It is important to many to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit .I felt the presence of the Spirit in church even before I became a Catholic. I was drawn into church. We trust in the Holy Spirit, who is essential and gives us the strength we need. We call on him and wait for him to act. Mary. Devotion to Mary is unique to us as Catholics. She is our Mother and we look to her for help and motherly love.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well? Synod. Some expressed excitement about Pope Francis' call to Synod and what the future might hold. This meeting today is an answer to prayer. We felt affirmed by the group, that other people felt the same way. The Holy Spirit is working among us - clergy and laity alike. Community. Nearly all saw our church as welcoming and inclusive. A priest didn't hesitate to have the funeral of a non-Catholic husband. The Church is there for people, especially when things are tough. One teenager felt lost: the Church welcomed her, made her feel accepted, not judged and she found friends. Another teenager commented that Church is a support system and stability in your life. I have a safe place, and people to go to for help. Sunday Mass. We welcome everyone – evidenced by the diverse nature of the congregations. I come out released of all the bad energy and full of positive energy. We have hope for the future as there are many children at Mass. The homilies are aimed at everyone, accessible and linked to real life and experience. Sacraments. Many expressed gratitude for the daily Mass in our parish and Exposition twice a week, and that Confessions are heard twice weekly and every fortnight at school. Sacraments are essential, helping us to grow in our relationship with God. Coming to faith through adult baptism was transformational for someone; a service of reconciliation

had been important for another. The connection with the school brings vitality – many children come for sacramental preparation. Clergy. Our priest welcomes newcomers at every Mass does everything to encourage community. He also takes his turn as Chaplain at Kettering Hospital. A nice, friendly priest who treats everyone the same, with respect, no matter the background. We enjoy good service from our priests - good leaders who show faith; retired clergy help as they can, with prayers and service. Lay ministry. wonderful to have so many lay Ministers bringing the Eucharist to the sick and housebound. There is a choir at each church (It is another way of praying), cleaners, catechists, flower arrangers, readers, children's liturgy leaders, a welcome team, repository, sacristans etc. and many young altar servers gives young people a chance to help out. Mission. The Church helps those who are poor and marginalised, giving a voice to those who do not have a voice and those who are discriminated against. If you are in need, the Catholic Church will help you regardless of your faith. Catholic TV channels can help promote and support faith. Giving Our church is accountable: everything that is collected moneywise is used for a purpose. We support SVP, Cafod, SPUC, Daylight Centre, Foodbank, etc. Our school supports the homeless. Social. The social aspect is important, building community. We have tea/coffee after the 10:30 Mass, Christmas Fayre, pub Christmas carols, and a wonderful Children's Mass on Christmas Eve. Groups. There is a well-run Children's Liturgy during the main family Mass, sacramental preparation, RCIA, prayer groups, SVP, and associated groups like Beavers and Scouts. There have been Bible study and other courses. SVP runs coffee mornings for the elderly. People have returned to faith through prayer groups, experienced miracles and prayers answered. Stability Continuity is important, People have stood up for the Church through persecution and the traditions of the Church are valued. As the focus for our unity, the Pope does very well in leading the Church. The steadfastness of the Church's teaching is important. Progress. The Church is welcoming of those who before might have been excluded. The Church's rules haven't changed necessarily, but Catholics are now more accepting and compassionate. Ecumenism. We are open to other Christian denominations. We are not against other faiths and believe they can contain truths. We have become more ecumenical.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well? Clerical Abuse. All adult groups spoke about the damage the abuse scandals have done to the Church: The abuse scandals have caused great harm. The cover-up unforgivable. It has made it more difficult for us to defend the church when others criticise. Marriage. Most of the groups addressed what they saw as overly-restrictive rules around marriage, divorce and annulment: Some of the rules are very restrictive and unforgiving: God will forgive you but the Church will not. There is a lot of hurt and sadness at being excluded from receiving the Sacrament. Laity feel deliberately excluded from knowledge about rules and regulations. Authoritarianism has ruled too often and for too long. Shortage of Priests. Most groups spoke with concern about the shortage of priests. The lack of vocations to the priesthood is serious, Our priests are doing too much. We need more, but the Church will only accept celibate men to train for the priesthood Catholic priests can get lonely. They may not understand the realities of family pressures. Young people. Most groups expressed sadness that the Faith is not being passed down the generations. Young people are growing away from the church. Some asserted: Schools are not giving them the chance for a real relationship with Christ, or teaching prayer properly. In the world well-being has replaced spirituality. Non-practising parents expect to have their children prepared for the sacraments. They can be very demanding. Even after Confirmation some youngsters never come again. We struggle to retain the youth in our church. Mass can seem long and repetitive to the young. Women Several groups asserted that women are undervalued in the Church. Women should be more involved in Church leadership. Women should be valued more and their gifts used to better support the priest and parish. Eg as deacons LBGTQ issues. Many people expressed concern about the Church's attitude to the gay community. Some sensitive issues are not discussed by the Church; it appears to silently condemn. Many people feel disapproved-of. The gay community, must be allowed to live authentically. Lay Commitment. The majority of Catholics are

not really committed to serving Christ through his Church. We need to be more involved. Like today's homily: do we just want to be part of the crowd, or are we going to be Christ's servants? Mission is not just the responsibility of the priest: We need to get out of our church buildings more. It's just a building; we ourselves are the Church. Community. One group felt that the Church community doesn't always reach out to its own members. We need to better promote inclusivity and community. We need to learn each other's names! Church people need to recognise that within the Travellers' Community there has been a very steep rise in alcoholism, drug taking and dealing, unnecessary violence and suicide. Adult formation. Many groups remarked that Catholics can be uneducated in faith matters and short on Biblical knowledge. There is not enough encouragement and emphasis on formation. Media. Some people felt that Church doesn't speak out enough on some issues and has lost touch with society. Teenagers remarked that on social media the Church can come across as too serious or even hostile. Misconceptions about Catholicism are common outside the Catholic community. Not open to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not given enough emphasis in the lives of many Catholics. Mission. We do worry about lapsed Catholics, especially in our families.

What are your dreams for the church?:
What are our dreams for the Church? A full Church. We dream that all Masses will be full of families. The Church would be a beacon. It would be so amazing that people will be drawn to it. We need an even better welcome. Hospitality and music (a wider variety of music, perhaps to reflect the different countries of the members) to draw people in – maybe mini-retreats. Clergy. More priests! Priests should choose to be married or celibate. Compulsory celibacy was introduced, so it could be reversed. This would bring more priests who understand more about family life and relationships. Laity. The laity need to really commit to the Church. More important roles for laity to support clergy. Many priests need to delegate and consult people more. Priests need more support. Women. All adult groups felt that the Church needs to give women more important roles. We need to bring back women deacons as described in the early church Most people would be happy with that. For women to be able to preach and be represented in the clergy. Women could do baptisms and have more spiritual leadership in the parish. Some groups dreamed of having women priests. Building community. We need to make more opportunities after or outside Mass for people to meet. House groups. Small groups to get together for a meal, prayer, bible study. More Parish events as well as events to connect with local community. Family Life. The Church should have a more merciful approach to divorcees who wish to practice their faith. Rules and regulations need to be looked into – are they from God or men? More involvement to help married couples establish their marriage. Training for counsellors to help families before they struggle too much. Children. To find ways for our children to be actively engaged in the church – somehow make it more relevant to them – keep them interested. We should seek help with this. Listening to children. Give them a voice. For our schools to actively promote the Catholic way of life and spirituality – education in the deeper things. To evangelise families who come forward for sacramental preparation. The Youth synod meeting asked for a youth group with some spiritual content Ecumenism. We would like the Christian Churches to be united so we can have unity of fellowship. Ongoing Formation Encourage people to invest more time in learning about their faith. Bishop visits Bishops should visit parishes more often and there should be more opportunities to give feedback and listen to people's opinions. The Holy Spirit. The Church needs to be Holy Spirit led. Like the synod. We want a movement of the Spirit. More public devotions to the Holy Spirit could be developed. Image The image of the Church needs to change so that we are known as a Church of love and acceptance (not full of rules- a thing to fear) We need to be innovative in the way we engage with social media, letting people know what we do well, as well as better communicating the Good News. The Church needs to find its voice in the world, to influence societal change, speak out more against corruption. Mission on the streets. All of us need to be involved in mission outside the church building. There are opportunities to witness for

us and to show society the way - in our families, in church, in school.

Our Lady of Walsingham, Corby

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
N/A - Didn't get to this question.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Pastoral – brings people together. Knights of St Columba – Fraternity, you're not alone, grow in faith together. Feels worldwide – the Mass is the same everywhere you go in the world, locals have always been welcoming. Community – brings you a connection to home. Gives a good grounding – gives you 'rules' for life. Priests speaking from a place of 'love of God' rather than 'fear of God'. Traditional rituals like funerals. We can be a source of comfort for non-Catholics through our prayer and conversation.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Communication between churches locally and globally could be better. Church could be kinder to divorcees – especially in cases where there's no fault of their own like leaving domestic abuse, a lack of access to communion for people who otherwise do great service to the church, affecting genuinely devout Catholics. Attitude towards people who are gay isn't always kind. Reaching out to lapsed Catholics could be better. In the past and maybe currently people are afraid to come back to the Church because of chastising words of a priest one time. Should have dealt with priest abuse of vulnerable much better over the years and should continue getting better. Priests should be allowed to get married – not scripture based, man-made rule, they would be a good example of marriage/family life.

What is your dream for the Church?
Priests getting married. More things to get young people involved.

Sacred Heart Leighton Buzzard

Process Used:

Introduction 7 meetings were held and the attendance overall was 50 which is 15% of regular Mass attendees. Meetings were arranged to accommodate as many parishioners as possible, including weekday evenings and weekends. Facilitators and note takers took general notes and themes from each session with the same questions being put to each group who attended. Notes were then compiled and collated; the following (with the exception of question 4) presents common themes collected by the facilitators and note takers and also less common responses: the notes below are a summarised version of the extensive discussions that were held at each meeting.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Q1. What is it like being a Catholic today? Common responses: brings structure to life, meaning to life, community, basis of all I do, gives me a sense of values according to which I act, making me other-centred, a way of seeing the world, way of meeting/speaking with God. Provides a support system, a social setting, a guide on life's pathway, a place for faith to flourish, a 'family' where I belong, an anchor in troubled times. Less common responses: a privilege, a structure during lockdown – something to hold on to when all else was very different. I just love being a Catholic. Eucharistic – real presence – like a kiss from Jesus. Following Jesus along the road, participating in the new path of the Church. It is the Church/faith that goes right back to the apostles.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Q2. What are your experiences of the Church doing something well? Common responses: liturgy and celebrations, involvement, bringing families together, friendship, children's liturgy, different groups with common aim/values supporting and building Church, supportive priest(s) who make a difference, constancy of the Sacraments, a place where we meet the Lord. Helping the poor, social action locally and world-wide, sense of mission. Welcoming and sociability – it is a very welcoming and supportive parish. We are very fortunate in our priest and deacon. Less common responses: powerful witness of those who give their lives for the faith, bringing people back to their faith, working with other denominations and faiths, tolerance/acceptance of difference, inclusive. Mass can be found world-wide and is always constant. Church 'holds on to the treasure', i.e. the faith. Resilience in face of opposition/disregard.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

Q3. What are your experiences of the Church when things have not gone so well? Common responses: not bringing children to their faith, letting the faithful of all ages slip away. Children and young people exiting from church life. Being over institutional, clergy who are not inclusive, not person centred who are authoritarian. Women undervalued in the Church. Abuse and cover-up scandal. Decline in numbers. General Absolution not offered even at specific times of the year, such as at Easter. Less common responses: the Church is too traditional, takes the safe option, bows to secular world, afraid to say what it thinks on controversial issues. Bishops are remote from the parishioners. Being over institutional; clergy who are not inclusive, controlling – laity need to be more involved in the running of a parish. The Church needs to work in partnership more with other Christians. We don't have/generate passion for our faith. Locally, no Catholic school. The Church and its values are an ideal that we cannot live up to, e.g. teachings on contraception.

What are your dreams for the church?:

Q4. What are our dreams for the Church? Responses: a Church that is ever-more outgoing, enthusiastic, welcoming and inclusive. Less rigid, more honest and open to change. Inclusive of all, regardless of difference. Ecumenism made real. Like a family that grows and flourishes. Lots of

young people and families – our future. An increase of vocations to priesthood and religious life, including married men and women deacons and priests. Masses for children. Churches that are full of faithful, vigorous, enthusiastic believers who want to be there. Establishing faith groups in the parish.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Luton

Process Used:

On Sunday 6 March, parishioners at the tea/coffee session after the 11.00am Mass, filled out their considered responses to the Synod questions. Some participants worked together as a group, others gave individual responses, 9 sets of responses in total. Below are the collated results.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

• Being a Catholic means I feel loved through being part of my church family, but also part of the bigger, world -wide church family • Everything in my life is connected to my Catholic faith • All my life choices have been guided by my faith • Being a Catholic gives me a sense of belonging to a great big Church family • My faith helps me to become aware of God and His love • Being a Catholic means commitment to practicing my faith • My faith teaches me the morals by which I live my life • My Catholic faith gives meaning to my life and a sense of well being and sanity • Being a world wide community united in following the teaching of Christ • Spirituality

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

• Catholic education of our young people, instilling a sense of responsibility towards our neighbour • The many Catholic charities and the way they present their profile in the world • The help given by Catholic charities is available to all regardless of faith • The care given to others by godly religious communities • That sense of being the great family of God, kind and generous, coming together to help each other in times of trouble and need • Regular services and devotions • Practical outreach by the parish (SVP/Catenians etc) • Prayer groups such Legion of Mary

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

• Catholic education! The teaching of faith becoming a school subject • Parents not being supported in instilling faith in their children • Poor communication in general • Lack of outreach to parishioners who have had to stop coming to Mass because of age or infirmity, especially those who used to attend Mass daily • Those times when people find themselves in difficulty and do not receive the support they need from their parish community • Child abuse issues dealt with appallingly and the way victims were/are? Treated • Paternalism in the Church • Victimisation of women over the ages • Intolerance of other faiths, LGBTQ community • Sense of elitism

What are your dreams for the church?:

• To be a loving Church where all feel welcomed and respected whatever their race/social class/faith/etc • To be a Church community that shows love and understanding to all, especially the marginalised • To be faithful to the teaching of Christ and be bold in proclaiming it • To bring back the prodigals - have a programme of reaching out to those who have left the Church • That the Church may be regarded as a Moral Authority in the world • To be a repentant Church • To encourage more musicians and more music participation in the church • To have more priests Sacred heart of Jesus, Luton

Sacred Heart and Weston Favell, Northampton

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Awareness of God's love within us.
Education - know God, who is alive and love & serve God and increase the desire to know him better.
Forgiveness; care of others and united in the Holy Spirit.
The Church is my life.
I can go to Mass in any country and feel at home.
The Eucharist is very important in my life.
To be part of the Body of Christ.
My moral compass.
Comfort in times of difficulty.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Making people feel welcome at Mass and prayer groups.
The involvement of the laity.
Dedication of the clergy.
Masses throughout the week.
Community work in prisons, hospitals and schools.
Providing missionary care and aid to charities, such as CAFOD and food banks.
Contact with those in need - the sick, the dying and the provision of the Sacraments.
Pilgrimages.
The use of religious ceremony.
Parish is an oasis of peace and calm.
Helping families at special times - baptism, first communion, marriage, funerals.
The SVP.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Lack of continuing adult formation.
Engaging with the LGBT community.
Caring for the divorced and remarried.
Poor quality of education, both general and religious, in many of our Catholic schools.
There is a danger that we can stick too rigidly to the rules and risk becoming pharisaical.

What is your dream for the Church?
A missionary church. Inspiring laity to lead more in the wider community.
That the young will keep attending Mass which they can find boring. Sustain the commitment made by children and parents in the Sacraments of Initiation so that they continue to be involved in parish life.
Greater use of the Sacrament of Penance.
Every parish to have a wide variety of music to cater for all.
Increase in vocations – improve our outreach to the young.
Reaching out to other Christians and those of other faiths. Working with them on local social projects.

St Alban's R.C. Parish, Winslow

Process Used:

Version 2: 24 Feb 22 Our parish is mainly retired people with a few younger adults/parents and school children. Three zoom sessions and one physical meeting took place with twenty-two contributors, seven questionnaires were returned and three individual conversations took place. This feedback is taken from the notes of two gracious listeners then finalised by a small parish group. We have highlighted the main themes under each of the four Diocesan questions as bullet points and included some direct quotes underneath these.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Most of our contributors were brought up within large parishes with active communities and several Priests. Growing up in this environment had been a route through to cultural and often-lifelong adherence to Catholicism and had been extremely important for their journey in faith. All felt sadness at the decline of the church and communities once experienced, in particular for young people and the effect this has on the church today. Living with God each day As a catholic I value the Eucharist and regular access to the Sacraments To me the universality of the church provides stability and unity We have the scriptures and Angels and Saints as role models Faith gives me the answers to most questions in life both on a spiritual and emotional level Being a Catholic means following a way of life where I can show kindness, forgiveness, understanding, tolerance and encouragement to others Shared Values with other Christians.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
• Pope Francis is felt to be great world figure who openly address's global issues and often speaks out for the marginalised. Pope Francis is a great representative. • The church generally responded well to the immediate problem of the Covid pandemic, People felt gratitude and thought it contributed to a feeling of togetherness with other Catholics; Response to Covid well handled with online mass's, prayers and prayer groups, rosary and Novenas and other. • That a Church building is available as meeting point for Catholics. Sharing Churches with other denominations can help with costs and maintenance. I can go into a church and feel close and talk to God You can go to Mass anywhere in the world and feel at home. It is humbling but amazing to realise there are Catholics globally following the same traditions as us. • Priests can be the source of comfort and wisdom. I remember, priests would come to the house, and were part of community/society. Weekly Mass sheets provided underpin comprehension. Social Justice and teaching – the church gets it right by looking after the poor and needy. The work of Nuns and Monks with children, families and the poor all around the world. Catholic Schools stand out as achieving better academic outcomes. The Catholic community I'm in is great.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
• Continuing experiences of strict rules and attitudes of Clergy clashes with differing lifestyles and modern cultures: Lots of rules and regulations – it feels it would be easier to be a non Catholic Christian at times. Burden of guilt is hard to shake off in adult life. • Interpretations of complex rules are not made clear for all: Very little said by clergy or hierarchy when the Prime Minister got married in a Catholic church • Continuing lack of tolerance of marginal groups and treatment of the divorced and others groups: Church will not bend and should be more flexible especially for those wishing to be full members of the church and receive the sacraments. • There is confusion about catholic culture, identity and modern attitudes with a perception that Church guidance is out dated: Now consider myself as a Christian first, then a Catholic I love Mass, but more and more I feel less of a Catholic, but just a Christian We use the concept of reconciliation and forgiveness, but where does this connect to conscience as identified in Vatican 2? • A Strong, deep dismay of scandals, especially

Abuse and way complaints have been handled over many years yet still happening: There is a lack of understanding about the causes and situations that can lead to abuse. Church should be more transparent. Covering up serious problems. Reputation of church is upheld rather than of suffering of victims Danger of spiritual abuse • The Synod process highlighted we do NOT have enough group listening processes inviting reflection and honesty between individuals, parish or dioceses. There also appears very little communication about joining up parishes and resources to facilitate supporting each other, this could help build on local strengths and help areas of weakness. For example, our parish of St Albans has great strength of community spirit; a weak area is that we have few young people with none attending Catholic Schools so there is little opportunity for them to meet other young Catholics. More synods to help enhance our faith Can we do more together, not only with other Christians but across parish boundaries? • One young person made the point: Heating in church is terrible… I am always frozen when I go to Mass • Varied experiences of the connection with Children: Children's liturgy is poor and relates only to creationism not reflecting modern themes and knowledge Within my generation there's a massive stereotype against Christians, Catholics and Anglicans. • The church assumes the laity of all ages has knowledge of church teaching and the ability to relate this to the world and the times we live in. Population these days are generally better educated yet, in some ways, NOT educated in way of faith. Role of catholic schools could be extended? Do they prepare pupils enough? How can I explain the meaning of Transubstantiation to others? • Greater inspirational Prayer and Liturgical services are needed. Mass feels distant from me, I had to work really hard to connect and retain connection: Latin is part of our history Latin is no longer learnt so is like a foreign language to newcomers Liturgy should always be appropriate to those in attendance Our Parish: • Reflections highlighted difficulties of being hosted in an Anglican Church. To some this does not feel a 'home' and they can feel simply a tolerated guest. Decreased services and diminished facilities are most keenly felt, also the erosion of meaningful things giving substance. For example: individual death/baptism/confirmation dedications at mass and celebrating personal anniversaries. Some worried that traditions lost due to the pandemic such as, wine for Laity, the sign of peace, the offertory procession, the use of servers and blessing those not able to receive the Eucharist, might not return. This would leave them feeling even less involved. I hope that our parish of St Albans carries on. Can we have a mass dedication book back • Most recognised the restricted opportunities for contact with a Priest: sometimes not living in the Parish, perhaps having a another job. This leads to a lack of opportunity to talk and also to a loss of personal connection, restricting the formation of good partnerships: Miss having a priest to be able to talk to Feel like I am losing my faith and there is no encouragement Some housebound people receive the Eucharist from a lay person but may not have seen a priest for years. Leadership qualities are needed. … Parishes vary but do well with some priests, how does the church allocate priests to parishes in order to meet the local needs? • Learning from other spiritual leaders We could benefit by knowledge gained from other religions and their leaders.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Global Structure: • There was a consensus that there should be a review of the 'top down' structure, to establish fewer layers of hierarchy. People expressed reticence at confiding in the clergy due to individual experiences of the clergy giving different interpretations. The church needs wider horizons and a shared vision of worship rather than rigid structures. I wish the clergy to talk to 'us' not tell us. • The wish for forgiveness and reconciliation was emphasised for all marginalised groups especially those who are divorced, remarried people and the LGBTQ community with more thought on how to include those who are lapsed. All should be fully welcomed, Most yearned for a more God centred approach What is acceptable to God within the context of Jesus' life where he welcomed and ate with all The Role of Women: • All expressed vehemently that Priests should be able to marry. Equally, women should have stronger roles in the Church such as Priests and Deacons. Several expressed personal experience of how positive the Ordination of women had been within the Anglican Communion. It's vital that women should be deacons, now not in the distant future. This

would bring a new perspective to the spiritual life of the church. A stronger role for the laity particularly women should be re-examined, culture may have excluded them in the past. Women have so much to offer Christian Unity: • Christian Unity was a strong theme, the church should respect other religions and have more joint services at both a local and global level, giving more opportunity for the laity to share and have greater dialogue with other Christian groups as well as other religions. I would like Christians to support each other as an important part of Christian unity. Encouraging Young People: • The loss of young people to the church, often in their early teens, was a big issue, most thought they would continue in their faith or come back to it if it were more relevant, interesting and more dynamic. A liturgy more relevant to modern life would be appealing; many felt their children switched off during services. Most would like to have more up to date role models and a greater knowledge of recent Saints. We need a greater range of activities for younger children, ask them what they would like and think more about what they need. Encourage and involve young people and understand the issues they face in the modern world. We need to modernise how the essential message is delivered, make it more fun and more interactive, without changing it My parish is a bit dead, there is not a lot for teenagers like me Our Parish and the way we worship: • It is important to stress the loyalty and depth of feeling of the congregation of St Albans Parish. We look for leadership to enhance and re-energise our congregation in this growing thriving town. People want to pray for their own sharing joys and sorrows at mass in an informed way. • Contributors were appreciative that the pandemic had introduced them to on line opportunities for prayer and services; they feel committed to using these more in the future. It was accepted that not everyone would be able to access in this way and considerable thought needs to go into how to include the vulnerable and housebound. More opportunity is requested for opportunities for study and prayer. Can we have more opportunity for prayer and study through perhaps sharing with other parishes. The Synodal Journey: • There was a fervent hope that this synod process will not just be a one off that it will continue or be repeated in some way. Some expressed frustration at whether the laity will be heard. Although some felt negative about the future, others, based on the shared experience of this Synodal process, felt an opportunity to invigorate our Parish by addressing the areas discussed has been provided. • It is clear however that many dream of a church that is inclusive and reflects modern life, not only in the West, but also across the world. One which allows people to live life, as Christ would wish them to. I want the church to reflect and address the reality of people's lives right now We must recognise that complacency is a stumbling block. There must be a cessation of the inward looking culture.

St Aidan's, Little Chalfont and Our Lady's, Chesham Bois

The comments contained in this response are drawn from the various parish meetings which have taken place within the communities of St Aidans', Little Chalfont and Our Lady's, Chesham Bois. They also contain the input of Deacon David Curtis and have been reviewed by Fr Roy Karakkattu and Brian Gallagher who helped gather the Parish feedback.

The Mass

The continuity and the universality of the Mass were seen as very important, giving people a sense of their place in the ongoing life of the Church and bringing them closer to their Catholic brothers and sisters around the world. The local community of Mass goers was described as a family giving unconditional love and support to any of its members.

Concern was expressed at the reduction in Mass attendance that has been occurring over the last 20 years and has been more recently worsened by the Covid pandemic. The particular reduction in attendance amongst teenagers, young adults and families with children of all ages was noted with sadness and alarm was expressed as to what this will mean for Mass attendance in years to come.

Views were expressed about what the Church might do to reverse this trend. These included:

- More music and singing in Mass.
- Shorter Masses as children find it difficult to concentrate for more than 45 minutes after which time parents need to focus more on their children than on the Mass.
- More frequent children's masses with children actively engaged in the liturgy.
- A regular children's liturgy during Mass to allow the younger children to better understand the readings and prayers and to allow their parents to focus fully on the Mass.
- Rethink Mass times. It is not helpful to have two churches which are close together offering Mass at the same or very similar times. Equally there is a need to understand what Mass times would attract more families or young people. Some parents felt that a 4pm Sunday Mass would be very helpful.
- Concerns that the Latin Mass at Chesham Bois restricts our Parish mass times and frustration that Bishop David has not followed the Pope's lead and addressed this issue authoritatively.

Priestly Formation

Sadness and concern were expressed about the falling number of Priests and the impact that this may have on the frequency and location of Masses in the future. Concern was also expressed that the requirement for celibacy is attracting the wrong type of men to the priesthood. In addition, the model of individual priests living alone and with relatively little support from their diocese was thought to be unhelpful. There was almost unanimous agreement that the Church should allow married priests with very few understanding or accepting the arguments given by the Church against such a move. This lack of understanding is heightened by the full acceptance of married Anglican Priests into the Church. A common suggestion was that Permanent Deacons could be ordained as priests.

In all our discussions there was continued sadness, hurt and anger over the child sex abuse cases in the Church. Whilst clearly hating the sins of those involved a significant part of the anger was addressed at the Church itself for its past and continuing failure to openly and honestly address

these issues. People did not want to be part of a Church where protecting and sheltering priests and nuns who have committed these crimes is considered more important than openness, honesty and real care for the victims. This issue is more important than the Church seems to realise and is a continuing source of pain and frustration for many active Mass goers.

Concern was expressed that the formation program for Priests is not adequately preparing them for Parish life. Priests are leaving seminaries not properly equipped to cope with the demands of Parish life. There often seems to be a lack of compassion and mercy in their response to the challenges faced by parishioners in their journey through life. Some thought that Priests needed to have more experience of life before starting their formation, others thought that the formation program needed to focus more on the practical aspects of being a Parish priest. With the shortage of Priests there is much less scope for mentoring from experienced parish Priests and so these aspects of the formation programme take on increased importance.

Catholic Education

There was extensive support and praise for the local Catholic primary school. Having a local Catholic primary school was very much appreciated and seen as an important factor in the high numbers of children joining the First Holy Communion preparation courses. Parents were sad that there is no local Catholic secondary school which could help older children through a very challenging phase of their development and provide a strong foundation for their faith journey and their continued active engagement with the Church.

It was suggested that stronger links between Parishes and schools would help to draw lapsed parents back to the Church and a more active participation in Parish life. This would also offer stronger support communities for parents. Extending and developing Catholic education through more and bigger Catholic schools was seen as a vital part of re-evangelising the families and children who no longer attend Mass regularly. A pushback on this and other initiatives might be cost but the Church is perceived as hugely wealthy organisation which is failing to apply its resources to grow the Church or to aid those in our communities in real need.

The Church's presence in the community

With the diminishing number of people attending Mass any initiatives tend to rely on support from the same parishioners. Fatigue, increasing age and other demands on their time limit how active the Church community can be. Consequently, It was felt that local Catholic communities were becoming too insular and inward looking.

A more active and visible engagement with local communities and the issues and challenges facing them and the world more generally was felt important to both publicise the work that the Catholic church already sponsors and supports and to encourage greater and more active participation amongst Catholics who have ceased to regularly attend Mass. Catholic Social Teaching (CST) was seen as a very powerful basis for engaging all ages, but particularly teenagers and young adults. It has, perhaps, been forgotten by many that being a Catholic means more than simply attending Mass once a week. Through greater knowledge of CST and creating more opportunities to put it into practice at a local level we can show that the Catholic community is actively engaged in addressing the issues that really matter to individuals and communities. This will attract back those who want to be part of a community which is actively doing good in the world.

Even in our most prosperous Parishes there are those being left behind, those who have to rely on food banks or pay-day loans to survive. Surely the great resources of the Church could be brought to bear much more actively and effectively to help the poor and disadvantaged in our Parishes and Diocese. The idea of offering an alternative source of short-term financial assistance to counter the reliance on pay-day loans with their criminal rates of interest is something that we could explore through the establishment of a Catholic Credit Union. This would also allow more wealthy individuals and Parishes to support those from less affluent parts of the Diocese.

Re-establishing Parish social life

It is vital to re-establish and extend Parish social activities as we emerge from the pandemic. Many groups including the old, lonely, the worried and young parents would find it very helpful to have opportunities to share experiences and seek mutual help and advice. For example, we could establish “Tea and chat” groups, “Baby and toddler” mornings, “Back to Church” conversations, Youth social action groups. Mutual support and help were seen as important attributes of thriving Parishes but we need to facilitate these opportunities and give them time to get established. It is also important that Parishes are prepared to invest time and money in such activities.

Other purely social activities like garden parties, quiz nights, Parish lunches and coffee after Mass offer a chance for people to re-establish their links with other members of the community and can also give opportunities for fund raising for good causes or local initiatives.

St Anne's Wendover

Process Used:
People really appreciated the opportunity to come together and talk. A very rare opportunity to open up big themes around how their religion impacts their lives, their hopes and dreams, speak about wounds.
The spiritual conversation process has been profound.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Belonging to a global community.
Feeling of being special.
Sensitivities to the ecumenical dimension of our community which is enriching.
The community is a place we can bring our sadness and joy.
Feeling that it is part of the core of our identity. It defines the way we live and gives a richness to our lives beyond words.
The importance of the Eucharist which is at the core. It gives an inner sense of never being alone and a feeling of love, safety and security with a God who loves.
Being grateful to have models such as parents on whom to base our faith from an early age.
Teaching and Scripture to fall back on.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Being a strong, loving community, supportive of one another and open to new people. It provides spiritual and practical support.
Greeting and welcome is vital for creating a sense of community that is familiar and friendly.
The teaching of the church – especially Vatican II
SVP and other charitable outreach.
Bereavement support, particularly through the liturgies.
Sustaining the congregation as a +1 church as parishes and clergy change.
Music enriches our community.
Inter-church worship e.g. shared space with Free Church in Wendover where both bills and worship are supported by both communities.
The universality of the Church is a constant-Mass is the same all over the world. People come together to celebrate the Eucharist.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Poor communication both among Catholics and with non-Catholics.
Language can be old fashioned and exclusive.
Covering clergy abuse instead of being open and dealing with it.
Lack of support and training for priests, no community for them. Not to have to live alone, be alone in their ministry. Training needs to be more practical and rooted in people's experience.
We don't nurture ourselves in our Catholic identity – there is so much potential.
Misogynistic with women's roles defined in terms of lesser tasks and responsibilities.
We do not harness the gifts of young people.
The church does not welcome everyone and is judgemental, eg divorced, LGBT

What are your dreams for the church?:
To continue to have Scripture based conversations about our faith.

We need the tools to go out to people.
Improved communication and organisation
Continue work of Vatican II, which was a breath of fresh air
Greater continuity when reaching out to people to create communities.
Address the shortage of priests by allowing married priests.
Priests should live in communities for practical and mental/emotional support.
Women's gifts should be used and appreciated.
Gossip about priests, the homeless and marginalised should stop-they should be cared for by the Church.
Join together with other churches.
Support pro-life issues and communicate with the wider world more often.
Create more opportunities for parish discussions, spiritual growth and prayer.
Keep talking
Build on the creation of the Church being a listening Church and empowering the laity.
Not making it difficult for people with families to come to come to Church.

St Anthony of Padua, Farnham Royal, Slough

Process Used:

During the month of January 2022, a number of synod conversations were held with parishioners to seek their feedback on the four key questions. We used these conversations to inform our Parish's response to the Diocese for Synod 2021-2023. In total 22 session were offered, including two online sessions and two in the neighbouring Catholic Primary School, one was specifically offered to parents of children preparing for their First Holy Communion and one for young people. In all 52 adults and young people attended. Meetings were held on weekdays and at weekends, day time and evening to ensure as wider cross section of people as possible were able to contribute their views to the process. In addition, a questionnaire was offered for people to record their views in writing. We received three responses to this questionnaire of which two were from parishioners who had already attended one of the Parish meetings. These have also been included in this summary. In addition we received one Letter in Response to the Catholic Church Synod, which, with permission, we have appended in its entirety.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Joys of being a Catholic Personal: The joys of being a Catholic were generally expressed within the context of faith, specifically - knowing that God is with you at all times; a feeling of inner peace; prayer; the teachings of Jesus and celebrating these through the sacrifice of the Mass; the Sacraments; devotion to Our Lady; and particularly the worldwide celebrations of Easter and Christmas. Many commented that their faith brings structure to their lives. It was also important to people that they feel part of a Christian Family, both locally and globally and that the Church provides them with guidance to live by and a Creed that all Catholics share. The example of the Saints and Martyrs and other holy men and women through the years and the history of the faith were clearly very important to many people. A number of young people expressed their joy at knowing Christ in their lives and living with Him day by day. Local: - People's joy in St. Anthony's was in the meeting of friends at Church, and the sense of local community that St Anthony's offers. People noted the importance of the feeling of belonging at St Anthony's and the sense they had of being close to God when they were there. The peace and quiet of the Church was also commented on, as was the variety of opportunities provided to connect with God and provide a focus for life. Some commented on the privilege of being able to serve the Parish community. Others commented on the joy they felt from music within the Mass and other celebrations. Being able to send your children to Catholic Schools was also seen as positive. Global: People's joy included the knowledge that they were part of a worldwide community encompassing all nationalities. Pope Francis was seen by some as embracing this. He was described by one respondent as humble and charismatic and his leadership on climate change was of particular note. Difficulties and challenges of being a Catholic Personal: The personal difficulties and challenges of being a Catholic were identified by people as staying faithful and proclaiming Christ's teaching in a secular world; not knowing how to explain to non-Catholic friends why the Church has the policies that it currently has and personal struggles with accepting certain aspects of the received faith, such as its teaching on birth control and divorce. Many commented that it was challenging to bring up children in the Catholic Faith within the context of the modern world and make them go to Mass. One adult commented that Mass can be monotonous. Many commented on feelings of guilt when they did not meet the exacting standards of the Church. Others said that they found it challenging to go to confession in the traditional way but preferred a Service of Reconciliation which was less formal. Local: In relation to getting involved in the local church, many commented that the same people doing everything in the same ways for years makes it difficult for new people who want to help, to get involved or to bring in any fresh ideas. It was also noted that some Clergy have been perceived to be difficult or to have behaved in an unacceptable way and that there are no systems in place for this to be dealt

with. There were other comments that there seemed to be inconsistencies in the interpretation of scripture and Church teaching from priest to priest. A number of regular Mass-goers commented that the local Church had been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 virus and that a number of previous regular attenders have stopped coming to Church. One person commented that they found it hard to focus when the Church was not quiet during Mass. Global: The overwhelming response to the challenges of being a Catholic globally was the perception that the Catholic faith is diminishing. Some felt that the Church has become too political. Many commented that it is not seen to use its substantial funds to make a difference to people all over the world. A number of responses also commented on what they consider to be outdated policies of the Church, particularly in relation to divorce, gender inequality, and the treatment of LGBTQ+ people. People also felt that there was a do as I say, not as I do attitude from the hierarchy of the Church and that the contribution made by the laity was not properly recognised by higher authorities in the Church. There was also a perception that priests and others within the hierarchy showed a lack of faith. Most responders felt that the Church is in need of reform in order to remain relevant in the modern world and needs to be seen to be a force for good in every community. A small number commented that the restrictions on the use of the traditional Latin Mass and that the decision to transfer Holy Days to Sundays were regrettable. Others commented that they felt that not everyone understands that Catholicism is part of Christianity or what is the same and different between Catholics and other Christians.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Local: Locally many of the responders felt that St Anthony's provides a good place of worship with a priest who is always accessible and that every Mass is a good Mass. It was also noted how the current priest cares about each individual with a holistic approach and that he includes all parishioners in decisions to be made and makes the whole church feel involved. Many commented on how well the priest conducts baptisms, confirmations, funerals etc. Many people including, one of the young people who participated, commented on how helpful they find the preaching after the Gospel at Mass. A number of people commented that they greatly valued the monthly 24 hour Adoration and Service of Benediction that has been recently introduced. Others voiced their appreciation of the availability of week-day Mass, Rosary and prayer groups. Music was another thing that was felt to be done well. People valued the diversity of the Parish community and felt that it was representative of the local demographic. Almost everyone commented on how welcoming and friendly St Anthony's is and that it provides good community links with the local school. The celebration of parishioner's birthdays was also appreciated. Tea and coffee in the Crypt and the choice of Sunday Masses available to attend were also highly regarded by most. Having young readers in the Mass was also very well received. Others felt that at times, when there had been a lack of clear leadership from the priest, the laity had been strong and proactive. Some commented that special events such as the Church fete had a strong community feel and all were encouraged to participate in the various ministries within the Church. There were also remarks that the teaching of children was good in the Church and in the school. The availability of online Mass via Zoom was also seen to be helpful. Global: Globally, responders felt that the Church is good at celebrating the main Christian Festivals and giving some clear messages that are globally respected and endure through time. Televised messages and the availability of online Mass across the world was also felt to be a strength. The ability to participate in and follow Mass wherever you are in the world, whether or not you speak the language, was felt to be very positive. It was also noted by many that it is good to have the Pope as a world-wide leader who visits many different countries and that the Catholic Church unites people of different nationalities in one focus of adoration and worship. There were also comments that Pope Francis comes across as loving and understanding. People felt that the Catholic Church has a good reputation for educating and creating opportunities across the world, particularly in its missionary activity with schools, hospitals and through the work of CAFOD worldwide. One group commented that on a global basis the Church tries to reach out to young people. Some felt that the current structure of the Church is good.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Local: At a local level, responders felt that more young people need to be encouraged to come to Church and more parishioners need to be encouraged to get involved in charitable activities within the local community. It was also felt that more could be done to make non-Catholics and non-practicing Catholics feel welcome at Mass. A lot of people commented on not knowing who to approach if they have questions or want to become more involved and that it should be made clearer who in St Anthony's does what. The view was also expressed that Church finances are not always well managed and that not enough information is shared within the Parish regarding how the finances are being spent. Responders also noted that building maintenance has not been managed well in the past and that there are not enough groups in the Parish for supporting families, young people or for studying the Bible. More teaching about the faith beyond sacramental preparation and involvement of greater numbers of adult and child volunteers were also highlighted as areas for development. It was suggested that the sound system in Church needs to be improved and that within worship, some commented that hymn choices need to be more upbeat and inclusive to encourage congregational singing. Many people commented on the lack of current provision for children during main Sunday Mass. It was noted that the Church website could do with some improvement. There was also a comment that there are currently no set times for Confession which they found unhelpful and that the 24 hour Adoration should be held on the first rather than second Friday of the month. Others felt that St. Anthony's had not been supported by the Diocese when there were difficulties with their Parish Priest and that he had just been moved on to another Parish.
Global: Some responders felt that the Catholic Church has become afraid to speak out on global issues, preferring instead to hold its counsel. It was also noted by many that the church has not moved with the times in relation to a wide range of issues - namely support for the LGBTQ+ community, teaching on contraception and the ordination of married men and all women to the priesthood. It was also felt that the Church does not do enough to encourage vocations to the priesthood and to prepare seminarians for the reality of Parish life. Others commented that more use could be made of the laity, particularly in situations where a Parish Priest cannot be found but the Parish Community is vibrant. A number of people also commented on the perception that the Church is very wealthy but not seen to share its wealth where it is most needed in the world. There was particular concern that the Church is not tackling the challenges of homelessness at a global level. There is a perception that funds of the Church are not properly accounted for. A small number of people felt that new churches are not being built to display the beauty of God but rather to look like modern unattractive buildings. In nearly every group at least one person commented that recent scandals and cover-ups had diminished the moral authority of the Church. It was also felt that the Church is not good at managing the media and particularly social media. It has been noted that there has been pressure placed on certain enclosed orders of nuns to become more involved in their local communities and this is not always welcomed. An opinion was also expressed that the Church should not change things said by previous popes and that some clergy have found themselves victimised for speaking out.

What are your dreams for the church?:
The overwhelming response for the dreams of the future of the Church was to see the Church family increase with Churches filled with people of all ages and full of warmth, joy and hope. The Church would be vibrant at all levels and a beacon of light for the whole world, teaching and practising Christ's message of love and respect for all people. In order to achieve this people's responses included the need to make Church more attractive to children and to adults of all ages; to be a strong mission Church; to attract more vocations to the priesthood including women and married men; to be more transparent; to be more understanding and accepting. Following on from this, the majority felt that in order to achieve these objectives, the Church will need to become more up to date and inclusive without losing sight of its traditions and core beliefs and that people will need to

be encouraged to give more generously of their time and money to the work of the Church. Many hoped for a unified Christian Church in the future. Locally, responders' dreams for St Anthony's included well taught congregations, a strong mission focus for the church, retreats and Bible Study groups and regular Parish meetings. Many also noted the need for the Church nationally and globally to continue to teach its core message with support and explanation, so as to not be taken out of context and appear to be unduly judgmental. Many of the younger participants commented how much they wish that St Anthony's will always exist for future generations to come. It was suggested in one meeting that the Pastoral Council of Vatican II be revoked, also that the third secret of Fatima be fully revealed and that the Church should consecrate Russia at the request of Mary. Some commented that their dream was for the return of Catholics who have left the faith and the conversion of non-believers. In summary, this exercise has generated many positive ideas for how the Church both locally and globally should move forward and a clear desire and commitment from parishioners at St Anthony's in Slough to be part of the future of the Holy Catholic Church.

St Augustine's, Daventry

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
Below is an anonymous summary of the 21 parishioners of the Parish, including a member of significant group of Polish parishioners, who have replied to my request for input. Initially a request had been placed in the weekly Parish newsletter by Fr. James Cassidy, the Parish Priest on Nov.14th and has been inserted each week for a number of weeks.
I agreed to a request from Fr. James to act as the recipient of any replies, which should be via email. After 10 days or so I had had no replies so I advised Fr. James I that would solicit replies from 10 or so parishioners I knew took an active part in the Parish and had eight replies after some prompting.

Following the responses I had received, I reported to the Parish Core group, which is Chaired by the Parish priest with the assistant PP also attending. The CG were impressed by the quality of the replies and proposed that an attempt be made to engage more parishioners. Another member of the group, John Peachy, agreed to help me progress this idea. As a result, all parishioners were invited via the Parish newsletter with a
questionnaire attached for them to return. This elicited only one reply. A meeting after Sunday Mass was planned and one in the week with a time suitable for maybe younger people with children at school.

At the Sunday meeting in the Parish Hall, most people sat at various tables as usual for their refreshments, so JP & I decided to go to them rather than waiting for them to come to us. We took the question papers around to each table and remined them what it was about and asked if they would like to answer the questions. We received 12 papers back, some were a summary of what 3 or 4 people on a table had discussed. An approach to our small off shoot church in the village of Yelvertoft by David Wilson, had elicited 3 replies and the weekday meeting just 1 reply.

Below is a summary of all these replies, in the order of the 3 questions the Diocese had set us. Some of the responses were the similar so I have tried not to repeat them except where there is a different emphasis.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
All responders clearly valued being members of the Church. They spoke of the value of the opportunity to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist and their gratitude for the physical presence of a parish church, served by its priests and people. They also welcomed the opportunities for support and friendship that a parish provides in good times and hard times, such as a bereavement. There was a comment on the impact of the Covid crisis on how beneficial it was to be able to watch Mass online. This initially, was the only alternative to the suspended attending of Mass in person and was invaluable! Some have continued to do this, and one respondent said on this , "Everyone is different and they have to do what they have to do, but there is no substitute for going to Mass if you can".
Having access to Mass online each day is, however, a great way to start the day and possibly brings the Mass to people who would otherwise not have it. Gradually, many churches have switched their online forum off, but the Cathedral in Northampton seems to have set it up permanently. It's a media outlet that we certainly hadn't previously used but, with today's technology, needs to be a part of the whole gamut of communications.
The Parish should continue to try to gather parishioners for social events such teas after Masses and also continue to attract young people to be part of Masses by doing their altar serving and involving

them in the Mass. It should also continue catechism from early years and welcoming parents to support.
It is important that we continue to be a part of a strong church that at its heart it is centred on the love of Christ and teaches His values. Another important aspect of the Church is that is not afraid to speak out for the poor and underprivileged and on matters of social justice.
The Church's provision of schools and Education for high quality religious and general education is a valuable assert for families and society and should be maintained.
The diocese, and maybe some of the bigger parishes, should be accessible to the people to improve and maintain good communications with diocese parishes and people. This process could be enabled by having trained volunteers answer enquiries mainly phone and internet promptly.
Continue to provide a place for worship and contemplation. Teas and coffees after services to encourage fellowship.
The church should remain open and stick to traditional Catholic hymns.
Missions' charity work dialogue between all Christians, as well as other religions. Praying and celebrating with other churches, encouraging Christianity.
Educating the children. Keeping the music.
Keep serving the community pastorally and spiritually. People are now getting their spirituality from the Internet since Covid, which is detrimental to parish life.
Have jolly hymns and children's liturgy. Improved communication and carry on ensuring overseas aid.
Being sensitive to bereaved and the sick. showing humility in the way we treat everyone, especially the poor, and marginalised. Administering the sacrament of the sick and dying.
Preach the word of God even if it conflicts with government law in the future.
EXIST. Church (as both: community of people and a building) should exist in those both senses. However understandable it is not right to sell smaller church buildings to" feed" the budget to make church survive for a couple of years. For Catholics who come from abroad church is the place where they find strength, peace and consolation in prayer in front of God 3 (in a foreign land) as well as develop relationships with other people who share the same values. Church building is a special place where people encounter God in a special way – in the sacrament of Eucharist and can grow in faith by sharing their spiritual experience with other people.
PRAY. Prayer is the main mission of the Church and we should never forget that. The less we pray the deeper crisis the church has to go through. When the church stops praying, it dies. Priests should encourage people to come to Mass during the week because this is how God bestows his blessing on us. If people are told Mass is a great blessing (brings joy, strength and consolation) will become interested in it. We should renew our faith in God's real presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist and show it to other people.
Mass availability is an issue. People have different spiritual needs – some people find it enough to attend Mass once a week, while others not. The majority of working people in the UK have no choice. Weekday Mass in English parishes is at the time when they are at work (mainly in the morning), so they have no chance to come. it is no wonder that gradually their faith vanishes, they go away from God and don't see the need to come to church at all. Whenever possible, if there is more than one priest available in a parish, there should be a choice for people - morning and evening Mass each day. It's a rule that churches representing Polish Catholic Mission in the UK offer various times of weekday Masses (morning and evening). Distribution of Holy Communion in church outside Mass is another suggestion. This is a good solution in those parishes where priests say the Mass at a time which some people find unsuitable for them.
Apart from Mass it seems to be of great significance to extend the scope of spiritual practices or" occasions", (feasts) to come to church. There are many feast days that can be celebrated solemnly e.g., Immaculate Conception, Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, Annunciation etc.
STAY OPEN in situations when there is great danger for all humanity, e.g. pandemic. In such difficult moments people especially need God's presence, the feeling of him being close to them, they need

to feel his healing touch. People can find the best help only in prayer. Prayer in church where our God dwells is better because the faithful meet God physically present there in the tabernacle, so they are reassured of his presence and their faith becomes strengthened.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
2 What could the Church stop doing to allow for a focus on what really matters?
There was a recognition that the Church in the West, at least, was going through a considerable crisis with the greatly reduced number of priestly vocation and an aging clergy. This in turn was having an impact on the future viability of some parishes and perhaps the Holy Spirit is urging a new look at some established traditions to ensure a Church for now. As a result there were proposals on the way forward These included that the Church should stop requiring a vow of celibacy for its parish clergy and allow them to marry and have a family if they choose to do so.
There was a proposal, mainly from personal family experiences, that it was time the Church looked more compassionately on married couples whose marriages had broken down through no fault of their own and allow them to remarry in the Church.
The Church needs to focus less on the dogma and rules and instead encourage the practice more openly on the and compassion based on love of Jesus.
It also needs to pay less emphasis to outsiders and other Christians and focusing on the of the differences between itself and others. This is especially so where the church refuses holy communion to those baptised members of other churches. This appears very judgemental and in opposition to Jesus' teachings. Also stop refusing HC to those it considers 'in sin'. We are all sinners.
The Church should stop being so secretive, come clean over the safeguarding scandal/ financial issue/shortage of priests and come clean on real cost of running a parish/diocese, thus help understanding. This would help develop a collaborative approach with lay people.
There should be a review of the provision of Catholic Schools to ensure they are equitable as there are some areas we have no Catholic education available, in others c 70% of our intake are other faiths, this can't be right.
Encourage wider participation in the Mass by having a variety of music hymns to include different age groups a monthly mass that the youth could enjoy not the dire lukewarm hymns words and tunes. We need to encourage youth back into the church.
Greater involvement of the laity. be involved with other communities. Encourage a sense of community within the parish.
Contemplative music on entering and leaving the church.
Allow priests to get married to encourage more to join and consider female priests.
Work towards greater Christian unity. Reduce reading during Mass and instead explained the readings during Mass or introduce after Mass with discussion or interpretation or experience of the relevance of the themes.
More activities focused on the of course Lent, a meditation on Marian devotions and more songs.
Homilies to be more about catechesis then soft philosophy. Breakdown the Mass readings explained why we do believe some things.
Tranquil music on leaving and entering the church to provide an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity to discourage chattering before Mass starts to allow people to pray in peace.
Promote equality, joy and encouragement to a greater level. Nourish its members and show leadership inspired by the teaching of Jesus Christ.
Put holy water in the front at the entrance to church. Restart giving Holy Communion in both kinds.
Inform the community about exemptions in the use of masks.

What is your dream for the Church?
3 What new things should the Church consider doing?
The church should allow women deacons and in due course women priests. Accept married priests and allow married deacons to become priests.

The church should allow parishioners, accountable to the bishop and the diocese, to continue to administer local churches when there may no longer be a priest available, as long there is a viable number of parishioners with necessary skills and competence.
They could be permitted to lead prayers and when necessary, baptisms, marriages and funerals and host priests to say Mass when available. This whole arrangement could be kept under annual review involving the people and the Diocese.
We have made great progress in the area of Ecumenism over the past 10 years, but we could be doing even more - our parish is vastly under -represented in this forum and we need to expand our thinking, talk about it more at church and raise the whole subject to a far higher level of engagement.
We need to look at how we can circumvent the obvious GDPR rules and there are ways to clearly to put sick parishioners on our sick list - they need our prayers and, very often, it is a source of real frustration for many parishioners that they aren't aware that their fellow parishioners are not well.
Bereavement Services, Masses in November, Blue Christmas Carols, all play an enormous part in helping those families with recently deceased members and, also, those whose family and friends who have died some time ago - the importance of these services has come more clearly into mind over the past couple of years - maybe we could build on these and look at what else we could do to embrace those in our parish whom need our support at this difficult time
Now, more than ever, we have more parishioners who are housebound !!...whether this is because of shielding, or uncertainty about coming to Church in this Covid climate, or lapsed, or sick or medically restricted - similar to the challenges that GDPR above throws up, we need to find a way to cut through the red tape that restricts our identifying who they are. The SVP do a magnificent job in this area, but they could do with a lot more help so we can get to those parishioners and, notwithstanding the obstacles, and help them to continue an active faith life.
Encourage our churches to be more visibly present in our communities. The churches could be centres where our faith is lived out. Where the poor and underprivileged are served. Hold meetings and social occasions with other denominations and faiths and have dialogue with them.
Focus more on parish life and ecumenism by developing friendships and work on spiritual matters. Pray for each other as well as socialising and learn by more formation and learning how to support and help the needy or anyone in our society who needs support. By involving churches more in the groups and people around us. We do this by prayers and development of greater understanding of needs, not only within but around us but further
afield.
Encourage a music group to bring in an alternative way of worship sometimes. Pray with people in church. Encourage lay people to be trained to offer prayer after Mass or do special healing services for those desperate for help.
Variations in the Church Services including Mass. e.g. a livelier Mass/service once a month? There could also be different hymns to cater for all tastes. This could also be a way Involving youngsters in services such as children's Mass with readings, singing etc. by them. There could also be lay led services for young people run by them.
More awareness of the Role of the Diocese e.g. the link from parish/deanery to diocese, in a straw poll, only 20% of folk know who the Bishop is.
Improved Communications Skills. Train all clergy in the use a pc/email/zoom, social media. Make the congregation feel valued and loved and encouraged to be active members of their churches.
Value our overworked and under appreciated clergy and work together to lift their burden. This means breaking the mindset that the priests and deacons do everything and the Masses sit and listen to them.
Discourage people from chatting on entering the church for a prayerful atmosphere.
Encourage children to be at church and encourage the community to tolerate disruption by younger children. Encourage children to go to children's liturgy.

The Church should be clear and firm on its teachings. Stop limitless tolerance towards other religions. Focus more on the Bible and its meaning and focus on joy and fraternity, do not over emphasise preaching on sin and punishment.
More control and accountability of income and of Parish and Diocesan money
Allow the sacraments of the Eucharist to be given to all non-Catholics.
Be more tolerant of gay marriages, divorced couples, married clergy and women priests.
Stop using gloves when administering Holy Communion.
Use Stewards when the number of faithful coming to communion is so great that that's the ceremony is prolonged unnecessarily.
Excluding minorities who wants to be part of the Christian community.
Covering up any wrong doing by clergy or laity.
Some come to receive Holy Communion after a long period of staying away from Sunday
Mass and start thinking that they naturally deserve it. That way of thinking may finally result in developing false faith – externally people may seem to be ideal Catholics but in fact they may be gradually losing the idea of what real faith is and what it is based on.
Sacrament of reconciliation – when this is a separate event, (mainly in Advent or in Lent), it should be concluded with distribution of Holy Communion. This is why people go to confession to be able to receive Holy Communion straight after it.
Various prayer groups revival. People need to share their experience of faith with others, pray in a small group and discuss their problems with faith, talk about the Bible and the Church teaching etc.
In English parishes (very desirable, but not always possible) there should be a bilingual priest who serves English- and non-English speaking parishioners. It would help keep the whole parish community together.
Parish newsletter could be modernised – there is enough space there to increase its content, (maybe publishing Sunday homily or another piece of religious writing).

St Augustine, High Wycombe

Process Used:
We had a mixture of meetings after Sunday Mass, larger Parish meetings, small groups and some people sending in comments either handwritten or via email. There were also some who said they did not wish to take part because they didn't understand what it was about and had no wish to change Church Teaching!

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
We are privileged to receive the Body and Blood of Christ (and other Sacraments) and to witness to Him. With this privilege goes the responsibility to witness. Our identity as Catholics is the centre of our lives. We desire to witness so as to share the benefits we have received and are strengthened in this work by the knowledge of having a sure moral compass derived from Scripture.
Our Catholic identity gives us a framework for living our lives. It is not solely an individual response to God but we are connected in faith to the whole Christian family. This gives us an identity which enfolds and includes the identities rooted in our own particular cultures. We belong to God, and as part of the Universal Church, are never far from home. We belong and are secure. We recognise our non-Catholic brothers and sisters in Christ and so wish to avoid any squabbling or triumphalism towards those who are also seeking to follow Christ, though we also hold fast to the faith we have received in fullness.
Even when we fail there is always a way back, a way home. Jesus continually calls us to Him, 'Do not be afraid.' We seek to follow Him and listen to Him. As we seek to develop a relationship with God we are strengthened by the practice of our faith in liturgy and in acts of charity.
We know there are many ways of following Christ, but all are inevitably Christ-centred because He is alive. The Eucharist is about the present and the future. We know we can trust Him whether we are following Him in joy or in suffering and sacrifice.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The growth in Ecumenism over recent decades - the variety of forms of worship (Mass, Prayer Groups, Adoration, Confession, Rosary etc.) all rooted in the Liturgical and Doctrinal Traditions of the Church - Teaching and apologetics present us with Teaching that is both nuanced and clear - Catholic schools and hospitals have been a great success story, bringing benefits to Catholics and non-Catholics alike - there are many opportunities for growing in faith - there is a very practical outreach to those in need, notably through organisations such as the SVP or CAFOD - the Church is one of very few powerful voices heard in the world that can be raised against injustice or oppression or a lack of moral vision

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Sometimes as Catholics we can be insistent on having things our own way, causing or seeing divisions in our own church. There can be localist or exclusivist attitudes. Despite Ecumenism we can often have a sense of 'them and us' in relations with other Christians. Still less interest is present in inter-faith relations.
Many Church members do not seem to be committed, with the result that too often a huge burden of work falls on a very few people.
While the Church seeks to welcome all, not everyone sees it that way. Too often people with same-sex attraction, or those who are divorced and remarried can imagine they are not welcome. We need to seek to overcome this and to communicate better.

Better communication is also needed in areas of catechesis - the need to persuade people to grow in their faith and to persuade people that being a Catholic Christian should be a real commitment of the self to Christ.

What are your dreams for the church?:
As Jesus urges us: 'Be Perfect! We dream of a Church that will celebrate its beauty and authenticity through Teaching, Fellowship, Liturgy and the lives of the Saints, centred on Jesus and recognising in humility that we are not yet perfect as we improve methods of communication, accompanying others on the journey to God. If the Church is to spread light in charity, truly becoming a Light of the World, individual Christians must wholeheartedly live the faith.
We dream of a Church that really seeks to help the young properly understand the Teachings of the faith, with Sacramental programmes involving parents and communities; a Church with more cohesive and enduring groups for children and young adults to help with Teaching, Prayer and Fellowship, perhaps making more use of modern technology. Nor should this Church forget the needs of older adults in friendship groups.
All of this demands that more people should be actively involved in the life of the Church

St Augustine's parish, Milton Keynes Cluster

Process Used:

We trained a number of listeners but the uptake for in-person conversations was very limited and disappointing. We engaged the congregation at Sunday Masses, including feedback. Responses could be in written form or on mobile phones using a website called Slido.com and included those following on the live-stream. This was not strictly in the spirit of synod but did in fact solicit a considerable number of suggestions which can be used to take forward in the parish as well as contributing to the diocesan submission. An online Survey Monkey was also offered and taken up by a good number of people.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
For a number of reasons, being a Catholic is a source of joy for many. • The Eucharist and other sacraments, and opportunities for prayer, provide spiritual support. • Being part of a community (including through online opportunities), having a sense of belonging, are valued. • Being a Catholic gives respondents a sense of meaning, of direction. • It provides ethical guidance and a way to be countercultural. Some commented on the difficulties of being a Catholic: • Being ridiculed or scrutinised for being Catholic. • Negative media coverage of Catholicism • Being regarded as weird, out of touch Others remarked that they were grieved by church attitudes or actions: • Some rigid conservative church attitudes or teachings (e.g. homosexuality, attitude to women) were hurtful. They made some feel unwelcome. • Sexual abuse scandals were also a source of pain.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The following are the things which the church does well and which helped people to journey together: Many people said that parish groups could help them – • Being able to join different parish groups which allow for a range of gifts to be used; some that have been led by lay people have been very participatory; these enhance feelings of belonging and involvement. • Involvement in social activities is important to many people. Music group, CaFE, Bible courses, Life in the Spirit all mentioned as helpful. • Plenty of opportunities for active participation around the liturgy Some examples of when people felt really listened to include: • Occasions when priests and deacons have really listened to personal circumstances. • When a Bishop demonstrated that he was open to listening to and respecting those with alternative views, and a parish that actively welcomed those who can feel on the margins, especially LGBTQ persons. • When communication is good. • Some experiences of being well-informed and consulted at parish and diocesan level, (though not in the final decision-making). Being consulted and therefore made to feel involved in parish decisions is important to many. • When the priests are approachable and friendly and actively engage with parishioners; they put you at your ease; their open house evening is good. • The support of both priests and of fellow parishioners when times are difficult. Examples of when prayer and the liturgy were done well and so were very helpful included: • The opportunities for worship and prayer together • Online streaming of Mass and other services is good and has been very much appreciated, enabling people to feel included during lockdown and opened them up to the Church in other parts of the world. Many still find this helpful post-lockdown. • Dignified liturgy, including the Latin Mass • When Mass particularly involves young people Other instances of when the church is seen to do things well: • When opportunities are provided to deepen one's spiritual life, faith formation. • Pope Francis because of the way he speaks out and takes a different stance from some previous popes. • Vatican II which opened up so much in the life of the church. • Outreach to local communities and the poor. • When younger people are encouraged to be involved.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The following are examples of things which were found to hinder journeying together and situations

where the church did not do things well: Miscellaneous submissions: • Some older and some younger parishioners feel that the main focus of the church is on families and there is little/nothing for them. Some young people feel invisible. People miss opportunities to meet with their peer groups. • Opportunities for socialising with peer groups are few. The feeling of community is absent. • It has been difficult to re-connect after the lockdown and closure of the church. • Opportunities are not available for apologetics and learning how to navigate the various controversies. • That the church is out of date and needs to move into the 21st century, especially in its thinking on major moral issues of our time such as abortion, gender issues, same-sex marriage, LGBTQ, attitudes to women, women priests. The church is not always inclusive. • There are not enough opportunities for growth in faith (all ages). No follow-up for those newly Confirmed and those who took part in the RCIA programme. • A failure to adequately promote social and economic justice; a lack of visibility locally, in action for homelessness, child poverty and youth work. • Poor communication. • A lack of lay leaders for various ministries • When some lay people dominate and prevent others from actively participating. • The scandal of sex-abuse by some clergy and its cover-up in some cases. Failure of the church to admit its faults. • Failure to acknowledge and provide support for mental health issues • No support for those returning to church after a long absence. • The cluster situation means we lose our sense of identity as a parish. • The current translations in the liturgy are not helpful. A number of comments concerning the clergy included: • Those occasions when the clergy take all the decisions, do not share information and fail to involve the laity. • A hierarchy who seem to take the laity for granted. • Clergy not seeming to fully value meetings with lay people, • Judgmental sermons that only make people feel ashamed, • Clergy are not interested in individuals, • They can appear out of touch with parishioners' reality. • Others felt that too much is asked of the clergy and they are given too much deference. A number of submissions were about the church not being inclusive enough: • When parishioners do not feel welcome or included and feel that there are divisions within the congregation. • Parishioners can feel marginalised if their views are different from others, including views on the environment. • The language used about certain groups of people eg LGBTQ can be insulting. • Attitudes towards the divorced and re-married can be an obstacle. • Someone commented that those who prefer the church before Vatican II are not listened to.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A large and wide-ranging number of proposals were made: • Respondents urged increased and varied opportunities for prayer (prayer groups, house groups, retreats etc) and Masses. • Our cultural diversity needs to feature more in liturgies. • Increased opportunities for ongoing faith formation are needed for clergy, religious and laity. Bible study and general faith formation to help understand our Catholic identity were recommended. • The importance of strengthening our sense of community was stressed, with multiple social events, ministry of welcome, outreach initiatives - especially to young people. One respondent commented that we need to become a community centre and not just a place for Sunday worship • Initiatives need to include people of all ages and not just focus on families. • Social media should be used to counter the negative impressions of Catholicism. • Parishes should make increased use of online communications (e.g. Zoom, livestreaming) to build a more inclusive community and make initiatives accessible to all. • There were calls for greater involvement in social justice issues and local community needs. Mental health issues and environmental concerns, commitment to all of creation, were named as areas needing greater commitment. The church needs to be more visible and more outward-looking. It also needs to speak out against injustices. • The Church needs to reform situations where it marginalises members because of their gender, sexuality or marital/relationship status, disability, social status • Accessibility of churches needs attention (people with disabilities, parents with infants etc) Opinions were divided on the need for the Church to update its teachings. Some said the Church should preserve existing teachings and not change or be influenced by society's attitudes. Others called for change that incorporates increased understanding today of many contentious issues. In essence, the

Church needs to change to become more inclusive and more relevant. They urge the church to • Remove compulsory celibacy for priests, • Allow women priests, • Welcome gay people and same-sex marriages, • Update its teaching on contraception, abortion, gender and sexuality and reform its position on divorce. • Re-think women's position in the church in the light of Christ's example. • Offer pastoral support to LGBTQ people in the diocese, and every diocese should have Masses welcoming LGBTQ Catholics, parents, families and friends There were a number of calls for developing a different approach to parish management and ministry. Recommendations regarding management were: • The church needs greater transparency and accountability in decision-making locally and more widely. • The church also needs to be open, not secretive, about problems or scandals affecting it. • We need greater involvement of lay people in decision-making at overall parish level and not just regarding individual groups. • Lay people need to be empowered and not be so dependent on clergy. • The church needs to find ways to acknowledge and express thanks to lay people for the many services they undertake. • It also needs regular mechanisms by which lay people's voices can be heard, a diocesan website was suggested as one such mechanism. • Lay people should undertake managing administration and finances of parishes and free priests up to provide spiritual support. • Parish councils should have decision-making powers and not just an advisory role. • Have regular, perhaps yearly, processes in parishes like this synod listening exercise, so that the church listens more to the laity and gathers feedback. We should not see this as a one-off. • Ensure that listening processes result in action and make a difference. Recommended changes to models of parish ministry were: • A greater role for lay people in pastoral ministry. • Women should be given more leadership roles that use their gifts and professional skills. • Develop pastoral ministry models for parishes with teams comprised of women and men, lay and clergy, married and single. • Canon law and other Church directives should be changed to allow expanded roles for lay pastoral workers e.g. preaching, administering other sacraments. • Recognise the contributions of women religious to parish ministry • Develop proper ministries for roles undertaken by lay people

St Bernardine's, Buckingham

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
Process: This submission comprises the views of two groups of four women each plus a third family grouping of two adults and three young members. The submission also includes the quotable voices of individuals: three men and an almost house-bound 104-year old woman. The groups followed the recommended procedures of prayer to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment, meditation on listening to one another and allowing space for everyone to speak as well as time and space for refreshments. The groups met in members' homes. The views of the groups were remarkably similar. The following summary is of responses to the four questions put before the groups. The individual submissions are annexed.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
The women in the groups were all brought up as Catholics as was the father in the family group. They felt that being a Catholic gave them identity, being part of a universal Church. As one adult put it: "it means continuity and stability and a narrative that helps to shape a life from birth and baptism through to death." At the same time it means community, being part of a local group as well as a world-wide Church, sharing Jesus' message of love while recognizing that this is not always practiced. Some understood that Jesus' message is shared by all Christians. Some members also recognized that some of their children, although raised as Catholics and leading moral lives, are not practicing Catholics. For one teenager, being a Catholic meant "having God in my life gives me someone to talk to."

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
This question solicited many individual responses rather than a group attitude or consensus. One member was inspired by a meaningful retreat she attended and this called forth another person's love for Taizé services. Various people valued the fact that the Church as a whole provides schools and education but they also underlined the important role that lay people play in the process. One young parent expressed gratitude that locally St. Bernardine's was creating a space for its children: "catechism, first holy communion, confirmation classes and children's liturgy"-- provided mainly by the laity-- "are all well- supported by the parish council and the priest." The sense of one of the groups was that more, institutionally-sanctioned, involvement of lay people Is necessary to perform all these and other tasks. One person offered her gratitude for the sacrament of Reconciliation, particularly the possibility of face-to-face meetings with a priest while others did not agree preferring their own conversation with God.
The fact that the Church sticks to its principles rather than following fashionable trends was underscored by some individuals. The Church's missionary and humanitarian work across the world was also praised as well as the commissioning of music and art throughout the ages. One twelve-year old liked the music in St. Bernardine's services, "especially the guitarist."

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
This question elicited the greatest responses, many of which had to do with bad experiences with individual priests or nuns. Some had to do with corporal punishment or other kinds of punishment of children in school settings, refusal of absolution, priests forbidding marginalized people's involvement in church services, forbidding people to go to other churches' services and so on. The Church's handling of child abuse came under severe criticism in all three groups. It has left a lasting stain on the Church's image and caused embarrassment to its members. The teenage cited being teased by his friends. The hurt and damage to young people still needs attending. The Church has yet not taken into account the repercussions such abuse can have on victims' future behaviours. We feel shame that the Church has covered up, moved priests around, and has not yet faced up sufficiently to draw a line under this disgrace. The groups felt that the Church has not done enough

to keep its young people in the Church, sometimes this was because of poor communication skills on the part of priests. For instance, the twelve-year old asked that homilies be made “more youth friendly.” Some members felt the Church had not confronted the dangers of the internet, that it had instead given attention to irrelevant things such as modernizing the liturgical language or reintroducing the obligation to eat fish on Friday. Moreover, it has made changes without consulting its members.

What is your dream for the Church?

This first paragraph sums up the dreams of two of the groups: the Church will live or die through its clergy. If the Holy Spirit is not calling men to be priests, we must think how to keep our sacraments alive for us all. We would like to see married priests, either those who are already married but find they have a calling, or unmarried men who may be married after ordination. One group mentioned women deacons as a first step toward women priests, which both groups would like to see, to bring a female perspective into the institutional life of the Church. We want a Church that understands Christian Unity in a broad sense.

All three groups want a more OPEN church, open to marginalized people, open to family planning, to gay couples who may simply be looking for a blessing to their partnership. All three groups would like to see a Church that reaches out to the young, to embrace them so that they see themselves as part of the church and can pass on their faith to their children.

Some individuals would like to see the Church sell some of the Vatican treasures to give to the poor. Some suggested that Bishops’ pastoral letters be videoed to bring them to life.

St. Bede's, Newport Pagnell

Process Used:
We asked people to answer the four questions during Mass after thinking about it for five minutes. A summary of the answers was produced and people could comment on them during Mass as well as in groups afterwards.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It is part of who we are and gives structure and meaning to life as well as being part of a community/family both locally and universally. It strengthens our faith, gives us hope and we believe what the church teaches and helps us to practice our faith.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The church is a welcoming community with people caring for each other at all levels and providing support beyond the church community. The celebration of the Mass and of other sacraments is done well. During the pandemic the livestreams and the work to keep the churches open was appreciated. Pope Francis is an asset and locally the Cluster is a great idea.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The abuse issue and other negative experiences of the church in the past. We are no real community. There is a lack of priests and of young people, without a strategic plan for the future. The church is rigid and not truly inclusive and nothing changes. For divorced people coming to church can be difficult.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A church is a force for good and a vessel of love, while staying relevant. As a welcoming and diverse community it helps its members, reaches out to non-church people and is present in the digital world. It increases in number and attracts young people and has more priests. It has women as priests and deacons and allows priests to marry and divorced people to remarry.

St Columba's Parish Chesham

Process Used:
We started our parish Synod journey at the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) in late November 2021 and launched the parish phase in December 2021 with a specific Synod leaflet and reflection after the Homily, inviting written responses. Subsequently this process was followed up with two in person listening opportunities held after 9am Mass on 30 January and 6 February 2022, with an offer to organise more at different times if needed. The First Holy Communion children and youth choir were also involved in a Synod experience/listening process and the feedback is included in the Appendix. The PPC agreed that all feedback should be included in the parish report so that all voices could be acknowledged irrespective of the process used. Wherever possible feedback/Synod findings are included in the Appendix with a note of the method of receipt. The feedback has been anonymised and where required, e.g., for the in-person groups, feedback was shared with the respective group participants to review and agree prior to including in the parish report. Key themes were identified as part of the group phase and reviewed further at a specific parish PPC meeting dedicated to the Synod feedback which also included parish group leaders from UCM & SVP. Key themes: 1. Build the community – a. Encourage more to return, find the why not coming back post pandemic. b. Increase the number of social/pastoral events to enable relationship forming within the parish. c. Improve the communication within the parish, awareness of groups, events and opportunities for involvement and volunteering. d. Develop spiritual events such as prayer groups, House/study groups, CAFÉ style and Ecumenical opportunities e.g. Churches together for Chesham. 2. Engaging Young people – involving, listening and hearing young people – develop strategies to encourage them to be part of the community. 3. Servant Church – Spiritual people giving service to others attracts others. Inspire a sense of Mission and outreach in our parish. Increase education /engagement with Catholic social teaching. 4. Global Church: Be more inclusive and welcoming to all; structures of the church to modernise, e.g. women deacons and priests, married priests, Ecumenicism, divorced, separated etc. Actions to address themes 1-3 above will be developed with parish volunteers and we will continue to have discussions in a Synodal way to develop our plans. Fr Alessandro & Parish Pastoral Council team 24 February 2022

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
We did not use this specific question.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Responses below are from the FHC children & Youth Choir members I love the hymns I love Hymn, Federica, Cross I love God so much I love making people happy I love music, joy Like: Fr Alessandro because he is funny and happy all the time. More music More people I would like more Priests, more Bibles Both of the Priests Church Picture People/Federica/Sue Bible Stairs Stained glass windows, songs, the Choir Fr Alessandro Holy Communion Learning about Jesus Would like to see: Church football team Play more games Jesus x 2 One family It to be warmer More windows, more wine More music, prayers, Priests, some party on Saturday. Warmer. More Bibles, pictures, people, windows, wine, bread. More music, Priests. A party. Collect food for the poor More people The church to be warmer.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
• For me I think across those three questions – it is all about reaching out. I suppose my question to myself what does reaching out mean? and who are we reaching out to? In essence it is the way we live and if we feel that the real presence of the Eucharist is the be all and end all, I have taken to

saying at the end of Mass Go and announce the Gospel and respond, Thanks be to God, and for me what does that really mean in my daily life? Are we reaching out to Catholics? Are we reaching out to people of all faiths? Are we reaching out to people at the margins – and do we actually ask the people in the parish what they want from us as a parish, as a community? If people tell us what they want, we can then talk to them individually and in small groups, and we can then use their talents to the benefit of everybody. • To let people really say what they really want, to say what they think, without guiding them will enrich our Church. Sometimes clergy and Church guide too much – wanting to help and direct people. With a spirit of resurrection and rebirth we should use this key word listening without influencing direction. Simply listen and not talk too much. • Sort of things that go through my head - welcoming more people in to our Church and parish, and that begs the question those sort of people whose have stopped coming to Church, people who are divorced or separated who find it difficult, and even other Christians – problem we have strictly speaking we do not give communion to other Christians and that sets us apart from other Christian faiths – some things to think about there – are welcoming with one hand and but partly closing the door in another. You're not that welcome, you're not allowed to do that – some things to think about. • I really enjoy coming to St Columba's – I like to think there are some things we do well – enjoy the singing, the Choir, the children's groups that Federica has set-up, SVP do a great job and have made many friends over the years I like that to continue. Post pandemic – reflected how we build our community, our sense of community and what does community mean to everyone in the Church, what do our parishioners need? and how can we help the poor of Chesham, the vulnerable, be more visible, do things broader and work with our fellow Churches. A big ask I know – how we can we get involved e.g., Christmas donations to Children's homes, doing something on Saturday helping people out, Church open for prayer, not just be the end Church and would be nice to be welcoming – demonstrate our love of Jesus by welcoming and helping others – would be great if we could think about that and how we can involve people in the parish to see what ideas they have. • I think it comes down to listening, but I think within that I think what we do need is a gentleness – sometimes missing in our approach to people and things, and whatever we do – a kind of lack of patience and a lack of listening – but actually being gentle with it and being kind. One thing the pandemic taught me – I am on my own and I spent a lot of time on my own and it gives you a lot of thinking time and reflecting time, you then start looking at everything within your life – can be unkind without meaning to be unkind. Catholics have a reputation for it, of being dictatorial in their approach. I would like to see a gentleness and embracing everyone, building on parish and all aspects of Church life with a gentleness that sometimes we don't have. We are doing many activities to attract young people so they may find opportunities to grow in friendship, to discover and value their gifts, to learn and live out the gospel. More parishioners to be encouraged to participate in life of Church. Particular focus on youth as they are the future of Church and need to feel an important part of it. Encourage boys to join Altar service as they may become on day the good priests we are praying for. Whole Catholic life should be focussed around the Eucharist. Our journey is only haltingly processing and needs clearer outcomes for active participation. We really need a comfortable place to meet for discussion groups, study together, activities for families and elderly to meet and been matey & caring. I have been called to serve my parish community in the youth & music ministry. I need to listen to the Holy Spirit's prompting in stepping out of my comfort zone and try new things. - Return to the roots – regular Sacraments, particularly reconciliation & Eucharist (more than one a week) - Engage in young people Catholic growth & upbringing - More prayer & fasting I would love to find others who would like to study Pope Francis; encyclicals, discuss them and action them in our parish(es). Valuing everybody's gifts, that is open to try new ways to live and spread the gospel, to encounter people in the real world, to meet peoples needs. I dream of a church that is not hiding behind closed doors concerned about maintaining the status quo, a church in which people are free to pray and follow the Holy Spirit, more spontaneous and joyful in every aspect of the liturgy & creative. A Church that is attractive for the quality of preaching, for the quality and variety of music and the warmth of welcome. A Church that reaches out and goes where God's love and compassion

are most needed. A Church that is open to engage and work with other denominations. I dream of a Church that understands and attracts young people with projects and proposals that are fun and meaningful to their lives. A Church that is not judgemental but welcomes everybody. I dream of a Church where women are encouraged & trained to take up leadership roles, depending upon their gifts and their calling… I wish to hear homilies full of passion and delivered without reading a script. I hope more support and professional training will be given to church leaders as well as ongoing formation. Coherent with Jesus' teaching, united in one doctrine, consistent and undiluted. I dream of Church that is truly Apostolic, does not bend under modernistic, poisonous influence of protestant heresy or rotten materialistic reality of more general new world propaganda. I dream of a Church that is my home, run on the Holy Spirit, not on tolerance unit at all costs. I dream of Church where Her shepherds smell of the Holy Spirit not of the sheep. I dream of the Church where there is a clear pathway for the formation of Catholics through their religious lives, so we don't end up with people who do not know that basic dogma hence create their own rules and beliefs, thinking they are still Catholics. Shepherds should speak with one voice, and that should be the same teaching that St peter and St Paul were teaching 2000years ago. Heresy should be removed from the Church and condemned firmly before more people will fall because of it. Just like it was before the Second Vatican Council, there should be consequences for those who openly disobey Church's teaching e.g., not allowing Communion to politicians openly pro-abortion. Good a listening to needs, excellent at motivating inclusiveness, and encouraging small groups for Bible study, or prayer, or visiting shrines or other churches for Stations of the Cross or Benediction, or non-religious activities with all age groups for fun & togetherness. My dream for the Catholic Church as a whole is that firstly we can continue re-building trust (after the many sexual abuse cases), aiming to be as transparent as possible, obviously this being a long-term goal. I feel concerned for the Church's future, and know personally from my own adult children, how people can drift away from the Catholic Church, which really saddens me. It's hard to pinpoint exactly why this happens, but I feel like the archaic image that some people have of the Catholic Church as possibly stuffy and judgemental, could be holding us back in these times where it is so hard to get people through the church doors, and I believe in the past God may have been portrayed as an angry God in the Church, who would greatly punish people for their sins, rather than the loving forgiving Father that He is. On reflection we may have like the Pharisees focused more on the rules and regulations, and not enough on showing God's love through our actions and words. I have seen and am very thankful that Father Alessandro, the other deacons, and you Gerard, are all so welcoming, friendly and approachable and have really been working hard to make great changes at our parish. I hope and pray that in the long term this more accepting and welcoming stance can help not only encourage more people to join the Church, but also help the young people already in the Church to continue coming as adults. ------ I have since had a think about how I see the mass, some observations, and suggestions for our parish. The Mass When I was younger the church and the mass was something that played a huge part in my upbringing, married life and the early years of my children. I regard the mass as sacred in its content and form which has stood the test of time. Having attended a number of other churches over the years I do notice the differences in some areas of the service which I really think we could adopt and which would improve the experience for all. These include: 1. Welcoming into the church before mass 2. Families having more of a role in the service 3. Homily – This was always the time when my father would usually drop off to sleep! Other churches make this part of the service exciting and different, with lay people getting involved, possible families and guest speakers or presenters 4. Music and settings – this has always been an important part of the service for me and I feel it really should be a youth led or integrated thing where possible. Our choir is fabulous but all getting on. We need to introduce younger people into this or integrate the youth group with the choir if at all possible as this would encourage them and encourage more parents and family to attend the services. Bringing in modern technology would also help with amplification and visual content. 5. After Mass – It is always good to have a time to chat and mix after mass if possible. This is especially important for the older members of the church who may be lonely or need support. I'm sure the

above is already on the radar, but you need a community of people to get involved and want to help which is not easy! The Church The church is a constant in my life and safe place both physically, mentally and spiritually. Being able to stay in contact with people I have known during my time in Chesham is also of great comfort and is what our church is all about. Looking at the attendances and age of the churchgoers on Sunday is a bit worrying. Covid does not help but it's not going to be easy to fill the church unless there is change. Possible Options: 1. Leave everything as is and see how it goes. 2. Look at the current size and layout of the current church and grounds and assess our needs with a view to adapting this, possibly downsizing or improving what we have. There may be a community need for spare space / facilities which could be incorporated. 3. St Columba's site is sold for development and the money invested in either the Gt Missenden site or Chesham Bois Site which could be refurbished and improved and then used as the parish church. Gt Missenden may be the best site for this as it has good facilities already and is served by one priest. ------- A few more thoughts for the Synod. We have to be careful that the Synod just becomes a discussion (what we want the church/our parish to be) about organisation - role of the laity, possible married clergy etc though these items must be on the agenda. We also need to define how best the Church should portray itself in a rapidly changing world. We will always need to be an evangelising and teaching Church but how best to do that it changes from age to age. For example the problems the Church faced when it was under attack in the Reformation, or when most people could not read are not the same today. I believe we have to portray ourselves as a Church of prayer, service and the sacraments. If people can sense our spirituality - helping others to feel their need for God in a materialistic age and see that we are a servant church - Clergy and lay people wiping feet, that is the most effective way to evangelise in today's world. Evangelise by example showing that we are people of prayer and service to others. At parish and Church level there needs to be a strong sense of a shared purpose. The mission needs to be owned by the members to become effective. Easier said than done. Achieving this needs prayer discussion and leadership. As a practical suggestion I have observed in our parish and others over the years that 'shared experiences' our very helpful in a parish. That might be the shared experience of a retreat, a day of recollection, a visit to a holy place away from the parish, a social event, an away weekend for young families etc. They seem to be particularly effective when they happen outside the parish geographically. There is something about travelling away together that brings people together. It is probably impossible to think of one event which all the parish could come to so I would recommend trying to create a programme of such events. • St Columba's/church is part of my extended family, a community, and a sense of belonging with support and friends – even more important at difficult times • Numbers are down – some watch live stream, post Covid – sad to see • Would like to be more of a community – being part of extended family again. • Sad last 2 years – parishioners not coming back. Small group is us who have come back to Church – need to identify those who haven't and find out why? and encourage to return • Low numbers are a big problem – it is sad • Empathise how do we reach out? • Inaccessibility – Church out of date? irrelevant? How does the Church present itself in a modern world? • Part of a global community. Being part of a community gives you a lift & makes you feel good • Sad to see numbers – change in time to 9am does not suit? • 9am better as Fr has time to talk to people after Mass. Previous timing seemed like we did not have a Parish Priest – no personal connection. • Relevance to today's society – Catholic Priests are old. Relevance to me – more energy to connect to young people. Inclusion of women deacons and priests as well as married priests. Be more connected – now not good enough – need a way forward. • Change takes so long • More welcoming Church with a clear narrative – separated, divorced etc – Jesus would welcome them. Need to stop judging – no barriers • Ecumenicism – Holy Communion not allowed with CofE etc. Catholics - We're special- need to move beyond this and be welcoming. • Today's world what do young people think of overall Church? • Every human being has a spiritual dimension. Everyone needs to recognise the need for God. Young people do they feel drawn to God? • What kind of Church to attract people? Church needs to project Servant Church – characteristics for today. • Ecuador Mission experience – Church is central to their lives, everyone engaged, include everyone,

more atmosphere, everyone chipped in. Here small insular families, busy lives – Church is lost in the process. • Spiritual people giving service to others attracts others o Story at work – What are you doing at weekend? I am going to Mass. Met with shock o Story at work – what are you doing at the weekend? I am going to Mass. Another colleague – so am I – lovely to hear • Very few are anti catholic – perhaps just do not know/ignorant • Leaders are white men • Need to encourage • Story – Parishioner with dementia, neighbour brought parishioner to Church and gradually the neighbour became to be happy to come to Mass themselves. Heart is in the right place – unusual ways can bring people back to Church. • Reach out to others – proposal to find out gently why/raise in discussion • Church is open; It is safe to come – please come • Church's need to modernise – what's the value proposition? 'What's in this for me? • Quiet dignity of Catholic faith • Feeling after Mass – really nice. • Need appealing messages • More support from the Diocese – feels like we've been cut a drift – not making money • FHC Mass last year was packed – where are they now? dip into the Church system why? They are the future we need to know from them their thoughts. Suggestion to liaise with the Our Lady's School system/head teacher to see if there's an easy way to find out how many families regularly attend mass and where (as opposed to church records as is written). • We used to a Deanery with 17 Churches with Deanery masses once a month. There were prayer groups each week and joint meetings. I found these encouraging and I learnt a lot. Sometimes children participated, junior choir, Youth club etc. Made a deep impression on my Catholic faith and encouraged me into joining in things, groups e.g., UCM, SVP CTfC. Since Fr Bailey, enthusiasm has dampened down. • Happy to help – age a challenge. • Would like to read scripture in each other's homes. • Very clear – Church is undergoing far reaching changes. Sharing Priests is the norm. Deacons taking a more significant role. Always though Church was here long before I was born and will be there long after. Recent events – Benedictine Monks at Downside Abbey leaving. Amazed it has come to that. Perhaps a lesson if needed. • Church is not about places – it's about Priests, Deacons and Laity. Changes cause me to remember that truth. • Period of great change in the Church and reasons why in community. • As a child there was Sunday Mass at 7/8:15/10/11/12:15/4/6…and all were packed. It was a different attitude then – about community & occasion to meet up. Enthusiasm has gone. Pandemic impacted. Mass should be a pleasure rather than a chore. Amazing today at Mass – number of families, diversity of parishioners – need to grab and build on this. Enthusiasm can be there – need to gain pride being in a parish – family core. • Enthusiastic Priest and Deacons – take advantage to build a parish family first rather than go outwards. • Sense of gaining unity about a fractious parish. Sense of disconnection & division – use to be strong – not now. Group of equals with humility rather than a hierarchy. • Show forgiveness to those who have left. Encourage more people to be involved, more people to feel confident to be involved. • Heal divisions, partly circumstances, partly human fallibility. • Put down baggage, share experience, part of the same Church. • Terrible few years – how do we get people back? Need to think why they stopped – another routine, other things, are they afraid? – scared still don't want to come. • Socials – get people involved e.g. Quiz night. Need to get moving again. • Loos of confidence in people – a lot at home on their own. Without live stream Masses in lock down – would have lost the time with Church. • Wear masks – demonstrates we care about each other. • Afternoon tea – socials need to look at. • 9am Sunday Mass in winter – feels early now (didn't before) – when weather improves may help. • FHC families – don't see them in Church unless they are told to go to 6pm Youth Mass. How do we keep them/involve them? Young people need to welcome them in – how do we engage – future in the young people. Great that there were some young families this morning. • Parents and older people are also key to children and the future. Grown up parents in the choir encourage their children to join/sing in Youth choir. Show church is fun. • Church is about community caring about one another – lack of opportunity here with accessibility (upstairs hall) and limitations on land. Need flexibility of thinking/planning. • Building relationships through getting to know one another – opportunities to do. • Disconnect between hierarchy and church. Defend the Church with friends - abuse scandals – still not addressed properly, no openness. • Unless offer young people fun, safe place where they are involved, listened to, and heard. Where's the voice of

young people? • If relationships not there difficult – would love to have a vibrant parish community. • Decline with pandemic but started before then. People's world shrunk, older people too much effort to go out, going out in potentially winter difficult for older people. Don't feel involved, downward spiral. • Married priests – needs a lot of thinking about. Story of a female CoE Vicar engaging local community and getting people together. Waste of talent with married men not able to become Priests. Church has been rethinking for a number of years – lots of talking? Where are the women? What power do they have? Need to move on in the 21st Century – Church needs to be open more to woe and married Priests. Church needs to be more innovative on how involves people. Opportunity to look hard, be much more open. • What would Jesus do? Welcome everyone – divorced, separated, LGBTA etc. Church should develop and change as society has changed. Be open to find a way forward. • 2nd Vatican Council arose from a crisis in Church and review of core values – needed change at the time. Pope Francis encouraging again, post pandemic. • More diversity in families – some catholic parents married to non-catholic and this can lead to difficulties – especially with bring up children catholic & catholic life.

St Dunstan, Bourne End

Process Used:

We only received seven responses from parishioners at Saint Dunstan's and these were from two couples, two families where one of the spouses attended Mass regularly and one teenager who was a regular member of the Parish but has since moved away to study at university. The responses were also mainly via e-mail which was not ideal since even though we could explain the nature of each of the questions, it did not really allow for discussion and thus answers are more local than universal. It should also be noted that members of Saint Dunstan's parish also attend groups hosted at Saint Teresa's and so would have responded to the Synod questions in those groups

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Many common words like, community, family and faith were used in the recorded comments and mostly in the same context. The Church was seen as a supportive system where members care for each other and pray for each other. Being Catholic is about going to Church to celebrate Mass as a community which gives them a sense of pride and faith knowing that support was always right there from like-minded people willing to offer their assistance. It is a way of life that provides guidelines by which to live. Even people who are not Catholic but attend Mass feel a sense of belonging because they are able to go up to receive a blessing instead of Communion. This was also true for non-parishioners and family and friends attending funerals – many remarked on how welcome they felt not only at the Parish but throughout the very solemn services that are well conducted and explained for people of different faith that really gave them hope. Mixed in with the mostly positive comments were two negative comments and these should probably fall under the response to question 3 but were more related to Mass and so are included here with some possible repetition in the response to question 3. The homilies were concentrated on the readings of the day but not the moral teachings of the Church or any other specific teachings on the Catholic faith. Saint Dunstan's has an aging community, and we could do more to assist those members in way of large print hymnbooks and Mass sheets.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

As the parish is quite small and only have one weekend Mass, it meant that Mass feels a lot more personal. Many families have grown up in the parish and so the parents are friends and so too are the children. The parish really pulled together every year for the Christmas Fayres with a great sense of pride. They were always proud of the effort of the parish when it came to working for or donating to charities like the one-can trust and other annual collections. The consistency of Mass, the Liturgical Seasons and Feast day's mean people know what to expect from the Church especially when it is different from non-Christians. Families especially felt the caring and concern of the Parish and parishioners by the visits they had in times of need which was a great comfort. One respondent remarked at how much it meant to here when her husband passed away with all the messages of love and support especially when it came from parishioners that she did not know. The coffee mornings did go a long way to helping to get to know parishioners but with the pandemic this did stop and so they would like to see this pick up again once we are allowed to. As already mentioned in the response to question one, the Parish was not only welcoming to its regular members but visitors and also visitors of other faiths were made to feel welcome and included.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

There were many comments regarding the homilies – younger members felt that it was too long and that the message was diluted because of this and also that its often not reflective of life as they know it. The younger responders wanted something that was more relative to their lives, their circumstances. Along the same lines, the older responders felt that the homilies were too focused on the readings of the day – they feel that they have heard the readings so many times before and can almost guess the homily and therefore not as attentive as they probably should be. They would

prefer to be catechised during the homily as they feel they would benefit from any changes in Catholic moral teaching or just being reminded of the fundamentals of their faith. They are also of a belief that the younger generation will benefit from this as they may not have had the Catholic schooling or any catechism beyond their confirmation. Some felt that the community could be quite judgemental and therefore you had to pretend to be a specific individual at church rather than who you really are. This could be seen especially for couples who are separated or divorced and the church – not specifically Saint Dunstan's they were at pains to say – should be much more welcoming to these individuals and also their children. The same could be said for those of different sexual orientation especially when it comes to the sacraments and preventing these individuals from receiving them. Too little time was spent at the end of Mass talking about events in the Church or diocese that would benefit the serving community. Notices are sort of mentioned and a reference to the newsletter, but this does not always have all the information and many people do not even take these home. People will pay more attention and probably respond more or better if the priest advertised these from the pulpit. We could also do more for the aging parishioners which make up most of the congregation on a Sunday. Perhaps hymnbooks with larger print, Mass sheets too or even making use of screen projection. The older respondents felt that the time is right for women clergy – starting first with women deacons and them women priests possibly after the inception on women deacons so that the Church can learn from this experience – from a training, theory and practical perspective – so that this can be taking into consideration for the training and inception of women priests It was felt little to nothing was being done to attract the declining number of young adults and children. This is exacerbated by the fact that the homilies were too long, not in a language that children could relate and not experiences that were relevant to them.

What are your dreams for the church?:
In the two group sessions we had, the respondents of both groups agreed first and foremost A Church filled with youngsters!. I desire for the Church to be the field hospital that Pope Francis talks about. It would be nice for the church to be more inclusive and less judgemental of those on the fringes regardless of their circumstances. There is a desire for the Church to be vibrant and relevant on stop shop for families throughout every stage of the lives from baptism to marriage to their funerals. Many believe that the Church takes way too long to adapt to new trends and staying current with younger respondents feeling that some of the beliefs are outdated. This Synod apart, there is not enough chances for parishioners to voice their concerns – the feeling is that they are not being listened too. Also, this Synod is for the diocese and the worldwide Church, what about our own Parish? In conjunction with points raised on question three that are related to Catechesis, there is a desire for the Church to provide lectures, lessons, etc. concentrating on the specifics of the Catholic faith and also addressing difficult topics like contraception, sex before marriage, IVF, assisted suicide to name a few. In keeping with the progressive thoughts and desires, they would like to hear more about this in homilies by linking global issues with the teachings of the Church and reiterate that the Church really is a place for everyone where we treat everyone as we would like to be treated.

St Edward the Confessor, Milton Keynes

Process Used:

In our Parish we had a meeting with all the people who wanted to be part of the 2021-2022 synod process. This group would then help with the discussions after Mass and collating the responses. The questions were put to the whole congregation, the parishioners were asked to take time to reflect on the questions before writing their thoughts and responses. An invitation to discuss these after Mass was extended to all. Responses were collated and handed out to the whole congregation so they could see the views of other parishioners. By way of discussion, the congregation were asked once again to reflect and comment.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being Catholic is being part of a family, a community, having a Christian identity. There is opportunity to be educated in catholic schools and to prepare for sacraments within the church. Catholicism gives a framework to live by throughout our lives. There is a feeling of reverence preparing for and being part of the sacraments.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
We are a welcoming and caring community encouraging parishioners to become involved, to support each other and parish activities. We support local and global charity giving and projects in the wider community. Over the years our parish has been blessed with a fantastic litany of liturgies, music and choir events as well as youth Sunday and celebrating Pentecost with bidding prayers in many languages. More recently we have appreciated the efforts of the clergy to provide online services, opportunity for prayer and newsletters during these covid times.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
We are saddened and shamed by the historical failings of the church, going forward there needs to be more transparency and honesty. We are aware that we lose numerous young people in their teenage years, we need to find ways of engaging with them and listening to their needs, encouraging them to take a more active role in the community. We should look at adapting mass and offerings to be more attractive to young people. If we want to be a space of serenity, approachability, sanctity, home in the modern and future world we must prioritise kindness and compassion and be inclusive to all.

What are your dreams for the church?:
We would like to see more vocations to the priesthood, reviewing the role of the priest and possibly looking at married priests and the possibility of female priests or Deacons To be more inclusive and listen graciously to each other, we can always learn from different perspectives. To be more progressive in applying the teachings of God to the modern age without bending the rules of God's word or teaching.

St Edwards, Kettering and surrounding parishes

Process Used:
This is a response from the parishes that make up the area of Kettering. It was a response over the weekend of the 11th and 12th of February across all masses. The process started by a period of reflection, and the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit, followed by the participants given time to fill out the answers to the four questions proposed by the Synod. If for any reason some participants felt that they required more time, then the option to take the forms away with them, and were asked to fill them out and return them the following week. We had a response of 176 replies, 172 paper and 4 by email, as a copy was published on the parish website for the Laity that were still isolating, and those that were unable to be at mass on that particular weekend. All responses were collated, and the following is a summery of the top responses:-

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
1. Universal & Local Community/Family with Shared Values and Faith
2. Hope/Unconditional Love/ Forgiveness & Accepting Faults and Failings
3. Transubstantiation/Tradition & Teaching Commandments
4. Purpose/Structure and Meaning
5. Prayer/Grace and Mercy

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
1. Building Communities
2. Support in time of need
3. Mass
4. Work of Missions & groups
5. Churches working Together e.g. Soup Kitchens

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
1. Better Judgement with Abuse and Corruption
2. Practice what we Preach
3. Lack of Engagement with Young Adults and Teenagers

What are your dreams for the church?:
1. Guide/Support/Celebrate with Future Generations
2. Unity/Peace and Prayer
3. Forging the Right Path while being adaptive
4. Teaching the truth and compassion
5. More inclusive/option for married priests/women priests and a more prominent role for women.

St Francis of Assisi Shefford

Process Used:

This report reflects the conversations and written input, within the parish of St Francis of Assisi, Shefford. The period covered was Tuesday 11th January 2022 to Sunday 30th January 2022 One UCM Meeting – on 11th January 2022 6 Parish Face to Face meetings offered, after 9.00am Mass and before 5.15pm Mass I. 16th January 2022 II. 22nd January 2022 III. 30th January 2022 3 Zoom meetings (held in association with St Peters @ Biggleswade) 4 individual written submissions, either via email or completed forms through the Parish returns box

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
• The Catholic faith is like an anchor • A body of like minded believers • The promise of eternal life is important and knowing that when we lose somebody that it isn't the end • It is a privilege but also a responsibility to be a catholic • It is home, never alone, identity, lifestyle, rich heritage – tradition • Being a member of the one true Church, that goes back to Christ himself • Being part of a Universal Church • Having the magisterium of the Church backing us • Having a deep spiritual friendship with other Catholics • To listen to God and follow his teachings and to listen to God • It means to listen to the one God and to listen to people who protect us and let us be in peace • To go in a Catholic Church means to be a Catholic • Being part of the one true faith, having an opportunity to hear the word of God and to try and live according to Gods will in our own daily lives. • To spread the word and be part of our community of faith • To be able to pray and hope for a better world and help those around us • A great privilege and responsibility • Our identity is in Christ • Belonging and sharing together • Living in Christ now and for Eternity • A faith built on solid foundations, the truth • At a time of such poverty, and when we know need and exclusion is likely to increase, we as a Church should reflect on the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching, and seek to find new ways of ensuring that the preferential option for the poor, grounded as it is in Gospel teaching, is understood to be as critical to the living our of our faith as is worship. • First a Christian one Universal Church Worldwide • Rich heritage and sacraments • Knowing who my saviour is Jesus Christ • The Mass, Rosary, devotion to Mary Mother of God and knowledge of eternal Saints. • Life after Death • Guidance on how to stay close to the Lord • Believe the Church has the fullness of truth • Community and family provides strength • Helps me to live my life, courage and strength when weak • Really need God in my life • Strength in Parish family, still argue and disagree, but continue to love as a normal family does • Need God in my life following bereavement • Will pull together • Comfort, great family link with God looking after us • Generosity of Spirit, irrespective of belief • Need to find our own way • All roads lead to loving heaven • Actions of individuals has adverse impact • Part of a community with similar beliefs and values • Church with a Worldwide membership

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
• Welcomes all people • Celebrations, Funerals and Weddings • Baptism and Holy Orders • Mission work; CAFOD, SVP, MISSIO Worldwide • Christian unity, Churches together • Education Catholic Schools, Colleges, Pilgrimages to Holy Shrines (Pro Life) • Embracing progress. I believe that rather than contemplating whether the ordination of women or married clergy is appropriate, we as a Church must prepare for how to draw all such people into a life of dedicated service. Ours is a faith of inclusion and should be structured as such. Further, the already notable absence of sufficient clergy to cover the existing parishes reflects the urgent need to open up, rather than to seek to perpetuate a short-sighted exclusion. More important still, the exclusion of women from the priesthood is quite simply wrong. It must change, and I have no doubt that if the Church seeks to sustain and even grow, it will. • Catholic Schools are important for teaching the faith • Friendship within groups should be encouraged in the Church • The Catholic Church has upheld and defended the deposit of faith • Now the Church is beginning to open up acknowledging imperfections •

Administration of Parish with Priest shortage • Welcoming and inclusive of all people • Works of charity Worldwide • Education • Family celebrations in Church, embraces all the family (children) • During Covid 19 Lockdown kept in communication with us, it was done well (and had to be done quickly) was a chance to see and hear other churches • Having groups such as SVP, UCM & CWL, going out to other faiths or non-Christians • Praying and passing on our belief of the power of prayer • They help us to listen and learn about the one God and how we can help and learn about God • To learn about discernment • Stories in the Bible allows us to listen to the Church, God and they take and teach people to learn how to be a Catholic person • Welcoming us into our Parish family, being supported in our faith especially in difficult times. • The role of the Canon and the Deacon has been very important in our own family • Pope Francis has connected with some key issues facing the world, e.g., Climate Crisis and the Church continues to try and help vulnerable people and support Catholic teaching around the world • Historically, defending and passing on the authentic faith and doctrine. Apostolic succession Magisterium • Upholding the faith doctrine, sacraments, giving us the Catechism, valuing the scriptures and deposit of faith • Praying – We are a Church that prays • Charitable missions i.e., support for others @ Sea/Homeless/SVP/Marys Meals/ CAFOD etc. • Abundant support/literature/retreats/teaching on our faith is produced and available • Books/DVD's/Courses/Online/Groups • The Bible • The Catechism • Providing a stable and consistent platform on which to relate to in order that I can aim towards being a good Christian and a Catholic • Not being afraid to hold firm and not moving with the fashion of the day

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
• Not acknowledging Child abuse in the past and the hurt caused to people. Huge deception and denial • Reluctance to face uncomfortable truths • Unwillingness to change e.g., Latin Mass • Worries about disunity within the Church (at the very core not at Parish level) • Latin Mass separate from everyday Parish activities, it should not be banned, nothing wrong with it. To make it one again. • Inclusive not excluding. By being more inclusive encourages non-Catholics or lapsed Catholics back into Church • Latin Mass! • I think that people should speak about people who thought in the way and people who do good to other people who let our continue lives in peace and are not taking care. • I think we should talk about the people who bring peace • Compassion for Separated, Divorce people • Child abuse, failure to address the problems. • Lack of sympathy or compassion for lapsed Catholics • Failure to Listen to the People • Harsh judgement on victims of domestic abuse, single parents • At a much more local level, we should seek to integrate ourselves more actively in the community. Our own experience in Biggleswade highlights this. We have a growing and increasingly youthful community. What do we as a parish do to draw new families in, and to welcome and support them on their own journey of faith? • Can we do more to play an active part in our communities. • Pandemic – People denied access to the Church to worship, pray before the Blessed Sacrament. People denied the Sacraments. Churches locked. Churches should be open. • Sexual Abuse – Failure to fully take responsibility for this evil! • Lack of opportunity for the church community to repent and pray as a body of believers. Particularly in places where the Abuse took place. Repentance and Cleansing needed. Even though we personally did not abuse, we are part of the body which did. • Victims poorly treated by the Church institution.

What are your dreams for the church?:
• To enable and encourage one another to use the gifts we have, to build up the Body of Christ • To emphasise the power of prayer • To manifest the risen Christ by our lives • To encourage and welcome the teenage group sadly missing from our Church community at the moment • Retain young people – more vocations for all • Church grows by people giving their talents • Increase in Pastoral work • To keep Churches OPEN • People to share the joy of faith to all • I support a return to our roots! Scripture/Sacraments/Good Effective Catechesis • More women involved • Christian Unity; Dialogue (in Ministry) Services • Respect for every person (Pro Life) • Bible studies and classes • A Social Hall, large space with resources for the disabled body of people (Deaf, Blind) • FAIR TRADE

policy • Good safeguarding • Everyone will be renewed by the Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth through our faith • That the Church may grow and reach out to more people. • That we get back to normal and be able to embrace others again, we've taken so much for granted before lockdown • That we could be One in Christ again and we become more forgiving and so should the Church • Ecumenical / interfaith action. Linking back to my initial proposal regarding our living out Catholic Social Teaching, we should seek to find ways to join with our brothers and sisters in Christ from other denominations, and those from other faiths, in seeking to serve the poor and those in need. In an increasingly secular society, we have much in common with those motivated by their faiths from different denominations and religions and should seek to build on this in celebrating the role of faith in our society. • My hope is that this Synodal process reflects a commitment of our Church to listen to those voices of those who will play a role in continuing to carry it forwards into future generations. I hope we can seize this opportunity as the beginning of a process of greater inclusion, rather than a passing phase. There is so much to be hopeful about. • Allow married Priests • Allow Permanent Deacons to be Priests • Return the Sisters into their Habits, because they are a visible representative of God on earth • Return to kneeling to receive the sacrament, more respect and reverence at receipt of the Body of Christ • Return to kneeling when the tabernacle is open, to venerate • To become higher profile in and be seen as more important in a secular world • To become energetic, vigorous, and alive in our communities • To be seen as an important cornerstone of living a rich, giving, thoughtful life. • For more people to learn and understand what it means to live a life in Christ • For the Church to remain and strengthen in its place as an important part of society • For more people to seek an opportunity to grow their faith • To help those in need in the name of Christ • That people listen and learn about our God and to bring people up as Catholic • For friends and family to learn about the one God • For people to have good lives and for people to remember people risked their lives for us to be able to live in peace • To be able to pray about people when they die or special moments for them • To manifest Christ to each other and all with whom we come into contact and to do whatever he tells you • Receive evermore fully all that Christ died to give us and to share that with others • Discover/seek to serve, what is our vocation? • To encourage, enable and support each other to live gospel lives, by every means possible and to pray always for more, more, more! Amen

St Gregory the Great, Northampton

Process Used:

We had 7 group conversations (33 people) and had responses from 10 individuals. The two lead listeners met with the priest and deacon to go through all feedback sheets. Taking each question in turn, we picked out each different point. These were circulated to all facilitators and scribes to ensure that the statements and their intended meanings were accurately reflected. There are approx 1700 words over the 4 questions. Bullet points were used as much as possible in two blocks separated by a space line. The first blocks are where the same comment was recorded more that once and appear in descending order of the number of times. The second blocks are where comments are only recorded once. On each Feedback Sheet, it was not always noted how many within the group felt the same.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Family of the Church - Feel at home - Loved Intrinsic part of me Universal Church with Pope as the Head (3)- Mass anywhere in the world (3) Mass and Sacraments, especially Holy Communion and Confession Christ's teaching - True Church Belonging Cradle Catholic - [one view - Mass to please parents -> comfort blanket -> firm faith] Source of strength Holy Spirit guidance Glad to be Catholic, brings me to order, shaped me Strong values of family going to Mass together Meet the saints in Church Opportunities to evangelise Grace - Help needed Mirroring Christ's life, works of mercy, identity in Christ Feel safe in the arms of trustworthy God Children - gifts from God Adoration - Lovely to sit and talk to God Forgiveness by Jesus - Merciful; Live by God's will not mine. God's plan Plan for a better world - moving in the right direction Proud - especially with other groups, e.g. SVP, Mary's Meals, etc The Church never swayed from the truth Catholic vs Christian - Common ground but missing the Eucharist in non-Catholic services Sometimes the only Catholic in a group Education a big part of growth Guilt - [Paedophilia - embarrassed to be Catholic]; [Individual - conscience] Constantly defending my beliefs Traditions of our Church Some good Others less so Some incomprehensible Feel part of a welcoming and loving universal family

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Alpha/Bible Timeline/Bible Study/Mission/NYMO - good youth retreat Music and liturgy - season celebrated through liturgy and music, e.g. candlelit Advent service at the cathedral Confession available daily if wanted Church's teaching - giving back Liturgy - uplifted especially a fresh perspective by Homily Online resources - courses and Mass Rosary/40 hours/prayer and petition Sacraments and preparation - inspired teachers First Holy Communion teachers are 'on fire for the Lord' which encourages children Blessed sacrament Putting Mass online during Covid Keeping the church open during the day Extra Masses during Covid Clergy and lay working together working together is fruitful Community bound together in love Sacramental care of the sick Children's liturgy during Mass and children's area. Mums and Tots Refreshments Catholic schools Donations of goods well organised (e.g. toiletries, Hope Centre) Prayer Always there for us Instructions/prayer online Changes since Vatican II - Pope Francis not to be judgemental - loving and accepting Profound silence during consecration Standard of readers Bereavement care Welcoming environment for the diverse cultural community Campaigning for social teaching and justice Looking after the community (Gregory Care, Cafod) Religious going out to the marginalised Ecumenism - sharing Small Communities Synod - welcome move to include opinions from all and sundry Lay leadership Annulity process - ongoing access to the sacraments Following visit by Missionary Priest, felt the power of the Holy Spirit move and become a living part of me I feel if you want to grow in your faith, St Gregory's has something to offer

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

Priest shortage - consider married / women priests Women not appreciated in the Church - women priests / deacons /in formal roles Annulments - more clarification needed (eg Boris Johnson married

in Westminster Cathedral) Sexual abuse in the church Come across as a Church of rules and regulations. (Our Lord came to serve) (eg daughter not being allowed to have brother as Confirmation sponsor - both left the church as a consequence Poor treatment from nuns Judging, misunderstanding, lack of communication. Not using the talents in the congregation. Confession - secret, face to face discouraging, children intimidated No daily Mass in the evening for shifts workers Lack of community - moving to a new parish, nothing to belong to, so went to another parish with prayer group and music. Don't welcome new comers very well (Other denominations more welcoming) Not enough education beyond confirmation. (Bible Study) Sacrament in the mouth, not in the hand Not enough general absolution (many left because they dislike confessing big sins face to face); dislike individual confession. Latin Mass abolished Not enough activities for young people, youth groups, brownies Not enough nuns Children not learning to pray Married / celibate priests - confusing. Need more to draw men to priesthood Lack of youth provision Cliquey groups - judgemental groups Money laundering Priests from home and abroad not cared for enough Lack of explanation of what the priests do Children should be allowed to take active role during the Mass, not just for Christmas. No commitment to children and youth Mass. (Once a month?) Parents of noisy children made to feel unwelcome. Young people are not kept interested or engaged. Answering What's in its for me? No visibility of volunteer roles in the church. (People need to easily make a connection to those involved, as well as what opportunities exist) Challenging questions from young people need to be supported and given time to explain and debate issues important to them, eg homosexuality. Church not open enough generally Catholic schools do not do enough. Bring back Sunday school or separate faith from the school Lack of time spent by the priest with the parishioners. Care of the housebound queried Misconception about christian unity and divorce Lack of silence / reverence during and after communion and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament Lack of punctuality at Mass Not praying for vocations to family (Only pray for vocations to priesthood and religious life, priests come out of a strong Catholic family) Lack of involvement of Indian Community (music) Home visits have declined Sermons need to convey a clear message succinctly to match people's attention span (5 mins) (Summary of points printed in newsletter?) Tithes are not encouraged - to help with the finances of the church. Unfairness among congregation - inconsistency and feelings of exclusion (funeral offered to one lady after a miscarriage and I was offered nothing) Do we follow up when our members 'aren't seen at church for a while' Activities should NOT be allowed in the building that water-down the teaching of the church, eg Tai-chi, Yoga Feedback on numbers attending courses within the parish, both online and in person. As a useful tool for promoting new ones. Not enough encouragement for ages 20-50 into attending Mass Contraception - another area for consideration. Lots of paid jobs being filled by volunteers.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Ecumenism, more inclusive, more tolerant of other religions. Include other faith participation in church activities, including Small Communities To be inclusive. Just because we don't advocate homosexuality doesn't mean we don't love the people. Supporting unwed mothers. Further instruction post Communion / Confirmation. Allowing priests to marry (place for both married and unmarried). Who was it said : It is not good for man to be alone GEN 2:18 Faith sharing Early morning / late evening Mass for nurses, Saturday evening? (Shift workers) Punctuality at Mass More understanding of the value of the Mass / Sacraments Clarity and charity about the divorce rules. Marriage is not for life. How can you see one person receiving Communion and the spouse not; both are God's children. Be more Christian The Church must show the outside world our openness and faith. More use of social media to share our message Be a church that moves with the times. Prejudices still exist in the church. Jesus loved everyone but the church doesn't always show that. People are excluded by the rules that push others away, especially young people. Bringing our faith into our daily lives, outside of Mass, through Small Communities to continue fellowship and support during the week. Stop losing young people (Give them reasons to remain Catholic) To see support groups for elderly, alone, single parents, and those discouraged by life. Become a place where Mass

is respected and we all understand we are in the Divine presence of our Lord at Mass and to save socialising for afterwards. Prefer Service of General Reconciliation, followed by individual confession for those that wish it. How to stay safe (Occultism) Evangelisation Churches open to people More attractive opportunities / activities for youth, youth leaders Mentorship / buddy system for new parishioners. Education (Bible study / schools) More involvement from adults Be a more welcoming church Community (belonging) and unity (Ecumenism) More cost effective heating Quiet period post Communion Empowering people to develop the parish. More active roles in the Ministry of the Church for women Consistency Increase faith in schools and more priests visiting schools After Mass videos (while people are still seated) to educate and /or discuss points of view (eg Alpha) More support groups for the lonely and marginalised. More opportunities for youth (eg youth choir, music) More vocations to religious life. More family prayer Not to lose our values. Do not 'water down' the Church. Should not allow activities on church premises that contravene the teaching of the church , eg Tai-chi, yoga. Better teaching of the church, Marriage prep. Learn from admirable practices in other religions. Lift Covid restrictions soon. Really knowing our parish and becoming a network of help and encouragement to all. Become a voice that is heard and understood by everyone in simple clear messages. Let's not be caught up in noise and the unimportant. Young people are the future of the church, we should be asking their views. To support the right to life and oppose legalising assisted suicide To oppose the drive towards gender and LGBTQ ideology, especially in schools and government funded institutions and support those who stand against it. To oppose United Nations demands than Kenya and other African nations legalise abortion in order to receive UN aid, and to challenge and oppose the pro-abortion industry and lobby. To challenge the World Health Organisation policies which advocate the killing of unborn babies (abortion) as a human right and promotes a curriculum which sexualises children and imposes gender ideology in the classroom. To challenge Big Tech companies' censorship attempts to control the freedom of speech of pro-life and pro-family citizens in social media and web platforms To challenge Disney, Netflix and other entertainment companies to stop them producing films that show Christ and Christianity in a completely fictitious and damaging way - in ways that they dare not portray other religions To support those facing persecution and unjust criminal charges for sharing Bible quotations on Twitter and standing for marriage based on a union between one man and one woman, and to support Christians who face unjust discrimination for trying to live by their faith.

St John Henry Newman Parish, High Wycombe

Process Used:

This is the Summary Synod Report from St John Henry Newman Parish. We had 8 group spiritual conversations: • 3 face-to-face conversations with 5-6 people and 2 listeners • 4 Zoom conversations with 3-5 people and 2 listeners • Our Southern Indian Group had their own conversation and sent in their report We also had 6 submissions from individual practising Catholics, and 6 submissions from individual lapsed Catholics (most of whom had individual conversations with our listener who had been a lapsed Catholic). • We then brought all of the information together and had a spiritual conversation and discernment among our Parish Priest, Permanent Deacon and the 6 listeners that had been involved (6 in a room together plus 2 others of us on Zoom). This report is the result of that.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

BEING PART OF A WORLDWIDE FAMILY The majority of both practising Catholics and those on the margins considered themselves to be members of a family or an extended community. This community is both local and universal in scale: A worldwide loving, caring and generous community who share their lives with Jesus AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH For many there is a strong sense that this communion stretches back in time to Christ himself and his Apostles. Critically it is one in which Christ remains active in the Eucharist as well as the Persona Christi of the Priest. We are an apostolic Church. This makes Catholics different from other denominations and we should be careful to preserve this as we change in response to new challenges OFFERING SUPPORT AND REFUGE The Church gives meaning, structure, support and comfort. It is a way of orienting/navigating and making sense of life and of experiencing the mysteries of life. It is also a means of working out our salvation: A significant part of my life. An invitation to daily take part in prayer with the Lord, and reflect on my life to date in a busy and sometimes hostile world. It has been with me and seen me through disappointments and heartaches, good times and bad. In a rapidly changing world it has been my constant stay BUT FAMILIES ARE MESSY As with every family there are difficulties, failings and scandal which create a sense of shadow. For many, this is often compounded by a lack of understanding of the teachings of the Church and/or guilt about not following the rules. DIMINISHED SENSE OF SAFETY AND WELCOMING In recent years, some have even questioned whether the Church is a safe place - for gay people, for example, who fear being ostracised. Also, the abuse scandals of recent years, and how they have been dealt with by the hierarchy, add to the uneasiness about safety: In adulthood this positive view has been replaced with a more critical view of the Church rooted in perceptions that it is: a) old fashioned/ stuck in its ways/ intransigent and; b) has abused its position. Specific examples cited include failure to ordain women and the shame of paedophilia. One or two go so far as to say that the Church no longer is a place of safety STRUGGLE AND COMMITMENT Almost all Catholics would acknowledge the failings. However, what distinguishes between those who continue in their practice and those who are now on the margins is their sense of spiritual attachment: I don't agree with all the teachings of the Catholic faith. But I do feel drawn to this Church faith. Although am open minded to the spiritual side

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

THE CHURCH CAN BE WELCOMING For most there is a strong sense that the church can be welcoming of new members and good at making existing parishioners feel welcome. This openness is reflected in growing diversity of our communities. GOOD AT BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER Historically, the church has been good at fostering a sense of community, togetherness and social connection. For most there is both the solace of prayer and the warmth and friendship from community: I went to St James Church in High Wycombe (now closed) and it was so friendly, such a kind and loving Community …….. a happy congregation. Allowing the parishioners to organise events just to spend time together; charitable events; dinners; quizzes, dances and Church Christmas

Bazaars……. There was a good atmosphere Some highlighted that this came to the fore during the Coronavirus pandemic during which there was a strong sense of people looking after one another: Early in the COVID pandemic, it was good how parishioners arranged telephone calls for people who may feel isolated CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS IS A STRENGTH A great strength of the Church is the provision and celebration of the Sacraments - in particular those Sacraments which only occur once (e.g. Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage) and the first occasions (e.g. First Confession, First Holy Communion). The flexibility and innovation of the Church in adapting during the Coronavirus lockdowns was also praised by some: Being considerate of our spiritual needs by offering Live Online Mass and relaxing the rules regarding compulsory Church attendance during lockdown/ restrictions In addition, a number of responses highlighted the value and centrality of Confession. GIVING A MORAL LEAD A great strength of the Church is its tradition, Catholic doctrine and its moral authority. The Church is recognised as offering a strong moral lead and using its international stature to address issues such as peace, poverty and abortion. This is the source of another strength of the Church – charity – on a local, national and international scale: Managing Charity works efficiently: CAFOD/ Aid to the Church in Need/ fundraising through May Day /Christmas gifts/cards for lonely and housebound SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE..... Part of what makes the Church such an effective advocate is that it continues to speak with one voice. The Church does well when it speaks with one voice on matters spiritual. Brings relief and comfort to the poor and needy in a practical situation PROVIDING EXAMPLES OF HOLINESS More powerful than any edict, though, are the examples provided by people. There is a strong sense that the Church has always been good at providing inspiration and role models for holiness: individuals living out Christ's teaching. Pope Francis is widely recognised and perceived as offering a great deal of encouragement as is his championing of the Synod. Image of service from the Pope – even my non-Catholic friends are positive about our current Pope The Church stands up for what is right and the Pope is placing very strong emphasis on helping others – particularly the poorest in our world Whilst Pope Francis is particularly praised there were many examples cited of individual priests, religious and lay people who serve as role models for service and who have had a great impact on those around them. Volunteers were particularly praised for all they contribute.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
MAINTAINING OUR STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY While many believe that the Church can be welcoming, there is a growing concern amongst some that the sense of community, belonging and togetherness is now slowly eroding. There is a lack of focus on community, connection and belonging. Many people leave because there is no sense of belonging. This is something people crave in the modern world and other denominations do this much better There is less community than there used to be and less emphasis on it. We no longer know one another as parishioners. Priests move around a lot more and don't get to know the community well and they are less able to gather and keep the community together in the ways that they used to There is also a sense that we are not managing our communities well with some highlighting the lack of effective communications and coordination within the parish between priest, Parish Services Team and parishioners: Communication. No lead volunteer so limited effort has to be for basic tasks e.g. website updates. No overarching or annual objectives (these have been drawn up, but no volunteer) This can be compounded by a lack of continuity in the clergy who have each had different emphases causing confusion and in worst cases has led to upset (e.g. different interpretations on the permitted uses of church buildings under Canon Law leave some to wonder what outreach possibilities we shall have in future). The impact of coronavirus has been to exacerbate this and to leave some isolated and feeling abandoned. Due to the need to isolate, it seems that more people are being pushed to the margins – unable to come to mass and participate in church events; some can participate online (but need to be acknowledged in the Mass); others with no internet have less access to the parish community FAILING IN KEY PARTS OF ITS MISSION There is a sense that the Church is failing in some key aspects of its mission: teaching, pastoral care, stewardship. Many highlight that the teachings of

the Church are increasingly not heard or well understood and there is a need to think through how to do this more effectively. In addition, it was felt that the importance of Our Lady was not communicated effectively to non-Catholics. Sometimes, Clergy has not shown the courage to proclaim the Gospel (undiluted) to the faithful (Church comers) out of the fear of losing the numbers of Church attendees. There seems to be a half-heartedness to proclaim 1 Cor. 6:9-10; thereby not warning the congregation of the danger of eternal damnation losing them forever The Church needs to help people to not go astray – lots of people have lapsed because they don't know the Church's teaching Also highlighted is the reduction in pastoral care which is due to cuts in the capacity for outreach and evangelisation. Finally, there is frustration with the relationship with the Diocese. There is a perception amongst some of highhandedness and a lack of effective listening that has made people lack confidence in parish, diocesan and Church consultations. There is also feeling that past methods used by the Diocese to appoint contractors, to do church and school building work, without getting several quotes and written agreement have led to a waste of resources. There is also a perception of a lack of engagement and support in key areas: In 20 years there were very few visits from NORES unless for specific reasons - e.g. the hiring of a new head. Certainly, it was felt that the diocese did not have a great interest in the running of the school (from an ex-governor). OUT OF STEP Many highlight that the Church is out of step with modern life in its teaching on contraception, divorce and remarriage, LGBTQ+ and the role of women in the Church. There is a widespread belief that the way the Church deals with these issues is uncaring and inconsistent. The current approach is perceived by most to represent a significant failure of imagination that is threatening the long term future of the Church itself. Where Jesus was loving and forgiving, understanding and insightful, the Parishes in High Wycombe and the Church in general can be anything but. The Church's rules on contraception and divorce are harsh and uncaring. Their behaviour towards women is outmoded and disrespectful. Not everyone feels welcome and included – e.g. divorced people or gay people. The ethical framework appears to be out of step with the teaching of the Church – insufficiently grounded in love and forgiveness. This is driving away many people directly and indirectly – it almost drove me away Several people have mentioned that they feel as if the Church is going back to Pre-Vatican II days. PAIN OF SCANDALS AND THE UNDERMINING OF CHURCH CREDIBILITY There remains horror and revulsion about the child abuse scandal. This has constituted a serious breach of trust for some in both the Church and clergy. Moreover, there remain concerns for a few that the Church has not yet done everything it can/ needs to/ could do to address these problems and support victims, and more openness, transparency and communication is needed.

What are your dreams for the church?:
WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE, RELATABLE The desire for our churches to be fuller is almost universally shared. This will be enabled by greater inclusiveness and relatability. This does not mean condoning sin but will require much greater focus by leaders on discerning how to work in the world without compromising our moral beliefs. It will necessitate having a more empathetic approach and looking for solutions in a collaborative way. Many practising and lapsed Catholics hoped the Church would change its teaching regarding contraception, divorce and re-marriage. Keeping pace with the changes in society. Ensuring that everyone knows they are welcome in church and won't be judged Understanding the messiness of life and help to bring people back into Christ's footsteps. When people see us differently, they will see the relevance of our Church to the world The Church will bring down obstacles and increase the path of love - making sacraments available where people are entitled to have them and assisting on how to be allowed to receive the Sacraments if people cannot currently receive them. Most believe that this approach is completely consistent with Christ's teaching. However, it requires more listening, dialogue and greater imagination on behalf of the leadership of the Church. Listen to the people that comprise the Church far more, reaching out to all Catholics. Make the Church truly follow Jesus's teachings on being tolerant, forgiving, non-judgemental, accepting and loving. No one should feel estranged and unworthy. G K Chesterton said, There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of

something better tomorrow. We just need to take the medicine. MORE VIBRANT COMMUNITIES WITH SACRAMENTS AS A WELL-SPRING A welcoming and inclusive Church is understood by many to be the cornerstone of thriving communities: I hope that our church in the parish will be a thriving community again where all people that will come to worship, be accepted as they are; so be an inclusive church not one that discriminates, alienates people and excludes some Our churches would be more open – open the doors and welcome people in Specifically, many parishioners would like to see more efforts to include the divorced and remarried and the gay community. Most people would like to see a more vibrant and active form of community that gets out into society. At the heart of parish life will be the Sacraments and there is a strongly expressed desire for more availability of the churches and greater centrality of sacramental life – open for prayer, open for silence, open for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, open for the Sacraments during the day (e.g. Confession). The Sacraments are the life-blood of the Church and Catholics need to be taught about the Sacraments throughout their lives – respect for the Eucharist, how to use the Sacrament of Confession and Sacrament of the Sick LIVINGTHE WORD - ORTHOPRAXY There is a strong appetite for our communities to become places where we live out our commitment to God together. In this regard the first church offers a role model for many: Be a worshipping community like the first Catholic community: faithful, upright, bold, righteous, filled with the Holy Spirit There is also strong sense that we must become communities of practices not just communities of belief. The Church should focus on orthopraxy as well as orthodoxy: Right doing and right living is as important as right believing. It should focus on works as well as belief, service and care for others are key parts of Jesus' teaching Critical in this regard will be finding practical ways to support one another. Helping each other as a community in practical ways at both the parish and Diocesan level e.g. parishioners offering advice to one another or the Catholic Church setting up a bank LIFE-LONG LEARNING ABOUT FAITH There is also strong appetite to get to know God better and to always be trying to deepen our relationship with Him and introduce Him to others. To do this we will need to foster a culture of ongoing education and invest in resources and new ways of speaking: To maybe move forward a bit with the times and talk of modern day miracles as well as the historical ones The importance of education for children and support for young people was consistently highlighted. In particular, there is strong appreciation of the importance of giving them the foundations for a relationship with God and the world: Children should be taught to pray in different ways (not just by rote) including contemplation and meditation so that they are used to listening to God Greater provision for younger people who are the future of the Church. In particular, a focus on cementing links with schools and on supporting young people as they transition out of the school environment with tangible support drawing on the chaplaincy model in universities TAKING THE MISSION TO THE WORLD - WORKING WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS AND FAITHS A greater understanding of our faith is essential so people can engage with confidence with the world around us. There is a strong desire for the church to be active in the world. Most share the dream that the church will be much better at getting the message of God's love out and supporting people with the struggles of living in a modern society. In this regard there is a strong desire for us to be a more ecumenical church, one in which we are working with and reaching out to other faiths. For most, this is the logical conclusion of a belief that we are all God's children and that by cooperating we can have greater impact - making things better at a local, national and international level. One God, one Truth, a united front for all Christian Churches, standing on different ladders but all looking above for salvation and fulfilment. Amen MORE LEADERSHIP ROLES All of this requires more leadership and the Church needs to be imaginative in embracing the leadership potential of both women and young people, helping the latter to continue to be engaged and more developed in their faith. There is a strong desire for more involvement for women in leading the Church. Although it may take time we should move towards growing the role of women – allowing women to preach, become permanent deacons and, ultimately become priests. This also reflects the reality on the ground that the majority of churchgoers are women. We were all baptised as priests, prophets and kings – women as well as men.

St Joseph's and St Clare's Parish, Aylesbury

Process Used:

Attending the listening workshops, reading through the diocesan synod handbook, prayer and discussion to work through responses. Our parish priest looked at questions that were pertinent to our parish and those questions were addressed by being put on questionnaires for parishioners to respond to at Mass, or either within their parish groups or through zoom meetings that had been arranged.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Having a sense of belonging. It is important to belong and have a sense of involvement.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
One of the questions we addressed- What do you appreciate in your parish? Having a parish priest who is hardworking and the commitment that he has to ensure there are Masses weekly and three Masses on the weekend We have a friendly and caring parish that gives a sense of belonging and friendship, a community, a family Well organised preparation for the Sacraments Beauty and peace of Mass- easy for newcomers to find details We have two churches that are safe and well maintained We meet other members of the community Diversity- we are a great diverse community Outreach to the poor & homeless The sermons are easy to understand and Mass is respectful and calming Lots of groups to get involved in

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Were do we think our parish can grow? By having more community events for all to join in and that will enable us to be more of a community and bring us together while raising money for the church while helping improve services we offer and hopefully encourage more people to join or come back Better facilities for community outreach and as such welcoming more diverse groups Having a choir/ youth choir Having an additional priest or chaplain to help ease the burden for the parish priest Have more encouragement for our children to young adults to be more involved and engaged in the liturgy, fundraising events and other parish activities More acceptance Promoting how we can help others not only within our parish but also in the wider community Having special children's / youth Mass from time to time that encourages the youth to be involved and homilies can be easier for them to follow Provide a club for the children after confirmation- Involve the schools By being more friendly and welcoming when people come to Mass To be more united as a catholic community in the deanery

What are your dreams for the church?:
What are your dreams for yourself and your parish community? To try and get the parish community back together to socialise more and be more involved in order to get to know each other better and grow That we can work closely with other churches and religious organisations for different events that can encourage a deeper conversion for all To be more involved in and with the Church To provide children's liturgy to help our children learn and understand more about Jesus To have a better collaboration with schools To have more priests To be more welcoming and inclusive To pray more, hope more and grow further in communion To be stronger in our faith and support one another To see more young children and young adults attend Mass and have them encouraged to attend perhaps through youth activities and most especially after they have received their sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation A willingness to engage with difficult questions That our parish Community is seen as a core driver for the 'common good' in Aylesbury To bring up our families alongside the catholic church community and schools

ST JOSEPHS. CHALFONT ST PETER, GERRARDS CROSS

Process Used:

Our Synod process was lay led by Mr Charles Whitehead. In early January 2022 Cannon John Udris came to our parish to outline the synod process to our team of listeners. Two priests and twelve lay people attended. We then held three sessions on Saturday mornings after Mass, each lasting 90 mins. These were attended and enjoyed by 30-35 people each week. Parish groups and families were also encouraged to discuss the questions. We also created our own Junior Synod questions which were discussed during Children's Liturgy sessions and with one of our First Communion groups. We received a total of 44 submissions:- 10 - Saturday groups – approximately 30-35 people in total 7 online submissions to the Diocese and shared with the parish 18 families/individuals or parish groups, this includes 5 First Holy Communion Families. 9 Junior Synod submissions Throughout the process the most frequently recurring themes were:- The importance of evangelisation and the need to become missionary disciples. Appreciation for the richness of our liturgies and sacraments The importance of belonging to a caring community A wish to be more ecumenical, working together with other Christians, A need for more support for our young people That married people may be ordained as priests. Recognition for the role of women in the church and ordination as deacons/priests A desire to more inclusive regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, or marital status The poor handling of the abuse situation by the Catholic Church

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

a.Our Catholic Faith gives us a strong identity and a good moral compass to guide us through life. People appreciate the well-established traditions of the Catholic Church, its liturgies, the sacraments its prayers and devotions. There was a real sense of gratitude for the many sacrifices that had been made, particularly by the English and Welsh Martyrs to keep the Catholic faith alive during times of persecution. b.There was a strong sense of belonging and the importance of being a member of a loving, caring and supportive community. c.People appreciated the universality of the Catholic Faith. The Catholic Church is one; it extends beyond national boundaries and the presence of God can be felt in His Church. There is something beautiful about a Catholic Church where you walk into Mass in a different country, a different language but you still know the Mass, you celebrate with others as one with God. I also really love when you walk into an empty church, light a candle for the departed and sit in silence and feel the presence of God with you. d.Many people saw themselves as Christians who follow the Catholic traditions. e.Since Vatican II there is greater participation in the Church.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

a.Our parish is welcoming. There is a strong sense of belonging to a good community which cares for its people. b.The liturgies of the Catholic Church are rich in symbolism and when celebrated well they are beautiful. The sacraments are life-giving moments which feed us, give us hope and we receive the mercy and forgiveness of God. People appreciate that receiving the sacraments marks significant stages in our lives.. A number of people commented on the very positive experiences they had had when attending the funerals of family members or Baptisms. Priests had been welcoming and inclusive of everyone and had shown compassion. Families and their visitors had found comfort and peace in the funeral liturgies. c.Catholic education is important to us. d.Catechetical formation is well run and fruitful preparing families for Marriage, Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. e.Our parish is good at reaching out to its neighbours, to those on the margins through organisations such as St Vincent de Paul Society, the London and Slough Run for the homeless. The furniture market provides many families with essential furniture at reasonable cost whilst simultaneously raising funds for our parish and local charities. f.The missionary work of the

Catholic Church in the world is excellent. The Catholic Church also responds quickly and generously to assist wherever disasters occur in other countries. g.Our church provides for families. It inspires the children and introduces them to the church in a kind, relatable way h.The anulment system is rejuvenating. i.Under the current strong leadership of Our Holy Father Pope Francis, we are seeing some contrition for some of our past failings, more transparency and openness in the ways the Church teaches and practices the Catholic faith in accordance to God's Laws, first and foremost, and not by following Man's Laws to the detriment of our beliefs. The introduction of Virtus and this opportunity for the lay people in the Church to voice their opinion and address their concerns openly to our clerics, religious leaders and our Christian community. Junior Synod Responses - What do you like about Church? a.I enjoy learning new things b.Many of our children said they enjoyed the choir and singing hymns. They also like saying prayers and enjoy lighting candles after Mass-- I like that we pray to God and light candles for the ones we have lost c.There is a lot of things to take part in. d.I like the parish community which is welcoming and kind. e.We all enjoy the Children's Liturgy. f.I enjoy being together at coffee after Mass. g.I like it when our priests visit the school. h.The people who work here and who volunteer are very kind.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
a.The Catholic Church is too hierarchical and male-dominated.. b.The role of women in the church is not recognised. They are not allowed to fulfill their full potential or to be ordained as deacons or priests. c.The Church is not good at retaining its members following sacramental preparation. d.The Catholic Church is not good at owning up to its mistakes. In particular there was grave concern over the way the abuse of minors had been handled. The Church had sought to save its own reputation and had failed. e.The Catholic Church is afraid to confront the controversial issues of the persecution of Christians, co-habiting, contraception, conversion therapy, LGBT+, homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia. The Church appears to fear criticism. f.The Human failings of parishioners and clergy - including bishops are:- i.Too open to people exploiting others. ii.Shying away from speaking outside the flock. iii.Not being proactive in speaking out on political issues. iv.Just giving money to resolve a problem. v.Not being present at ecumenical celebrations. vi.Not promoting the Church sufficiently. vii. Not being inclusive as Jesus would want us to be. viii.Fails to be relevant to the young, minorities and women ix.Closed to those who don't tow the line, Jesus wants us to act with love which is more important than being brain washed. g.Some priests do not have empathy with children and young people. h.Those who are divorced and remarried are unable to receive the Eucharist. i.The way bishops are elected should involve wider consultation, including the laity, and where possible bishops should be elected from within a diocese. j.The current training, support and development of priests is not fulfilling the needs of the Church. k.We are Christian first and Catholic second. l.Authorities within the Church are persecuting the Tridentine Rite of the Latin Mass and those who adhere to it. m.Involvement of senior members of the Church in worship of a pagan idol - the Pachamama in the gardens of the Vatican in the presence of the Holy Father. n.During the Covid19 Pandemic the Catholic Church closed down and failed to administer the Sacraments which are at the heart of its mission on earth. This was a grave error of judgment for which there should be repentance. It is now proving very difficult to regather our community as the Body of Christ. o.The role of the Catholic Church does not include the promotion of a particular scientific view regarding anthropological climate change. In so doing it supports the political agendas associated with it (United Nations Agendas 2021, 2030 and 2050). Taking such a role is neither scriptural nor doctrinal and is in conflict with Our Lord's teaching that the world will pass away. Junior Synod Responses - What don't you like about Church? a.Waking up early to go to Church b.That we have to stand and sit down again. c.The Church could do more to lecture Christian groups that use God's Word to spread hate and hurt throughout the world. d.That the Church can be judgmental. e.I don't like wine as the Blood of Christ. f.The benches are hard and uncomfortable. g.There is nothing I don't like.

What are your dreams for the church?:

a.That we are more outreaching, invitational and welcoming..A place where people grow in their faith by supporting each other and sharing our faith together. People requested more house groups and prayer groups and opportunities for bible study. We should provide opportunities for people to COME AND SEE. We may need to use different forms of liturgy so that everyone can participate fully. b.If we are truly Christian then nothing should divide us. We should celebrate together what unites us rather than focusing on what divides us. There is currently only one ecumenical group of local clergy meeting together for a monthly prayer meeting. We would like to see clergy and laity of all Christian faiths working and worshiping together. c.That every baptised Christian should recognise the vocation of their Baptism and their giftedness and ask NOT What is the church doing for me BUT What can I do for the Church or how can I better be church with my fellow Christians. d.That our young people should feel valued and an important part of our Church and given more support post Confirmation, particularly meeting them where they are and providing opportunities to share faith, friendship, fun and food. e.Continue to engage with with young families after sacramental preparation. f.Extend the Women's World Day of Prayer to more than one occasion per annum. g.That we feel fed by the Word of God by receiving good homilies which focus on the weekly readings. h.That we have Catholic schools accessible to all children with free transport provided. i.We need more engaging Catechetical resources which reflect the culture of our own country. j.That all Christians, and those of any faith, be free to practise their faith without persecution and that we all be more compassionate and understanding of other faiths. k.That the church provides training for lay leaders to encourage the formation of Missionary Disciples. l.A church that is inclusive of all ages, races and genders. m.That we reintroduce the beautiful liturgies and prayers of the Church eg Benediction. n.That we use technology wisely and intelligently to engage with all ages and audiences. o.That every parish should have a parish leadership team, with our priests recognising the giftedness of the laity and encouraging them to use their skills to help run our parishes. Priests and laity should be able to work harmoniously together to develop a loving caring and vibrant community. p.That the Catholic Church resolves the issues around sexual and other abuse. q.Contraception should be condoned. Junior Synod- What are your dreams for the future:- a.To receive my First Holy Communion right now b.Focus on teaching the young people. c.I want to be a doctor and help others. d.To spread more love. e.I want to look after my Mum and Dad so they will live longer and happily in their lives. f.That the Church will expand and more people will come to it. g.That people will all have bibles and prayers books and that we have a colourful church h.More crucifixes to remind us that Jesus sacrificed himself for us. i.To have a prayer area to go to during the day. j.More activities together rather than being at Mass. .

St Joseph the Worker, Luton

Process Used:

Below are the collective responses from the Listening sessions held in the parish during January and February 2022.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

• Everything – We believe and trust that we are on the right journey and understand our faith in God to be the right path. • We belong to a universal church which is evidenced through good community. • Being able to celebrate the Mass daily. The pinnacle of the Catholic faith is of course participating in the sacrifice of the mass. • Church Doctrine and the Sacraments help to form the boundaries that help structure our daily lives.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

• Our Liturgy and the Sacraments are constant and unwavering. • My parish is a thriving and welcoming community • Charitable works via CAFOD, CARITAS and parish programmes – supporting the homeless, visiting the sick, family support through our school. • Ecumenism & Interfaith work – we interact well with other denominations and other religions within Luton.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

• The Church was not proactive when dealing with issues of abuse. We should not have protected the guilty religious. • Catholic education is well respected, however, there is no connection between the work done in schools and the parish. What has gone wrong with our youth ministry? Are we using the wrong language? Catechesis for teenagers is not working. • The Church did not respond fast enough to Covid restrictions. • Communications are not as good as they should be at every level.

What are your dreams for the church?:

• The potential for priests to choose to get married. • The option for women to become priests. • A more inclusive approach to those on the margins of our community; more integration with the LGBTQ community for example. A more compassionate approach to those who are currently excluded from our sacraments. • A more engaged youth community, who are engaged with their faith. • A well supported clergy and religious, rich in love and alive with the Holy Spirit.

Parish - St Joseph the Worker, Luton

St Mary's Woburn Sands

Process Used:
Group and individual conversations

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
A Church which provides a guide for life, based on love, and a code of good behaviour, with the core values of Catholicism as in the words of the Apostle's Creed Strength in times of hardship, sickness and bereavement A privilege in belonging to a church congregation, a church family and a social community God is that than which no greater can be conceived (St Anselm) - it is an honour and a privilege to be a Catholic A welcoming worldwide universal Church The great value of a Catholic upbringing at home and in school Catholic traditions and spirituality and sometimes Catholic guilt Understanding that faith is not static, it is evolutionary Importance of our Lady and the Saints, prayers and the Rosary Going to Mass regularly and experiencing joy and focus of life with God Prepared for conflict and division with non-Catholic family members Catholicism is in my being. If I lost it, it would feel as bad as losing an arm. Importance of the Mass and all the Holy Sacraments Appreciation of Church music, hymns and the liturgy Provides a foundation on which we can build The value of retaining Latin somewhere in the liturgy Whole worship centred around the Eucharist, receiving Jesus at Holy Communion Host is easily identified as the Body of Christ Real Presence of Jesus Importance of confession

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The opportunity of holding a Synod as a call for members of the Church to listen to each other and thereby re-affirm the future direction of the Church. The triangle with the Pope at the top, then the Cardinals, then the Bishops, then the Priests and at the bottom the people – Pope Francis wants to turn this triangle upside down so that the people are at the top Pope Francis a great example Bringing people together from diverse backgrounds Looking after one another Accepting other faiths, integration of other communities, non-Catholic The welcome provided to strangers and to those returning after lapsing Being involved with the church helped to keep me through difficult teenage years. Different Priests, all with different gifts The foundation and support of Catholic schools Help by the laity in preparing children for the Sacraments, both at school and in the community The outstanding comfort often experienced at Catholic Requiem Masses and funerals in providing help for the bereaved but also the celebration of a life. Catholic Press, Catholic online Mass – a rock in the pandemic, and Catholic charities e.g. night shelter, food bank, Christmas Box appeals The promotion of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Confession, self-audit in line with what God expects Organized activities, retreats e.g. Mount St. Bernard

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Reluctance and even hostility by the Church about mixed marriages Obscure procedures around marriage annulment Priests who have difficulty empathizing with those struggling with life Those who foster aloofness and clericalism A historical tendency towards misogyny in the Church Excessive strictness by some clergy in their interpretation of Church rules Lack of empathy towards divorcees, LGBT, the elderly and outspoken priests We are poor at supporting our priests Some anti- Pope Francis movements The scandals and cover up of abusive criminal behaviour by a few priests giving the Church a very bad name Harsh unfeeling behaviour in the past by some convent nuns, especially in their handling of unmarried mothers who were treated badly The excessively strict behaviour in the past of some priests and nuns in Catholic schools Problems in Ireland between Catholics and Protestants The gap after confirmation for young people Lack of vocations to the priesthood Priests not available to be a listener, help in crisis or for advice Cluster formation, all centred around St Augustine's Church Church, St Mary's, locked and inaccessible apart from the two Masses per week Lack of transparency around organization and finance So much wealth in Rome, so much poverty in

the world Not enough on the spiritual journey, for adults or young people, lack of spirituality

What are your dreams for the church?:
Promotion of the need for vocations to the priesthood and religious life Life of priests / nuns to be supported Married priests with support for the family More Deacons Women Deacons Women Priests 10-year tenure for priests from the community A realization about the importance of listening to each other Ecumenical approach The need to look more outwardly, to reach out more to those in need Building on parish community More tolerance, open-minded, open environment Priest to concentrate on spiritual side, other groups to concentrate on running of Church More positive publicity Finances transparent Church to be open for quiet prayer during week, adoration More children's groups, to encourage faith, socialise together to grow solid in faith

St Margaret of Scotland, Luton & St Thomas the Apostle, Caddington

Process Used:

St Margaret of Scotland, Luton & St Thomas the Apostle, Caddington Parishioners at three separate tables (D, H, J) were asked, following a discussion, to discern three answers for each question:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
D The Eucharist is the centre of our lives, everything comes from that. D The Sacraments are a significant part of our lives. D Community and the need to evangelise to bring more people in. H Faith or believing that God will be there throughout our lives. H Part of a Christian community of Catholics and of other Christian denominations. H Embracing Christ's values and standards. J Believing in the one true God. J It feels like coming home, being able to attend church to receive Holy Communion. J Knowing your community – asking about and looking out for each other.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
D Big occasions such as at Christmas and Easter and the Sacraments are done very well. D Reaching out to other communities, inclusion, outreach and mission – helping others. D We provide the conscience of the nation – Pro Life. Many non-Catholics, even if they don't agree with us, recognise that we have an unflinching moral stance. H Our Church did a brilliant job during Covid in making the Mass and other services available via streaming. H Our structures are very good - The Mass, Sacraments, Eucharistic Adoration, Rosary, honouring Mary, different liturgies – Latin, Old Rite, Polish, Syro Malankara, Syro Malabar Christmas and Easter. H Our outreach and charitable work is superb via CAFOD and others in education, health and numerous other ways. J Confession is a special Sacrament of healing, with wonderful Priests willing to listen and discuss matters relating to our faith. J Our church rose to the challenge of Covid and lockdown with us being able to feel the presence of God and leaving good memories. J Mass being provided online is an excellent initiative and an example of our church adapting to the modern world.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
D We struggle to maintain what we have. We have to do better in keeping youngsters involved and improving our youth formation. D Our church was very slow to acknowledge wrong doingabuse. We hope we are making good progress on this now. D Some felt our church is drifting away from its doctrines, whilst others felt it was not adapting to societal changes. A careful line needs to be pursued. H We don't do a good enough job at reaching out to others and bringing them into our church. New communities often come with a new priest, but not from the wider parish. All Catholic parishes should meet and greet as non-Catholic Christians do in their churches. Track and Trace enabled us to discover the names of many parishioners. H We are not very good at communicating to parishioners or to others. We tend to leave everything to the Priest. We need to raise our game through our newsletters and websites and persuade parishioners to use them. We need to thank those people who generously look after our websites more often, they are providing a wonderful service to our faith. H We struggle to retain children and youngsters in our churches. Catholic education needs to think through how to inspire youngsters to stay in the church. Are the relationships between Catholic Churches and Catholic schools as good as they should be? J Getting young people to stay in the church. Schools have changed their admission policies to bring in non-Catholics which has changed the ethos. At the London Oratory there aren't any non-Catholics. Teachers respect the pupils and vice versa. Child stand when a teacher enters the classroom. These standards are not maintained in all Catholic schools. J Many people, including Catholics, do not understand the rules surrounding who can receive Holy Communion and this can cause offence and result in people not coming to the faith. J We Catholics are not generous enough in supporting our parishes. We need to find ways to raise more money.

What are your dreams for the church?:
D To get our holy faith to be taught properly – sound teachers, and to increase reverence at Mass D To encourage parents to get their children to Mass D Our society is changing and we need to modernise and adapt to the new environment. However, we must remain faithful to Catholic teaching and this must come from the top of our church. The Old Rite Mass should be fostered H Society is changing and this needs to be recognised. We must remain faithful to the teachings of the church but we must adapt to the 21st century. H To persuade the world to accept the sanctity of human life. This means before birth and near the end of life, but also means an end to war and to allow peace and justice to flourish. H We must all become evangelisers. This doesn't mean we must all go into the town centre with trumpets blasting, but we must all find ways to sow seeds to enable the Holy Spirit to bring people into our church. We must all be active in our community and we need to let everyone know that the Catholic church is there to help everyone. J Getting young adults involved with the church. Youngsters to be made to feel really welcome. J To keep on celebrating the wonderful Sacraments of our church. J To encourage more vocations to the priesthood, Diaconate and Religious including many more nuns.

St Martin De Porres, Luton

Process Used:
As a parish we held two synodal gatherings. One on the 23rd of January were we discussed questions one and two, and a second gathering on the 20th of February were we discussed questions three and four. Prayer was an essential element of this process.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
The responses to this question were largely positive. Many people noted the values the church had given them such as faith, humility, kindness, hope. There was a great emphasis on following the precepts and teachings of the Church and on following the teachings of Jesus Christ. There was a great emphasis on the importance of the sacraments and the sacramental life. Devotion to Our Lady was also seen as important.The unity of the church was a key theme that arose in both this question and in question two as we will see. The importance and necessity of the obligation to evangelise. To convert people to Christ, his Holy Church and also to convert ourselves. As one respondant said; 'Unity, Togetherness, connectedness, community.' and another 'My Catholic faith is my sanctuary.'

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
During our conversations there was, perhaps inevitibly a lot of focus on how the church reacted during the pandemic. Many people reflected that despite everything the church had overall reacted well to the challenging situation. Saying that despite the situation, Mass was still available and that initiatives like loud speakers outside the church had enabled the faithful to participate in a way they otherwise may not have been able to. Mention was also made of the diverse nature of the church and the parish community, and how this is a particular strength of our parish community. People were comforted by the fact that the Churches teaching (dogma and doctrine) cannot change, no matter what the world may say. This was seen as a great strength. There was also a focus and emphasis on the churches social outreach and work particular mention was made of social outreach during the pandemic, work in education, medicine (hospitals), foodbanks and helping the poor and the most vulnerable and those most in need. As in question one the unity of the Church was seen as a good and essential component. It is interesting to note that the Church is seen as diverse and yet unified and united in and through its diversity. Being missionaries and bringing Christ to those who do not have the means was seen as essential role of the church and something that the church does well (although could do better.)

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Catholic schools should promote and teach the catholic faith and catholic culture more and do it better. There is a need for the church to be more vocal about the role and significance of the families and speak up when parishoners and others leave the church/ the faith. More importance to be placed on educating and passing on the faith to younger generation and the spreading of the faith within families. Catechumens and teaching could/ should be improved. A need to tackle misinformation and lack of undersatnding and knowledge about the faith and the church. We are in a cultural battle which we are losing. There have been times when pleas for help have gone unanswered or unaided. One group mentioned that priests in the confessional can be harsh, and that the personality of the priest and people skills have 'been lost.' People should be dressed in their Sunday best. Unneccesary chatter before Mass and people arriving late is distracting and does not set the right tone of prayer for Mass. Lack of commitment from Parents to journeying with their children during first holy communion sessions. People/ parishoners can feel left out unwelcomed considering the multi-cultural nature of our parish. The church as a whole (I think this is probably referring to the local church rather than the universal church.) was not that welcoming, not that open. There can be a lack of knowledge of scripture, especially as regards teaching on the Eucharist

and its reception. The church needs to be reaching out to all members of the community, not just those who are catholics.
People don't feel part of the parish enough to get involved so it is the same people doing all the work. Parents not getting involved with their children's preparation A lot of people lack reverence when they dress inappropriately, chat in church and come late/leave early Lack of welcome for new people or excluded people (LGBTQ, divorced, foreigners etc..) Lack of catechesis across the board - clergy and laity - which can result in fundamentalism.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A merciful and welcoming church. To be more vocal about the faith using new resources and modern forms of media. More money/income. Support our priests. Motivate new methods of missonary work and social outreach. Priest to be more pastoral – visit when people fall by the wayside. Going out to the community and beyond. Getting out of our comfort zones. Going out to the less fortunate, visiting the sick as well as non catholics and those who have lapsed or stopped practicing. The dream is that each person will be fired by the Holy Spirit to be welcoming (Matt 5:31-46) That each person will feel inspired to visit the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked etc. Play an active role in the life of the church. Instill a catholic culture and faith through young families. And hold still to our faith and culture. More vocations to priesthood and the religious life. That the church will evangelise the culture and save souls. We need to show the next generation that the Catholic Church and Jesus Christ is the true radical way as opposed to BLM or Extinction Rebellion. This does not mean changing teachings to accommodate to the world. Young people have a lot of passion and desire for change. We should live radically, as Christ did. The younger generation will produce the saints of the future who will lead the church into the future. Greater commitment from all. More opportunity for prayer – Especially opportunities for meditation and more opportunities for adoration. Times set aside for silent prayer to hear God speak in our lives. The involvement of every parishioner in church activities and the life of the parish. Especially family involvement and the involvement of young people. Teach the faith. Give the people the ability to learn the faith and so be better able to practice it. Encourage more often and make people feel welcome and give them a sense of belonging.
That all have a sense of belonging and all get involved in its mission. That families get support in their ministry so that children can be supported well and grow up strongly rooted in Gospel values That we are an out-reaching Church to all – non-Catholics, refugees, the homeless etc.. That all have a need for deepening their faith and not leave it just to father and then putting it into action to help our brothers and sisters locally and globally. Also to be able to defend the faith. That we have more silence and meditation More priestly vocations More women involved at all levels

St Mary's, Dunstable

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Everything. Life is rooted in our faith. Feel very lucky that we can practise our faith without restriction. Lovely to go to other countries and find Catholic church where I can enjoy Mass.
My life.
It is the pin on which the Catherine Wheel of life spins
THE REAL PRESENCE
Everything – my life
Would not be happy or well if I did not have the Catholic faith
Everything, I would be lost without it.
It's a blessing.
To be kind, to help others
To lead a good life and support others.
To lead by example.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
The global church – Mass is Mass wherever we are.
Charitable works and support for those in need. Wonderful to know there are people in parishes all over our country and across many different countries looking after those in need.
Distant memories
The liturgy is very well done
The Mass and the teaching of the faith.
Feeling part of the Catholic community, being in our Lord's house as one.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
The shame of abuse in the Church and how many higher ranking clergy did nothing to stop/prevent it.
Need more effort to build community, both socially and in prayer
Welcoming – worked well during the return to Church period
Promoting Catholic education
Recent memories
Sadly the infrastructure has been weakened for years and communication is difficult – mixed messages do not help the situation.
There seems more and more difficulty in organising groups on the model of the Celtic Church – belong and believe.
I feel the congregation should take more part in answering Mass. Bring the altar lower, still facing the congregation.
The breakdown of order and control. Safeguarding.
We are sad when churches have to close down.

What is your dream for the Church?
Freedom to worship everywhere
Prayers for more clergy without whom we'll founder.
Prayers for Catholic education, in the hope we don't lose all the youth as soon as they become teenagers. Lots more participation of youth in church, but that needs huge encouragement.
Return to a caring community for all ages.
Back to roots, eg married clergy
Small local groups who support one another

High focus on family life, Catholic education, Catholic teachers linked to social life. Evangelical Church a good model.
That we may all be one as Jesus said
To convert all to love Christ and Almighty God
To increase worldwide in holiness.
To have more priests to serve.
I think in the future priests should be allowed to marry as the priests are dwindling and churches closing.

St Mary's, Woburn Sands

Process Used:
Group and individual conversations

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
A Church which provides a guide for life, based on love, and a code of good behaviour, with the core values of Catholicism as in the words of the Apostle's Creed Strength in times of hardship, sickness and bereavement A privilege in belonging to a church congregation, a church family and a social community God is that than which no greater can be conceived (St Anselm) - it is an honour and a privilege to be a Catholic A welcoming worldwide universal Church The great value of a Catholic upbringing at home and in school Catholic traditions and spirituality and sometimes Catholic guilt Understanding that faith is not static, it is evolutionary Importance of our Lady and the Saints, prayers and the Rosary Going to Mass regularly and experiencing joy and focus of life with God Prepared for conflict and division with non-Catholic family members Catholicism is in my being. If I lost it, it would feel as bad as losing an arm. Importance of the Mass and all the Holy Sacraments Appreciation of Church music, hymns and the liturgy Provides a foundation on which we can build The value of retaining Latin somewhere in the liturgy Whole worship centred around the Eucharist, receiving Jesus at Holy Communion Host is easily identified as the Body of Christ Real Presence of Jesus Importance of confession

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The opportunity of holding a Synod as a call for members of the Church to listen to each other and thereby re-affirm the future direction of the Church. The triangle with the Pope at the top, then the Cardinals, then the Bishops, then the Priests and at the bottom the people – Pope Francis wants to turn this triangle upside down so that the people are at the top Pope Francis a great example Bringing people together from diverse backgrounds Looking after one another Accepting other faiths, integration of other communities, non-Catholic The welcome provided to strangers and to those returning after lapsing Being involved with the church helped to keep me through difficult teenage years. Different Priests, all with different gifts The foundation and support of Catholic schools Help by the laity in preparing children for the Sacraments, both at school and in the community The outstanding comfort often experienced at Catholic Requiem Masses and funerals in providing help for the bereaved but also the celebration of a life. Catholic Press, Catholic online Mass – a rock in the pandemic, and Catholic charities e.g. night shelter, food bank, Christmas Box appeals The promotion of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Confession, self-audit in line with what God expects Organized activities, retreats e.g. Mount St. Bernard

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Reluctance and even hostility by the Church about mixed marriages Obscure procedures around marriage annulment Priests who have difficulty empathizing with those struggling with life Those who foster aloofness and clericalism A historical tendency towards misogyny in the Church Excessive strictness by some clergy in their interpretation of Church rules Lack of empathy towards divorcees, LGBT, the elderly and outspoken priests We are poor at supporting our priests Some anti- Pope Francis movements The scandals and cover up of abusive criminal behaviour by a few priests giving the Church a very bad name Harsh unfeeling behaviour in the past by some convent nuns, especially in their handling of unmarried mothers who were treated badly The excessively strict behaviour in the past of some priests and nuns in Catholic schools Problems in Ireland between Catholics and Protestants The gap after confirmation for young people Lack of vocations to the priesthood Priests not available to be a listener, help in crisis or for advice Cluster formation, all centred around St Augustine's Church Church, St Mary's, locked and inaccessible apart from the two Masses per week Lack of transparency around organization and finance So much wealth in Rome, so much poverty in

the world Not enough on the spiritual journey, for adults or young people, lack of spirituality

What are your dreams for the church?:
Promotion of the need for vocations to the priesthood and religious life Life of priests / nuns to be supported Married priests with support for the family More Deacons Women Deacons Women Priests 10-year tenure for priests from the community A realization about the importance of listening to each other Ecumenical approach The need to look more outwardly, to reach out more to those in need Building on parish community More tolerance, open-minded, open environment Priest to concentrate on spiritual side, other groups to concentrate on running of Church More positive publicity Finances transparent Church to be open for quiet prayer during week, adoration More children's groups, to encourage faith, socialise together to grow solid in faith

St Patrick's, Dustan, Northampton

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Importantly, to be Christian as well as Catholic – with the opportunity to be active – with guidance from the hierarchy
A personal encounter with Christ ..... hopefully to witness God's love of the world with joy.
Family – friendship – welcoming. Care about others – reject racism and other failings –respect other sects – work with them
Being part of the Universal Church, access to sacraments. Part of life I couldn't do without.
Worship, care and prayer for everyone.- in union other people and faiths.
To be following the one true faith and have a moral compass.
The Eucharist – one of the corner stones that my life is built upon.
Cornerstone of my life – a way of life – to help others and reach out to them. Can lead us to consider where we are in our lives.
Born into the faith – a way of life – Christian and Catholic – family values.
Part of a world-wide family. Friendship.
Be true to Christ's teachings. Participation in the sacraments.
Christian as well as Catholic – work with the universal Christian church. The obligations instilled in childhood some 60 years ago stand us in good stead.
A caring community, worldwide Christian family. Led by God, following his teachings, of love and goodness. helpis us to lead good lives. Catholic within the Catholic community.
Pope Francis is an inspiration – will speak openly on 'difficult issues' and encourage us to think about such issues. Often speaks on the importance/care of Mary.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Parish is an oasis of peace and calm – daily Mass. Mothers prayers
Catholic education at home and abroad Catholic Missions – S.V.P.
Lockdown –online Mass – can be very helpful to families.
Welcoming to new families – especially from other countries.
The sacraments – charitable work –care of the sick, housebound, the poor, and aged,
.Being in unity with others.
Funerals (meaningful and supportive). Celebrations of feasts e.g. Christmas and Easter – their spiritual meaning.
Helping families in the special times in their family lives – baptism, first communion, marriage, funerals – in some cases their contact with the Church may be patchy but we have to welcome them with open arms.
Original 'Social Services' – visiting the sick and praying with and for them.
Improving use of technology, keeping up to date with technology and social media.
Social justice involvement and intervention. Social interaction.
Being more welcoming.
Working with the universal Christian church.
Support local community – e.g. food banks.
Sunday school for children – encouraging parental involvement – social events for children.
The ceremonial concentrates the mind most wonderfully.
The use of social media. Outreach has been good – and our leadership responded well and with respect to those we engage with.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Some man-made rules – confusing – stick to the scriptures.

Divorced people suffer – annulment process is cruel and – some embarrassing questions only - reinforce prejudice of some priests towards non—Catholic witnesses.
Exclusion of divorcees.
We lose some priests to marriage – time to change the rules?
Need to improve the experience Church for young families.
Abuse – but practical support now available.
Scripture/Catechism – better access and support in parishes.
Divorce – difficult for 'innocent partners' time to look at rules re the Eucharist.
Treatment of the divorced.
Help parents and children with religious instruction.
Being more open – outgoing about our faith.
Sometimes information is hard to come by – we need to be better informed and open.
Mass changes watering down the liturgy.. Distribution of the Eucharist – celebrant/priests should be involved – not replaced by laity.
Latin Mass – welcomed by many but hard to come by.
Catholic Education in our schools needs more support – currently non-Catholic children can attend school Masses but there is fear this may be ended and if so it can create division among children.
Likewise for non-Catholic staff – some of whom might well be ministers in their own Church – not taking religious instruction for children.
We can be snowed under with our desire to help others – how effectively can we change this?
We might need to learn how best we can look for and find the good in others – possibly the way we live and articulate our lives could be a good start.
Sometimes the Mass is not inclusive and relevant for children and young people.
Exclusion of non Catholics – previously divorced?
Mixed marriages. LGBT.
It's an 'old Church' – history can be constraining. Adjusting to the way the world is changing so rapidly and not always for the better is difficult but certainly Pope Francis has been very active in his messages to the world – especially the love of God and neighbour.

What is your dream for the Church?
Inclusivity irrespective of age, marital status, sexuality, gender, you are welcome in the Church for worship and Holy Communion.
Pastoral support – share each other's burdens – God's welcoming Ministry as we come out of covid restrictions – prayer for those in need, organised prayer groups/house prayers, practical support e.g shopping/lifts for the vulnerable.
The Word – précis of homily in newsletter – renewal mission..
Inclusivity – help parents and help children to be more involved – perhaps especially the newly baptised. Books/pamphlets for children in Church. Possibly a room?
Housebound and sick ensure they are included with home visits and the Eucharist.
Social activity to bring families together – e.g gather after Mass with food from the various nations that make up a parish.
Increase in vocations – improve our reach out to the young.
To grow in strength – to know again how it was when I was a child,
That others, including non Catholics would listen to the ideas of the Church so that they can support my family life. Social help to be increased locally.
Future – at the present rate of vocations – may mean larger Churches with huge car parks on the outskirts of town as in America.
The large Church on the edge of town model is not universally welcome.

St Paul's Thrapston

Process Used:

Herewith the response from St Paul's Thrapston - East Northamptonshire Parishes group. Sadly there were no separate Listening Meetings at either Holy Name Oundle or St Thomas More Raunds At St Paul's we had three one hour sessions after the Thursday morning weekday Mass at which there were mostly the same parishioners attending though not all came to all sessions.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:

That the Church will be more missionary, that her doors will be opened and accessible to all That the Church will pay more attention to the unchurched in the communities she operates That a particular attention will be paid to the needs and struggles of young people in the post-modern society To have more participation of Women in the administration of the Church Coming together for Adoration alone and with each other as a fellowship Worship in different ways, singing and praising the Lord in traditional Mass; in prayer and in worship songs, giving testimonies, listening and joining in By ourselves in a quiet place, outside in nature, in church and our houses Confession, compassion A Church more active in opening its doors to other religions All parishes to have a youth policy to encourage and understand all young people Better communications by the Church/Bishop; opinions on world, family matters Parishes to react with more caring activities for the whole local community More fellowship, a place to meet, a church hall More group prayer, Rosary, Divine mercy chalet Bible study with Catholic teaching (eg Fr Mike Schmitz 'Bible in a year' Lay people to play a bigger part in the functioning of the Church More activities for our young people More gathering outside of Mass Charismatic renewal; Awaken the Holy Spirit A way to be found to re-inspire the youth to believe and drive the Church onwards To recognise the diversity of religions in the modern world and try to connect; to try to inspire greater unity To not be bound by human history, just the Holy Spirit, timeless Deepen our understanding of where our faith leads us; knowing and sharing with others in our community; social contact for support Helping more actively those in need in any way; having a duty to others in any nation or any faith; linking with other Christians locally Adaptable Church structure: Involving women more, ordination of women; having a married clergy; being less Rome centred.

St Peter's, Biggleswade

Process Used:

This submission summarises conversations within the parish of St Peter's, Biggleswade. There have been: -3 Zoom encounters with 5-9 attendees in each -3 in-person encounters with 3-6 attendees in each -One meeting of the SVP group with 7 attendees -4 individual written submissions using paper forms or emails The group session followed the model developed in the Diocese (Introduction, question, silence, each responds, silence, replies, silence, summary and notes)

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Rejoicing in companionship with Jesus and participation in the Truth of God. Role of the Church in reconciling humanity to God. We are part of a Church with a Worldwide membership. We love being able to attend services in any country/language. We feel a wonderful sense of belonging. We are part of a community with similar beliefs and values. The Church is always there for us, at whatever stage of life, even if leave it for a while. It is 'part of our DNA'. We can rely on ancient traditions, that create a link to 2000 years of history There is stability and guidance. Values and practices that some of us learnt in childhood, often appreciated later. The Church is like a family: we stay together and love each other even when disagreeing. Sometimes we have to grapple with the teachings, but still appreciate being part of one community. We appreciate the rituals, such as praying the Rosary. Catholics used to be a stigmatised minority in the past, less so now. The parish offers support, especially for the vulnerable. We have friendships here. We also serve those outside the church, being an 'active force in the community'. We embrace the Church's values of social justice and the 'preferential option for the poor'.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Church handled the pandemic beautifully, with 'faith, humility and prayer'. The moment with the Holy Father prostrate in an empty St Peter's square resonated Pope Francis is a 'world leader', highly respected by many respondents and others outside the Church - although we are aware of opposition to him within the Church The basic teachings of Jesus are a source of light and strength. They are always about inclusion, and we need to follow them better. Some people found comfort in the clear teachings and rules that do not change over time, like a 'groundrock' - although others clamoured for the Church to listen more and move with the times (see Q3) The values of Vatican II are a welcome step forward in how the laity can belong to the Church and how we relate to society. It also helped people understand the Sacraments better. Encyclicals are 'like jewels that help us understand our faith' In recent decades, there has been more dialogue and openness to other denominations, for example mixed marriages are easier. There are some great examples of inspiring preaching and teaching, for example in evangelical churches and the Alpha course (although some were suspicious of the evangelical worship and how money-oriented they found it to be) We are able to hold a great diversity of opinions, worship style ('from Latin Mass to Christian rock') We are now more relaxed with Sunday Mass, e.g. 'we wear jeans', children can move around, we can welcome priests from other denominations We do a lot of good in society, e.g. CAFOD, Night Shelters. We also support other parishioners when they are vulnerable. We are grateful to priests for bringing Communion, we are 'spoiled' by having it so often (although there are concerns about the priesthood too, see Q3) At the local levels, communities often thrive, there is a culture of 'grass root initiatives' (although not always reflected at higher levels) Parish groups, including children's classes are very welcome - although many feel we need more of them Some people felt very welcome in our local parish (although some did not, see Q3).

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The higher levels of Church hierarchy are perceived as 'divorced from ordinary people'. There is a

'disconnect' and inability to listen. Their main role should be to 'facilitate people's relationship with God', but this often fails. Priests can be distant from the reality of life for most of their parishioners, and so fail to strike a chord. Serious concerns about the shortages of priests, which is only set to get worse. 'Why is God not sending enough vocations?' is it a sign that things should change? Can we do more to encourage vocations, e.g. sermons, posters, retreats, etc. We expect priests to take on too many responsibilities when they are already overstretched. They are selected and trained on a spiritual basis, and not to be managers. We need others to take more of the roles in the parish. A Parish Council would be a good start. Many felt that opening up the priesthood to other groups (e.g. married and women) would be the solution. Celibacy seen as 'unnatural by some. However, not everyone agreed that the priesthood should be opened up. Some people felt that the rules are 'too rigid' - although others liked the certainty (see Q2). Serious concerns about the marginalisation of women in the Church. They are always given 'menial jobs'. Some felt that 'the exclusion of women from the priesthood is quite simply wrong' and it 'must change'. Others disagreed and prefer an all male priesthood. The abuse scandals are still a huge stain on the Church's reputation and obstacle to trust. At times, especially in the past, the Church preaches 'based on fear', which is seen by most as inaccurate and unhelpful. However, some thought fear is a useful tool to instil discipline in children. There are too many Catholics still shouldering guilt - but God has redeemed us! Some people think that there is too much emphasis on exclusions. Exclusion of entire groups (e.g. LGBT+), exclusion based on circumstances (e.g. divorce) and even the exclusion of women from roles of responsibility. The huge number of rules around Communion keeps people away, rather than 'help us get closer to Jesus and let his presence bring us to perfection'. 'Something is dreadfully wrong with Confession', people don't like to go despite the possibility of grace. Some people have received judgemental and even offensive responses from priests. The process needs to be improved. 'Teaching on abortion, contraception and other things is not understood. Most Catholics ignore this in early married life… the church is failing if this is God's will and so many do not do it.' We do a bad job of keeping young people engaged past their First Holy Communion. Some reappear for Confirmation and then disappear again. Some people felt we need better ways to keep them in the Church - although others felt it is healthy to question and even move away, the Church can always welcome you back later in life. We need more family and young people activities to keep them engaged. The lack of children liturgy is a problem. The lack of a Parish Council at St Peter's was seen as a loss. It makes it harder for initiatives to get started and created a 'stronghold' of people who control everything. We 'disregard the ability of others to help' and this led to stagnation in the parish. Some people did not feel welcomed at St Peters, although others did (see Q2), so we have the potential to do this well. It is difficult to not have a separate room at St Peter's for groups and activities.

What are your dreams for the church?:
We would love to have more people actively involved in the church. This means more groups, more activities, more volunteers, more chatting…It also means a more engaged involvement in the Mass. Parishioners being 'active in church rather than a passenger' A church where there are no 'strongholds' that exclude others. Where everyone feels they have talents that can contribute. A church that is central in the lives of parishioners, as individuals and also as families. We want to have confidence in our faith. We would like more ways to grow in knowledge and faith, for example more courses and group discussions. Sermons are also a good way to help people deepen their faith. A Church that is 'welcoming and enlightening those in the fringes'. Some people want more radical inclusivity, in step with the example of Jesus. More Catholic visibility at community gatherings, such as the Remembrance celebrations. Many people want to see more opportunities for women, although others are satisfied with the current role of women, especially as those caring for the vulnerable. Some people dream of women preaching from the pulpit, as deaconesses and even priests, although some disagree. Female religious could play bigger roles in parishes. More activities for children and young people, using 'a bigger toolbox'. Having conversations with young people, rather than making them feel like they are being indoctrinated. A strong, vibrant community that

also helps them connect with other young Catholics across the Diocese and the world. We dream of a global Church that is ‘a safe haven, to support everyone and help religious growth’ We should do more to help ‘the poor and those in need’. This could be in interfaith contexts as ‘in an increasingly secular society we have much in common with those motivated by their faiths from different denominations and religions’. The Church should be more vocal about social injustice and the ecological crisis, speaking from its strong theological and moral foundations. More priests and other religious vocations are needed. A Church that ‘focuses on what’s important’: God, the Spirit, the teachings of Jesus. This should help us reconcile divisions while maintaining the beautiful diversity. We need to embrace the teaching about the different parts of the Body and find ways to resolve disagreements with love, as healthy families do. A church that ‘radiates joy’ and so is attractive to others. Local churches that open for people to go to pray during the day/evening.

St Peter's Marlow

Process Used:

Two of us spoke at all masses one Sunday and invited interested people to give their names. We then invited them to meetings in line with their availability. Four meetings, 3 in church during day and evening and one at parishioner's house. Four groups met during January and February. These notes are a reflection of some of the things that came up in those sessions. A total of 24 parishioners were involved, including Fr John and Deacon Kevin.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Here are some notes to give an idea of what came up in response to the question: What is it like for me being a Catholic at St Peter's today? ….. Theme: how can we 'be' church today? • Generally, it seemed that people felt free and secure to say what they felt, even if it was hard to put into words sometimes. • 'I would be disappointed if all this happens then topics like women priests were not addressed.' • 'Not sure what this is going to achieve.' • 'There was a real energy in the room, which is the Holy Spirit. We need more opportunities for this kind of listening.' • Most said that they felt very welcomed at St Peter's, but one or two said this was not their experience. • Worldwide, media portray RC church as a place of guilt and paedophile priests (e.g. the film Spotlight on priests in Boston USA). Need to accept this happened but also to find out what good things people say about the church and invite positive portrayal of St Peters. • 'I've started enjoying mass. I've always loved the hymns' • Church needs to be a place where people know who I am and are pleased to see me. • We know we have to move on, but it's hard to change. • Need to focus on creating community and extending it beyond regular mass goers to their friends and others, especially at weekends. • During mass we have no interaction with one another. It sometimes feels like we have a full church, but it's full of hermits who come to mass, and then going back home to their/our cells. • 'Modern life has taken off at such a pace and made it difficult to keep kids interested in church.' • 'it's so joyful being a friend of Jesus…we want to build a community based on this.' • 'I like it when there is continuity of sermon themes between one week and another, and between priests and deacon.' • 'We discern the Holy Spirit though small interactions. We need to be 'tuned into' the Holy Spirit to recognise his actions. Questions generated: • How to get youth involved? • How do we foster a loving, caring community? • Confirmation and communion groups: parents may put their children forward for formation but not attend church themselves. How can we help these families? • We lost young people and families, how can we reengage them? • Interactions between parishioners after mass tend to be 'chat' rather than respective listening. How can we create time and spaces for us to listen to each other and hear the Holy Spirit through this listening? • How can we reach out to listen to the marginalised and neglects/rejected? • We all know young people and others who have lapsed, since taking the sacraments. Part of this mission is to find what kind of invitation will bring in those at the margins? Offers: • One parishioner offered to host a listening session for youth. • HT of local RC school has offered a room for Synod initiative activities. • Three people happy to host/co-host further listening sessions. • Two others happy to co-facilitate with others. • Parish to look at doing up a parish room to make it more attractive for parish groups to gather in.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
see above

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
see above

What are your dreams for the church?:
Dreams: • to become a real family church where children and young people (and parents) look

forward to Sunday as it is the day they come to church, and has a good social feel also. • Parish facilities being used to build parish community life, not just as an investment/money-raiser. Church and Pugin rooms being in great demand by parishioners to meet, listen and pray. • For our children to come back to church and take an active part in designing the way forward. Suggestions: • A session on Good Friday for lapsed Catholics to talk to us and each other about what happened, why they stopped coming to mass and what do they still value about being/having once been a Catholic? Explore any 'woundedness' of this group and how this is what our religion is all about. • Maybe use a kind of Truth and Reconciliation approach, listening to lapsed Catholics talking about what they feel is wrong with the church – no attempt to defend or to reconvert them, just listen and discern. • Use Catholic art, music and poetry to show the wonderful influence of the church on the Arts. • Going for walks in 2s or 3s around local Park, or pub/cafe sessions to bring people together to listen to each other, with the Holy Spirit in the midst. • Maybe celebrate more – bring back celebrations and festivities throughout the year; processions and parties. • 'We need to make personal invitations to people to join a listening session.' • Make Small Hall into a more comfortable space for developing Synod (journeying together) at St Peter's.

St Peter the Apostle, Rushden

Process Used:

Three afternoon Parish meetings and some outreach visits. Small group prayer and listening to one another.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
What does it mean to you to be a Catholic? • Being part of a local and worldwide community and belonging to a universal church; • A personal encounter with God, open to the Holy Spirit; • A privilege to be a Catholic; something to be proud of; • Grateful to be part of the church; • Gives purpose to life and a sustaining support in times of trouble and hardship; • As a Catholic, we have direct access to the person of Jesus Christ through the Eucharist and the Sacraments; there is nowhere else to go for the forgiveness of our sins; • A life based on prayer to serve and love God; • I feel welcomed in church; • As a Catholic, I feel responsible for handing on the faith to others; • The Church is consistent in its teaching and its celebrations throughout the world; • We have the assurance of the availability of God's truth in the Gospel of Christ; • Provides a framework in which to live one's life and encourages commitment to certain standards; • People can be very judgemental against Catholics; • Being a Catholic is a very big part of my life; it is integral to my identity and it makes me a better person; • Can be difficult being a Catholic in these modern times; • As a convert, I was made to feel very welcome; • It is important to me to be part of a church which traces its lineage back to Jesus and His Apostles, giving access to the Sacraments which, when celebrated, are encounters with the risen Christ; • Not an unblemished Church but I find its foundation much more stable than the Church of England; • Examples of saints/martyrs gives me guidance on how to live today; • I find clarity of teaching very helpful eg Catholic Social Teaching; • Focus should be on attending Mass and receiving the sacraments and not on the gimmicks of beautifully choreographed services; • People know I am a Catholic and it affects the people I work amongst; • As members of the Catholic Church, we are part of a large community which includes the communion of saints.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well? • Gives a sense of belonging; support in a loving community; • Since Vatican 2 there is a better understanding of the Liturgy; Latin could be a barrier and English translation has widened understanding; • Charismatic renewal has helped bring the Holy Spirit into the Church; • Embraced technology: in Covid showed initiative in increasing online services; • Increasing use of laity (eg Extraordinary Ministers); • The Church has come a long way since the 60s eg women's ministry and servers; • A lot more inclusive over the last half-century; • Parish Forum with the priest's guidance and encouragement leading to formation of groups offering faith based friendships, fellowships and support to the parish but also to the wider local community; • Social outreach (eg SVP and Legion of Mary); • Closer dialogue with other denominations; • We are obedient to the will of God and the infallible teaching of the Church; • Church has put in place rigorous safeguards at all level to prevent any further abuse; shows it learns from its past failings.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well? • The Church is overcentralised in Rome; • Young people leave the church in early teens too often; • Not enough lay participation—especially young people; • We need counsellors for youth; • Early experience of confessionals can be negative: they can be dark and frightening and sometimes the priest can be intimidating; • Some experience the church's being unsympathetic and unsupportive in times of matrimonial break up or difficulty; some have felt lost/cut adrift and excluded. Some people feel the

Church's attitude has had a damaging effect; • The isolation of priests needs to be addressed; • Priests should not have to be business managers or administrators; • Preparation for marriage is inadequate at times; • A need for courses to help people enter ministries; • A need for the Church to modernise; • Priests are not trained to relate to women and children; • Historical abuse has tainted the Church worldwide; (but see final point in previous section); • To evangelise the laity need more knowledge: they need teaching; • More specific happenings like Alpha Courses would be good: something people enjoy;

What are your dreams for the church?:
What are our dreams for the Church? • Important that it does not change too much; doctrine and Sacraments must not be watered down; • It needs a new vision to bring families back into the Church; • We need presence of churches in new housing estates; • More missionary understanding of our faith for all the community. More and better catechesis for all; • The Church needs to be more inclusive to embrace those groups currently feeling unwelcome; • There is a need for real leadership in the Church; • Consideration should be given for female ordination (eg deacons); • Priests could have families/wives as in the Eastern rite; widen options for priesthood as the value of married priests coming through the Ordinariate has demonstrated; • Celibacy still to be continued and valued; • The Church needs to continue to actively campaign for every life to be respected and valued from conception to natural death, even if this is not the popular view; • There has been an erosion in the following of faith due to the secular pressures of anti pro-life and LBGT government pressures. This erosion has been accelerated by Covid; • Society has changed and it is much harder for any child to belong to any faith now. All last three points exemplify Faith v Culture; • A faith community that loves, supports and encourages all members; • Recognise evil in the world and use St Michael's prayer after Mass; • Make fuller use of the media to express Christian beliefs and to amend the misconceptions of Catholics in the eyes of the wider world; • Our hope is that the Church will grow ever stronger as the result of the Synod; • Clergy need to take more responsibility for teaching/disseminating faith knowledge; • A church free of corruption, including true repentance and an understanding of the impact of abuse; • More evangelising—especially via the laity.

St Teresa's, Beaconsfield

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
A variety of listening opportunities for the parish.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Community
Many common words like “faith”, “spirituality”, “community”, “universality” were used in the recorded comments and mostly in the same context. The Church was seen as a supportive partner and gave a sense of certainty.
Sharing in structure and values is important. You know where you are.
However, in present times, belonging to the Catholic Church gives some reason to be critical of us, particularly relating to the abuse scandals. With no specific local comments, it could be contrived to being party to this.
Respondents felt a sense of pride about belonging to the Catholic Church. Being part of a community was the most common thread from all of the responses and this was expressed in various ways. It gave many a great sense of belonging.
A serving community that shared a common belief and lived by the same morals being upheld by the Church and having the same rules and obligations. Adhering to these morals, rules and regulations is what makes people feel happy and gives them a sense of peace.

Care and Service
One phrase that stood out was “The Church is like a warm blanket”. Another aspect of being part of a community was the care and service that the Church provided for those who were possibly less fortunate or in difficult circumstances. SVP was referenced more than once.
It means to think of others and their needs and to do the best you can to meet those needs.
To try to be the best person that you can be and to recognise that true happiness comes from leading a ‘good’ life and not from material possessions.

History and Tradition of the Church
Belonging to the Church with a long tradition and history was something that many were proud of too.
With no specifics mentioned on this, it can be related to the sense of “belonging” especially when linked to the universality of the Church. The traditions of the Church as passed on from the Apostles, Popes, Bishops and Priests worldwide and sharing in this commonality is a huge part of what it means to be a Catholic for many.

Universality
The tradition is a strong sense of pride because “you can't reject what you never had” and the Catholic Church is what people want to preserve. The fact that worldwide Catholics share in the same Mass and follow the same liturgy everyday increased the sense of belonging to an extension of our local community.
The “strict” parameters of the Mass also add to the feeling of worldwide unity. We are able to attend Mass in other countries, being celebrated in a foreign language and still be able to follow the Mass because of the beautiful and common Liturgy.
Being a Catholic means ‘Everything and Nothing’ having been brought up a Catholic, having the morals and teachings instilled has meant I still have the values but no longer go to Church.
There were also comments of how this universality meant being part of a local and universal family. Some felt that the Liturgy also leads to “verbal unity” by virtue of the common prayers. Interestingly, a teenage respondent commented on the Sunday commitment or the Sunday obligation – it was felt

that this meant that the community was more attuned to one's neighbours due to this frequency. One statement recorded said that 'Catholicism is the peg on which one could hang your Christianity'.

Faith and Spirituality

Faith and Spirituality was another theme that came up in the responses in various and similar guises – "bringing a spiritual dimension to what is ordinary". Other comments focussed on living the faith by being forgiving and treating other people as equal and as we would like to be treated. For some this meant showing respect (fear of God?) by the way we live our lives.

Negative comments

Mixed in with the mostly positive comments were the negative connotations that many felt were pinned on Catholics because of the "sins of a few'. There is a feeling of being embattled, that many have an incorrect view or opinion of Catholics because of the various abuse scandals around the world and the manner in which this was handled by the hierarchy. The bad press that this received has not helped as this aided the public to form an opinion, rightly or wrongly and thus paint all Catholics with the same brush.

Others had had negative experiences of unsupportive clergy, or a non-welcoming or what felt like a judgemental community, leading to years of non-attendance. But being 'born a Catholic' led to acceptance.

Being a practising Christian meant that more often than not you were in the minority and even more so when one is a Catholic.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?

(Analysed by 'Frequency of Response'– the result of a 'partly' weighted survey of the responses, where 'groups' only count for 1 response – so, underestimating the real number of responses).

1 Charity Work – 15 responses

The most frequently praised 'work' is the Church's involvement with charity. Within this category, the most often mentioned were work with the homeless, the sick, the destitute – organisations such as the SVP. Of note is the observation that, in the main, the work was attributed to the laity – perhaps not surprising as our respondents were all from the laity.

2 The Sacraments and Pope Francis'– Two headings, 11 responses each

2a The Sacraments – 11 responses.

The Sacraments were seen and appreciated as the very core of, and milestones in, our lives. They were praised for the beauty and sensitivity – leaving lasting impressions in the cases of Communion, Marriages, Funerals, and the relief and support of a good Confession.

2b Pope Francis – 11 responses

Loved by all, and someone to be proud of outside the church – the very embodiment of the living Christ, an example way beyond the church.

3 Consistency, Parish Priest and Social Groups'– Three headings, 9 responses each

3a Consistency – 9 responses

Respondents liked the Church's consistency and found its moral stance 'helpful', 'a rudder in strong waters', 'a way through', 'a guideline in shifting sands', 'a code for life'.

3b Parish Priests – 9 responses

Respondents were extremely appreciative of their 'good' priests: cf "Our parish priest goes far beyond the task; he really cares, he gives his time." "There is a real sense of value of their commitment and time" (Quote from a 'Confirmation' teenager.)

3c Social Groups and Events – 9 responses

Respondents wanted, needed and valued a life with other people organised around the church. They did need or want them to be 'exclusively' Catholic. They felt that where offered, this is something well done.

4 Social Outreach – 8 responses
Separate from Social Events – a sense of preparedness to welcome, walk alongside, befriend and support people other than members in the Catholic Church.

5 Working together – Ecumenism – 5 responses
This is about shared goals and aims with people from other denominations and none – again mainly around charitable works: eg 'Ecumenical citizens Advise Centre), 'Churches Together', 'Careers Springboard (job search help)'.

6 Welcome, IT and Livestreaming'– 5 responses each
6a Welcome – 5 responses
It always feels warm and welcoming – an atmosphere in general exuded by our church here in this parish.
6b IT and Livestreaming – 5 responses
Since the time of the pandemic, the use of the livestream for Masses and services has been really appreciated. For those who are elderly, infirm or supported in a Nursing Home or Residential Home, it offers a real opportunity to feel part of the community.
In addition, the 'teach-ins', both Diocesan and local, were signalled positively.

7 Universality and Social Teaching – 4 responses each
7a Universality – 4 responses
The fact that the Church exists and offers a consistency of services throughout the world and gives a sense of world-wide community in which one feels 'at home' wherever one is.
7b Social Teaching – 4 responses
The value of the social teaching has set the tone for many Catholics, whether at home or abroad – gives a sense of justice and fairness.

8 Schools, Working with Children and Missionaries – 3 responses each
8a Schools – 3 responses
Catholic schools have a reputation for quality of teaching, and for manners, behaviours and attitudes.
8b Working with Children – 3 responses
This is particularly appreciated in our parish, where the Parish Priest and Deacon were specifically commended – the amount of catechesis, children's liturgy and, particularly children's Masses, scored well.
8c Missionaries – 3 responses
Missionary work was also seen in positive terms, but generally seen as work carried out by, and attributed to, priests and religious orders.

OTHERS

9 'Prayer' and 'Children's services' – 2 responses each

10 'New Liturgy', 'Inclusivity', 'Homilies', 'Synod' and 'Making me a better person' – 1 response each

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?

The Scandal of Abuse

Not surprisingly many of those who participated mentioned the scandal of abuse as one of the areas that the Church had not handled well. This was a twofold criticism that, firstly, the abuse had been allowed to take place and then secondly the way the scandal was handled – a cover-up.

Church being out of touch

Often these thoughts were linked to the Church being out of touch with the mind of society and a failure to identify with the experience of most people. People often thought that the Church was too exclusive. This was mentioned in a number of areas: the approach of the Church to questions to do with LGBTQ issues. The handling of divorce and those in second marriage situations. Some people have to choose between marriage and going to Church. The church turns its back on 'loyal people'. In mixed marriages, the person of another Christian tradition is not able to participate fully in the Mass and this can be very painful.

The Church does not reflect the present society. This sometimes makes the Church seem out of touch and not relevant. For instance, in the area of birth control.

Young people

Young people were not switched on by the Church. They feel as though the Church was not relevant to their daily lives. They do not always feel safe and supported.

Education

Education – lay people – young and old. Education was often mentioned. Sermons were not accessible and the language used was often outdated and opaque.

Mass

Not enough joy in the celebration and some felt they no longer wanted to participate because there was no 'uplift'. People often felt that they were not inspired. A younger mother expressed the view that to fully worship she needed to attend a community church.

There was a difference of opinion over the use of Latin in the Mass – some seeing it as has having a beauty and resonance, others not wanting to hear Latin phrases. The pandemic had allowed communities to use social platforms to live stream the Mass. This had been much appreciated and its disappearance, as we moved out of the pandemic, left some people feeling that they were no longer able to access the Mass at convenient times and without the need to travel. There is not enough liturgical awareness and the Mass and its structure is not sufficiently understood.

The use of general absolution had been valued and there had never been an explanation as to why it had stopped.

Continuing Education

There was feeling that the Church was not good at helping people with ongoing education – 'other churches do it better'. Not enough use of social media to overcome this problem. 'There was a general lack of knowledge about the Church and its teachings'. There is a need for ongoing evangelization.

Communication

Communication was also mentioned. The Church needs to 'embrace more modern approaches to information and communication '. There isn't enough use of social media to connect with people. Not enough emphasis on young families. The Church does not always recognise the pressures that young families are under. There isn't enough of positive, encouraging words. The younger generation responds better to this approach. Parish councils are not pro-active enough in communicating with the wider parish. The parish may not always have good levels of connection with the Vatican, there is often a disconnect.

Lack of ecumenism
It was noted that there are not enough activities with other churches and peoples of other faiths. It was mentioned that we emphasise 'Catholicism' over 'Christianity'.
The Church as an Institution
The hierarchy can sometimes abuse the power that it has – too institutionalized, stuck in the past and too controlling. There are too many rules and restrictions. The wealth and resources of the Church is not used for the good of all. Often, there is no visible accountability and no repercussions for those who misuse their power and position. If there are no set standards for all, 'cracks will appear'.

Inclusivity
Local parish communities are lacking in community spirit and awareness of each other. A need to be aware of those who are not regular attendees. There are often perceived cliques and those who never join in. The Church is not welcoming enough. It is sometimes too austere and does not recognise and celebrate diversity.

Support for Priests
There was a feeling that priests were not supported enough given the growing demands made upon them. These demands mean that more traditional priestly functions, i.e. home visits, no longer happen. This is not good for the 'mental health of the priests and for their parishioners'. Young priests are often too restrictive, which is often a threat to church when they are full of rules and no joy. We need to develop more mutual accountability and support. We need to recognise the complimentary roles of clergy and laity.
Global Issues
Some thought that we are not actively involved in caring for the planet. Others expressed the view that we should not follow society's lead on climate change. We should heed the words of Jesus – 'do not be afraid'. In general, the Church's teaching on social justice is not highlighted enough – it needs to be talked about, explained and sold.
Women
Women are not on an equal footing with men. Many expressed the view that women should be allowed to be ordained as priests or that there should be women deaconesses. Also, that male priests should be allowed to marry.

What is your dream for the Church?
*(TN. Thematic Nuclei.)

Church as part of daily life
There was a feeling that the same people come to Sunday Mass regularly. They listen, discuss the Mass briefly outside the church and then go about their daily business until the next Sunday. There was a dream to have large numbers of people participating, with a sense of busyness about the church, present every day. The image of a 'beehive' with many people buzzing around, in and out, was described.

Young Catholics
From responders of all age groups, we heard a desire to involve young families, nurture them and help them to bring their children up in the faith. To do this there could be changes in terms of youth ministry to involve young people in the Liturgy but also social activities which build community and a sense of journeying together. When children are encouraged in this way, they will want to take part in something more. *(TN: I, III.)

More frequent social occasions around the church with chances to share meals together appear popular. Diversity in the church can be encouraged in this way.

Following the Pope's Example
People thought that the ecological ideas in the church are only slowly developing. Whilst Laudato Sì was not specifically mentioned, there were oblique references to the Pope's recommendations and a desire to do more. The Pope's path of care for the poor and a simple life was cited as an example for all to follow. To discern the best way to achieve this, there were suggestions for social team building in all age groups. To have more youth involvement in charitable activities, to encourage our unity and already established dialogue with other local churches and to take local measures to care for our planet and therefore the people in less developed parts of the world. *(TN: V, VII.)

Collaboration
Collaboration with other dioceses, with lay groups, religious organisations and other sectors of society can be encouraged with the use of social media when face-to-face meetings are logistically difficult. *(TN: VI.)

Discernment
There were statements saying that the mass was 'old fashioned' and that we could be more 'charismatic' in our worship. There was also a wish for the church to remain constant and be there for our grandchildren and beyond. There is scope for discussion with the laity, they would like to discern together with the clergy on occasions whilst recognising that any consensus flows from the common obedience to the Spirit. *(TN: IX.)

Social Media
Social media is here to stay, the strictures of the pandemic have driven change in that the responders welcome online masses. It was realised that a greater online presence should develop with platforms explaining, in a modern way, the beliefs of the church – hence the importance of involvement of the young. An online presence with platforms explaining the beliefs of the church would enable a positive public image to be more widely known. One person wanted to request a special platform for children on the Vatican website *(TN: III.)
Prevent future Scandal
The scandals of abuse and its cover up were a subject in question 3 listening but the dream is to continue to address and eradicate such atrocities ever happening again

Women and Lay People
Many people dreamt of a greater involvement for women in the Church with frequent reference to the possibility of women deaconesses, married priests and even women priests. The idea of more lay people helping to share in the immense workload of priests was also suggested. *(TN: V)
I dream of a church with an athletic and stimulating environment that young people want to be part of. To be a missionary church and the hub of the community for people of all faiths and none. *(TN: I, II)

A Synodal Church
We must dream that our church both locally and globally can become a participatory and co-responsible Church and form ourselves in Synodality. *(TN: VII, IX, X.)

St Teresa of the Child Jesus, Princes Risborough

Process Used:

There were 9 meetings of up to 6 people – 3 meetings held via Zoom and 7 in person - total participants: 49 In organising these contributions, I have grouped the 'Ten Synod Themes' as became appropriate through the conversations.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

A – COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY AND LISTENING Ghosts of the Distant Past: still live in memories • fortress Catholics – self-imposed separation/exclusivity • snobbery – class issues in parishes especially as regarded belonging or influence • priest as absolute monarch or Tsar – oppressive – leading to helplessness/voicelessness in the face of authority (even adults/parents would not dream of asking questions e.g. about children's experience of physical abuse in school) • sectarianism, bigotry, tribal Catholicism – no such thing as ecumenism – not even allowed to enter other churches – told only one place Truth could be found • at 7 years old told by nun that father would burn in hell because he was not a Catholic • you carry forever the anger and distress at oppression by priests • guilt – still carrying this from strict domineering version of the faith • mixed marriages stigma and disapproval • abuse at the hands of priests, monks and nuns • Catholicism as a world of its own • priests with backs to us and no female altar servers; at least these have changed Spectres of the Present: the public face of the Catholic Church • ordinary Catholics feel shame at o widespread child abuse o Appalling cover-up o prime concern of hierarchy to maintain reputation • asking us to pray in reparation – are we responsible for their sins? • now ashamed to admit Catholicism in public • how can I stay in this church? (but also, where else would I go?) • why would anyone join this church? not just abuse issue but marginalisation of women and intolerance of divorced/remarried (shame and anger re Boris Johnson's third marriage – laughing stock/hypocrisy) and LGBTQ – the Church is not welcoming to changing understanding • why would anyone want to be a priest or encourage their sons to become priests? • old priests, tired and overworked – why would anyone join this? • the Church is dying • compulsory celibacy is unnatural • women do everything but have no voices • what other walks of life are women and married men prohibited from? • we won't see the change even if it comes – can't wait – do it locally • it's a men's club not open to the voices of women • exclusive language further excludes women • a priest should be chosen by and from the community • the obstacle to needed change is hierarchy – it distorts the body of Christ • bishops need to be open and transparent – they are isolated from the people • if the church is to survive – hierarchy and governance of the church must be open – • Bishops Conference is not transparent e.g. Agenda and Minutes should be published Ghosts of the Recent Past • why take part in this process if it's just going to be rubber-stamping? • consultations in the past (e.g. on the family) seemed to go nowhere – no feedback, never knew what was sent on or decided • (but) Bishops' Conference reaction to the family consultation was to say the people didn't understand the teaching of the church well enough – e.g. divorce/remarried, LGBT – 'we needed to be taught better' was a shocking response that showed they didn't listen • why give our ideas if they're just going to be thrown in the wheelie-bin Human Companions • the family of the parish • our own families, whether or not they come to Church and whether or not they fit into the church's desired mould • 'lapsed' Catholics – who seeks them out? – why are they not attracted to come back? • one who no longer comes to church said: there's nothing there for me. Just coming to church is not the same as community. • need to extend welcome to all • anyone not within the church's blue-print of a good person is excluded e.g. gay/divorced-and-remarried • the church needs to show it is interested in the whole world • we need voices from wider groups and perspectives – there should be no fear of this • the church is good when it reaches out to the margins – inclusive – not just accompanying but real belonging • deeply disheartened and wearied by being told to hold to models of human nature that do not encompass the reality of that nature made in the image and likeness of God – how dare we speak of our gay brothers and sisters as 'intrinsically disordered'

Spiritual Companions • the Communion of Saints • all who have walked the Way before • sense of historical tradition – our link all the way back to Christ

B – SPEAKING OUT, AND AUTHORITY & PARTICIPATION So much of the Catholic experience is bound up in the figure of the priest: • 'absolute monarch' priest can stifle • tired priest can mean nothing happens • the model of priesthood is too narrow we will never get enough priests unless we widen the net all my life we've been asked to pray for vocations – look what's come of it – almost nothing. The Holy Spirit is telling us something • male and female perspectives are not the same – we need to hear a diversity of viewpoints and experience. We are enriched when we hear more. • priest should be shepherd but often is a gatekeeper • a parish priest who is a good leader/organiser finds the right leaders in the community • (but) we are all too passive – we assume the priest should be the leader • it doesn't matter if a priest is male or female, married or single, gay or straight – what we want is good holy people • clericalism – there's too much dependence on the parish priest – if he lacks vision there's a vacuum • instability/impermanence makes everything difficult e.g. series of non-diocesan priests with uncertainty in each case of length of stay • lay leadership team needed around priest for continuity • Divine Renovation needs a team – PP must be open to that • (but) Divine Renovation presupposes the centrality of the priest – still an authority figure • priests as figures of authority can infantilise the laity • strong parish priest may 'touch on the shoulder' and get individuals to do things but this approach is personal and can lead to cliques – who's in and who's out – this happens if a priest is seen (and sees himself) as the centre or head of the parish instead of part of it • where does permission come from to act? • we need to take things forward ourselves

C: DIALOGUE IN CHURCH & SOCIETY, AND ECUMENISM • public face of the Church is dreadful (see A) – we are all tainted • not comfortable with being asked to evangelise when the news is so negative – full of scandals and abuse and so much money • and yet: Bishops should communicate more – expressing the faith and social teaching and proclaiming the good things we do Voices not heard in the media unlike Archbishop of Canterbury or Basil Hume – they do not exhibit parrhesia • not good at apologising for abuse or righting wrongs – or showing that lessons have be learnt – e.g. safeguarding • we can be insular, like a sect • we don't evangelise, unlike other churches – it seems foreign to us, not part of our culture – how do we get out of the Car Park? – and what do we do then? • we can put ourselves on a pedestal as the only accessors or purveyors of Truth - perception from outside – e.g. comment to a Catholic about, Your God • (but) one participant said: Truth is encapsulated in the Catholic Church … we have something peculiar – special – we can't accommodate • other churches can seem to have more energy and joy • SVP & CAFOD better side of the church – social action • we are not so good at personal witness/testimony – not in our culture • being Catholic is an 'identity' as well as a 'belonging' – must not be a club – must be an open-hearted reaching out to all • we need online/digital/social media presence – especially to touch the young • we are losing the communications battle for people's attention – how does the church add value to the world – how do we know it and how do people outside the church know it? • where are we adding value to the world? • our eternal message needs to be packaged for the here and now • let people hear the word of God • speak to the needs around us • we speak to ourselves • other churches are meeting places for a huge variety of people, organisations, community groups – open to everyone – our church is locked • how do we 'sell' ourselves? • dialogue and discussion are possible e.g. media – soaps – engage with religious questions – don't see the Church doing that in the media • effect of Church's sanctioning of Boris Johnson's third marriage – to the world this reeks of hypocrisy and fawning to power. To many Catholics this is simply an insult to those who divorced and remarried who are denied communion (by some priests) • attitudes to LGBT people casts shame on us all – discriminatory, cruel, denying how God made them • 'Natural Law' is a human construct – a way to perceive the world. Not 'fact' or 'truth'. • Churches Together – our parish always on the edge of this – welcomed but uncomfortable • I still think being Catholic is OK. My Mum told me we were special and I believed her. But then I grew up. Complexities of Ecumenism: • not allowed in

other churches as children – lingers… • there are some core beliefs we won't let go • power of personal testimonies v our diffidence • need to put our arms around other people – not just Catholic-Catholic-Catholic • we are usually set apart – seen as standoffish • need to build on what binds us together rather than what keeps us apart

D: SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMON MISSION; DISCERNING & DECIDING; FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY All conversation around these topics started with the priesthood and 'the hierarchy' – see earlier sections. odd timing for these discussions when we've been so long without all being at Mass together Helpful: • sense of the universal church – a wider family with many cultures and perspectives – not just local and parochial • living out our faith through works – a way of being: faith in action, not just 'piety' • community is the core • a sense of solidarity especially young people e.g. Lux and World Youth Day • community of faith – recognising self in others and vice-versa Issues: • tension between a desire for a parish to be a self-governing entity and a desire for a 'permanent' priest e.g. a new priest could stop/change everything • a priest should be associated with the sacraments, the people should do everything practical • parishes need much more efficient organisation - lay people running things, managing, directing - – let us just get on with it • roles limited for women – male-centred • who decides which activities are relevant to mission? • do we need permission to act? Why? Who from? • Church teaching documents – need to be publicised and opportunities for discussion made available • might be nobbled by priest to do something but then given no support • formation for roles in parish/church ?? • some priests are detached • different priests have different attitudes e.g. who gets communion/ who gets baptised/ who gets married – in their church • some want certainty – fixed rules – most want warm welcome to all • at present there's no need to commit to anything in the parish – just come and go • recurring themes: o married priests o mercy o welcome everyone o COVID legacy – will we recover? Synodality • can we trust this process at all? • prepared to engage but bitter experience… • things need to be credible in the light of experience • need firm commitment to do something – address issues that are raised in this synodal process • will anything change? These conversations can raise some awareness of problems – and they let us speak – but will there be an effect? • who leads? Who follows? • should there be lay careers in the Church? • Pastoral Area – time to develop relationships between parishes Speaking from the heart is the essence of Synodality, so: Individual voices on being in the Church • Catholic is an identity • pride from a Tradition back to the Apostles • comfort in grief – what we look to the Church for • Heaven and Earth • Presence of God • the 'Veritas' of the Church • guidance on morality – need reminders and leadership from the bishops • teaching of mercy through the world • focus on Social Justice • faith gives structure to life. • I talk to God to sort out problems. I have my own relationship with God. • being Catholic comes with a rule book and paternalistic authority. I don't have to be my own God. • rules can give safety and stability • rules can give peace • rules can be causes for alienation and marginalisation • sadness about people not welcome – once focus of unwelcome was abortion – now gender and sexuality – must extend welcome to all – need to re-express some teachings • gap where young people should be • keep harping back to the social structures of 1st century Palestine – who writes the history: men – women are written out • what is it to be Catholic? Why not Christian? What seems to matter is being in the Party – toeing the line… • Christians have Christ but we have it all • half the population is excluded from priesthood – anxiety that acute shortage may lead to more unhealthy men coming in - it doesn't matter if a priest is male or female, married or single, gay or straight – what we want is good holy people • priests not formed for real parish life and the need to work in collaboration with 'non-ordained' • I want the church as a whole to be inclusive with deep respect for others and unafraid of going out to others. • hierarchical nature of the church causes obstacles – pyramid completely the wrong way round – as if only the clergy matter and the rest tag along • finding it harder and harder to be in a male church – exclusive language increasingly grating – not a brother or son – increases marginalisation of women • double standards – already-married Anglican priests able to become Catholic priests – hypocritical • an immediate link – a deeper connection – with

other Catholics – 'Catholic-Christian' – a family within a family – belonging • being a Catholic when young was about obeying the rules. Now it's about trying to be a follower of Christ – listening at Mass, reflecting, and putting it into action • needs not to be a club but about embracing fellow human beings, building bridges – part of universal family • too easy to fall into 'we are a people set apart' • as a child, home was a place where a practical expression of faith – works – could be and was lived out • it's all I've known – a bit like breathing – it informs everything • Zoom masses more intimate and 'no obligation' has made me feel I want to go more • much is good in the Church but the organisation is flawed • why stay? because if you leave you cannot effect change • faithfulness through action e.g. Catholic mother, part of the 'kitchen crew' • need to focus on the teaching of Christ, pure and simple • still some hope & joy despite what's going wrong • don't always want going to Mass to have a social aspect – sometimes just want anonymity – to be allowed to meet Jesus without social pressure • I long to be unembarrassed to wave the Catholic flag – not to feel shame on saying, I am a Catholic. • the priesthood is a distinct men's club which makes the whole church feel like one • teaching needs to be expressed better – good apologetics • heard a lot about love in my youth but didn't see it in practice – felt like giving up • the discovery of the Holy Spirit was completely overwhelming – despite the world's comments [about the church], the main thing is spirituality – a light all the time

E: CELEBRATION (PRAYER & LITURGY) • the Church does Mass and the sacraments well • importance of access to sacraments • without that wider sense of the Church it can feel small and languishing – need to remember, there are so many of us • does the liturgy speak to people? – it can lack the joy, enthusiasm and fire of some other churches • one participant praised Mass as celebrated at the Oratory – truthful, orthodox, beautiful, doesn't try to accommodate to the world – hard not to be engaged • wonderful sense of community in worship • why come to Mass? Commitment/obligation can build into a sense of community/belonging • sense of sacramentality distinctive from protestant churches • treasures of the church – spirituality – need to be shared more – spiritual formation • important to keep genuflection, grace before meals • universal special years are nice e.g. Year of Mercy and Year of St Joseph • Who are sermons/homilies for? • Could we have different liturgies e.g. for young people – especially the music • Use people's gifts to enhance the liturgy e.g. young people as musicians • Catholic devotional stuff v protestant reliance on scripture – eye-opener as grew up – how different a non-Catholic environment was • appreciation of Mass being the same anywhere in the world – wherever you go, the Mass is the Mass.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:

See also individual submissions #4 and 9

St Thomas Aquinas and All Saints, Bletchley, Milton Keynes

Process Used:

There were three Conversations held in the Parish in which all four questions were considered. Each conversation was in-person. Approximately 25 People attended in total. Additionally we received two written submissions from two of our teenage parishioners.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be a follower / disciple of Jesus Christ –being in love with Him. Fulfillment, sense of family, being around like minded people – worldwide community. Being under the authority of the Pope Rooted and immersed in the sacraments. Having the celebration of Mass at the centre of one's life. To be rooted in history – a real and tangible connection with the saints. Identity and something valuable to pass on.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Second Vatican Council and its implementation. The Church wraps itself around you with love in times of personal crisis. Religious Education in our Catholic Schools. Universality of the Church. Good and swift response to the challenges of the pandemic with the provision of live-streaming. Effective Marriage support. Effective bereavement support. Modern and creative catechesis.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Clergy abuse crisis. Culture of secrecy and cover-up. Seeking to protect the institution. Atrocities in the Irish Church especially around the care of children and vulnerable people. Vatican appears to be too political and divided. Too much pressure placed upon clergy – not given enough support or encouragement. Lack of pastoral direction from the centre regarding issues related to LGBT +. Lack of engagement with young people. Quality of liturgy in some parishes is very poor stemming from a culture of complacency. Pope Francis often appears to be too negative and uninspiring. Too critical of the clergy.

What are your dreams for the church?:
More consistent pastoral approach from the clergy – presently no one priest seems to say the same as another. Better training needed? Clerical celibacy should be optional. Update Catechism to reflect Church teaching regarding transgender and LGBT +. More educational resources for home Catechesis as well as for schools particularly in the area of Christian anthropology and gender identity & sexual identity More activities for young people. Pope Francis should be more supportive and less negative of his Priests. Perhaps he could smile a bit more to radiate the joy of the Gospel. Female servers at all Masses including the Extraordinary form. Separate robing facilities for male and female servers.

St Thomas More, Towcester

Process Used:
The process was multi-faceted: The response sheets were given alongside the parish newsletter across the Masses at one weekend; the priest spoke at every Mass giving a reminder of the diocesan launch and the purpose / aim of the synod was given. Encouraged people to respond in a prayerful manner either individually or with others, encouraged people to also reach out to the housebound, or those on the margins of the parish. Further information was provided on the parish website, with reference being made to the diocesan website and a useful YouTube clip on this matter, lead by Austen Ivereigh. A means of collecting the responses was made. Aside from this there were two open opportunities to reflect and graciously speak / listen to people's response - one evening and one during the day: again these open sessions were achieved in a prayerful and reflective way. The priest was not directly involved in the groups; to allow a sense of 'freedom' to speak and listen and not be unduly influenced. The groups were facilitated by listeners who wrote notes. The priest has drip-fed reminders about this opportunity to participate.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
* An accident of birth. Yet it's when you question that faith that the answer lies. I feel part of a much larger family being a Catholic. * It is the most important defining characteristic of myself * To attend Mass regularly. Prayer. To be fully Christian (Catholic) and to follow Jesus and to try, through the Holy Spirit, to live out my Catholic faith as a missionary disciple, whilst drawing close to Christ on my journey, growing in my faith and reaching out to others. I love to have spiritual conversations with others, but don't always do it very well. * To belong to a worldwide worshiping community which is not inhibited by belonging to one culture. This should help avoid a narrow, blinkered attitude in our churches. To be Catholic means standing up for what is right and not influenced by every whim and fashion in society. * An opportunity to practise my faith in a community with people I know, respect and like. It enables me to be able to bring up my children with a knowledge of the Bible, understanding right and wrong, hopefully in a way that will make them enjoy being Catholic and want to attend Mass. * It is important to continue and believe in the faith which my ancestors have suffered to retain. * Belonging to a family. Feeling confident in my beliefs. * I am a cradle catholic (with a small 'c'); the tradition I was born into and it taught me right from wrong. I'm grateful to my tradition because it set me on a life-long quest for what Jesus called life and its fulness - an exciting journey of both joys and struggles. I do not believe that ANY religion has a monopoly regarding The Truth about our Creator / Source. I strongly believe in Christ Jesus and his message. * I became part of God's family through Baptism. Since joining the parish 12 years ago and becoming involved in volunteering in various local organisations I hope to spread the warmth of my faith to local people. * Foremost a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ living with an intent to do as he would and as he wants. Thereafter a member of a family, global in geographic terms and continuing undying in chronological terms. Also a member of a church which has a material social and moral role in my present world, a role which requires it to be generally right and to be outspoken about being right, showing leadership. None of the last is inconsistent with humility * After coming to Mass with my husband week after week and listening to the Mass I realised it was the right thing for me and to feel I was at one with the Lord, through my faith in the church. * I was christened in the Anglican church at birth. My decision to become a Catholic arose when I was engaged to be married to my fiance, a Catholic. * To be Catholic means everything to me. I cannot imagine how I would have got through seriously difficult times in my life without my without my Catholic faith; being able to call on God's help in these times has been the rock that supports me. * It means: belonging to God's big family all over the world. Going into a Catholic church anywhere in the world and feel at home, whatever the language and local traditions. It is easy to make new, strong friendships wherever you go when you belong to the Church. The privilege but also the

responsibility to be the 'salt of the earth and the light of the world'. Being able to receive the Sacraments of the Church to enable me to find the Way of Holiness and Everlasting Happiness with god in Heaven. * It means belonging to a supportive, caring and loving community who try to follow Christ's example and teachings to love and care for one another. * It means believing in Jesus and try to lead a good life through following his teachings and trying to be kind and friendly to all. * To have a moral compass by which to lead my life. The Church and its teachings about eternity give me a purpose to life. * I think of myself more as a Christian but as I was brought up as a Catholic that is the Church I attend as it is most familiar to me. * A sense of belonging to something good and holy. Being a member of the mystical Body of Christ, yet feeling so unworthy. Feeling welcome in spite of my shortcomings. Knowing I am loved and forgiven and safe. A great comfort and knowing my conscience will guide me to choose the right path. Our blessed Lady is revered by the Catholic church which I feel Jesus wants, other Christians do not love her as we do. * Part of a world-wide community living the words of Jesus Christ. St Paul's letter to the Corinthians speaks of Faith, Hope and Love and the greatest of these is Love - the love inside the Church (mostly!) for each other and those outside is heartening. * To belong to God's true family. To learn from others. To show others through love, kindness and faith. To know God protects and guides me. To know God loves me even when I get things wrong, but will take my hand and explain through others or readings. To be open to change, God's love and to love others.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

* Having Pope Francis to speak out for us. * My childhood in a choir school, my boyhood under the Benedictines, the Chaplaincy at my university, Dominican priests rescuing my family from an unfriendly priest, more Dominicans making friends when we lived in Iran, finally the family of the parish now. * I think Pope Francis is an excellent leader and it is good to see him taking a lead on the environment and climate change issues as well as coming across as very welcoming. * Mass, great homilies. Welcoming (mostly - but some get missed). Socialising. Small group participation. * When parishes are welcoming to those from other cultures and faiths. It is very encouraging to see churches in a local community coming together for social events and common worship where possible. * Generally very welcoming to visitors and new members. Supports communities in other countries through collections. Supports local community through Foodbank - could do more to promote this. * Endeavouring to adapt to the changing world! * Made me feel welcome and that I belonged (I am a convert). We have resisted the many and recurrent pressures to compromise or dilute Christian dogma. * Local - the parish community worshipping together and supporting each other, sadly disrupted by pandemic. Universal - a much better understanding of, and working together with other Christian denominations as well as our Jewish brothers and sisters, and other world religions. Alleviating poverty and hardship in disaster areas around the world, eg CAFOD. * Church successfully provide the sacraments and a forum for communal prayer to its existing congregations. Experience of Parish priests is that they are extraordinarily good at their task, given the circumstances of their lives. This can only be put down to the training and support that the ordinary churchgoer never sees, and to the Holy Spirit. The church also sponsors organisations that seek to help the poor, unwell and those in difficulty. The bishops and cardinal are generally successful in providing leadership on a local and national scale, holding the balance between need for restraint in their pronouncements and tone and the call for apostolic fervour. Generally has the right focus - on Jesus and the gospels and not ,eg, on either itself or on fashionable or easy issues such as environmentalism. * The warmth of welcome. * The influence that Pope Francis is having on the Church gives me great hope for the future. * The fact that the Catholic Mass is the same celebration wherever you go in the world - language does not matter. * Love that some of the Devotions that are still kept in some churches, Bible studies, adult faith formation, youth groups, sacramental preparation and some classes also for parents. * As an older person, I've seen positive changes from years ago - from rules and guilt - to kindness and love as basis of our lives. Is this due to individual priests. We now receive practical and pragmatic advice. * Helping the sick, inform and

poor at home and overseas. Speaking out against war and injustices. * The church provides a 'comfortable' environment in which to meet people of like mind, * The RC church working with other denominations for Christian Unity. * Always making right and wrong very clear. Not changing rules or watering down the rules. Giving members a strong sense of guidance. Always reminding us members of much God loves us. We don need that assurance regularly. * The removal of paedophile clergy - albeit slowly. The Church is now working much better with other Christians and other faiths. * Inviting all to participate in the Mass. Welcoming People when you arrive and afterwards. Having silence and prayer groups, something for all. Forgiving to all through example. Sharing time, a meal, prayerful experience family get togethers. Celebrations of all peoples - parishioners. Behave like a family, teaching with gentleness. Opening our churches as soon as they could during the pandemic. This has lead to a growing and strong confidence in returning to a post-Covid world,, and possibly in a better mental space. Children: involvement of children. Not being mean to people who are different to us. Being fun. Being fair.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
* Don't always deal with things quickly. Sometimes our sins get the better of us. * Local issues to do with how parish failed to stay in touch throughout the pandemic and issues with set up. National issues - the Church's initial reaction to the pandemic with the closing of churches was pretty poor - almost abandoning its flock when it needed it. Closing of churches was unnecessary, or went on too long. A more robust response to the Government could have been presented. The overnight development of spiritual communion looked to me somewhat opportune. * Church's attitude to non-Catholic spouses attitude is rather jackboot: the requirement that non-Catholic spouses agree to children being brought up as a Catholic and, God help us, sign a piece of paper to that effect, show be done away with. * Embarrassment, disgust, disappointment and shame iro child abuse scandal and how matters / cases were handled / attempts to cover up such acts. Has seriously affected the church's standing among non-Catholics and in the media. While apologising is right and proper, the church should be less defensive and endeavour to put the scandal into a proper perspective of the number of people involved. Excessive regulation and complaints procedures are becoming a new idol. Careful media handling is needed. * Clericalism has been all powerful and the we must ask Father first mentality still prevails - that's my experience in more rural parishes. * Priests seem to have lost close contact with their flock due to an ever-increasing workload. More transparency and better communication between priests and people. * Treatment of LGBT and divorced Catholics. Not allowing divorced and remarried Catholics who live in stable and loving relationships to receive the Eucharist - another scandal. When priests have broken their vows they can be laicised and continue to receie the Eucharist - no life-long punishment here. The teaching that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered seems extremely harsh. Perhaps the whole area of human sexuality needs to be looked at again, in light of new insights. * Very few women fold important roles in the Catholic Church, especially where governance and decision making is concerned. Apart from being totally out of step with 21st century society it seems an utter waste of talents! * Hierarchy of the church in Rome who live with wealth while the poor starve. Unapproachable, self-centred priests who won't listen! * No problems. Think the Holy Father given the power through God Almighty guides us perfectly. * Lack of reverence to the Holy Eucharist - both in a doubting faithful over Real Presence and in the manner of receiving Holy Communion at Mass. * Nothing really, though it would be good if non-Catholics, such as a spouse who come to Mas could receive Communion. They would not feel excluded. Some clergy not so welcoming to non-Catholics. * The damage that an unhappy priest or authoritarian priest can have on parishioners. Some priests have made it very hard for children to receive the sacraments, even though they appear to be doing all that is asked. Some priests have had an attitude that the parish is his and that the buck stops with him. * Some churches have little or no space to offer chance for socialising - making it difficult to always feel a part of a family. * I wonder about the wider church and all the stories we hear. Just hope and pray through prayer can be sorted. * Lack of apostolic fervour. Though very difficult in the

prevailing secular mood in society means that any outspoken attempt to spread the Gospel risks being counter-productive. It is however the Church's job. * We don't do well explaining RC morals or social doctrine to people. Non-Catholics especially, but also Catholics. Not so much what they are, but how they are good. A few prominent political leaders have been setting a bad example. * Disappointment with several contradictions within the Catholic Church. * Catechism classes not always very engaging and likely to put them off, rather than encourage. * Confessions, depending upon the priest in question can be either a wonderful experience, or the opposite. * Good at catechesis and sacramentalising, but not evangelising * Some people are stuck in cultural Catholicism, pre Vatican 2 - some priests too.

What are your dreams for the church?:
* That it would learn to engage with the youth. * Greater involvement with the local communities. * To shed all the restrictions created by Church lawyers: Intercommunion with other Christian groups. Rules preventing gay couples fully expressing their love. Forgiveness of people who made the wrong choice of spouse and now love someone else. Freedom for all Catholics who feel they have a vocation to join the clergy - this refers to women. * A more OPENLY welcoming church to those in point above, and those who are LGBTQ+ members. * The issue around marriage is a separate issue and should be considered separately to supporting, welcoming and accepting LGBTQ+ members (new or old). * Evangelisation and Mission at the heart of everything we do. A place where all are welcome, a safe place where all are invited and encouraged to grow in their spiritual journey with the Lord. Reaching out to those on the peripheries, as well as those around us and outside the church. Opportunities for each and every one to be a part of the Mass, the parish, and diocese and to be a part of a small group community. A place where we can be and form others to be missionary disciples with training, ongoing formation and support for all. * Not infiltrated by division and tension. That we be open to change, without watering down of the essentials of our faith. * A church that is not laughed at and is the butt of jokes about paedophilia. To become a church that really helps the poor and needy and is able to be relevant in the 21st century, To ensure that strictly sticking to Catholic doctrine does not put people's lives at risk. To be a place that my children want to keep coming to and not just going to church because they have to. i want them to get enjoyment from being a Catholic. * Reunification! Unity with other Christian churches. * In order to harness good will and charisms good leadership is needed - not necessarily ONLY provided by clergy but lay people of all walks of life. * Ongoing formation and education of the laity at local level to make us fit for mission. * Small local ecumenical faith sharing groups to pray and study together. * Understanding to reach out to others not of the RC faith. To put our own church in order, re abuse, so we can lead by example and tell the world God loves everyone. * I would not want the Church to command. I would however want it to lead and its watch word must always be the Gospels. Resist the temptation to trim the sails so that the Church's teachings fit a little bit better with what the wider society would like. Stick with the message of Jesus Christ, making clear that huis message is the right one, which includes saying on occasion, politely, that other religious messages, or indeed secular messages that purport to be equivalent, are not right. * Sustain a welcoming and more inclusive church! [Local issues of space and opportunity to meet and socialise. * Wider church has to be more welcoming and beyond reproach. * A church where each faithful has the means and opportunity to come to personally meet their Saviour, deepen their knowledge in the Scripture and Teachings of the Catholic Church as defined in the Catechism and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then we can go out as salt of the earth and light of the world, bearing the standard of the Cross against the standard of the world.... a beacon of the Truth of Christ and the Love and Mercy of God, without compromise or watering down. * To support and pray for the Pope in his attempts for change. * Family members to embrace the Church. * All faiths come together for the common good in tackling world problems: poverty, conflicts, environment. Meeting and sharing skills, talents and experience. Value whatever the disability, hurt or experience. To be Confident in being a Catholic, to say what being a Catholic means and accept other faiths openly. * I think it is time that the church had women

priests. I see no reason why a person of any gender should not be able to follow a vocation as a priest. * Church leaders (especially in Rome) thinking of the sheep rather than themselves. All elements of paedophilia removed from the church

The Catholic Community of the Holy Cross Church and Saints Philip and James Church BEDFORD

Process Used:

Promotion: several months of newsletter articles, preaching on the Synod by the Parish Priest and Deacons, collective and individual invitations to join the sessions. Process: Four open adult meetings, one youth meeting, one online meeting, several individual conversations and individual submissions all grounded in prayer.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

'A joy and a privilege'. Identity. 'Very difficult: being a catholic Christian today, I know I'm going to be criticised because of the bad press and past hurts committed by members of the Church'. We are part of God's family. 'To be in love with the one true Church.' Everything I am. Inclusivity and universality: 'always at home in any part of the world'. Love of God and love of neighbour. 'Jesus in the tabernacle.' The Church founded by Jesus Christ. 'The sacraments'. Church teaches with God's authority. Moral compass. 'To be rooted in history'. Grounded in Scripture. Liturgical structure. The Mass. 'Great to be Catholic'. The Sacraments are everything. 'My strength and support'. The presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Awareness of the Holy Spirit. Comforting. 'Awe and wonder'. 'I cherry pick (being pro-contraception) and don't adhere to rules like Holy Days of Obligation'. A sense of conscience and perspective. Devotion to Our Lady. 'To live by sacramental grace'. The desire but inability to defend the Faith. Challenge from living the Faith without family support. 'Affects the way we live and the decisions we make: abortion and euthanasia'. Family tradition. Tolerance. 'The beauty of the Mass and other sacraments.' Friendships. Grounded in Sacred Tradition. 'Catholicism is about the people'. Helps make sense of life. 'Other people don't understand my Faith'. Trying to live the ideals. 'I love being Catholic'. Contributing: financially and otherwise, to the parish. 'Hard work: less opportunities to learn about the Faith'. 'I enjoy defending the Faith'. Authentic religious instruction in Catholic schools. 'It is part of our culture'. 'A sense of peace. A sense of right and wrong'. Being proud of what the Church does! 'Being a part of the Body of Christ on earth: my road to heaven, the journey from our mortal life to our real life. Something I depend on'. 'As a Catholic Christian it is important to me to be outward looking and to try, however poorly, to reflect the joy of knowing Christ in everyday life and interaction with others.' To seek consolation in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. 'To be a missionary disciple of Jesus.' Diversity. 'Sometimes feeling lonely because Catholicism can be counter cultural'. Embarrassment: historical scandal. 'Sadness that others have rejected the Faith. People are drifting away'. • The youth participants echoed some of the above themes and their responses included: 'God is present in the Tabernacle for us', 'The Real Presence of Jesus in Holy Communion', 'I feel Jesus' presence in the Tabernacle', 'To be a follower of God'. 'To walk with Jesus'.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Catholic education. Teaching on doctrine and morality. Availability of the Mass and the other sacraments. Availability of the clergy in times of need. Care of the sick, the suffering and the dying. Missionary and aid agencies such as Missio, CAFOD, Pax Christi, the SVP, etc. 'Support of life from the womb to the tomb.' Communication at parish level. Mass livestreamed. Creating sacred space: the Blessed Sacrament. Pope Francis's advocacy of the environment, migrants and synodality. Pope Francis' desire to make the Church more compassionate, humble and less removed from the world. Pope Francis 'can be a trigger for conversation'. 'She rose to the challenges of Covid'. The liturgical calendar brings alive the Faith: 'a joy in holiness'. Lay associations, e.g., Franciscans. Bereavement support. The SVP during the pandemic. 'The Priests are a strength of the Church'. The clergy are caring (but there are too few of them)'. Beautiful liturgies: the Mass is central, it is 'the source and summit of our Faith'. Advocacy of peace and justice. 'The Church has changed tremendously: the Faith is more appealing'. Catholic Social Teaching. Inspiring documents like 'The Common Good' and Laudato Si. Catholic healthcare. 'The support from the local Priest during hard times.' The Church is

inclusive ('but we allow the media to dominate the narrative of being otherwise'). The Extraordinary Form of the Mass. The Magisterium guides us. Ecumenism: North Bedford Churches Together. 'Whilst I have grave misgiving about the Synod our parishes have approached the process admirably; its support and impartiality is admirable'. Supporting and encouraging vocations to the diaconate and priesthood from our own parish. 'Seeing the fraternity that exists among younger Priests'. Pope Francis: his spiritual and moral leadership. The positive aspects of Vatican II. • The youth participants echoed some of the above themes and their responses included: First Holy Communion Mass: 'The church looked beautiful!'. 'I enjoy singing the hymns.' Praise offered toward servers and musicians by clergy and laity. Priests and Deacons being friendly. Being part of the music group. Being an Altar Server. The Look sheet. Youth Summer Camp. Seeing and speaking to younger Priests and Deacons like Fr Daniel and Dcn Liam. Feeling welcomed and at home in each Church of our parish. 'Having Stephanie work with us'. Children bringing forward the bread and the wine at Mass.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Unfair criticism and hostility toward the Clergy. 'The Church has enabled the dilution of the Faith and the reduction of awe and reverence'. Clergy are not always supported by the Hierarchy or laity. Loss of reverence for the Mass. Loss of clergy and laity. 'Patchy' pastoral care. 'No systems in place for connecting people.' The divorced and remarried lack support. LGBTQ+ relationships and community lack support. 'The welcome is not warm enough'. Sacrament of Confession: poor teaching, limited availability and bad experiences. Annulment process. 'Some people are not welcoming and you feel out of place'. 'Historic treatment of unmarried mothers and illegitimate children'. Historic sexual relationships between Priests and laity. Inconsistent application of Church teaching. Teaching the faith. Clergy taken for granted. Unfriendly laity and clergy. Unrealistic expectations and dependence on volunteers. The liturgy can be austere and off-putting to the uninitiated. Inconsistent teaching from clergy ('Why don't they all teach from the Catechism?'). Lack of clarity around essential teachings on Faith and morals. The 'Welcoming' is not consistent and non-existent in some parishes. Poor at building community. Lack of communication. 'Lockdown: reservation about Spiritual Communion'. Poor use of modern technology during Mass. Requests for Mass intentions not always handled well. Failure in encouraging people to return to Mass and the other sacraments post the pandemic: 'it is a big challenge to get people back to Church'. Clericalism: the divisions between clergy and laity. 'Livestreamed Masses has resulted in a loss of attendance and engagement in the Holy Eucharist'. Too much looking back and not enough embracing of the changes in society. The 'destruction of the liturgy'. The public disagreements about Latin in the Mass, the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, etc. 'I attended this Church for X years before I got to know people. It is not as friendly as it should be'. Admission of children and young people to the sacraments when they are not ready or sufficiently prepared. The dilution of the Faith. The loss of devotion to Mary and the Saints. Families are no longer held together by prayer. The near total loss of Eucharistic Exposition from parishes. Has the focus of the First Holy Communion Mass shifted away from receiving Jesus in Holy Communion to the associated gifts and parties? The near total absence of Nuns in parishes. 'The silence of the Hierarchy in not speaking with an authentic Catholic voice'. The pressure group mentality amongst some people toward the Synod. The perceived increasing liberalising and secularist agenda of the Church. 'A lot of unnecessary hurt and confusion is being caused by the Synod'. Little working together and unnecessary competition between our two parishes. Judgemental attitudes of laity and clergy towards late arrivals, poor attenders, noisy children and offertory giving. 'Certain parishioners seem to be in charge of the Church'. The lack of uniformity in Catholic teaching across parishes is a weakness: 'Why don't all clergy teach what is in the Catechism?' Cliques among parishioners. 'The lack of catholicity in diocesan schools'. 'The lack of direction from Rome regarding ministering to members of the LGBTQ+ community who want to live by the teachings of the Church.' 'The teachings of the Church are not well known by the faithful'. 'I have always found the Sign of Peace really awkward'. • The youth participants echoed some of the above themes and their responses included: Being told off by older parishioners, 'Now we have

hymns the Sunday Mass is too long', 'I feel like the older people are watching me and are disapproving' and If Jesus is there [in the Tabernacle] shouldn't the background be more colourful?.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Growth. Return of the lapsed. Evangelisation. Vibrant. Inclusion of the 'excluded' in the sacraments and parish life. Diaconate and Priesthood: Ordination of married men and women. Renewed reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. Specified time of communal silence after Holy Communion. Relaxation of the annulment parameters. Further deliberation on: 'Is the use of artificial birth control by a married couple contrary to God's will?' Greater cooperation between parishes and Catholic schools. Authentic implementation and fulfilment of Vatican II. Greater involvement of the laity in decision making. 'A renewed desire and enthusiasm for the Mass'. Christian unity. A return to the Faith. 'Where young people feel welcomed and worship is uplifting'. Explanations given during Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals. Implementation of Divine Renovation principles around Welcoming, sacramental preparation, etc. Great inclusivity. 'The future is young people: meet them in their sphere'. Clergy and laity being less judgemental. A spirit of volunteerism. 'People giving standing order payments to the Church'. 'An attractive social environment: drawing people in to evangelise them'. The purpose and power of the Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee needs to be addressed. Our churches should be open for prayer and contemplation. Return of the 'CTS' booklets. Better Catholic role models. More groups for Bible study and Faith sharing. 'Ability to handle problems and complaints more thoughtfully'. The need for more flexibility and adaptability. 'That the Church is still here in the future'. A return to the old pattern of: home-school-parish. Outreach from the parish into the schools. Using language that young people can understand. Masses specifically aimed at children, the disabled and families. Greater accessibility to the sacraments without rigid limitations. More priestly formation taking place within parishes. Training for reaching out more effectively to people via social media, etc. Teaching and explanation associated with the use of Latin in the Mass. To be a more warm and welcoming community. Develop ecumenical and interreligious connections. Without putting them on pedestals, we should treasure, support and affirm our clergy. 'Sacramental candidates continuing to come to Mass after First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation'. There is a need for greater transparency in the way in which parishes are run and how decisions are made. Online social gatherings for the housebound. Reduce the burden placed upon Priests. 'The Church valuing and promoting celibacy for her Priests and Religious'. 'Wider celebration of the Extraordinary Form of Mass and Latin in the new Mass'. Liturgies that 'embrace music from all eras of the Church'. That she be less politicised. Not be frightened to teach the Faith. Pope Francis: 'more encouraging towards the clergy and return to radiating the joy of the Gospel by smiling again'. Support given to help people explain and defend the Faith in the work environment. • The youth participants echoed some of the above themes and their responses included: Grow the community, seeing different Priests more often on a Sunday, more involvement of young people, youth snacks and activities (separate from the adults) after the Sunday Mass, burying the Alleluia Banner each year: I love doing that!, helping to lead Children's Liturgy of the Word, youth being asked to help prepare for the Sunday Mass, youth helping as leaders for the Summer Camp, young persons Mass on a Sunday evening, decorating the Church for Christmas and Easter, descriptions of the liturgical items around the Church ('so we don't have to keep asking what they are'), different hymns for young people at the youth Mass, 'Praise and Worship' music before the Sunday Mass, balance between young and older people in liturgical roles and as Welcomers, young persons committee to help arrange the liturgy and events, 'the Bishop coming to speak to us regularly', youth who are Welcomers, a youth-orientated newsletter, Summer BBQ on Waveney Green after Sunday Mass, pilgrimage to Walsingham and children's explanation of the Sacred Scripture readings at Mass.

Pastoral Area Reports

Luton and Dunstable Pastoral Area Council

Process Used:

Luton and Dunstable Pastoral Area Council For a Synodal Church Luton and Dunstable Pastoral Area Council met on Thursday 24th February 2022 to discern about six answers for each question from the submissions that had been received from Parishes:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
* The Mass and Eucharist are the centre of our lives; everything comes from that. * The Sacraments and prayers in our church provide hope and are a significant part of our lives. * Everything – trust – trust that we are on the right journey and the right path. What we are taught about Jesus is correct and manifests itself in our faith. * To belong to the universal church and more locally to a community. * We are called to Mission, to evangelise. * Our faith gives us the standards and values that we should live our lives by.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
* The Mass, Eucharist, exposition and all the Sacraments. * Charitable works via CAFOD, CARITAS and others – health, education, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, a whole spectrum of care taking our faith out to the world. * Community within our Parishes – lots of groups, all doing different things and bringing people together. * Catholic education * Remaining faithful to church teaching and that dogma and doctrine cannot change. This is seen as a great strength and providing security, regardless of what the world might say. * Our Church did a great job during Covid in making the Mass and other services available via online streaming. A good example of our church adapting to the modern world.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
* Our church was wasn't as honest and open as it should have been on issues such as abuse. * Our church is not always faithful to church teaching, tradition, doctrine and dogma. Parishioners in one parish gave the impression that they considered the Novus Ordue (The Mass celebrated since 1965) as being the worst thing since sliced bread. Several parishes said the Tridentine (Latin) Mass should be fostered. * Our Church's initial response to the Covid pandemic was not acceptable, in allowing our churches to be shut. In a time of crisis, prayer is even more important and we were not vocal enough in insisting on that position. Our Church is not always strong enough in defending ourselves and our faith. * Our church often falls short of making everyone feel welcomed. We need to be and seen to be more friendly in drawing more people in and being more welcoming. Greeters during Covid were a blessing and this welcome needs to continue. Those with special needs or housebound who might struggle to get to church should be involved in church life by for instance involving them in prayer. * Catholic education is lauded. However, youngsters having passed through it leave the church. What are we getting wrong? Are we using the wrong language? Are we not instilling the right level of respect for the Sacraments? Also, we are failing to bring people into our church from the wider community. * Communications are not as good as they should be at every level. * Evangelisation – it seems as if most Catholics grasp the need for evangelisation and that they are called to evangelise. However, many do not have the confidence to evangelise or know what message they should be sowing.

What are your dreams for the church?:
* Mass, Eucharist Adoration, Sacraments and our prayer lives must continue. They are, correctly, the centre of our lives. Diversity in liturgical forms such as inspiring charismatic Catholic voices should be

encouraged, helping to bring more people into our diverse, but united universal church. * Our Church has a record of doing good works second to none. Our charitable works must continue. We must try to get youngsters more involved and by that we mean buying into the charitable effort and not just being present. * We pray for more vocations to the Priesthood, the diaconate and religious life. All need the full support of the laity both physically and via prayer. The contribution made by nuns and sisters to our faith is invaluable and these vocations must be encouraged. * Catholics need to be taught how to evangelise – How? What language should we use? How do we spread the good news of Jesus? * Catholics must be more welcoming to new parishioners. In non-Catholic churches with 20 parishioners, two new people arriving are noticed and welcomed. In a Catholic Parish with 200 parishioners at one Mass, two new people are often not noticed. We must do better. Social events to bring people together – interaction – inclusion - help to promote unity. The need for a clear message that the Catholic Church is a place for everyone. * The sanctity of human life must be relentlessly promoted. Protecting the unborn, those with special needs, all the way through to the coming of old age. Every human life is precious. Human dignity must be at the centre of everything we do, caring, inclusive, non-judgemental, being more Christian.

Northampton Pastoral Area Council

Process Used:
Compiled by Fr Brendan Killeen

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Belonging to the Universal church.
To be part of a prayer community, caring for each other both locally and worldwide.
Living the original teaching today with God in us.
An ability to trace our faith back to Jesus.
A way of keeping in touch and focussing on spiritual matters and understanding the Bible.
A path which helps us to salvation at death.
Shared experience; fellowship; understanding & common practice.
Awareness of God's love within us.
Education - know God, who is alive and love & serve God and increase the desire to know him better.
Forgiveness; care of others and united in the Holy Spirit.
The Church is my life.
I can go to Mass in any country and feel at home.
The Eucharist is very important in my life.
To be part of the Body of Christ.
My moral compass.
Comfort in times of difficulty.
The priceless pearl where I can receive the Sacraments.
As a convert, I find that the church gives me a sense of 'home'.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Having Saint John Paul II and Francis as Popes.
The permanence of the Church.
Vatican II reforms.
Mass in the vernacular.
That the Church takes time and considers issues and then proclaims clearly on them.
Providing clear guidelines on what is right & wrong, good & bad, positive & negative for humanity.
Catholic social teaching.
Making people feel welcome at Mass and prayer groups.
The involvement of the laity.
Dedication of the clergy.
Masses throughout the week.
Community work in prisons, hospitals and schools.
Providing missionary care and aid to charities, such as CAFOD and food banks.
Contact with those in need - the sick, the dying and the provision of the Sacraments.
Supporting causes, such as pro-life.
Eucharistic Adoration.
Pilgrimages.
The use of religious ceremony.
Parish is an oasis of peace and calm.
Helping families at special times - baptism, first communion, marriage, funerals.
The SVP.
Bible time-line and studying God's word.

Social events.
Provision of live Masses during the pandemic.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Lack of continuing adult formation.
Engaging with the LGBT community.
Caring for the divorced and remarried.
Poor quality of education, both general and religious, in many of our Catholic schools.
There is a danger that we can stick too rigidly to the rules and risk becoming pharisaical.
Clergy treating laity as equals in the Church.
The child abuse crisis.
Lack of continuity from priest to priest; from bishop to bishop.
Different approaches as to whether to baptize a child of parents who are not regular church goers.
Congregations not always being welcoming to new or returning members.
The lack of provision for the Latin Mass.
Engaging with those of other faiths.

What is your dream for the Church?
That the Church becomes more love based rather than rule based in its dealings with those who 'do not live up to its standards'.
A missionary church. Inspiring laity to lead more in the wider community.
Focus on climate change and poverty.
There needs to be a proper role for women - not as ordained persons - but a proper role which gives women a purpose which they can fulfil. Our Lady frequently speaks to young women in a loving and encouraging way and the Church needs to nurture this.
That the young will keep attending Mass which they can find boring. Sustain the commitment made by children and parents in the Sacraments of Initiation so that they continue to be involved in parish life.
Greater use of the Sacrament of Penance.
More prayer services for the bereaved.
Every parish to have a wide variety of music to cater for all.
The Church can be all inclusive, but this has to come from the top, attitudes need to change.
Less secrecy - if there are problems, be open and deal with them honestly.
More appreciation of parishioners and what they contribute. Listen to their views and act upon them. Do not see them merely as a source of funds.
Social activity to bring families together - for example, gather after Mass with food from the various nations that make up a parish.
Increase in vocations – improve our outreach to the young.
The church should allow parishioners, accountable to the bishop, to continue to administer local churches when there may no longer be a priest available, as long as there is a viable number of parishioners with necessary skills and competence. They could be permitted to lead prayers and when necessary, baptisms, marriages and funerals and host priests to say Mass when available. This whole arrangement could be kept under annual review involving the people and the Diocese.
We need to manage the GDPR rules so that the sick are not forgotten by other parishioners.
Encourage our churches to be more visibly present in our communities. The churches could be centres where our faith is lived out. Where the poor and underprivileged are served. Be in the news for the right reasons.
Reaching out to other Christians and those of other faiths. Working with them on local social projects. Engage with people on their level.

SOUTH BUCKS PASTORAL AREA: SYNOD CHECK-IN

Process Used:
Held 26 January 2022 This submission is the output of a Pastoral Area Gathering of 10 parishes. The agenda for the day included: 1) The Gathering (welcome, purpose of day, lighting of paschal candle and opening prayer) 2) The Check-In (round robin Synod update from each parish) 3) The Sorting (3 rounds of spiritual Conversation covering experiences of the Synod process) 4) The Listening (each small group briefly sharing three findings: Most positive or uplifting, Most negative or disappointing & Most surprising, then reflecting on what was heard) 5) The Deciding (distilling what the main learning was, asking each group to place all their findings documented on post-it notes on the wall under most relevant theme - Communion, Participation, Mission, Process, then 'walking the wall') 6) The Going Forth (next steps, closing prayer & farewell). PROCESS 1. Be the change we want to be. 2. Some groups came to cabinet agreement. Agreed themes coming from their groups. 3. See the Church adapt to an internet world. 4. We've had joyful & personal responses- emotions expressed. 5. Is there a tension because we have not reached out this way before? 6. Sense of hope and trust and joy in the conversation – the spirit is at work.* 7. Summarising/filtration process? Trust in the Holy Spirit. 8. Danger of scepticism of consultation process (cycle of disappointment)*. 9. Weighting – reductionism. 10. Young people do not feel this process is relevant to them. The Church does not listen. It takes too long for Church to implement change.* 11. The process will work. The lay voices will be heard. 12. Need more time. 13. Encouragement to listen* 14. Communication negative. People not listening? Message not CLEAR? 15. Synodal Process could go wrong!!* 16. The Synod process has the potential to take the Church away from the Truth. 17. The Synod process has the potential to disappoint people who the process to change the Church but discover that the Church cannot change. 18. What's the point? 19. The process (of gracious listening & speaking) & local changes is the outcome.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
PARTICIPATION 1. Need to Listen to young people [especially 18-35 yr olds] 2. For the young (below 60!!!) 3. Help young people to listen to them. 4. The people who did not partake because it will go nowhere* 5. Important to give people space to express their anger. 6. Good listener guidelines are very helpful and respected by participants. 7. Patience with those who don't keep within guidelines is needed – don't express irritation. 8. Keep things simple. 9. Involvement, encouragement to encounter* 10. Opportunity – be brave. 11. Devise ways to reach the margins. 12. Deep welcome and inclusivity for the Last – (Divorced, Homosexual, (the ones that have been in prison, prostitutes…) 13. LGBT? 14. What opportunities do we offer post confirmation? 15. Baptised laity need to accept that they are Church Ask not what the Church can do for me but what can I do or how can I be Church? 16. Role of the laity. 17. Full leadership of women. 18. Women's role. 19. Roles/vocations of women (?Deacons?) 20. Need more female involvement – more lay involvement in ministry. 21. Need to address the role of women in the Church. 22. Abuse/safeguarding resolution. 23. Review the Marriage for Priests 24. Too narrow selection process of Bishops. 25. Ongoing catechesis after formation.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
COMMUNION 1. Loyalty 2. Togetherness, good to be involved. 3. We need to celebrate diversity. 4. Dreaming about a fearless Church that makes people be who they are accepting them. 5. How we use modern technology with a sense of community – we have used Zoom in lockdown as a way of communicating. Effect of gracious listening – bring people to a new space.* 6. Sense of belonging to a community. * 7. Ecumenism – there is One Body. 8. Bishop of Portsmouth diocese offered to meet Divorces/Separated Catholics because of Synod*. 9. We belong to Christ and to the Church. 10. Difference of cultures & range of experience of the process so far* 11. Address factions and tensions in our parishes. 12. In some groups there has been a division of views but also unity in some views.*

13. We need more prayer groups. 14. Are we a listening community?

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
MISSION 1. Have we got a sense of community across World? 2. CHANGE. 3. Need for the Church to move into the 21st Century 4. Regular Mass attendees with very radical views.* 5. A more ecumenical Church, reaching out to other faiths. We are all God's children and cooperate to make things better locally and nationally. 6. Dream – Unity!! 7. Ecumenism +++ 8. The Church to focus on community, connection and belonging. 9. Understand the messiness of life and help bring people back into Christ's footsteps. 10. The Church is beautiful & glorious. Where else does one have the opportunity for forgiveness and counselling through confession. Christ came and told us a way of living our lives. If we fail we say sorry, we don't realise our work*. 11. Changing the world one conversation at a time. 12. Do what we can now, (don't just send to Rome). 13. Maintenance Mission? 14. What are the real absolutes! 15. Need to involve young people. 16. Focus on the younger generation 17. Attention to the young people. 18. Stop the youth haemorrhage. 19. Truly attention to walk with the poor. 20. Marriage: – Priests; - rates for Divorced; Birth control. 21. Don't lose hope; Don't be discouraged 22. Pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit for the Synod every day.

Schools

Holy Family Catholic Church, Langley, Slough

Process Used:
We invited our parents to attend a zoom meeting. Unfortunately nobody accepted the invitation. We also asked each of our pupils to respond to a 'synod-related' question (a different question for each year group) for our whole school display.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:

School?

Process Used:

We invited parents into school the letter of invitation is below. But only one parent accepted the invitation so we cancelled the session. A questionnaire was sent out to all parents/carers and thirteen parents responded. The responses were anonymous. Dear All As you may be aware, the Diocese has asked the school to take part in the worldwide Synod process in which Pope Francis invite us to share our thoughts and feelings about the Church and also our dreams for its future. The idea of the Synod is to simply listen to people's thoughts and ideas. It is not a parliamentary system with winners or losers, but a search for how the Holy Spirit is guiding us. The feedback received will be fed into a wider Diocesan process the fruits of which will ultimately be presented by the Bishop's to the Pope in Rome next year. We would therefore like to invite you to come along to an informal discussion on Wednesday 23rd February 2022 at 9.30am to hear your response and thoughts to the questions we are all being asked. We have invited a number of our Year 3 parents' whose names have been randomly selected . This is an important and valuable process and we would really appreciate it if you could take part. Please could you complete one of the boxes below. Many thanks Mrs A Hannighan

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Responses from Parents/Carers - each line is a separate answer to the question It helps me when making decisions in my life as I can turn to God through prayer and discernment. I feel closer to God A sense of family and having a strong commitment to God. To be part of an extended family in faith that have a common belief and purpose to live out the teachings of Christ. Means practice the faith and teach others to be in the right way to God! Believe in God , be kind and helpful to other Be a member of Christ family and blessed We don't follow any religion To be kind A child of God. I'm proud to be a Catholic. That I go to mass every Sunday, ans Jesus protects me. Being close to God

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Responses from Parents/Carers - each line is a separate answer to the question It provides support and courage in times of need. It is a place people can come to for celebrations as well as in times of difficulties. Church was able to reach out to those in need with food/gifts and gave those who were able to help others the opportunity to do so. Seeing many young people praying and sharing faith with others through youth groups and retreat days. Good with covid restrictions Continuing to have Mass daily, but also preserve good hygiene practices that keep us safe. I like the way the church reaches out to those who are less fortunate, particularly those in the developing world, through aid organisations like CAFOD and more locally, through organisations like the Saint Vincent de Paul. I like the sense of community that Catholic parishes create and I would like priests to continue to take an active role in fostering that community spirit and inviting people to feel more included. Guide young children, help venerable people. Preaches the word of God I value church's services Be a member of the community Praying and reminding us how to be good. I feel welcome at church, like a party with my family. Mass

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

Responses from Parents/Carers - each line is a separate answer to the question Lack of opportunities for young people to engage or meet outside of the church. Clergy who are not able to relate to children/young people, who drive them away rather than encourage them. Well it depends on the priest I have not had any bad experiences. I believe the church should be fully inclusive and accepting of all. I don't like the way the church excludes some individuals. For example, those who are divorced and remarried or homosexuals etc - I disagree with them not being allowed to receive communion. I would like the church to be more progressive in its thinking. I don't believe that Christ would have rejected them as he himself ate with sinners. I dislike the church's handling of child sex

abuse cases at the hands of Catholic priests. I would have liked the Church to have de-robed those priests and not shuffled them on from one parish to the next where they could reoffend. I think the handling of this was deplorable. Once I had to move from church because the priest was a very difficult person. For 5 years we're happy, we found the church that inspire you, guide you, touches hearts, helpful, powerful messages from God! The priest is a blessing! Preaching and politics , discriminating against unmarried couple N/A None I easily get angry. Children at church can be noisy and I have two young children who can be a handful. I sometimes feel I'm not welcomed with children which is upsetting. I get looks and comments. Once when I gave my 2 years old daughter a snack I was told off by the steward saying that food is not allowed in church. I wish the approach towards children was different and more understanding. I don't always know what the priest is saying.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Responses from Parents/Carers - each line is a separate answer to the question To be a place where all people can feel welcome. To have parishoners of all age groups that come to Mass regularly, not just for Sacraments. To be more involved within the community. To continue to play a supportive role and guiding us with our faith as we continue to cope with the global pandemic. To be a modern, progressive, fully inclusive church that lives out the teaching of Christ. I would like to see women take on a more active role as church leaders and perhaps even priests. I would like priests to be able to marry as I think this would help more individuals to accept their calling and would solve the problem of the priest shortage allowing the Church to continue into the future. I would like there to be less stigma around remarriage, homosexuality etc and more acceptance of the individual as one of God's children. That they continue to support those that most need. Listen and analyse the word of God, help those in need. For the church to carry on great services People of the community to be one. To live in harmony and as a child of Jesus. I would like church to focus more on programs/activities for children like Kids club when they can play and learn the Bible. They are the future and I feel there isn't enough at the moment.
School - Joan Cullen

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School Chesham Bois

Process Used:
Small groups with children and teachers

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
We asked...What does it mean to you to belong to a Catholic community? • Fantastic • It means a lot to me because the Catholic community is really kind. If anything happens to you people will look after you. • You always feel included • You always believe in God and he will always be there if you need him. You can put your faith in God. • Its like a family because everyone is believing the same thing.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
We asked..... Is there anything you like about church? • You feel like when you are donating money at the collection it is going for something good. • The youth Masses.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
We asked.... Is there anything you don't like about the church? • The wine – they would like a children's option • It is cold • I don't like the candles in case the church burns down. • They put too much Frankincense in the air. • Standing too long.

What are your dreams for the church?:
What is your dream for the Church? • Not everyone knows each other in church. It would be good if people got to know each other. Something afterwards for adults to get to know each other. Meet and greet. A party!!!! • Hymn sheets rather than hymn books. • Heating What about the church more broadly? • The church should encourage more people a range of more ages. Get younger people involved. People make their Holy Communion and then leave. • More people to come to church. • More things for young children to do in Mass. • Getting more children involved in all Masses not just the youth mass. Are there people who don't feel welcomed by the church? • Only if you don't know what is going on. • People act as if they are welcome but some people might think they are not as welcome as other people. What would make you want to go to church/Mass more? • If we got food at the end • More kid friendly. • More child friendly priests like Father Alessandro who explains the stories more deeply. • When its Christmas – Maybe don't do Midnight Mass at Midnight. • Make it a bit more alive and happy – Not what it looks like but what they say or do. • All of the readings are for adults.

Our Lady of Walsingham CP School, Corby - Children

Process Used:

These notes come from 2x 1 hour lunchtime sessions with Y6 Chaplaincy Team (14 children), I x 1hour session with Y5 class and some individual conversations. The 'spiritual conversation' process was used with Chaplaincy Team. A class discussion was held in Y5

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being a Catholic just feels normal to me. Belonging. It makes me feel included. When I was little I didn't feel included - now I do more than ever I have felt in my life. Being a catholic makes me feel I'm part of God, Jesus and the holy Spirit. It makes me feel happy God chose everyone to be welcoming and to be together. I'm not invisible, I'm not ignored but included. I'm not a catholic, but I always feel included. We are part of a community. Faith. If I have a problem I can talk to somebody. If you make a mistake God will forgive your sin. Being a Catholic means believing in God and taking Jesus' path. It means loving the Holy Family and spreading the Word of God – shining the light of God's love. We should treat everyone as we would like to be treated, help one another when we are struggling, do what Jesus would do and follow the Holy path. Receiving Holy Communion is special – it makes my heart happy. I am part of the Holy Spirit.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Inclusion. At school it is accepted that non-Christians take part in everything. We all go to Mass. Giving. Church does good for others: SVP Giving Tree at Christmas and lent; mother and baby packs At school we have mini Vinnies. We wrote letters to the elderly in the parish. We raise money for Cafod, Missio, Mary's Meals and other things like Race for Life Mass. We like Fr Michael. His homilies connect God to our daily lives – they teach us about faith in ordinary life. The Church spreads the Gospel. If someone comes to church feeling really depressed they can go away feeling better. The Nativity at Christmas is good and teaches us that God is good. Involvement. The Church gives the role of altar servers to young people where they can learn about church by taking part. Children's church is good for the little ones – a way to learn about Jesus. It is good when we raise money for charities. Faith. It is important to have some peace. It is good when we do our Sacred Space; when we go and get blessed or receive communion; have moments of prayer during the day. We can light candles for people who have died. We like the Prayer Shed and we like going to the church.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The Church. Why can't a priest have a wife? Why can't girls be priests? We don't have enough time in church as a school. Sometimes the readings are too difficult to understand. The church building. The church isn't warm enough. Uncomfortable chairs. Noisy children and babies RE RE can be too complicated – we don't always understand the bible. Couldn't we use a children's version? We have never prayed the rosary. Teach us to pray – I don't mean learn prayers. Giving. We should give more money away to the homeless and people in need. Faith. Sometimes arguments at home can stop us connecting with God. The same if you are being bullied. Parents arguing is horrible. When I'm tired, I feel guilty for not praying.

What are your dreams for the church?:
The Mass. Have girls as priests because it's unfair. Make the Mass more fun, happier, more colourful. More colourful more upbeat/ modern music More plays – some acting instead of always just listening. Children could act out the stories. A space to share food and drinks after Mass, especially with the priest. More social events for everyone at church eg campfire and food A party for Christmas and New Year. An egg hunt at Easter. Change the taste/ texture of the communion bread. Some weeks everyone could wear white for Mass. The building. Have carpets on the floor and comfy

seats. A soundproof space for children to go if they become upset or noisy. There could be a Holy art room. School. To use children's/teen's bibles at school. Teach us how to pray the rosary – most of us have one or more.

Our Lady of Walsingham CP School, Corby - Staff

Process Used:

These notes come from 2x 1 hour lunchtime sessions with teaching and support staff and governors and some individual conversations. The main process used was the 'spiritual conversation' as recommended.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Belonging Being part of a worldwide family is important – you can go to Mass wherever you are. Belonging is very important. Being part of a community. Faith My faith has got me through a lot of things. When you are low there is support you can draw on. We are continually learning. I try to be how Jesus wants me to. I ask myself What would Jesus do? I felt a real hunger when I stopped going to Mass at uni. During lockdown I had time to look into my faith a bit more. Sunday Mass Sunday Mass is like a re-set. It's an opportunity to stop and remember what is important. When you go into church you might be anxious and worried, but you come out and the feeling has disappeared. It feels good, you get an inner peace after going to Mass. It helps us to get through – God knows your intentions. The rest of life is so busy. I didn't like going to Mass when I was younger, but the Catholic school is an inclusive community and I always want to be there when we go to Mass. Guilt and Confession There is guilt though, and pressure – constantly feeling that you have got to do the right thing. Even walking past a homeless person can make us feel guilty. I don't like going to confession – if you are genuinely sorry, surely God will forgive you. But confession can be really good and healing too. Being encouraged by a priest can be really helpful.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Parish Priest. Our priest is fair, kind, thoughtful, friendly and has a good sense of humour. He runs the church well and is sensitive to people, taking time to get to know them. The homilies are positive and easy to understand – he can get his point across. He makes it real and up to date for the children, making connections with daily life. He sometimes takes people on trips. Funerals are always handled sensitively, including prayers with the family when the coffin arrives into church. Giving. In fact, we support lots of causes. SVP, Foodbank, Cafod etc Derek Hindwood is amazing with the SVP. It is good to know that people can turn to the church in their need. Clergy. It is a good thing that nowadays priests only become priests if they really want to. It isn't expected of young boys to offer themselves.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Divorce etc Expectations can be very narrow compared to how the whole of life is. In particular there is a lot of struggle and sadness around rules to do with divorce and remarriage. There are a lot of man-made rules. They sometimes seem unfair and harsh. There seem to be ways round them for some people (eg prime minister). Lots of people have had to sacrifice their desire to receive Jesus at communion. They should be forgiven not punished. Is this what Jesus would have wanted? The annulment process is really difficult and probing, causing deep trauma – the Church needs to look at this. It is sad when people find the church oppressive rather than freeing. Youth The influence of a particular priest on a parish is too important eg whether he encourages children or not makes all the difference. We need to get children back to church but it can be boring, particularly for teenagers and older. We have lost our place in the community because we lost our Catholic secondary school. In the past there was even a church football team. Image The Church has lost compassion with all its man-made rules. This is especially the impression which outsiders have. It is difficult to answer their questions about the lack of compassion shown towards, for example, the gay community, and people in difficult life circumstances. The church is not inclusive. The extent to which the Church is charitable, isn't always acknowledged by the outside world. Out of touch The wider Church is

sometimes out of touch with the lives of ordinary people in the real world. Several couples felt that the marriage course was full of personal questions and is patronising towards people who are already adults and have made life decisions. Abuse. The abuse scandal has been terrible for the Church and we haven't really been told the reasons why it happened and why it was handled so badly. There is more explaining to do.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Youth. We really need to focus on the youth. Perhaps we could have a youth Mass – just for them. LGBTQ inclusive. The Church should be prepared to marry gay people. Married priests Married men be allowed to train for ordination as well as celibate priests. Women The Church should ordain women. IVF The Church should allow IVF

St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Process Used:
We invited the parents into the school to contemplate the questions and share their responses
We had periods of quiet and stillness while we reflected on the questions
We then shared our responses together and recorded the responses on a powerpoint

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
- Feel happy and proud of my children
- The children are at one with God
- Proud of the faith the children have
- Want to encourage them to announce and express their Catholic faith
- Feel happy that we have masses and liturgical services
- Part of a family in a Catholic school
- Having a common faith/understanding/language in how we want our children to grow and develop
- We want to help our children to grow with Jesus and follow his example
- We love that the children are so involved and they are inspiring and good examples for others/peers – good hope for the future
- Difficulties – any non-Catholic family who joins the school understands our ethos and bring them board
- We need to ensure that non-faith families feel welcome – constant consideration

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
- Catholic doctrine is embedded through the school
- Masses in school
- Liturgical services
- The support from Fr Brendan – so inspiring and supportive and committed/approachable
- We are reliant on the skills/expertise of the clergy
- Emphasis on charitable work – teaching the children to have a sense of responsibility and empathy and a desire to help others
- Bishop David – very inspirational
- We need them to be inspirational so that the church has a future
- Worry that the church and schools are not getting financed enough – needs more support

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
What could the Church do better in its work through Catholic schools?
- Youth groups and Catholic schools
- Inspire teenagers to stay on the right path
- Financial and emotional support for vulnerable
- Priests should be trained on how to speak with children and adapt the gospel teaching
- Regular visitors to schools both secondary and primary
- The church needs inspirational lay people to work with young people

What are your dreams for the church?:
- Peace/trust/openness/justice
- Transparency and openness to continue

- There are less priests – what can we do about this?
- We need to open up and be joyful
- Support the vulnerable
- World faith leaders to work together to promote peace and make the world a better place – find commons themes and work together
- The church needs to consistently reflect the teachings of Jesus
- What would Jesus do?
- Revisit the teachings of the church – what would Jesus do? Are they consistent?
- Child abuse cases – we need to stand up and make it clear that this is condemned
- We need Catholics to be represented in politics – local and national level

St Edward's CP School, Kettering - Children

Process Used:

All children from year4 to year 6 took part (c90 participants) Conversations were in groups of 10. each group had 30 mins Question 1 and 4 only

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Belonging and identity I'm happy to be a Catholic because all my family are Catholics. It makes me happy to be part of the Church. People respect others. I was born a Catholic and want to be one forever. We are all united through Christ. We like to be in God's family and follow his footsteps. We are one body no matter who we are. I am baptised and have done first Holy Communion but I'm not a Catholic (several children said this). I'm a Catholic, but I don't go to Church. The Mass I like taking part in the Mass, particularly taking communion. When I receive communion it feels as if the Holy Spirit is in me. Going up for a blessing feels really special too. The Gospel tells me what Jesus, God and the Prophets did. We follow God; walk in his footsteps. We go to Mass every Sunday. My family find it difficult to get time to go to Mass. The people at Mass are kind. School Being in a Catholic school is like being part of one big family – everyone is there to help you. Although I'm not a Catholic, I have lots of Catholic friends. I didn't know who Jesus was when I started at this school, now I do and I can pray. The teachers here are really kind and I am really grateful to them. When someone is lonely I go up to them to ask if they want to play. Oh dear, imagine no prayers or RE! If you weren't at our school, you wouldn't know about God's plan for the future. It has helped me live a better life and do good deeds. Even though I'm not a Catholic, I feel special to be in the school because it teaches me the ways of God. I'm not a baptised Christian, but I still believe believe in Jesus and God because of the school. Faith I feel safe and know that God loves me. It's a special thing- like I'm related to God – he's always in me. Jesus and God will always love me and forgive me. I know that God will be with me whatever. I follow God and listen to him. Being a Catholic is to belong to God and be one of his children. If things are hard I have someone I can rely on and trust to help me and guide me. I listen to what Jesus did and try to influence the world like he did. I try to be a disciple. RE I like saying prayers in school. I'd like to say more prayers and have more stories about Jesus in RE - they are the best bit of RE – what you remember. RE can be boring –or more precisely, it is often inspiring, but then there's too much writing. It should be more about faith. We would like more prayers, drama, art. A choice of activities would be good. We would like to learn lots more about other religions too. We would like to learn more about actually praying and do more some quiet meditation activities. Prayer I pray to God and he keeps me safe. I always have someone I can talk to – I don't go through things alone. When I'm lonely I know who I can speak with. When you pray you might feel God near you - that makes me special because I know God loves me. Praying makes me feel more joyful. Praying helps me calm down if I'm angry. I pray to God to not be distracted by Satan. I have a relationship with God in prayer. I pray with my family at home. I pray at home when I go to bed. I pray for things and for forgiveness. I pray for a better future – to achive goals. I pray with my family - saying what we want to say, but we don't go to church. I pray at night before bed –Our Father and our own prayers for people. I pray a lot. I'm really thankful. Belonging and identity I'm happy to be a Catholic because all my family are Catholics. It makes me happy to be part of the Church. People respect others. I was born a Catholic and want to be one forever. We are all united through Christ. We like to be in God's family and follow his footsteps. We are one body no matter who we are. I am baptised and have done first Holy Communion but I'm not a Catholic (several children said this). I'm a Catholic, but I don't go to Church. The Mass I like taking part in the Mass, particularly taking communion. When I receive communion it feels as if the Holy Spirit is in me. Going up for a blessing feels really special too. The Gospel tells me what Jesus, God and the Prophets did. We follow God; walk in his footsteps. We go to Mass every Sunday. My family find it difficult to get time to go to Mass. The people at Mass are kind. School Being in a Catholic school is

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Being a Catholic is to belong to God and be one of his children. If things are hard I have someone I can rely on and trust to help me and guide me. I listen to what Jesus did and try to influence the world like he did. I try to be a disciple. RE I like saying prayers in school. I'd like to say more prayers and have more stories about Jesus in RE - they are the best bit of RE – what you remember. RE can be boring –or more precisely, it is often inspiring, but then there's too much writing. It should be more about faith. We would like more prayers, drama, art. A choice of activities would be good. We would like to learn lots more about other religions too. We would like to learn more about actually praying and do more some quiet meditation activities. Prayer I pray to God and he keeps me safe. I always have someone I can talk to – I don't go through things alone. When I'm lonely I know who I can speak with. When you pray you might feel God near you - that makes me special because I know God loves me. Praying makes me feel more joyful. Praying helps me calm down if I'm angry. I pray to God to not be distracted by Satan. I have a relationship with God in prayer. I pray with my family at home. I pray at home when I go to bed. I pray for things and for forgiveness. I pray for a better future – to achive goals. I pray with my family - saying what we want to say, but we don't go to church. I pray at night before bed –Our Father and our own prayers for people. I pray a lot. I'm really thankful. Belonging and identity I'm happy to be a Catholic because all my family are Catholics. It makes me happy to be part of the Church. People respect others. I was born a Catholic and want to be one forever. We are all united through Christ. We like to be in God's family and follow his footsteps. We are one body no matter who we are. I am baptised and have done first Holy Communion but I'm not a Catholic (several children said this). I'm a Catholic, but I don't go to Church. The Mass I like taking part in the Mass, particularly taking communion. When I receive communion it feels as if the Holy Spirit is in me. Going up for a blessing feels really special too. The Gospel tells me what Jesus, God and the Prophets did. We follow God; walk in his footsteps. We go to Mass every Sunday. My family find it difficult to get time to go to Mass. The people at Mass are kind. School Being in a Catholic school is like being part of one big family – everyone is there to help you. Although I'm not a Catholic, I have lots of Catholic friends. I didn't know who Jesus was when I started at this school, now I do and I can pray. The teachers here are really kind and I am really grateful to them. When someone is lonely I go up to them to ask if they want to play. Oh dear, imagine no prayers or RE! If you weren't at our school, you wouldn't know about God's plan for the future. It has helped me live a better life and do good deeds. Even though I'm not a Catholic, I feel special to be in the school because it teaches me the ways of God. I'm not a baptised Christian, but I still believe believe in Jesus and God because of the school. Faith I feel safe and know that God loves me. It's a special thing- like I'm related to God – he's always in me. Jesus and God will always love me and forgive me. I know that God will be with me whatever. I follow God and listen to him. Being a Catholic is to belong to God and be one of his children. If things are hard I have someone I can rely on and trust to help me and guide me. I listen to what Jesus did and try to influence the world like he did. I try to be a disciple. RE I like saying prayers in school. I'd like to say more prayers and have more stories about Jesus in RE - they are the best bit of RE – what you remember. 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Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
What are your dreams for the Church? Mission My dream for the Church would be that other people who don't believe would start to believe in God. But you can't force them - we need freedom and liberty. We should spread the word by giving out books like children's bibles. The Church should give bibles to everyone who can't afford them. I want the Church to be bigger. I want all the religions to worship together. Invite poor people to come in. Give out leaflets encouraging people to come. Preach the Gospel everywhere. If everyone in the world really believed in God, then there would be no bad behaviour, no littering, no murder, suicide, war, starvation, prisoners. Everyone would live in harmony and be joyful. We need to pray more about unity and coming together. Explaining to people how to do the right thing. Other churches also believe in Christ. Some people who don't believe in Jesus still try to help people Giving I want the Church to give more money to the poor and feed hungry people. Collect more money for the poor from near the church. Feed the poor! Welcome When they come to church, ask people how their life is going. Welcome them and make friends. Everyone should be given a crucifix when they come for the first time. Give out bibles to borrow while in church. Inclusion Let women become priests. Girls should definitely be able to be altar servers. Priests should be able to get married. Preaching It shouldn't matter what gender, colour, size, age etc, anybody can spread the Gospel. Women should be able to preach - it's just unfair to think only men have something important to say. Older children could sometimes preach, or at least have a few minutes to say something. We are all children of God and the Holy Spirit can fill anyone with the fire to speak Improving the Mass experience The people (not just the priest) could talk about Jesus during the Mass, and have discussions about faith - how they know things. We should be able to ask questions. Now it's like a one sided chat. They could show little videos about the life of Jesus or have pictures to go with the readings. We need children's liturgy to start again. We could even have Masses just for children. It would be nice to have a few more upbeat gospel hymns and music. More variety of instruments and songs. Some songs could just be for the children. The seats could be a lot more comfortable – nobody is usually expected to sit on a hard bench for an hour. Do we really think that makes God happy somehow? We should stay and eat afterwards - a feast! We should definitely have biscuits and cake after church and a chat. Improving the building I think we should make churches colourful and bright like heaven. Use coloured lights for atmosphere they can make you feel good. More pictures about Jesus life around the church for people who can't read as well as children. More colourful! Put carpets in the church so it isn't so echoey. There could be a room with a little library for people to get books and Bibles. There could be a book club before Mass, or in the evening. A group to study the Bible in sections. Children would like a book club for them. The church could do more to save the planet and promote environmental issues. They could put solar panels on the roof.

St Edward's CP School, Kettering - Staff

Process Used:

These notes come from 2x 45min conversations with teaching and support staff (11 participants). The main process used was the 'spiritual conversation' as recommended.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
At St Edward's we are a very diverse community, but we care about each other like a family. This sense of family is embedded in every aspect of the school. It doesn't matter whether staff are non-practising or not Catholic, they still feel part of the family and the level of empathy among staff is good. Working here has changed me – to think more about what is important in life. Even adults are taught to be more caring - you learn to look further, deeper. We teach caring, kindness, thoughtfulness, forgiveness, loving, treating others well and this is carried through into all our lives. Children don't necessarily get this at home. Families from other faiths chose our school because they know we have a strong moral compass and teach much more than the curriculum. I'm not a Catholic, but I like it that we have prayers and pray – it brings peace and comfort. It is amazing how quickly the children, even the youngest, take on the ethos, respect the faith, understand about the candle and the cross etc. When you are going through the roughest of times, with very little hope, as a Catholic you know that there is this bigger thing. A sentence from the Bible can speak to you and help you in a difficult time. The stories of Jesus are very important.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Pope Francis seems to have a more enlightened, inclusive and broadminded view of the world. In the past, certain topics were thought of as unsuitable for discussion. Pope Francis is trying to open this up. I pray for him. We are proud of our schools. The priests visit school so the children know them. They are good at explaining things to the children and welcome them in church. Masses in school are lovely – really special. At a low point in your life, having a priest to come to be with you and pray is wonderful. That, and other people praying can be what gets you through.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Fewer families bring their children to church. The Church is not inclusive. People of different sexual orientation are treated as if they have some kind of disability brought on them by sin. They are born as they are and the Church should welcome them and provide for their spiritual needs. There is a lack of compassion that many Catholics are unhappy with. The Church is perceived as old-fashioned and treats people as it did in the past – as if they are uneducated. In fact people are far more educated these days and will make up their own minds in matters of conscience. Women should be allowed to be priests. There are double standards, women are undervalued and opportunities to use their considerable skills (eg in leadership positions) are not given. The whole marriage-divorce-remarriage question needs looking at carefully and with more compassion – in our secular times, it seems ridiculous that we are actually turning away people who want to be full members of the Church. The scandals around clerical abuse and cover-up and mother and baby homes has caused many people to walk away and increased anti-Catholic feeling outside the Church.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Married priests Women priests Accept people's sexual orientation – remove barriers to inclusion A more inclusive Church, accessible to all People need to go outside the walls – be more missionary – it's not all about going to Mass Better promotion of the Church on social media

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, Aylesbury

Process Used:

The small group Spiritual Conversation recommended by the diocese.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
This Synodal process through the Spiritual Conversations in small groups. A Non Catholic - Being supported in prayer at a difficult time. An openness and freedom to proclaim the name of Christ. A sense of God's presence in the school. The warm atmosphere of the school. 'When looking for a secondary school for my daughter, having visited several schools, I was very impressed by the head teacher of St Bernards school saying, 'Before we talk, I want to pray for you. The school cared for the whole person.' Experiences from the past:- of being part of a participating community, for example through house Masses to which friends could be invited and where there was faith sharing at a deeper level. Also small discussion groups, celebrating the Mass in English and praying with other denominations. St Josephs was a welcoming and inclusive church. There was an interconnectiveness between the school, the church and the community. 'I was introduced to a personal relationship with Jesus by friends who were members of other non RC churches.' The school conveys Jesus . On entering the school, there is a good welcome and a feeling of community. This only happens in pockets of the parish church. Communities try, but lack emotion. A non catholic - 'Coming to this school has brought me back to my faith. I have found purpose and meaning at this school. You are always welcome here, no matter who you are.' Before Vatican II, the church felt very judgemental and rule bound. I learnt about God, not about a relationship with Jesu, I found that later in a small, supportive parish group. The catholic school nurtures , encourages coming to know Jesus and is concerned with the whole child not only the academic part of the child's development. The Catholic school is like another church and having families of other denominations enriches it. 'The Catholic school is 'Faith in Action', supporting children and families, it is like a model for how church should be.' 'Bringing myself down to the level of small children helped me in my faith journey.'

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
A non Catholic - At the school there is not much teaching of scripture, even if the obligation to go to Sunday Mass is emphasised. There is not enough teaching about the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus. The RC church looks very closed in relation to other churches and church collaboration in the town. ' I do not feel included, except by friends. There is a lack of opportunity to meet other members of the congregation and lack of community involvement in the sacramental preparation.' Children are described as 'the future of the church', but they are part of the church now. They are frequently not made to feel welcomed, nor included or involved. A teacher with young children,' I feel people (at church) are judging me and my children when they are simply being little children and not noisy. People frown and look disapprovingly. I dont know how long they, (the children) will be willing to come to church.' The church needs to be more open to other denominations and the richness they can bring. 'I learnt about a personal relationship with God through other Christians.' 'Jesus is not spoken about enough at Mass.' Opportunities are being missed, for example at Baptism, for people to come into faith and then be supported in their faith. 'My faith stopped growing as a teenager although I had a Catholic education and at no point felt Jesus. My children feel the same. It is hard to put into words. The church can convey, 'You are not one of us'. Why dont churches convey community, welcome, Jesus and the simplicity of his teaching?' Non catholic - At church I do not feel the same focus as at the school. The RC church does not feel 'alive' like other 'born again' churches. As a result of having catholic schools, the

responsibility of passing on the Faith has not been sufficiently recognised by parents. It seems like there is an emphasis on the sacraments and attending Mass, but not on a relationship with Jesus or the continuing journey of faith. People are 'sacramentalised' but not evangelised or discipled. The connection between the school and the parish is weak and the tremendous work of evangelisation and Christian witness of the school in the community is not realised. The church asks for money but is not transparent about how it is used.

What are your dreams for the church?:
The strongest message from the listening and sharing are for:- 1 More opportunities to have and develop a personal relationship with Jesus 2 The development of Discipleship 3. A greater emphasis on reading, sharing and learning Scripture. 4 For the parish to recognise, appreciate and use the potential of the school.

St Joseph's Catholic High School, Slough

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It means that I get love and support from God. - I like the love and support I get from school. - Love and support from others - Having tradition to follow - Serve Jesus - To be able to worship God in a safe place with other people who believe - It means to have a connection with God. - To believe in God and to love and trust him - Like a second family to me - To be loving to everyone regardless, to acknowledge God's love for you and everyone - To spread God's word, to be one of his apostles, to be within a loving community, share God's grace with all - To follow the morals and belief of God. And to believe in the resurrection - I'm constantly with people I can relate to - Being part of a Catholic community is very important because everyone is included and we pray to our Father all together, making our prayers more powerful - Being part of it fills a void in my heart. - Different religions but same community making us feel comfortable - It doesn't really have an impact on me - Everyone comes together as one - To be part of God's community - Everyone comes together as one - Everyone is friendly - Nothing much. I guess it's just nice you're a part of a community that have the same beliefs as you - Everyone supports the same cause - Being forgiving and being a morally good person - Everyone comes together - I feel supported and encouraged to do good - Everyone being there for each
Other - I can be closer to God - It is brilliant as there are people to help you - I never feel alone - Being part of a Catholic community means you are always loved and cared for - It means that you are loving and honest with each
Other - You're part of a supportive
Group - You're part of a group that support the same religion/faith. This creates a holy atmosphere. - There is people and support all around you. - It means that we are part of a group where we can help one another and be forgiving. - Means God is looking over me - It means being loving and care for everyone - Be a part of God's family - To be united in a large family - Being part of one big family - Helping the ones in need - It means I can appreciate the things I have in life - Nothing, but it's a lovely community where you learn about God and the Catholic beliefs - I have seen the values which have been enforced within every student. The school is more of a large family than anything, giving a sense of belonging - It's nice to be around a community that care about others as that's what Catholicism teaches - Community is like a family, very warm and caring - To be in a community that is loving and full of faith - Being part of something important and valuable, very close feeling to family - It means to be supported and guided by people around you - Loving family - To be fully engaged with the religion as well as follow and integrate with fellow believers – taking account for your actions – embrace God in a unique way - Like being in a caring supportive family - To me it means that I am a part of the body of people that wants to experience the grace of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. - I am blessed to be part of catholic Church to worship Jesus Mary Joseph. God is always gracious to me. - Catholic means to me is Serving God in good ways by offering in church and following 10 ten commandments . - It's a sense of belonging in a very beautiful way, like being a part of the family. - It's a major part of our lives- faith plays a part within our family all the time. - Being Catholic is very important to me. I love the traditions of the church. - Trying your best to be good , believe it in god give you a force to carry on every single day . - It gives me guidance in how I live my life - It means everything. It's the support and joy I get from knowing my religion and the community I have with fellow parishioners - Strengthens my faith - The catholic church is the universal church and mother church for all denominations. - The catholic church gains all the sacraments and the devotions to grow into our faith. - Means all members are united as the Body of Christ, given life by the one Spirit. We acknowledge one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. Doing the right thing and allowing others to be who they are without passing judgment. Living the word of God on a daily basis makes you Catholic. - Family traditions - Being a catholic means following God, try your best to pass on his word of faith

and follow and believe in all his teachings that we find in the bible. - A caring environment - Being Catholic and being a part of community to me means serving the less fortunate within the community, doing the right thing even though sometimes it feels like not the right thing to do and allowing others to be who they are without passing judgment. ... living with the God on a daily basis … - To be part of a community and feel supported and guided by God - Having been brought up in a staunchly Catholic family, the Church has always been a major part of my life. I became an altar server and even progressed to become a Master of Ceremonies. At the age of 18, I did however lose my faith but after a period of time, felt compelled to return to the Church and rekindle my faith! At the age of 43, I became a father and wanted to bring my son into the Catholic faith, he is now attending a Catholic Secondary School but since the outbreak of Covid-19, we haven't attended Church, as I am Clinically Vulnerable.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

'- - Pastoral care - always available - Some of my experiences are feeding the poor, offering services for our beloved ones that have left us, charitable offerings. - Yes, Church helps to gives us all Sacraments. - Encourage kids and youth to participate in church that's very good what I like. Masses at different times to suit our timings. - It's extremely important for the church to be open to everyone no matter the religion or differences so what's very well in our church thanks to the wonderful priest is being welcome and respected. - Things like the Synod inviting everyone to contribute- Lay involvement- continuing youth -development- world Youth Day - increased evangelisation within diocese. - Welcoming children into the mass and how my priest is very understanding when children may make noise. You are made to feel very welcome and that you are part of a big family. - Helping people to get better when they are very down and thinking no lights are coming, church helped me few years ago. - On line masses on you tube during the pandemic - Becoming more inclusive with the times especially around homosexuality etc. - Liaising with my daughter's old primary school, getting involved with local events and supporting the homeless sleepovers in the church during the winter. - Keeping the mass on no matter the circumstances. - The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Catholics believe that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God, and so everyone deserves to be treated fairly and equally. - Wedding, christening, first communion very important - The church has always done its best to help those in need. - Online during the pandemic - They are faithfully preaching and teaching the Bible despite the pandemic and difficult times we live in. They are providing hope and encouragement during the pandemic. - Having regular masses, confession which has helped me in the past, masses online during the pandemic to remain connected to my faith - Just recently, my Father is on End of Life due to bowel cancer. He asked for the Last Rites blessing from the Parish Priest. Unfortunately, he was abroad but he contacted another priest, from the shared Church, who was more than willing to come and give my Father a blessing. - They help people get through stuff when they need help - When they raise money for charity - At Christmas you do hampers for people - The day we did the cake sale - Communication, hampers, nativities, communion, charity - Doing good things for other people - I used to help out in my local church. The hampers. - Praying for someone - Singing - Being there for others when they are in need - They can teach about God very well - Reflective prayers, collective worships, charity events to raise money - Confirmation - If there is something that we need to be supported by the Catholic community is there to immediately give us assistance - A good atmosphere when we sing happy songs in church as it feels fun to praise the Lord in such a way - Tell stories about Jesus - When they held a Mass for someone who recently died. It was quite helpful because we could pray for them together. - Being a loving community and experiencing church through the service of school e.g. Mass and liturgies - I think the Church is good at making a good community and encouraging people to go to Mass - Throughout lockdown, the Church was able to do Masses online e.g. stations of the cross - They provide amazing emotional support - They have Sunday school teaching children

about the life of Jesus. They also do altar serving, which I have done for 2 years and it is a nice experience. - Priests get money - Help me get into the school - Church changing my mood - The Church brings everyone together - Teaching us a good lesson and teaches use more about the Bible, to make us closer to God. - They have given LGBTQ rights - When they recognised LGBTQ rights, although some Catholics don't believe in it - Support families through the school and forgive sins - Helping to get closer to God by praying - Forgiving sins - The Church donates money to charity - Dealing with my father's death - Giving out free bread during Mass. Helping people who are less fortunate. - Brings communities together - Giving to charity, preaching God's word. Including everyone seeing everyone as equal. - Letting us burn candles for student who died. Giving us peace of mind that he will be OK. - Letting me burn a candle when a young boy in school passed in his memory. - Raising money. - Including everyone to pray and worship God. Very diverse. - Being confirmed - Bonding together when problems occur. - Making church more interesting using hymns - Charity work, giving to the poor - Choir – singing together as a community - The songs - Going to Mass every Sunday - The Church is community where we all support each other and look after each other. - When the Church attempts to embrace all communities and help others, charities that aid those in severe need - Celebrations at Church and donating events - Spreading the word of God - Being there for each other in times of need – emphasising community e.g. prayers - Church doing charity work for the less fortunate - The songs are nice'

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
'- I can reflect on recent experience which was the Covid when we could not attend church as normal but was further moved to online service which worked out quite well but I missed going and spending time with God in the church. - taking kids to church, prayers at home, as a parent doing everything for them. Nowadays I am worried to say that kids don't have faith in God, they don't believe in, they don't want to give time for God. I am not blaming church but something should be done on this to build faith in kids. I know it's parents responsibility first but when they don't listen to parents they need to know this. - Previous handling of historical scandals. - Had a very hard time in my family, my local priest was around to listen and helped me. - Related to the above. Needs to be more inclusive of all forms of LGBTQ community. Especially around transgender. - Sometimes communication isn't too good towards parishioners. - Hard to go online and not get the physical communion. - when a child fails to comply with the values of the school - The worst thing is rude priest. - All the scandal of child abuse is unacceptable and priests should be allowed to marry. - Expectation to attend so soon - They are getting involved in some matters that they should leave community to actually decide on such as some political fighting (not all priests) or encouraging communities to e.g. take on vaccines when this should be a matter of individual's choice. - The Deacon, attached to my local Church stopped receiving a salary from the Church and had to look for other employment. He was also treated very badly by two of our Parish Priests! Luckily he became part of the Chaplaincy Team at the local hospital - I am often conflicted when met with the contradictory actions of the Church and so my faith has weakened - Hymns may not be executed with God's presence in mind - Not sure - Not speaking up enough on issues that need to be discussed e.g. Palestine and Israel - Hymns that are too long - Discrimination between people of the same

Parish - Sometimes the singing - Not being supportive enough on topics that need awareness e.g. Palestine - The negative stigma around being a Catholic because of the past things the Church has done (abuse) - Male have more authority than women - Explaining some parts of the Bible - My dad's death and funeral - Priest not reading properly - Holy water - When homosexual people couldn't get married - Not allowing homosexuals to get married back in the day. Not seeing through divorces - They aren't allowing homosexuals to marry - Women being denied the chance to be a priest. - Not letting women become priests. - The church service can be a bit boring especially when I was young. - The service is boring - The songs are all slow and the same. I think making the songs

have holy words but maybe a bit more fun get people dancing to celebrate God. - The songs are sad and slow not upbeat. Being upbeat would cheer up the atmosphere. - Forcing people to come forcefully. Making people feel uncomfortable when they confess. Laughing at the less fortunate. - The Church is usually alright, but it gets boring if I'm honest. The same thing is being constantly repeated, the songs, the prayers, the timings. The Church is supposed to include everyone so why can't they aim some things at children? - Encouraging people to spread the word of God and evangelise. - When I was forced to do confirmation - More Catholic activities like retreats and extra-curricular Christian activities - I don't know when the church hasn't been there for us - Women not being priests - My candle went out on my Holy Communion. I didn't learn all the prayers - Not going to church weekly - Priests have not have a proper church - I didn't go to church one day and then went back I missed out on a lot - The time when a demon possessed a person - Strict clothes rules, funeral, have to pay, priest is their only job - Less people went to church due to some bad experiences'

What are your dreams for the church?:
'- I wish that the Catholic Church can include praise and worship in the service. - To expand the catholic community. - I wish the church was always welcoming for everyone and respectful for their choices and also is for all the churches in this country to come together on the 25/03 (Day of universal dialogue between the religions organised by Al-Khour) and unite in prayer with people from all the world. - That people will come back - youth will thrive - parishes will be more open to fresh ideas to create deeper faith, mission and evangelisation. - My dream for the church is that people will not feel banished by the church for being different. I have known people who have left the church because they feel that they are not welcome because they are different and feel that their sin is too much for them to be welcomed by the church - Opening their doors to anyone and welcoming people happily. - To move forward into the 21st century and acknowledging that the world has changed and some of the Catholic beliefs also need to change in particular towards person's sexuality and divorce - Again related to the above. I want my church to be inclusive of everyone regardless of any background or issues. Jesus taught us love is love with no judgement. - To enable females to become priests or at least to say mass and be involved with the sacraments. - A revival for the universal Church. Through the charismatic revival, more young people in church in England ..as churches are closing, for members are getting old and young people are going astray. We need a REVIVAL. - To continue the good work they do in the community and supporting everyone in the congregation. The Church, and those in it, must: share the Word of God. - To focus on God and pass on his message and stop getting involved in politics. The catholic religion has been around for decades and is involved in things that have nothing to do with the church or faith. - Mordenisation i.e. recognition of same sex coupled, female priests - Having teenager as a son I would love to see church being able to encourage these young people to visit more frequently, do something that would make them glued to the church but this sounds impossible (almost) - Accept divorces. Accept and never condemn homosexuals and allow them to marry in the Church because they are people too - More funding to encourage younger priests and also allowing women to celebrate mass Church? - For women to be priests/pastors - I don't know what my dream is for the Church - For priests to have a life just like ours - That they will be able to help more people - Donating more money - Men to still have a family even if they are a priest - It can become popular - Youth groups - For the Church to be one united church without many denominations, as this will make the community more united and as one. - Plenty of money - To carry on - To be a place where we can all be happy and even and pray all the time - I wish for the church more modernised and appealing to a future generation - Become open - Together people in a better way and not forceful. Not the Church but rather love God and his word. Be accepting of the LGBT community and let people be themselves. - More accepting of allowing gay marriage, abortions, euthanasia, divorce etc. - I hope that Church lasts forever. - The Church needs to become more accepting of people - Women being able to have as much say in the Church as men do. More accepting of homosexuals etc. - More

youth activities - Women can be priests - Upbeat songs to dance to. - My dream for Church is to make religion more believable. - To be all inclusive - To open up about unfair justice - To be diverse and not discriminate others. Be open to everyone - To be honest and take accountability, aid those truthfully in need, become a religion of peace allowing followers of free will - To continue to drive peace into the world - Stop having constant news of abuse - To be more inclusive - To be more diverse and understanding to members of the Church - Involving more people of colour etc. Blacks, Asians - To be more equal between males and females - My dream for the Church is to have priests of different races. - More diverse Church, with female priests - More ethnic people and women part of the Church - Restore peace and balance around the world - Getting more equality in the Church in terms of gender and allowing gay marriage - More priests of different ethnicities - For women to be priests'

St Martin de Porres School

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
"On Tuesday 15th March, we will hold a brief session for a group of parents who feel that they would like to come into school to discuss these questions in more detail. The session will take place in our Prayer room and will be between 9.00 -10.00 am."

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
What does it mean to you to belong to a Catholic community (the school)?
I would like my daughters to continue to grow in catholic faith together as a community.
It means continuing to learn and grow our Christian faith as family.
Learn more about RC rather than other religion
Living out your faith with others in so many different ways, for example praying, raising money for CAFOD,
Proud and happy to be part of the Catholic community
One community - standing on God's commandments and Jesus request to be the light of the world. s
Local support.
Privileged
The religious history and belief
We belong to a community that has the same values and teaches my children the same principles.
important for children and families to build local connections relationships and being part of this community strengthens this
Great
To have Christian values
I grew up as a Christian and i will like my kids to grow up and have Christian values especially because of what's happening in the world today.
To belong to community that share the same faith
Proud and happy to be part of the community.
being apart of a community brings strength
Great
One community - standing on One community - standing on God's commandment and Jesus request to be the light of the world.
Being part of the Catholic community is a symbol of unity and faith which Christ is the centre.
I grew in a Christian background and i will like my kids to do the same. I also think it helps from early to instil Christian values into a child. It help with their behaviour etc.
It is very important to my family that my children are schooled in a Catholic school as Jesus is our guide in our daily living. I strongly believe in Jesus teachings and I know that the school makes sure these are taught to the children.
It is very important as my child will enhance his knowledge about the good news from the god.
like being part of a huge family
means a lot, as its Christian based
fantastic
local support
it means a lot to me and my family
Means our children taught and raised as at home and builds life-long relationships
I believe my children will have and education where Catholic values are followed and will incentive my children to follow the word of the lord.
Belonging to a catholic community gives my family the reassurance that out values and moral will be upheld through solidifying faith in God.
Peace of mind
It means being able to share your faith with community. It also promotes unity.

Learn more about RC rather than other religions.
It means belonging to a family united in Christ.
Being one in the name of Jesus.
it means a lot to me. I was brought up in a catholic family. i want my son to learn and be a good catholic.
For me and my family is raising my child with good values as this way she grows in a God environment
A school that is religious and puts God first
I feel it gives structure and meaning and a sense of community
My child will be able to grow in Christ and will understand the importance of being a good human in society.
What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Experiences of Church at school:
I like attending mass in the school or the church , yearly choir service and nativity, bringing home prayer bags, and other religious activities but the covid pandemic changed everything.
Prayer bags. Helping us to remind to pray.
Attending Mass and reflecting on the Eucharist, praying for others, Reading the bible. Family activities at home (prayer bag)
How school teaches good values and God's teachings to our kids through different interesting activities like assemblies, Nativity, Collective Worship, prayer bags, Carol Service, etc.
prayer bags, prayer and reflection, worship etc.
Prayer bag allows practice at home.
"nativity
prayer bags"
It awesome to belong to the catholic family.
I am really happy my son can take part in many of these, he enjoys it and likes to talk about it and it also brings us together at home especially through the prayer bag or Lenten activities etc.
School offers great experiences, have been involved in masses, assemblies, nativity and Easter celebrations and children have brought home and have easy asses to prayer bags
Prayers, support family and collective worship
My experience will be the fact that my children are thought about Christ and how to be a good Christian, how to pray and be a good person.
When the kids comes home with the prayer bag as a family we come together and prayer and reflect on God.
Prayer bags, preparations for lent and advent, assemblies etc
How school teaches good values and God's teachings to kids through interesting and interactive activities like Collective worship, assemblies, Nativity, prayer bags, Carol Service, etc
Prayer bags are wonderful as it's personal for the children
I have a great experience with the Catholic, they are helping my children in believes also how to behave in this society and in their lives is a great way to protect my children
Prayer bags, prayer and reflection, worship etc.
My experiences of church through the service of schools are: Carol Services, Collective Worship , Nativity, relationships and assemblies.
When the kids come home with the prayer bag as a family you come together and prayer and reflect on God.
I always enjoy listening to the Carol Service and watching assemblies before were a treat as kids showcase their talents
It helps especially for children to pray and give thanks to our Lord, appreciate all the blessings and sharing the word of the lord to families and friends.
Always learning new things and develop our understanding and knowledge through reflection
Prayer reflections the songs all have taught my kids a lot and I am grateful

Excellent
Prayer bag allows children to practice.
The school sent prayer bags since my daughter was in nursery and that help her establish foundation of prayer and the importance of it. The collective worship and assembly also helped my daughter reflect on the topics given relating to what we celebrate as Christians all throughout the year.
All of the above for all our children who attend and attended the school
I believe the praying at school incentives my child to pry also at home. The native activity and the learning at school about the Bible is very good and make the children been interested to now more about Jesus.
My child comes home talking about bible stories which we have shared together. she enjoys realising it's not just us who know God.
the church encourages children to faith and beliefs
These activities cultivate the Catholic faith and practices among the children and their families.
It reflects the foundation of the love of Christ which is now transferred into the love of one another as God commanded.
Prayer and reflection and assemblies.
My learned about the nativity through the school's Christmas programme.
My experience couldn't be better my child it's having the best support and guidance to become a better Catholic
Us parents need to see some performances live from now
None due to Covid I have no experience with this at st martins
Prayer and reflections connects us to GOD
What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?

What is your dream for the Church?
What is your dream for the world and how can the Church work differently to help get us there?
Peace and Harmony to the whole world. I know it is hard but we need to believe and unite in prayers. And I believe that introducing the kids to Christ earlier in their life will make them better individuals and they can contribute a lot in a bigger community to aim peace and harmony in the whole world.
That every person should grow in their faith in God and the rest will follow.
For everyone to know about Jesus, that Jesus Loves them and He died for them. WE can all have His love and peace in our hearts, that will help us to treats each other in a loving way,
To have peace and love around the world
Peace and Love. The church should demonstrate this through inclusivity regardless of race, gender etc
Peace to the world so the church can pray for those at war
Nothing at the minute.
My dream for the world at the moment is to have peace everywhere but I don't know what else can be done about that.
Pray that children will understand more about how to go to church, so even if the parent are not able to take them to church they go to church them selves
my dream for the world would be that there is no racism and equal opportunities for all.
"For the world to be a better place. No war, People living loving, kind, respectful etc. We need to keep praying.
prayer, prayer, prayer!"
For peace to reign and for all to coexist whatever their faith.
To have peace and love always around the world
Peace, unity and faith. when we get together we're better together
My dream is that to be in the world where everyone are equal with no race or society discriminations

Peace and Love. The church should demonstrate this through inclusively regardless of race, gender etc.
My dream is to cease the war in Ukraine and to restore peace in the world. The Church can work as a mediator between these countries at war and the church needs to consecrate Russia.
For the world to be a better place, No war people living loving, kind, respectful etc. we need to keep Praying even more!
continued charity works for the needy
To encourage fellow people to go to church attend masses and spread the gospel of the words.
"peace through prayers and collective goodness"
Dream is to get everyone know about Christ and how much He loves them all no matter what or where they are from. I would like the school to teach on evangelism and do more community evangelism
Peace withing the communities and around the whole world. Praying and believing.
a peaceful world to live in. The church can continue being proactive towards the young people to continue informing them of the love of God.
Peace in the world and equality is my wish for the world. The Church have been working together with other religions to work peace in between different religions and countries this should be kept and extended when possible.
Literally, world peace! there is so much hate and anger in the world and out local community. the church could be more welcoming and maybe advertise services etc.
world peace, no discrimination
A world where everyone respects and lend a helping hand to one another.
My dream is for everyone one in the world to see ourselves as one in Christ. The Church should continue the good work and also continue to help instil this same beliefs in our children as they are the future of tomorrow.
peaceful life
We need to join and pray for the peace to the world
Church can do more evangelism and teach kids the importance of God
I hope the world be a place filled with love, harmony, kindness, peaceful place. The church build individuals in achieving it by encouraging to be Christ like
I would like to share that when i was studying in a catholic school back home. we really did lots of religious activities. like for example: every month of October everyday the whole school prays one mystery of the rosary, every 12 o'clock daily everyone stops what they where doing and recites the angelus. one school staff says it on a megaphone or recorded voice and played through it the school so that pupils be reminded it is 12 o'clock and recites the angelus.

St Paul's Catholic School, Milton Keynes

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
Small listening groups of:
SEND pupils
Self-selecting pupils from all year groups
Chaplaincy representatives from several year groups

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
• Praying to God as a group
• Take responsibility (We could do this better)
• Learn the true meaning of Jesus
• Be respected (We could do this better)
• Come together as a community
• Do what Jesus says in the Bible
• Respect the rules of the Church
• Help others in the community (We do this well)
• All are welcome
• Practising the Church traditions
• More 'loose' with teaching because not all are Catholic
• Share faith with like-minded individuals (We do this well)
• Mixing with everyone – diversity (We do this well)
• Opportunities to be part of the Church – part of liturgies, charity work etc (We do this well)
• A place we can ask questions
• Even though I'm an atheist I can learn to be the best person
• Year 8 were of the opinion that they felt respected and safe being part of a catholic community. Safe in terms of the physical safety of the school as well as the "safety" of their mental health and wellbeing. They like the fact that we are a forgiving school, to be honest they have not experienced anything else. Some mentioned the fact that they had not mixed with other year groups at social times as a difficulty but the majority were in favour of their own social zones.
• Helps you keep your faith in you head all.
• Good to be part of a community
• Closer relationship with God
• Help you to Pray
• Brings everyone together
• Being judged on what you believe
• Some people think the praying and Mass is excessive
• Christ is at the heart of our community and our school moto of 'Love, Serve and do the Best that Is Possible' is a reminder of that.
• It sometimes feels like we are closer to God and following in his footsteps – at least doing our best to.
• The joy of being encouraged to be our own person but also to work together and to be together. It brings people together, like in school mass.
• The difficulties come when you get a wobble and feel that God isn't there for you when you feel you are struggling so you may question if you are losing your faith.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
See box above and:
• Bible readings in assembly
• Mass and getting to meet the Priest and listen to him.
• Encourage those who have a faith to take part in things

• Allowing us to remember those we have lost (All Souls Mass)
• Fundraising and always trying to help those who need help like homeless, poor, sick. The school Foodbank collection and shoe boxes.
• Emotional support in school works well. Someone is always there to listen and care.
• Smaller groups praying works really well, no bigger than form group size. It makes it more personal. Prayer spaces was really helpful and lovely.
• Community days to try and get involved locally and help neighbours.
• CAFOD and making us aware of bigger world issues like climate change.
• Year 8 comments. Of the three types of Collective Worship that Year 8 have experienced (Virtual during lockdown, virtual in the tutor room and all together in the gym) all said that being together was far the best option. They like the fact that we are all together with a shared goal and responsibility. They liked how serious we treat Mass (even though they have only had one school mass ever!) and liked how "normal" Father Brendan is, talking about his zip wire experience. For example.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
• Work on autonomy of our community so young people do not always have to be led by adults
• Work on responsibility for our environment (litter etc)
• Student Council to take more opinions of students
• Equality in Church could be improved
• More clergy visits to talk to us
• Back to whole school Masses
• Teachers not always to push Catholicism with all as some are not that faith – 'you must be Holy' is not appropriate for everyone
• Should not force everyone to take part in certain things e.g. not all required to go up during communion/ashes if not of the faith
• Active education on having respect and acceptable language to use
• Educating on self-awareness – how what you do/sound like looks like to and affects others around you
• Explicit teaching of manners and how to talk to people
• Rewarding behaviour and positive attitudes
• Praise and recognition
• Some people think Mass should be optional for those who do not believe or who are not Catholic
• Not everyone gets involved like they should or cares like they should.
• Sometimes people disrespect what is happening.

What is your dream for the Church?
• Focusses on what Jesus taught PLUS modern issues e.g. climate change
• Less 'stuck in the past'
• Focus on giving to a wider range of charities, the most needy even if they are smaller communities
• Making the Church open and accessible to all e.g. homeless or those without transport – organising Church buses to collect those who find it hard to get there?
• Understanding that no one is perfect
• Allowing people to learn from their mistakes
• Not being aggressive in discrimination of groups e.g. non-acceptance of LGBTQ+ community
• More accepting of Christians who are not Catholic
• Always say hello and invite people in
• I like to go and be left on my own (pupil with ASC)
• Mass not to be so long (pupil with SEND)
• Have music we can join in with and choirs (pupil with SEND)
• Let people in to ask questions (Child with VI with no connection to faith)
• A church that helps people get back on their feet and have charities like the YMCA

• Be kind and help me learn about the Bible (pupil with SEND)
• Year 8 asked for all Churches to work together to achieve equality, one community. What is going in the World and in particular in Ukraine makes people feel low in spirit and faith and the all churches and schools should be keeping those people in our prayers and trying to lift spirits.
• The Church should be a universal sign of good.
• The Church should be a shining example of community and hospitality.
• As a school we should get involved more in volunteering in the community on a more regular basis.
• As a school we would like to do the shoe boxes at other times as well as Advent. Homeless people need help all the time, not just winter.
• The Church could help more countries in drought.

St Thomas More Catholic Secondary Bedford

Process Used:

We ran 4 small synod conversations using mostly established school groups. We met in the Prayer room which is a separate part of school. We followed some of the guidance given, set boundaries, listening skills, used the stone activity with Year 7 and 8, it didn't work well with Year 12. The groups were as follows; 1. Year 7 ICTHUS club (Christian club) 2. Year 8 Youth SVP group 3. Year 12 See Judge Act group (Core RE) 4. Small staff group

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

We asked, 'What does it mean to you to belong to a Catholic community?' Group 1: Somewhere peaceful, God is watching, don't need to worry about being disrespected. Peace and quiet. If you don't get along you can apologise. Belonging, really belonging, a place where you are meant to be. You can share your opinions about your religion. A place where you feel safe and calm and peaceful. Somewhere where you are safe to pray. Prayers every morning. To be happy trusting and hones. To belong and to have a place to actually be yourself. It means to be happy, to be respectful, even if you're not religious and you don't pray be respectful. A place to be peaceful free and safe. We share the heritage of the faith that the Church has an opportunity to pass it on to each other and through each other. Welcomed and nice to be in a place where you belong. Nice to have friendships. Welcoming, not all catholic, learning to have respect for people from different backgrounds when you are praying. You all make a contribution. You are all important. Community! Introduced to new ways of praying like the Taize prayers on a Wednesday. Group 2: Good. I'm part of something. I can help others with things. I can make friends. I feel good, because I'm catholic, good to know more about the Church and origin of our school. Just feels like any other school (I've always been in a Catholic School). I'm accepted here, good place to learn values and morals. I'm used to it, it's nice to be in a community that shares your faith. I feel very interested to learn more about our faith. I look forward to the RE lessons. Group 3: Faith is recognised and validated in a way you wouldn't in a nonfaith school. Helpful to be connected to your religion. If you are a catholic helps you learn things you may not have known before. Nice to be part of a community where you can learn from other people. Not everyone's experience is the same, different perspectives not all Catholics the same. Nice for those who share the same faith. Feels safer same faith. Good to be in a place where I share the same faith and learn about other faiths Learn new stuff. As a non-Catholic its nice, interesting, accepting of different views. Group 4: Relationship between school and message of the Gospel. Special place that Jesus held for children. How important they were for Him. We must never underestimate their value. Blessing of the classrooms in January you wouldn't get that in a non-faith school. The safety of the school for children, their worth is so great, importance of children. Kindness reflected by the school to the children. Important years of formation in school years. I've worked in catholic schools all of my life. Majority of our children are not catholic, great place, perfect place. What's different from other secular schools? The prayer room, students can ask questions that you wouldn't ask in a secular world. They are given an opposing point of view. Student confident in their faith and beliefs. They are safe and happy in this environment.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

We changed Church to 'Your Catholic Community' . Group 1: Chance to do what we are doing right now (synod conversation). People can help you. You can discover God is above you always with you. Most other secondary schools wouldn't have facilities like the Prayer room. The Prayer room makes you feel welcome and safe. Whole community welcome you, comfort you. Respectful no matter your religion. In the mornings there is a time of quiet and peace (morning prayers) sets you off for the day. Always a chance to do something, help out be kind throughout the day. Opportunity of planting the sapling with the Bishop. Mass on Thursday nice to see different priest and for Mass to

be in a different way. Group 2: Being accepted in this group. Art. Drama has gone well. Happy to be at this school, being valued for who I am. Making friends that I can trust. Group 3: Teaching other religions as well, expands our knowledge. Being shown all different walks of life, able to make our own decisions, no pressure. Listening to opinions of everyone, showing us new things in assemblies. Taught different interpretations of the Bible, expand your own view. Allowed to think about what you want to believe. Aware of where the Prayer room is, opportunities to pursue your faith. Group 4: Effectiveness of a loving chaplaincy. Someone who organises a cycle of prayer, calendar of the saints. Great work of chaplaincy, strengthens the community, refreshing. Students praying before exams of their own choice. Memories of being in a full Church before the pandemic. The students do join in when they know the hymns. Lifts your soul! We always use the Lord's Prayer, they know when they leave that's how you pray.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Group 1: Sometimes other children can ruin things, relationships with other children. Group 2: Not getting along with certain people. Group 3: On line teaching in the pandemic – slow to organise it but so where all schools. Group 4: Current Year 7 &8 haven't had any services in the Church (covid problem). They have missed out. Lack of clergy. Unless the role models are in school vocations won't improve.

What are your dreams for the church?:
What is your dream for the Catholic Community Group 1: Everyone can aspire to do what they want. Everyone to focus and listen to the Teacher. People (Children) to get along, no arguments, no lying, a happy place. Work hard, be respectful of opinions and looks, and listen to what people say. To rebuild some things, to get the money to make the school what they want it to be. Group 2: To make the world a better place for everyone. To be successful. Less plastic. No climate change. To be able to travel, see other countries, see what the Church looks like in other countries. To make the Church a place where all people can be accepted not because of their faith but who they are. I dream to be a graduate in medicine and attend my cousins wedding in Brazil. My hope is that there will always be a Church to go to. Climate change and world hunger to be gone. I want to travel the world and help people find faith. Covid to be over, so many people have died quite unfortunate. Global warming to end. Group 3: Equality. If women cannot be priests how is the Church showing equality. More visibility on the finances of the Church. Lovely buildings but what's it doing to spread the Catholic or Christian message to the people in need. Not helping the people who need it e.g. the homeless, people in countries who can't afford basic needs e.g. education. Climate change concentrate on who contributes to it the most. Group 4: To have more access to Catholic priests in a Catholic secondary school. We need them. The children are the future of the Church. Want to see a dog collar at break and lunchtime. It's seen and lived. To promote and widen our charity work build on what we already do faith in action get busy! To let everyone know there is a big world out there. Find a job that needs doing, find a group of young people to do it. We can help each other.

Groups

Priest Groups

Process Used:
Conversations of priests from 6 of the pastoral areas

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Our more specific question was 'what is my experience (joy and challenges) of being a Catholic priest today.
In the next box I put the joys and the one after that the challenges.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The privilege of preaching the gospel
The joy of encountering and accompanying God's people
Being an instrument of the Lord's loving providence in people's lives
Connecting/re-connecting people - 'man of communion'
Awesome to administer the sacraments
The love, support and appreciation of parishioners
More confidence than before in diocesan central services
Joy of being welcomed into priestly ministry through the Ordinariate
The gifts and energy brought by diverse cultures
Collaboration of willing and generous parishioners
Joys of Priesthood:
The power/value of the Sunday liturgy

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Increasing workload 'overwhelming' - fears of burn out.
Burden of administration taking us away from pastoral care
Introduction of new procedures for which we have no training
Feeling used and taken for granted as a service station
Ploughing a lonely furrow
Need for fraternal support
Unjust interference in parish finances
Carving out time of personal prayer
Plate-spinning (juggling various responsibilities)
Traditional Catholics feeling marginalised by the recent Motu Proprio
Priests approaching retirement anxious and uncertain of diocesan provision
Isolation of retired priests
Reluctance of people to get involved - erosion of a volunteering culture
More and more work for less and less priests
Maintaining close pastoral support for parishioners with fewer clergy
Making sure we don't forget the 'anonymous' parishioner on the back row

What are your dreams for the church?:
A more vibrant laity embracing their baptismal calling
A more mission-focussed, outward-looking Church
Readiness to re-think the way we do things
More transparency

Greater inclusivity
More merciful, less judgemental
Less red tape, bureaucracy, hurdles and hoops
Greater role of women in the Church
More confident witness to the world
Increased lay leadership
Better listeners = more effective evangelists
Greater flexibility and adaptability in new circumstances
A curia that serves the parishes, not the other way round
A laity who know and can articulate their faith
Stronger sense of priestly fraternity
More opportunities for priests to share like this

Marginal Group of people in 30s and 40s

Process Used:

After the helpful diocesan training on 'listening to those on the margins' I contacted a group of people in their 30s and 40s who no longer attend Mass but who were fro years involved in catechesis, liturgy and Youth Work and outreach in the parish of Holy Cross. Some kindly agreed to meet with me over zoom. Others chatted to me informally. I sent them the questions; they reflected on these on these, at first individually then as a group over zoom. I was given one response in written form. The responses from all were very similar. I was trusted to record their responses accurately and send them in without further examination.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Being a Catholic is down to my upbringing - we are Catholic by default, but now would identify as Christian with no community.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

When we were young, and the SSCC priests were in the parish (Holy Cross) it was brilliant. We 'always felt there was a place for us in the church and a route to follow in our faith.' From First Communion, Confirmation and Impact we were valued and encouraged. We were Eucharistic Ministers, Readers, Catechists, and I was a Youth Worker. Some of us were on the parish council. Some were invited to report to the Deanery Pastoral Council about the youth work in Holy Cross. The priests and laypeople were like an extended Christian family. 'I was encouraged to explore my faith and develop not just as a Christian but also as an adult trying to find my place in adult life'. Our opinions were heard and valued. At Mass the homilies were about the Gospel, they had a clear message and they were short. The music was great, we wrote bidding prayers, and then when we were older we helped the younger ones to write them and read them. There 'was a sense of pride hearing them being read out and the whole congregation joining in you in a prayer you found important. We were involved in the music and the choice of music. As a Catechist and Youth Worker I ' always felt my role was to listen to the young people's questions and use the time in Confirmation preparation to prepare them for a life inside the church and outside of the church in the day to day living'. As an adult, I have been to beautiful funerals, and there was a lovely joyful memorial Mass for Fr Fintan celebrated by the SSCC from Acton. Pope Francis says great things...

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

The list is long! There is the clerical sexual abuse crisis - and even worse the cover-up and reluctant apologies which have taken years to make. The Church's attitude to women and the ordination of women, the attitude to the LGBT community, attitude to the divorced and remarried. It is not inclusive to any of these groups. It is an inward-looking organisation clearly self-serving of its male hierarchy. It is known more for all those attitudes and its long list of prohibitions than it is for the Gospel message of love and service. 'It is embarrassing to tell my friends I belong to it and retain credibility as a normal person.' Since the SSCC left we have had a different experience of the clergy. There is an attitude of 'the priest knows best'. 'I suspect priests are moved round to remove them from unhappy parishes hoping it will buy time. Never are the bad ones dealt with. In the workplaces, we are reviewed and if there are issues training is given to help. Does this occur, or is it a case that no news is good news and that it must be personal if people complain? The attitude is one of dictating answers which do not answer the questions asked and just increase guilt. 'On Christmas Day a few years ago the priest used the homily to tell us homosexuality was a sin. I have not been back. I do not want my children to listen to homophobia. I want them to learn what the Gospel says about love God and your neighbour...and that means everyone.' The church 'has hang-ups about sex.' 'It can't try and be judgemental about sexuality when we all know about the abuse crisis and the way it wasn't handled' Also, it treats laypeople badly who have spent years helping the parish. A new priest comes and all that is blown away. The diocesan priests do not treat us with respect, or

even with basic manners in some cases.

What are your dreams for the church?:
'For the church to be inclusive of everybody (including women and LGBT) as Jesus is.' Bring back the 'feel-good factor from Mass' Give our church back its identity. 'Have Mass not so strictly regulated: stop them from being a vanity exercise of the priest or Rome; remember that the purpose of Mass is to celebrate as a community and spread God's word' For the priests to be less interested in power and imposing regulations and be pastoral.' ' I dream that at Mass we could celebrate together, sing together, pray together, smile together and have that support through life we all need. However, I sadly believe that this is nothing more than a dream and that our priests and congregation will drift further apart regardless of these new ideas being given.'

LUTON MASS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Process Used:
Meetings after Sunday and weekday Masses. Online groups Meeting after Mass for people with disabilities

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Sense of community (8) Feeling Safe Incentive to pray Giving hope for the future Helps me to calm down and face reality Knowing I belong to Jesus It means everything Deepening my faith The Church is a world family (3) I am proud Freshness of Pope Francis

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
For parents of a disabled child: As members of the Church of England we have never been made to feel like outsiders. Makes me feel part of a family, safe and loved. All the children have been treated the same The fact that we can have a Mass dedicated to people with special needs means we can attend Mass stress free My experience is that the Church welcomes all people with disabilities

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Having to justify my faith Losing young people (2) Cultural differences Engaging with people of other faiths How to encourage people to return For parents of a disabled child: Nobody has a clue about autism. The commitment of others, including priests and bishop, is disappointing. I hope for a Church where AUTISTIC LIVES MATTER. My child has been excluded from Catholic education Very much resented being asked to take children into porch if making a noise or disturbing the priest Disappointment that failures of priests are not acknowledged I feel the pressure of ensuring children behave at Mass from people who do not understand Access to the sacraments is not promoted to the same degree as encouraging young and mature Catholics to prepare for First Communion or Confirmation. This could be interpreted as intentional and divisive by families with severely disabled members (SEND), but it is more likely to be a lack of awareness of the range of disabilities in society. Compare the provision made for those with loss of hearing or vision, for those in wheelchairs, who may have speech and are literate. Unfortunately, the majority of clergy and laity have little or no knowledge or experience of the impact on parents of living with family members who have severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviour. As a result of this, involvement in parish activities is very limited. Big and little examples of a welcoming attitude meant a lot to us and provided encouragement, continuity and support.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I hope a future Pope carries on the work of Pope Francis

The religious in the Northampton diocese

Process Used:

Meetings of small groups of religious in the diocese, in person and using Zoom, and using the diocesan process of gracious listening.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
The following were expressed as answers to this first question: • It means being part of a community, which is important to us and was missed during the lockdown when it could not be expressed physically. But the livestreaming was very helpful and in fact reinforced the universal nature of the Church when Mass could be accessed from different parts of the world. • The privilege of being part of a wider family and finding a welcome within Catholic communities wherever we travel in the world. Awareness that we walk together towards the same goal of sanctity for God's kingdom. • Baptism into the Church gives a strong sense of identity and belonging.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The following have been experienced as being done well: • Forming community which is supportive and welcoming to those from overseas (though it has does also have its challenges) • Sacramental programmes for formation and education. • Vatican II - the way it opened doors, especially embracing the role of the laity, giving them greater importance and opportunity within the Church. • Generously supporting overseas aid. Outreach both local and beyond which brings the world into the local church. • The liturgy can be really well done and the availability of a daily liturgy is appreciated. • The liturgy in our own language • Education – our Catholic schools and other educational establishments in England make a significant contribution to education in this country and are sought after by both Catholics and those of other faiths or none. Our schools have contributed to the faith formation of generations. • The guidance and mission of Pope Francis. His moral leadership across the globe. • Ecumenism, our continued striving in this area despite barriers of all sorts. • The Church's ability to change over the years but to maintain its moral stance on many issues, especially the sanctity of life. • The live-streaming of Mass and other services during the pandemic was very good and will have continued advantages for those who are unable to attend church physically. • The contribution of religious working with so many marginalised, refugees and trafficked women. • Gatherings for young people – such as world youth day.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
These are some of our experiences of things done less well in the church: • Leadership at a national level: our voice as the Church in England and Wales is not heard often enough or loudly enough. • Safeguarding and the management of safeguarding, where there have been so many mistakes, in addition to the actual abuses that have occurred. • The compassion that is frequently shown at the local pastoral level is often overshadowed by the more legalistic pronouncements at the public level. • A lack of really good communication, especially as compared with the Church of England in this country who employ a team to communicate on their behalf. • In the past, too much condemnation of those who are different, and in the present there is often still a lack of inclusivity. There is still a need to reach out to those on the margins and to respond better to the issue of divorced and remarried persons. • Clericalism and particularly a concern about the fact that this seems to be prevalent among those recently emerging from our seminaries. A serious concern about some (too many?) of the younger priests who seem to be favouring pre-Vatican II attitudes and liturgies. So, a concern about seminary training for the Church in this 21st century. There were some strong comments on this topic from people's experience which are important to say: we need men who choose the smell of the sheep more than those who choose incense and bells, with a real interest in service rather than in being put on a pedestal. • A lack of faith formation and especially of teachings

about the Mass. Too many in our parishes have had little or no faith formation since leaving school, apart from a Sunday homily. • A considerable lack of genuine involvement of the laity in many aspects of our life as a church. • The place of women in the Church. Women are still not recognised enough. It was accepted that Pope Francis is trying to improve in this area, but progress is slow. The acceptance in this country of a Scripture translation for the Mass which does not use inclusive language is much criticised. • Some priests allowing and promoting the old rite of the Mass rather than following the teachings of Vatican II as Pope Francis is encouraging us all to do. • Many local churches seem to have lost touch with young people, failing to reach out and involve them. Often it seems they are not seen in church after they have been Confirmed. • A lack of training at diocesan level in matters of health and safety.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Our hopes and dreams for the future include the following: • That we may gradually build a more informed and engaged laity with a strong community spirit. And a much improved role for the laity, including in decision-making where this is possible • That the ordination of married priests (other than those from the C of E) and of women will be seriously considered and taken forward. • That findings from the synod process will be implemented over time and even that similar consultations will take place more often. Gracious listening in the spirit of the synod should continue. • That our church building will become more of a community centre, open several days a week for activities in addition to the Eucharist. • That more parishes will be 'green' and adopt the 'live simply' programme. • For a re-think on the language of the liturgy • For a church imbued with a deep sense of pastoral care in all areas of life and especially for those most in need. Care and concern for minorities such as immigrants, those working in inhuman conditions; greater respect for cultural and other differences. • Finding ways of reaching out to ordinary families and those who no longer come to church. • To remember that we communicate best by the example of our lives, hoping in this way to reach out to people outside the church. • And repeating here a concern about seminary training, hoping that it is really preparing new priests for whom service is a priority.

A Religious Community

Process Used:
Community discernment

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
• Trying to be committed Christians and to live the sacramental life of the church. • To be faithful to the traditions of the Church and its magisterium • In living within the mystical body of Christ we live in community being responsible for one another. • Walking together by one another's side as followers of Christ, supporting and promoting justice, peace and the value of life, according to our Charism: Father, that they all may be one. • As Jesus choose his Apostles to be with Him, our vocation is to be a people of prayer who unites with Jesus and also who pray for others. • As a catholic consecrated person wearing our religious habit means a lot. Our Mother Foundress Saint Elizabeth Hesselblad said, to put on habit is put on Christ. This is a visible sign of our consecration that we belong to the heart of the church with our Charism and mission. We are recognised and respected as religious. Some times somewhere may experience anti religious behaviour from outside. But being a spouse of Christ it does not discourage us.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
• Living a community life we are all aware that the Holy church is more open than ever now to talk and to listen to the things that religiously not affronted easily or readily. • We have seen within the church bridges have been built for a better understanding and cooperation for all in and out of the church especially in relationship with other Christian denomination and other religion, which has made much progress. Ecumenism - the desire for Christian unity is in the very heart of churches as dialog and process of reconciliation continues • We know that the value and dignity of the women have been respected and promoted in the church • Church is the family of Christ and She treasures and supports Family life and pro-life • The church voices for the voiceless and reaches out to those who are least and less fortunate in the society. • The diocese and parishes have been aware of the move in the church to the value of the diversity of languages and cultures in the, priestly life, religious life and also of the laity. It accepts and embraces differences with outstretched arms. • The Holy Father Francis is seen to be a pope who goes around to the people in the world and wishes to be there where things are happening. He together with Bishops are committed ambassadors for peace and justice • We have seen the courage and humility to which the Holy Father has given an excellent witness of God's love by affronting the delicate human fragility with love and understanding.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
• We are aware that there are problems concerning the shortage of priest and closing down the churches. People's faith may lapse because of the lack of pastoral care. • We ask today what is the reason for the shortage of vocation in the priesthood and religious life? • We are failing to give credible witness and to be attractive to those who are searching • Any kind of scandals lead people away from the church especially those who have not rooted in their faith

What are your dreams for the church?:
• The Church need Ministers who are concerned for their flock's spiritual well-being and who with a shepherds heart are at their side in the various circumstances of life. • More concern and understanding towards those come to us for help in the church. • All must be welcomed to our church and there should be an atmosphere, which is warm and caring • Being elastic to suggested ideas from the young and elderly members of the parishes. • More opportunities for the lay people in the ministries which are proper to them • Continue the mission of the church according the signs of the time, being faithful to the roots and traditions of the church • An attractive and genuine way of evangelisation that more people may believe in Jesus Christ • A church which has in her heart the

needs of the poor and the disadvantaged • Foster the vocation to the priesthood and religious life living an exemplary and authentic life • Find a way and solution that churches may not be closed down because of the shortage of priest and finance.

Group - A religious community (this submission arrived after the main submission from religious had been posted)

Legion of Mary: Northampton North Comitium (Council for 4 Presidia and Northampton South Curia)

Process Used:

These are the responses of 3 of the 4 Presidiums (groups)in the Legion of Mary that are attached to Northampton North Comitium (Council) of the Legion. The members of the Legion met in their parishes and discussed the questions. They then submitted their agreed responses to the Comitium president (Mary Philpott). The responses of each Presidium (P1, P2, P3) are summarised below, and there is also an overall summary for the Comitium prepared by Mary Philpott. The members have approved of the summaries.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

P1: To be loyal to the Magisterium of the Church, and faithful to the traditions (which were detailed by the members). To attend Holy Mass and the Sacraments. To realise that love is about willing the good of each other, which doesn't mean that we always have to be nice. P2: To be part of the Church that Christ founded, and so having Christ central in our lives. This means following His commandments, even if this puts us at odds with the world. To live a Sacramental life. To have an intense gratitude to Our Lady. She is our Mother as well as the Mother of God, and she shares in the giving us the gift of redemption. P3: To live the teachings handed down by Christ, and stated in the Creed. Christ gives us all graces that are needed for salvation. Holy Mass is central to our Faith, and Confession is so important, but underutilised by Catholics. Consistency of teaching through generations gives certainty in the Truth, and being Catholic is not about feelings which change like the wind. It is difficult to live a fully Catholic life in today's world, as others appear to misunderstand us. We must not apologise for proclaiming the Truth, or compromise on our beliefs. Our foundation is the Lord, if we forget this we lose everything. This is what is causing families to become disjointed and when they lose sight of God drift away from Mass and the Sacraments. SUMMARY: The members are all convinced that the Catholic Church was founded by Christ, and so are loyal to the teachings of the Church, and the Sacramental presence of Christ in the Church particularly at Holy Mass. The importance of passing on the Truth to future generations is a primary concern for many members. The role of Our Lady in maintaining us in Faith is very important to the members. Members are finding that it is not easy to be Catholic in today's world as others do not understand our beliefs and spirituality. Members are prepared to stand up for their beliefs and not to apologise for being Catholic.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

P1: Education (NB please see the later negative comments made by other Presidia)and helping the poor. Maintaining traditional devotions such as Eucharistic Adoration and promoting new devotions such as the Divine Mercy. Devotions are seen as the glue of the Church. P2: The RCIA programme (as it explained the Living Faith) and the welcome that converts to the Church receive. The Livestreaming of Mass and Services during the COVID lockdown, particularly the homilies of the priests which were seen as balanced and wise, also the support for communities. The Provision of the Sacraments. Involving lay people in helping communities through support for organisations such as the Legion of Mary, bereavement groups, SVP etc. the Pope provides hope and wisdom particularly during the pandemic, and is inspiring for young people. P3: Allowing the Legion of Mary to bring the priest to the parishioners including works such as praying the rosary with families, and aiding enthronement of the Sacred Heart with families. The members felt it was a privilege to help others by listening to their hopes and worries, and learning of their desire to know God better. During lockdown, the members appreciated that the parish priest allowed them to contact parishioners that were found on the parish census, and help them to remain in contact with the Church. Through this, some were able to receive the Sacraments before they passed away. Delivering the catechism classes for confirmands, to ensure that the young people had awareness of the Church teaching, and the Truth of Jesus's teaching. They find that the young people are thirsting

for knowledge and ask probing questions. Allowing parishioners access to the traditional Latin rite, as well as Mass in the vernacular, has helped break down barriers and counteract misunderstandings. This is particularly important for families with young children. (NB please see the later negative comments made by other Presidia) SUMMARY: All Presidia mention that their parishes are helping with educating people to learn more about the Faith. They also value the role of the Church in maintaining Faith through the provision of the Sacraments and devotions such as the Divine Mercy. The great support provided by the priests and clergy during lockdown was greatly welcomed. In particular, the livestreaming of Masses and other devotions and the homilies of priests were seen as wise and gave hope. The Holy Father also was seen as inspiring for young people. The members also are pleased to be involved in supporting others in their parish (particularly by encouraging prayer e.g. the rosary) and see this as an outreach of the priest(s) to the parishioners. The members also are encouraged when they see signs that their work is bearing fruit and are very happy to help others as we journey together through life.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
P1: Some members felt that the Church made mistakes during the COVID crisis, which they thought meant that the priests capitulated to man rather than God. They gave several examples, e.g. there should not have been promotion vaccines that had not been ethically developed, the closure of churches during the first lockdown, not allowing reception of the Eucharist on the tongue. (NB see the previous positive comments). The members also felt that the Latin Mass was being supressed. (NB see the previous positive comments). The members thought that the priest's homilies should contain more about issues of conflict between the Church and society including abortion, same sex unions and transgender ideologies. P2: the members were disappointed by the way in which child abuse had been dealt with by the Church. They also had concerns about possible money laundering by the Vatican, and that money was not fairly distributed e.g. to the Church in developing countries. There was also concern that Catholic schools failed to deliver full Church teaching to the children. They also mentioned that many teachers in Catholic schools are not themselves Catholic, and therefore do not seem to be teaching all the fundamentals of our Faith. (NB see the previous positive comments made by other Presidia). They mention that some parishes do not follow the Liturgy. P3: the members felt that the catechism was insufficiently taught in Catholic schools. They were very concerned that this has led to a generation of adults who have a limited grasp of their Faith. The members felt that Catholic schools seem to acquiesce to the State on how they should deliver religious education. They mentioned that various New Age practises, such as stacking stones, has replaced more traditional approaches. They were worried that the children find the conflicting approaches confusing. The members mentioned that they found the children in their confirmation classes did not know basic prayers such as the Our Father and Hail Mary. The members recognised that the children's main teachers are their parents but wondered if the parents had the necessary knowledge. (NB please see the previous positive comments about Catholic Education). SUMMARY: The three Presidia appear to give different aspects of the Church that they have concerns about. The two Presidia who work closely with Sacramental groups for children have the same concerns about the standard of the provision in schools. They rightly mention the role of the parents being primary, but that this might also be inadequate. Neither Presidium mention if there is a programme in the parish to help parents support their children learning about the Faith. There was disquiet that the homilies from clergy do not often address the concerns of some parishioners, e.g. abortion etc. other issues relate to the situation in their parishes during COVID, and the disappointment felt by some when Mass and the Sacraments were not possible. The unease comes from the parishioners feeling that sometimes the policies of the World are given precedence over God's wishes.

What are your dreams for the church?:
P1: Catholic preaching and teaching is needed, to prevent people shaping the Church into their own image. P2: there were many suggestions made by this Presidium, which they mentioned did not

have full agreement in the Presidium. The suggestions are given below, and very much show the concern of the members for the health of the Church. In principle, the Church should give a clear voice for the future, and not be afraid to speak the Truth. They hoped that the Church would be energised by and enthusiastic in teaching the Gospel, and that there would be more priestly vocations. The members also hoped that there would be greater unity within the Church, and that in-fighting between representatives of the Church on social media should be eradicated. (Suggestions included, more roles for women which included ordination of women priests and deacons, more acceptance for people who decide not to have children, single Catholics, or people who have other sexual orientations. Clerical celibacy should be voluntary, the Church's teaching on contraception should be reviewed. Evangelisation for young people should make more use of up-to-date technology Apps (such as the Chosen)) P3: The members felt that everyone should be evangelised to know the Truth, and that we should be looking to Christ not the priest. They felt that the Church should re-build connections, pray together as a community and reach out to those who are wandering. They felt the Church would need to be unambiguous about the Truth, aiming to please God and not the world, and will be a true light to the World of darkness. The Legion of Mary is a true position to take the Truth into the homes in our parishes, and wherever we are asked to take it. SUMMARY: There is a common theme across the Presidia that there should be greater unity between Catholics. They all mention that the Church should proclaim the Truth confidently and unambiguously which is its mission. The members hope that this re-energisation would inspire more vocations and inspire all. Our Lady of Perpetual Succour (Comitium name) pray for us.

Legion of Mary - Northampton South Curia (Council)

Process Used:

These are the responses of 4 of the 6 Presidiums (groups)in the Legion of Mary that are attached to Northampton South Curia (Council) of the Legion. The members of the Legion met in their parishes and discussed the questions. They then submitted their agreed responses to the Curia secretary (Mary Philpott, email below). The responses of each Presidium individually (P1-P4) are summarised below, and there is also an overall summary for the Curia that has been agreed by the members.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

P1: The Sacramental presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is key. From the Sacraments we are drawn to Christ and so to love God and serve all our fellow human beings. The Catholic Church gives each human life equal value, and a path to redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus. P2: My catholicity informs my entire life, giving me a code of practice. I have chosen to live my life by my belief and to put myself at the disposal of the Church. Devotion to Our Lady is important, but not universally accepted, it is essential that Catholics explain Our Lady's importance and significance to others. Outward signs of being Catholic help us to recognise other Catholics, giving a sense of fellowship. P3: Providing an overall atmosphere of spiritual security and solace. P4: The Holy Spirit is the prime mover in the Church, and there is no lack of guidance from God the Holy Spirit, it is we who are lacking in our ability to listen and obey. Our Lady is key to the action of the Holy Spirit, but her role is misunderstood and undervalued. Our pride causes us to rationalise self-serving, rather than following the Holy Spirit, and this destroys unity. Our Lady was the unifier in the early Church and continues to do so today. We must do all we can to communicate the unique role of Our Lady, especially to those outside the Church. The Sacraments are Christ alive in the here- and-now of our lives. We must individually have the respect for the Sacraments that they warrant. We do not fear, the Holy Spirit will lead us, and when we act in unity, there is great joy. SUMMARY: The members all recognise that the Church is a Unity of us all (with the uniqueness every person respected) which has come about by the Holy Spirit and is maintained by Christ's presence in our lives through the Sacraments. Our Lady's role in bringing Christ to the World and maintaining the Unity of the Church is mentioned by two Presidia. The Presidia feel that we must do more to let others know of what Catholics believe about Our Lady. The Presidiums mention that there is a sense of security, solace, fellowship, acceptance, and joy in our Church. When we act in Unity, there is a wonderful atmosphere that was promised by Our Lord, the Peace that the World cannot give.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

P1: We are aware that the Holy Spirit is working in the Church, and this makes us generally positive. We are very grateful for the way in which priests and religious dedicate themselves to serving us as members of the Church. They do this is many areas such as social justice, bereavement, poverty, spiritual warfare and youth work. P2: There is a sense of community and purpose and many parishes are very welcoming to newcomers. In times of crisis (e.g. bereavement and illness), our parish clergy and community show a strong sense of caring and go above and beyond. This was particularly evident during the difficulties of the COVID lockdowns and restrictions. P3: The worldwide Church continues to bring people together and to support them. P4: Participation is playing our individual part in the Church's mission to Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News. The Church is doing well in that it is allowing all of us (lay people as well as clergy and religious) to do more in parish work. Lay people are very active in roles such as catechesis, readers, visitation of sick and bereaved parishioners, and playing their part in parish management through the parish council and finance committee. Organisations such as the Legion of Mary and SVP are often involved in serving the parish in these ways. We are grateful that our Presidium has always been well supported by all the parish priests, and our parish religious sister. SUMMARY: There is a sense of guidance of the Holy Spirit, and it is heartening to see how the Church is being led to make a stand on global issues such

as social justice, poverty and warfare. All the members recognise that the clergy and religious in parishes work very hard and are very caring for their parishioners, and the wider community. In all parishes, the laity are also actively involved by the parish priests in helping members of the community through difficult times, and in helping young people to make a faith-filled start to their lives. The involvement of the laity allows us all to obey Jesus' last instruction to Go out to the whole World and proclaim the Good News, in that we are setting a good example, so others know that the Holy Spirit is active in our Church.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
P1: Young people (after confirmation) need a more active role in the Church, so that the Chiurch survives. We need to gain a proper understanding of their needs, not just as we see them. We also need to communicate the importance of the vocation of prayer to the elderly and housebound people in our community. We also need to have conversation with young parents. We must not allow abuse scandals to undermine us, instead we must confront the issues and be completely transparent. P2: There is a breakdown of communication in our parishes, so we don't know who is in need or how we can help. People don't know where to go or who to speak to, and we rarely see those who need our help the most. Different communities in our parishes do not mix as they should, running their own social events. Young people find to it hard to find a role in the parish community. P3: There is a misunderstanding of the simple basics of Catholic teaching, which should be covered as early as possible particularly in schools. P4: Many lay people (particularly the young) do not feel called to the roles available to them in parishes (e.g. serving and reading at Mass, catechesis, singing in the choir etc.). The Church should do more to encourage lay people to explore their own vocation , particularly those who seek to spread the Gospel to those who are not part of the parish community. Also, to spread the Gospel directly rather than by example alone, and some members felt that the direct spreading of the Gospel would be seen negatively by other parishioners. Legion members who carry out direct evangelisation work (using the approach of the Legion of Mary) have found that there are a great many people in the parish who welcome contact with the Catholic church, and who wish to know more about our beliefs and/or who need our support. There are very few rebuffs. Members also felt that we don't meet enough with other Christian denominations to share and inform them about what Catholics believe. In the Legion of Mary, we act under the permission and guidance of the parish priest. However, in extension work we have found that some priests do not understand that Legionaries need to carry out apostolic work in the parish, and this has led to Presidiums failing to become established. SUMMARY: The members were concerned that there is misunderstanding of Catholic teaching and beliefs, which should be started as early as possible, particularly in schools. The Legion was also concerned that Catholics do not communicate enough with other Christian denominations. The members are concerned that parishes are not contact with the people who need help, particularly those who do not attend Mass or visit the church. There is particular concern for young people, who have difficulty in finding a role in the parish. The Legion of Mary has been reaching out to all people in the parishes for a century, and the system of the Legion provides a mechanism for members to prayerfully and sensitively carry out all types of apostolic work , including direct evangelisation. Some priests are reluctant to allow Legion members to carry out apostolic work, and this has led to the failure of Presidiums. We must not be inhibited by the scandals that have beset our Church in the past, but we must move forward and ensure that we are transparent in all our actions.

What are your dreams for the church?:
P1: We need to draw the whole World into our prayers, under the mantle of Our Lady. We need to rediscover the value of self-sacrifice, so that our lives reflect our beliefs. We must show tolerance, fairness, and equality, while not apologising for our convictions. P2: To be a Church for tomorrow: - We must accept where traditions need to change, so that the Church moves its focus away from ceremonies and tradition and becomes more welcoming to those whom the World disregards. If the

Church looks at itself honestly, it will inspire others to be the best in themselves. Our lives will then become more in keeping with the way that Jesus lived. - Perhaps ceremonies could become more ethnically diverse, with cheerful music. Young people could have their own Gospel choir? - We could perhaps use local papers to reach out to people by advertising to be listeners. P3: There must be unity in all aspects and areas of our Church family. This will enable us to truly follow Christ's teaching and footsteps. P4: Dreams come True!!! The Mission of the Church has been Go out to the whole World, proclaim the Good News, from when it started. We must continue to serve the Church in this way, even in impossible circumstances or places. Our Lady had perfect Faith, as she knew that nothing was impossible for God. We must do all we can to bring this understanding of Our Lady to the World, We do this by uniting ourselves to Our Lady, *To Jesus through Mary and that is our mission. We must encourage each other, so that we persevere to the end. We should let each other know where we see Miracles of Grace, which are the work of the Holy Spirit. * the True Devotion to Mary (St Louis Marie de Montford) is fundamental to the approach of the Legion of Mary.
SUMMARY: The first principle is that we must be completely united in all things, so that we act as Christ's Mystical Body in the World, with Mary our Mother working with us and through us (to Jesus through Mary). The Church can then expect its dreams for a Church for tomorrow to come true, though the Grace of the Holy Spirit. The members have made suggestions that show their care and concern for those whom they feel at present are not served fully by our parish communities. The suggestions show the diversity of the members, and their willingness to make sacrifices, to pray and to be open to the work that presents itself in their various parishes. Our Lady will lead us to those most in need and let us know how to help. Dreams come true!!! Our Lady of Guadalupe (Name of the Curia) pray for us.

Prison Chaplaincy Group – HMP Woodhill (Milton Keynes)

Process Used:

The following are responses gathered from men in HMP Woodhill. I was able to get responses from some small groups where and when this was possible, which of course has not been easy as we have not started corporate worship yet, and the regime has been very strict so far.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
'-family tradition -sense of guilt! -feeling part of a bigger picture -a strong sense of being the original church -unique and different from Christians! -never really thought about it'

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
'-making space for quiet and peace -creating places of worship and holiness -teaching about saints -devotions'

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
'-sex scandals -putting distance between people and priests -not allowing women priests'

What are your dreams for the church?:
'-happy -live music -welcoming to all -a place where I can take my friends to'

Other -

Prison Chaplaincy Group – HMP Bedford

Process Used:

The following are some of the voices from the Catholic men in HMP Bedford. It has been hard to get groups going following a very restricted regime still through Covid, however these are some voices based on small groups and one-to-one conversations

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
'-to follow a tradition -to love God and want to talk to him -to respect family tradition -to be set in a way of life -to feel close to a bigger family (belonging)'

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
'-sacraments -being able to get cleansed from sins (confession) -stillness -reverence -education -social action'

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
'-inclusivity -other religions/other denominations -praise (need more of it) -transmitting joy -being a joyful community -attracting people who are not catholic already -evangelisation'

What are your dreams for the church?:
'-buildings that reflect tradition -holy places -feel welcome'

Family Group 1

Process Used:

Discussion within the family as to what our Catholic faith means to us and how we can nurture it. We have filled this out as a family group.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

We are followers of Jesus Christ and try to live by his teachings – the first two commandments are the cornerstone of our lives. We are part of the Universal Church, with many different traditions but with one faith and with shared values that emanate from the gospels. Currently we look to Rome for leadership – this is a time when our Father in Rome is leading by example. At other times we might have looked to our Bishops here e.g. Archbishop Worlock who was vocal in his support for the marginalised. We are bound together with many other Christian denominations – we may not agree on all aspects of our faith but our desire to follow the path of Jesus is common to us all. Justice and Peace is such a key component of our faith – it all comes from the bible and the commandments

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Thank the Lord that Pope Francis was elected. We have a Pope who inspires and walks with us on our journey. Catholic Social teaching is a gift to those of us who strive for to carry out the gospel by actions. The work of Catholic agencies such as CAFOD who work for the poorest in our world are a beacon of light in the Catholic Church. The example of many clergy and religious elsewhere in the world who live and breath with their congregations often at risk to their own personal safety. The work of so many religious around the world providing education and health provision to all no matter what creed they are.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

We don't feel our clergy in this country do enough to speak out against the ills in our society – our priests, bishops and archbishops. There is a time when you have to stand up for what you believe in. We appreciate that the Synod is probably trying to rectify this but for so long the laity have been ignored and our opinions not sought. The introduction of the new translation of the liturgy was forced upon us – we (including our priests) had no say in it and our bishops have done us a great disservice by just accepting such a change for us all without us the laity even being consulted. Our view of our bishops deteriorated after this and we have little faith in them now. As Catholics we are part of a global community, and our local Parish should be the centre of that community for each one of us. However, we have never felt so disconnected from Parish life as much as we have done during the Pandemic. There was nothing put in place to encourage Parishioners to get together and once restrictions were lifted and Churches were opened there was no thought to those who for whatever reason did not feel able to return to Mass going. Because our Parish did not initially stream Mass we were left to find alternatives and so many of us we found a Parish community elsewhere. The Church is not good at leading the way in terms of sustainability and the protection of the environment. The Pope has been at the forefront of warning us that we must change our ways of life because of Climate Change. This message is ignored in so many Parishes. Our Parishes ignore this – new buildings are constructed without thought to the environment. Our Churches are not welcoming places. All too often they are run by cliques with little effort to involve a wider section of the congregation. Are we really welcoming to those Parishioners who have made the UK their home? There are not enough real roles for women. It feels that when women are involved higher up in the Church it is just tokenism and women are excluded from so many decision-making processes. The Church is not welcoming or understanding for those who are divorced. There is a balance between encouraging marriage for life but also acknowledging that sometimes things just don't work or change. So many divorced people (or those marrying others who are divorced) who were

committed to their faith are made to feel unwelcome and many of them stop attending Mass or attend other Churches. There seems to be little effort to encourage teenagers and young people to stay within the Church. There is no future for the Church if there are no young people who are committed to their faith.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To be a beacon of light and hope in this world. We need to look outwards and not be insular. To continue to speak out for the marginalised and the poor and those in need. Where Justice and Peace is at the heart of our Parishes – not something that a small group does. To be places where people want to come and worship, to feel valued and welcomed. To use language that invites us in. Not to hark back to exclusive practices such as Sunday Mass being said in Latin. Where the laity works with our Priests and Bishops together so that never again will we have decisions imposed on us such as new translations without the laity's involvement and approval (we know you cannot please all the people all the time but we have to be consulted). Following the pandemic we need Parishes to be questioning how we can progress without going back to the old normal so that we can restore and recover as a Parish together.

Group of engaged and marginal Catholics

Process Used:
Group of friends gathered for conversation - prior to pandemic would all have been practising and volunteering. Now much more patchy.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being gloomy. Catholics need to cheer up At best, being part of a community with a sense of love, God is love. Shared values as against a secular world Multi-denominational and multi-ethnic

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Some of the online masses - e.g. northern priest who really engaged young people but said his parish has been asked to stop as attracting people away from in person services Pope francis talking about gay people and about the environment Lay people effectively leading churches in the absence of a priest however then community can be disrupted by a priest arriving and not wanting lay involvement

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Irish and African priests (and some of the people) have been very rigid. Not possible to speak of change. Everyone around the table had witnessed a priest shouting at someone Catholic Churches in general can be poor at welcoming new people - very difficult to feel that God is love. Too interested in ritual - forgotten the love - e.g. children making noise being required to leave. Bizarre experiences of confession. Priests on their own not being able to cope with reality. Mass is very different for teenagers from the rest of their lives.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Parishes that are welcoming with great sermons, great music, would travel for miles to get there. Catholic forward-thinking - being part of global church that will make a difference. If we had married priests, they would have support - someone to talk to, would be less angry It is weird to be a celibate single sex organisation in 21st Century.

Group of priests and deacons

Process Used:
A group of priests and deacons gathered to think about Synodal leadership, specifically within our own diocese.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Our diocese has always been middle of the road. Clergy generally value each other and although we have a few odd characters, like any family, we get on well. Our leadership, bishops and senior priests, has also been of a similar disposition, mainstream, approachable, kind, thoughtful and supportive. That is true of what we know of our current bishop too.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Synodal leadership needs good listening along with speaking. Discernment comes by entering into conversation with others and listening to opposing views. There are currently no functioning formal structures in the diocese where this can happen. We have a very strong finance department and a COO who has had to deal with a difficult financial situation, but there isn't a setting or desire to listen to the wisdom of clergy. There are no wise trusted counsellors to have an honest conversation with. The council of priests, college of consultors, chapter and Bishop's council have met rarely over the last two years. These formal structures should be the principal organs of synodal leadership but are not. The bishop too has no wise trusted counsellors to encourage, challenge and share leadership with. Perhaps this is the way he works best, but it isn't in keeping with a synodal style of leadership and is poorer as a result.

What are your dreams for the church?:
In a perfect world leadership in our diocese would be: Imaginative about parish life. Honest about the challenges to clergy. The bishop surrounded by a group of wise challenging counsellors, lay and clergy. Brave. Caring and sympathetic to human weakness. Our leadership has and always had many of these qualities for which we are to be thankful.

Sacra Coeur group retreat

Process Used:

Broke into 5 groups of 5 after the process as recommended by the pastoral ministry training was explained to all and we prayed. Used the stone to aid listening. Each group noted their responses and fed them back to the room I am collating them here.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be a child of God, following Jesus -Belonging to a caring community. -The gift of prayer knowing God is always with us especially in times of difficulty. -Universality which aids familiarity when travelling. - Reception of the Sacraments especially the Eucharist. - Traditions and inheritance factor. -Open door to those who have lapsed. - feeling at home : as in homecoming. - shaped beliefs and how we have led our lives. United in Ecumenism

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Teaching of Vatican II. Deep devotion and commitment to the Eucharist. -Catholic convent education as a child gave gospel values and a rich example to live by. Warm welcome. Cafod relief work, Local charities eg Workaid , Cafe, on line services during pandemic, welcoming non Catholic partners, Marriage Encounter, Seminars re life in the spirit & Charismatic renewal, Liturgy and yearly cycles eg lent, advent, feasts and ordinary times, Music has given a love of music not found elsewhere. Retreats and days of reflection, prayer groups, Social justice. Reach out to Refugees - eg Oasis, Alpha courses, SVP. The introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy. In the past clergy encouragement to young people and home visits. Our non judgemental humble Pope Francis who is inclusive.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Hypocrisy- Practice what you preach! Clergy need to be held to account. Abuse scandal exposed lack of openness, lack of apology and responsibility. Isolated clergy poorly supported and supervised. Slowness in reintroducing women deacons. Not enough credit given to women, or that the people and the clergy together are the Church, marginalises people and certain groups, censorship of some books restricting study and development of theology. Rejection and lack of compassion at difficult times. Too much emphasis on man made rules (some of which are divisive) eg contraception, divorce and remarriage, Need for more love and forgiveness. The use of obligation rather than encouraging practice, Depriving people of their personal conscience. Not out spoken enough or sufficiently active during the pandemic, failing to engage the young. Clericalism. Does not free up and use the talents of the church. Authoritarian, inwards looking, poor on evangelisation. Poor encouragement regarding spiritual development parrot fashion prayers.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Married clergy, Women Priests, Change needed regarding divorce and remarriage, allow non catholic partners to receive the Eucharist, more inclusive church that includes the young.Needs to have a political view. Need to reach the unchurched and share our richness more so that more people want to come to church. Need for younger people as advisors to the Pope not the Curia. Less hierarchical, less judgemental. More ecumenical, modernise and be more open, inclusive to other denominations, points of view and faiths. More women in leadership. less familiarity and more respect. Enact Vatican II NOW. Rebuild the Church integrating everyone gender, ethnicity, disability. A neighbourhood church, remove the walls! Compassion, Kindness and love, a place to just be.

Teenage Group

Process Used:

A group of 7 teens and pre-teens gathered for a conversation. Pre Synod they had all been attended weekly Mass and some involved as musicians, servers etc. Now mostly not attending.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Doesn't make a difference to us. Having a connection to a God , if you believe in one. To have a place to go. Helps people socialise and make friends. Find a place with people with similar beliefs.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Getting people to play music. Children's liturgy. Lux. After mass socialising. First Holy communions. Celebrations. Making friends.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Homophobia, guilt tripping people into going to mass, forcing religion on the children, mass that is not geared towards children, accessible seats and buildings, old ladies making comments.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To be more respectful of other cultures and other identities. Not homophobic. More modern music.

Group of marginal 20s-30s

Process Used:

I attended the Local Listener and Reaching the Margins training. I decided to have a conversation with the not-regularly practising young adults who were coming to Sunday lunch for my birthday - my 3 single children aged 26-33 and nephew and his wife, young married (but not in the church) couple, with one year old son, yet to be baptised. I used part of the Synod prayer in place of the informal grace before meals that we would usually pray. I also took part in the Pastoral Area reflection day.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
One young adult just replied 'GUILT!' but then agreed that he also experienced forgiving love. Another described how he had to explain his exceptions to Church teaching (contraception, divorce, role of women) when he 'admitted' to being a Catholic. He is, however, fully supportive of the Church's teaching on abortion. He and his sister also felt the need to decry the clerical abuse scandals. My Catholicism is essential to my life and relationships.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
On the rare occasions when my children attend church (Christmas, Easter and funerals), which is always in the parish in which they grew up, they love that they are greeted by parishioners of all ages as returning family members. This was remarked upon by the non-Catholic friends also present for one of the funerals. At the Pastoral Area reflection day it was a joy to realise that I knew everyone on my table from different parishes well, and most of the others in the room. This was a day of real listening and discernment, wonderfully led by Joan Barham and Sam Canning - thank you

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The couple had enquired about Baptism for their son when accompanying my mother to Mass and, though very gently (and quite correctly) encouraged to enquire at their local parish which is in another diocese, they've not now progressed this. They hope to move soon, so they feel there's no point in trying locally, whereas they have a real connection to my mother's parish. It's so easy to discourage tentative approaches! I have undertaken extensive voluntary roles in the parish and more widely in the pastoral area, diocese and nationally equivalent to several days' work every week for over 25 years. My husband and I now feel excluded from my community of over 50 years, where he was baptised and we were married, when the parish priest said I could attend Mass but not exercise any ministry. This was unacceptable so we now attend another local parish, but the distancing from my community is a real bereavement. It seems to me that some priests are destroying rather than building God's Church through their need for control: this is clericalism at its worst.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A church in which we can all use all our talents in the service of God's kingdom to help everyone live life to the full.

Reaching the Margins conversations with individuals and couples

Process Used:

I met with individuals and couples using the Reaching the Margins format.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

• Gives me strength. • Goes back generations. • Being committed to certain standards e.g. way of life. • In line with Catholic teaching. • The way life is lived. • Same as it always did. • The assurance of the availability of God's truth in the Gospel of Christ for me and for the world. • To believe in the truth the Church is and gives. • Something to believe in and to pray to. • Someone to share problems with. • God is always there trying to keep things together. • Shared set of beliefs with a group of people who support the Catholic faith. • Not something I particularly think about. • The attraction of friendly people. • It is as much about people than the faith. • Being proud of being Catholic. • Sharing and meeting with people of similar belief, a big family. • Wherever you go in a Catholic Church you feel at home. • Gives a framework within which to live your life. • To be a Catholic is to believe in a higher being, to take example from Bible and teachings. • To give respect to all regardless of race or gender. • To try my best to be a good person. • It is about loving God and trying to love one's neighbour. • Stay in your bubble and trust God. • Try to be honest. • Very proud to be a Catholic and of being part of the wider Catholic community. • Talking about my Catholic faith on U-Tube and Facebook. • People very judgemental about Catholic's. • Being Catholic adds a huge amount to my life, it is a big part of my life and makes me a better person. • People know I am a Catholic and this affects the people I work amongst. • The feeling of a family stronger when coming to Church. • Faith as strong as ever it was. • Being a Catholic has not changed. • My faith is a part of who I am and is very important to me. • First and foremost I regard myself as a Christian, this is my belief into which I was Christened/Baptized. • I worship as a Roman Catholic and cannot imagine life without my religion and commitment to the church. • I may admire other faiths as we all have different and interesting views, including Judaism. • I am never ashamed to say that I am a Roman Catholic when asked which church I belong to, my answer is always, I am a Holy Roman!! • It is important to me that I am part of a church that traces its linage directly back to Jesus' apostles. • I recognise that the church doesn't have an unblemished history, but I find its foundation much more stable than the Church of England. • The example of the saints and martyrs again links me to the past but still gives me guidance on how to live today. • I find the clarity of the teaching very helpful for example Catholic social teaching. • I like that the focus is on attending mass and receiving the sacrament not on gimmicks and beautifully choreographed services. • I look forward to chatting to other Catholics after mass particularly when we discuss issues from a Catholic viewpoint. • We belong to the one true faith. • The Church is the people and the theology, it is a world-wide family joined by one belief whose dogma sets the guidelines for our lives. • Being a church member is not just about saying prayers and attending services.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:

• Continue as it is. • Important it does not change too much. • Needs a new vision to bring families and young people into the Church. • Presence of Church in new housing areas. • Must be more open and inclusive. • Somewhere to go to e.g. community centre possibly run by the Church. • That the Lord will soon return in glory so that as his bride we may be completely like him. • People to serve the Church. • Young people's community groups run by the Church to increase faith. • More lively

way of worship. • Becoming a more attractive organisation for younger people. • Re-unification with other churches. • For the Vatican to get more involved with political unrest. • To consideration including females for ordination. • To consideration for a married priesthood. • To be 100% open. • To allow non-contractual lay people to do general repairs to the churches. • More of a Catholic presence in England. • More younger people. • Church needs to own status as the One True Church. • I worry about congregations getting smaller and older. • I worry that young people do not have the same set of rules that I had. • One day the Church will be filled with young people. • That the parish will continue with a new priest and not be amalgamated. • Church should change to keep up with society. • I do know many people do admire the Catholic Church as well as many who are particularly scornful of the church, not sure how we can change the image. • We have perceived an erosion in the following of the faith due the secular pressures of anti-prolife and LGBT governmental policies. This erosion has been accelerated by the impact of Covid and compounded by the lifting of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. • To care for and help others through prayer and actions. Every effort, be it great or small, has value. • Society has changed and it is much harder for the modern child to attend any denomination of church and to be able to admit to this. • The future of the church lies with the children and the younger people. They need to feel valued and need to be actively involved in doing something, just attending Mass and saying prayers is not sufficient to attract them and to keep their interest! • That the church remains clear about what it believes and doesn't start to doubt its own sources. • That the church will continue to campaign for every life to be respected and valued from conception to natural death even if this isn't the popular view. • I hope more people will come to recognise the value of what the Catholic Church can offer. • That the church it will grow ever stronger and gather many more followers but to this end we have to change some Rules and regulations and this has to come from the Holy Father with input from the present Synod, and I am sure he is going to make some announcement that will shake the world, hope I am right! • Women could also play more important roles within the church, women in the Bible assumed very important responsibilities, why not now? • Changes are occurring around us all the time, why should the Catholic Church not change with the times? • Our youngsters leave home to further their education and very rarely continue their attendance at church. We need somehow to make the church services more appealing to them, but how is the question? • Immediately, follow the example of the Scottish Bishops and reinstate the obligation to attend Mass and widely communicate this action. • Widen the option for married priests, as within the Eastern Rite. • Make the Church more inviting to people by engaging in modern forms of communication. • Listen to the voice of the younger generations when they say the Mass and other Services are boring and out of touch with modern life. • Reinstate education and teaching, utilising modern media. • Look for more ways to reduce poverty and inequality in the world. • To see our universal family grow, and to have more people called to the priesthood and religious life. • We need to do more in the wider community. • People need, whatever their age, to be actively involved; we are not a contemplative society we need to be more outward looking. • Would like to see the rule of Celibacy changed! If young men wish to become priests but also wish to have a wife and raise children, surely there is nothing wrong with that. It may also avoid all the wrong doing that has blighted the image of the church, (not only the Catholic Church, although we seem to attract more attention.)

Individual Conversation with non-practising friend

Process Used:

An individual chat with a baptised and Catholic educated man, brought up in a practising family where the mother is a Catholic. He has not been to church since being a teenager.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
'I cant call myself a Catholic, rather a Christian because I dont practise. You need to do everything to be called it, like believe in Jesus and His teachings and the general lessons from the bible. What I say is based on what I learnt til about 12 years old so my thinking is a bit 'childish' . The influence was from my mother. I remember the parables like the Good Samaritan and their messages.'

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The church teaches doctrines and morals. It does charitable works.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
It is a large institution that has been undermined by negative press. I am sceptical of large institutions. Unfortunately people are inclined to remember the negative things rather than the good that is done. There is hypocrisy in teaching one thing and acting in another way. It teaches giving and providing for the poor and is part of a corrupt system (banking) in order to survive.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That it is more inclusive.

Ministry Pillar of St Joseph and St Clare Parish

Process Used:

Small group spiritual conversation on Zoom as recommended and explained by the diocese.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Giving support to the vulnerable, those in care/nursing homes, or in hospital, visiting those in prison and providing for the poor and homeless. Community and charity activities and gatherings eg Fund raising for CAFOD, CWL charity work. A diverse group of nationalities attend mass. There is a strong tradition of providing and organising pilgrimages and retreats. It has a long tradition of Religious Orders and the example of the Saints. The church provides a context in which to live our lives and has a strong framework and structure. It teaches values and morals. It is wonderful in times of trauma. it offers and provides different ways of praying.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
These are not personal comments to individual members of the clergy. The group did not want to upset or be disloyal to the clergy. There is a lack of inclusivity eg the role of women in the church and recognition of their contribution. There is a lack of flexibility eg. not considering the possibility of married priests. There is conflict between the wealth held by the church and providing for the needs of the poor. The response of the church to various scandals has not been done well. Greater Communication and transparency is needed eg when a local church was being closed, its difficulties were not known by other parishes. We need to work more closely with other Christian denominations and learn from them as well as them learning from Catholics. Initiatives are sometimes suggested but rarely come to pass. There is a reticence to devolve any responsibilities to parishioners in spite of their abilities and skills. The laity is largely passive and uninvolved apart from attending mass. and they are a small minority of the Catholic population. The church brings a wide group of people together but misses the potential of that. The church needs to be more than a Mass centre and needs to build community where provision is made for children and the youth. The emphasis seems to be on solemn behaviour rather than encouraging people to meet and chat before/and/or after Mass. There is little joy evident in the congregation during or after Mass. The Gospel and scripture readings and teaching need to be related to our everyday lives. The rich and 'churchy' vocabulary and language can be a barrier for some people. We seem to reverence Jesus in the tabernacle but not enough in our neighbour.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That there is more decision making carried out from the bottom up at the Parish level and the question asked of the people, 'What do you want our parish to look like?' That there is more involvement of women. That there is an emphasis on building a community, meeting in small communities and a new way of being church. That spiritual conversations are commonly used in different situations and that the church so becomes more synodal. That the diocese has courage and listen to the people.

SVP group - St Joseph and St Clare, Aylesbury

Process Used:

One meeting of 4 SVP members using the spiritual conversation as recommended by the diocese. The conversation lasted about 1hour 30 minutes.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Different nationalities of people go to our church. There is daily Mass in our parish. I know a group of people because Ive been at the parish many years We are a Christian presence in the town centre. Providing meals or vouchers for the poor and needy. Visiting and taking Holy Communion to the housebound and people in nursing homes.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
These are not personal comments to individual members of the clergy. 'Im ashamed that I dont know who people are in my parish.' When there was Lockdown we didnt know how to contact people or who was doing that. If I were to be new to the parish I dont know how Id get to know people today. The church is not very inviting. It is dark. There's a gap between us and the priest. We are not very welcoming. Reaching out to other denominations and people on the margins.

What are your dreams for the church?:
'I would like there to be more involvement with the church and with each other and simple opportunities to talk to people and get to know them instead of a quick chat at the end of Mass. I have made a close bond with the small group of catechists preparing children to receive the sacraments'. For a church centre that is open; where we can drop in and meet, talk, store equipment and share with each other. For our church to be knocked down and a 'purpose built' one to replace it with meeting/ gathering rooms. For there to be a team of people around the priest to support and help him. For there to be more priests. For parishioners to be more involved with those preparing for the sacraments. For example, ' A couple of years ago I approached a family who sat near me at Mass, whose child was preparing for Holy Communion. I explained to the child that I would pray for her in the months ahead. She was delighted and said she would pray for me too.' For House groups and other small group gatherings to explore scripture and discussion groups with a Christian perspective. For there to be Mums and toddler groups and ones for the elderly. That we are a community not just a group of individuals. For a way for new comers to be welcomed by parishioners and asked what they are looking for from the church as well as what they can contribute. Encouragement to be involved in the parish and ways to achieve this apart from a tick sheet. For a church where parents and children feel welcomed, included and provided for. Where different nationalities are represented at Mass, eg through singing a song in their language. For someone to be at the presbytery full time to talk to people, welcome them and answer questions. 'I would like to meet and make decisions without always needing the parish priests permission.' That we are a Christian presence in the town that reaches out, welcomes and embraces everyone, whether Catholic or not, smart or scruffy. For all people to be welcomed, and encouraged to be involved and included.

Mother's Prayer Group, St John and Holy Family

Process Used:

The questions were sent to group members before we met. We explored these questions within our Mothers Prayers group. There were 12 of us present. We had a short discussion reflecting on what it means to listen to each other. We prayed that the Holy Spirit would guide us and support us as we do in all of our meetings. Everyone had an opportunity to speak

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It's more than a faith, it's a community, a family. There's a level of closeness we experience that we don't experience in any other area of our lives. We can experience support in times of great need; illness, death of a loved one, family and life struggles. We can experience shared prayer. The feeling of praying together is very powerful and comforting. Being prayed for is equally comforting. We can share our faith not only with each other but with people outside of the church. We do it in a simple way by showing kindness/ doing good deeds while wearing a crucifix or simply saying, God bless We have the Mass and the sacraments which which we are part of and we very much appreciate.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
We have the Mass. It is something we have always had and it keeps us going. It is everything to us. We have our priests who hold us and work so hard. We appreciate the opportunity for regular adoration within the Church. Providing us with this opportunity allows us to meet with Christ in a very intimate way. Nothing can compare to this. We feel welcome and comfortable in church. Some of us have left the church for a while and have felt welcomed back when we returned. We really appreciate the sacraments that are offered to us. That we can receive the sacrament of the sick when we are weak and sick and when we approach death. A beautiful gift and a huge comfort. We really appreciate being able to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Although it is a spiritual experience we find is so therapeutic, being able to share experiences, stresses, concerns and struggles with a person who is sympathetic, non-judgemental and helpful (our priest) . We are not always enthusiastic about going to confession but we very much appreciate being able to feel that sense of freedom and a new start that we get after receiving this sacrament. We appreciate the homilies within our own church, we find them spiritual and uplifting, but most of all we find them practical. We can use the reflections from the homilies in our daily lives. They help us. Fr Andy tells us how he prays when putting together his homilies and asks God to guide him. We can feel that when we hear the homilies. We appreciate that this Synod is not a reflection on the time of the pandemic. However; we discussed our church's response to the pandemic. Parishioners were treated with sensitivity. It was devastating when we had to close the church doors but we appreciated the online Masses. We very much appreciated the opportunity to go to Adoration before Mass had started up again. Some of us attended and enjoyed the ' Life in the Spirit ' courses.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The scandal that some priests brought on the Church .No real apology. The damage that it has done to the Church and to the many good priests and clergy within the Church. We discussed how we feel the Church views people who could be perceived as different. We discussed the Church being judgemental at times.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Rather than bringing people 'back' to the Church and bringing the young 'back'; we discussed the idea of creating opportunities for people to meet Christ. How can we do it? We don't know but we do recognise the importance. To flourish in our Church we discussed having Rosary groups. We

discussed how other denominations have opportunities for both parishioners and people outside to have an opportunity to meet for tea and coffee within the Church.Providing a deeper sense of community and maybe a chance to meet the Lord. Can we make our churches look more attractive with flowers, pots and hanging baskets. To make the Church more welcoming but even more importantly this would reflect our love for our church. Could churches create a display board featuring a focus on the church seasons; interesting facts about a saint, Prayers , other church topics. This may encourage people's interest and curiosity.

St Edward's UCM, Kettering

Process Used:

UCM St. Edward's Kettering Foundation Submission to Northampton Diocese re: Papal Synod Rome October 2023 – Observations of members attending UCM monthly meeting held on 14th February 2022.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
Members agreed they loved their Catholic faith and appreciated its tenets; giving structure, purpose and meaning to our lives. The possibility of the ordination of married men to the priesthood was mentioned by some members, as was the ordination of women to the diaconate, but neither of these topics were pursued in any depth. However, the need for many more men to be ordained to the diaconate was thought by members to be crucial, and was considered at length. It was pointed out that the creation of the diaconate stems from the earliest days of the nascent Church (Acts 6:1-6), the deacon to be dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the bishop, and his body of priests, in the service of the liturgy, of the Gospel and in works of charity (CCC 1569 – 1571). Members recognised that the decision to undertake this very important role could be problematic, given the demands of a healthy work/ family life balance, together with the academic study involved. It was also mentioned that for geographical ease, diaconate studies could perhaps be pursued for those candidates in the north of the diocese at Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, and for those living in the south at St. John's Seminary, Wonersh. Members believed that there was also a need for the recognition of greater roles within the Church for women, either lay or religious, to be awarded on merit to those with appropriate skills or qualifications. Members were most concerned as to how to encourage a younger UCM membership, which is becoming a very pressing need, in order that UCM grows, and is properly able to contribute to the New Evangelisation the Church has called for. Again, it was acknowledged that 21st century demands of work and family were not always conducive to taking on such additional responsibilities. Perhaps the title Union of Catholic Mothers is, these days, somewhat of a misnomer, and discourages some women, when all Catholic women should be encouraged to join. We understand that the pandemic has caused all sorts of relationships in this country to fracture, be they within families or communities. Thus, it is incumbent on us to make a concerted effort to rebuild our church, her groups and communities. Since Covid appears to be less of a problem to society during spring and summer, this seems an ideal time to put these aims into practice.

Holy Cross - Prego Group

Process Used:

The Prego Group meets every Tuesday afternoon pray and to meditate on one of the readings for the following Sunday. The meetings are on Zoom and began at the beginning of lockdown; they were planned to last for Lent 2020 but still continue! The text with some commentary is provided by St Beuno's Outreach. For a few weeks, the meditations were reduced in order to allow time for the four Synod questions to be considered. Two of the members combined to prepare a draft response which was considered by the group before being finalised.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

1 What does it mean to you to be Catholic? 1.1 Being Catholic is my identity; it is my faith; it is Christ at the centre of my life as I try to follow Jesus as best I can. 1.2 Being Catholic means belonging to an international family, with Christ at the centre. 1.3 Being a Catholic includes the guidance and wisdom of Pope Francis; he highlights the truly important Christian values in life and encourages me to live them. 1.4 Being a Catholic means being nurtured by 2000 years of wisdom and prayer; it also means we need to accept the flawed nature of the human Catholic community; as members of that community, we have the responsibility to recognise and challenge the pain and hurt inflicted by the Church over centuries; therefore, at times it is difficult to be a Catholic. 1.5 I try to live my life in a way that people can see I am a Catholic. 1.6 It means everything because it is what shapes meaning for me; it is Jesus' living legacy to us and it supports me as I try to live out Jesus' commandment of love. 1.7 It means belonging to a Church that understands itself to be the Mystical Body of Christ and which has at its heart the Eucharist, Sacrifice and Sacrament; it means belonging to a church that has rich treasures (Mariology, the saints, the monastic tradition etc) within its history and traditions and which incorporates strong links with the Judaic roots of our Church.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

2 What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well? 2.1 The Church's teaching on social justice and the current practical application of that worldwide in education and healthcare by religious and lay missionaries and their volunteer co-workers. 2.2 The Church can be proud of the promotion of its teaching on justice and peace and of Catholic social and charitable activities throughout the world; despite being a minority in almost all countries, Catholics have a significant impact on justice and peace initiatives in their communities worldwide. 2.3 In Pope Francis, we have a worldwide respected leader, teacher and moral compass. The Church is a prominent campaigner in anti-abortion and anti-assisted suicide. 2.4 The Catholic Church provides very moving, sensitive and respectful liturgies, particularly as regards funeral liturgies. 2.5 Depending on the parish community and the priests involved, there have been some wonderful experiences of the sacrament of reconciliation and collaborative ministry. 2.6 Good priests bring untold strength, comfort and consolation through their administration of the Sacraments and pastoral care; excellent priests do all of this and also offer effective leadership, empowering the laity to live out their baptismal calling. 2.7 Liturgies that raise the heart and mind to God. 2.8 I have been privileged to witness the selfless self-giving of missionaries, clerical, religious and lay - they have given and still give astonishing and sometimes heroic service throughout the world; the historic colonial colouring of some of that service is recognised but this must be seen as very much within the context of the time; the generosity of service has always been the hallmark of the Church's missionary endeavour. 2.9 Pope Francis is a wonderful ambassador for the Church, tirelessly encouraging a more compassionate Church and ensuring that the mission to the marginalised remains a priority. 2.10 I applaud the strong leadership of the church which takes very seriously its responsibility for guarding the truths which have been handed down and which, through the magisterium, protects us from being exposed to belief which constantly changes. 2.11 Some of the encyclicals are beautiful examples of

excellent teaching.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
3 What are some of your experiences when things have not gone so well? 3.1 Clericalism: an overarching culture of clericalism is a large contributor to many of the experiences of 'things not going so well'. This group spoke of its experiences of parish priests seemingly sometimes to see their role as having a mandate for control rather than for spiritual leadership; power without constant mentoring, support, checks, reviews, supervision and ongoing spiritual and psychological guidance can be a contributory factor in many experiences of 'things not going so well', for example, clerical abuse, the cover-up of abuse, financial irregularities, liturgy dominated by the 'likes' and 'dislikes' of the clergy, a reluctance to collaborate truly with financial and pastoral councils and a real fear of change, discussion or challenge. 3.2 The clerical sexual abuse crisis, both the abuse and the consequent cover-up over many years The grudging tone of the apology of the Archbishop following the Elliott Report; the widespread abuse scandal and dissembling has caused pain to many within the church and caused many to leave; the hierarchy is slow to recognise or publicly to acknowledge this; there has been a lack of pastoral care for so many victims and their families; for many years this whole subject has been rarely acknowledged or held in prayer during our parish liturgies. 3.3 Lack of inclusion of many sections of society and the gifts they offer 3.3.1 Lack of inclusion of those with a physical disability Lack of provision for the hearing impaired: examples include - too few signed Masses; lack of provision for the blind and partially sighted (lack of large print Mass sheets or hymn books); lack of shorter liturgies for the sick; lack of comfortable chairs near the front for the sick and of designated wheelchair spaces - not at the side or back of the church. These matters are simple and relatively inexpensive to rectify and should be part of an immediate diocesan-wide initiative. 3.3.2 Lack of inclusion of those with intellectual impairment There are few regular and sensitively planned celebrations of Mass or other liturgies for those with a family member with Special Needs, be they learning difficulties or neuro-diverse; there is little provided for and little tolerance for people with mental health issues: there is little evidence they are cherished. Again, these matters would be relatively easy to rectify on a Diocesan level. 3.3.3 Lack of inclusion of those from the LGBT community and the divorced and remarried Much pain is caused by excluding the LGBT community and the divorced and remarried from Holy Communion. Remarks about homosexuality during a homily are unhelpful. The Holy Father continues to stress (EG 47): Frequently we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a toll house; it is the house of the Father where there is a place for everyone with all their problems. And again: The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. Such a shift in attitude would also assist the church to take a lead in countries where the LGBT community is persecuted. To quote Pope Francis yet again: Who am I to judge?. 3.3.4 Lack of women in paid positions of authority and leadership 3.3.5 Laity are not included in decision making in many parishes However, we know of some dioceses where the laity are even trusted to sign cheques! 3.3.6 Families with young (and therefore often noisy) children are often not made welcome Celebration of Mass does not include music or prayers for children; eucharistic prayers for children are available but not used; homilies at Masses rarely allow for the children present; consequently, many congregations seem now to be predominantly quiet and elderly. 3.3.7 Irregular attendees at Mass It is often pointed out at funerals and big festivals like Christmas or Easter that those who have 'missed Mass' have committed a mortal sin so cannot come forward for Holy Communion; parents have spoken about how let down they have been when a child home from university returns to Mass at these significant times but then hears that she or he is excluded; yet these services could and should be times of welcome, evangelisation, and openness to all.

What are your dreams for the church?:
4 What are your dreams for the Church? 4.1 To build and maintain parish communities founded on Gospel values 4.2 For the clergy and Bishops to be open to the changes we are suggesting 4.3 For the

culture of clericalism to be seriously and rigorously addressed in the seminaries and in the diocese 4.4 To re-examine the training of priests: young newly ordained appear to hark back rather than look forward 4.5 To have more priestly formation in parishes 4.6 For the parish ministry of priests and people to be collaborative with mutual respect and appreciation 4.7 For there to be a clear structure of inclusion of all sections of society in our diocese and local church structures and liturgies 4.8 To gather for Spirit-filled, joyful and uplifting liturgies, which speak of love and the Gospel of hope 4.9 To have women deacons and priests and married clergy 4.10 To have structures within the local church, the diocesan church and the world -wide church with clear leadership empowered and mandated by the Gospel values 4.11 For the Catechism to be more loving and to include all sections of society 4.12 For the Church to implement Evangelii Gaudium

Praise Fest Prayer Group, Milton Keynes

Process Used:

Group discussion in a prayer group after one evening session with the groups answering different questions

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
• Catholic means being universal and everywhere we go we can find a catholic church. Christ is universal and I am part of the body. It is such a joy to be a Catholic. • The World Youth day encapsulates the feeling of oneness and being closely bonded by being part of the One Holy Catholic Church. It's so easy to make friends due to our common faith. • What differentiates our Catholic Church is the beauty of the Sacraments. Only in the Catholic Church do we have the Holy Eucharist that nourishes us and is so central to our Faith. The Sacrament of reconciliation helps us to be purified and come back to God. These are treasures that we should never lose. • We need to see our faith as very important then we would give it the attention it deserves • There are times when we can become just ritualistic and feel it's a tick in the box exercise. Sometimes we go to Mass or going for Confession as a tick in the box just to fulfil an obligation. We settle for the minimum 40% pass mark rather than seeking more. • In spite of all the religions and Christian denominations that are present today, I would want me and my children and their children to be catholic. Being Catholic is so important to our faith and central to our salvation. • Belonging: big family, universal easy to slot in when living in a new country. • Teaching: beyond the bible - knowing where we come from brings joy • Real presence of Jesus: being part of his body • Community, a home, friends, praying for others • Universality: of mass, devotions and traditions, sacraments, (reconciliation bringing comfort and joy) • Mary: mother and intercessor • Saints: • Relationship: meeting Jesus

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
• Encouraging Charismatic renewal as it fosters a personal relationship with Jesus and helps people find out what gifts of the Holy Spirit we have which can serve the church and evangelise. • We encourage and pray for Christians of other denominations as we are one body • Running Alpha – chance to ask questions without feeling judged – people have started Alpha with no faith and ended up getting baptised • The number of schools the Church builds – education of young people – • Our liturgy is good – universal- we know what is said in church today – the Gospel is preached. • The Eucharistic service is unique. • The priests serve us so well, God bless them. • Church is consistent, it stands for truth • Priests sacrifice a lot in carrying out their duty as priests

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
• We are not really outreaching. There is nothing for young people to do after baptism/confirmation, so they go to other churches. • The Gospel is inherent in the Mass but do people have the invitation and opportunity to respond and know what to do next to connect to the faith community and grow as disciples? • Welcoming events inviting neighbours, colleagues – Church of England does this we should do it. Also, they do 'Impact Sundays' – outreach in streets or helping local charity then give testimonies. • We need space to worship and listen to what the Holy Spirit has to say and pray for each other. • We need more communities for all age groups to reflect, pray and be social together and learn the bible. • We should pray more to ask the Holy Spirit to lead us as individuals and communities. Not just pursue our own agendas but let God show us His agenda for the Church. We have been listening to each other but we need to listen to God too. • We want people to be closer to God rather than 'religious': to have a personal relationship with God, not just going to church as a religion. • We need to pray more for the Pope, bishops, priests, vocations and young people. We need training on how to explain church teaching in a loving way. We need availability of information e.g. natural family planning and chastity education. • Church is not welcoming for all, especially

family with children and youth • No youth engagement from Church. Discussed one particular incident family moved to Pentecostal church because the young person lost the faith due to less church engagement. • Priest should encourage new people to take up roles. Discussed one incident all key people were old people and they don't want to move or neither priest not encouraging to move them • There should be some working manifesto(rules) in each parish and it needs to reviewed regularly like youth engagement, welcoming people, house visit, prayer group etc • Often in the Church we see that people are scared to respond or to sing. They worry what others will think. By doing so we are not being brave. God wants us to praise and worship Him just as Bartimaeus called out to God. We need to have freedom to Praise and Worship loudly. • Sadly, there is a feeling that the Priest somehow needs to do everything in the Church. We have been baptised and by our calling we are also part of the Priesthood. While lay people may not be able to administer the Sacraments, we should be able to support the local Parish in other ways to support the Priest. The Priest does not need to do everything. He needs the lay people's support. The laity have a lack of understanding of our faith. When we come to Mass, the sign of the Cross reminds us of our Baptism, of being part of the family of God, we are coming home. We come to God to serve God. When we are at home, we feel free and don't feel a burden to help with the chores in the house. We should support the Church and help the Priests. • The Church is our Mother, and we would like the Church to continue to teach Her children about marriage, relationships between man and women and we learn it from the world and movies which misleads us. • We need our Priests to be bolder to speak on topics related to relationships and regarding sexuality i.e. Man vs Woman and that God has created us Man and Woman for a reason. • Church should open more Catholic mission schools. • Those who teach in the church are not always qualified and therefore are not able to provide the right answers to questions. The church should ensure people are qualified to teach.

What are your dreams for the church?:

• To have solid spiritual programs for the youth (youth empowerment) • To have a committee to look after the elderly and make them feel inclusive. • To create youth club on social media / Catholic social teaching (how to get people to know God) • To have evangelization programs • The Church to have a second look at her members welfare (members showing love and care among themselves/others) • We dream for a church that is engaging, revived, that focuses on spiritual development with committed parishioners who are reflective and priests who are totally involved in all aspects of the life of the parish

Family Group 2

Process Used:
This response is from a Catholic family. We gathered together to discuss how we felt about the questions asked below. One catholic and one non-catholic adult and three children under 17 and

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
16 yr old - it means going to church on Sunday. Having God in my life gives me someone to talk to. Adult Catholic - it means continuity and stability and a narrative that helps to shape a life from birth and baptism through to death.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
16 yr old - gathering as a community in mass 12 yr old - the music especially the guitarist. Adult non-catholic - they were Covid safe Adult Catholic - creating a space for the children of the parish. Catechism, first holy communion, confirmation classes and children's liturgy are all well supported by the parish council and the priest.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Changes without consultation (e.g. mass sheet) Poorly communicated requirements, priest wanted children to put their hands out clearly for communion but never said as much. It frightened them because they didn't understand.

What are your dreams for the church?:
16 yr old - Better management of church scandal. It is source of embarrassment, teasing from friends. 12 yr old - make it more interesting, make sermons more youth friendly. Adult catholic - Inclusion: intolerance of divorcee's or homosexuals is incongruent with the welcome God extends to all. Its very hard to defend the joys of the faith when this is the kind headline non-catholics see as a core principle of the church.

Three over-70s meeting for lunch and prayer

Process Used:

Prayer and a lunchtime meeting of 3 over 70s.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
We belong to the one true faith. The Church is the people and the theology, it is a world-wide family joined by one belief whose dogma sets the guidelines for our lives. We have perceived an erosion in the following of the faith due the secular pressures of anti-prolife and LGBT governmental policies. This erosion has been accelerated by the impact of Covid and compounded by the lifting of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
From a personal faith point of view, the Church offers everything that is needed for Eternal Life, but the communication of this has eroded over the years, particularly since Vatican II.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The lifting of the Mass attendance obligation has been used as an excuse by many people of all age groups for not attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. For the 3 months when the Churches were closed by law, the need for the statement from the Bishops' Conference was unnecessary, as the law precluded Mass attendance, and people would have come back more quickly and in greater numbers if the 'get out' hadn't been there. There is less 'teaching' from the pulpit than there used to be, so that many people are unsure about the 'rules' and traditions of the Church.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Immediately, follow the example of the Scottish Bishops and reinstate the obligation to attend Mass and widely communicate this action. Widen the option for married priests, as within the Eastern Rite. Make the Church more inviting to people by engaging in modern forms of communication. Listen to the voice of the younger generations when they say the Mass and other Services are boring and out of touch with modern life. Reinstate education and teaching, utilising modern media. Look for more ways to reduce poverty and inequality in the world.

Family Group 3

Process Used:

Discussed at home as a family and summarised our views.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

We are born Catholic and brought up Catholic by our parents. However, the pertinent question is: Had we been brought up in another Christian denomination would we consciously and voluntarily choose today Catholicism as a faith? The reason I ask this is to question what differentiates the Catholic Church from any other denomination. What is our unique selling point, to coin a business phrase? In my view, it is the fundamental belief that Christ is present in the Eucharist at Communion; but that is hardly made universally known by our Church or generally believed even amongst Catholics. I am deeply disappointed at the way the Catholic Church is progressing. There seems to be a growing divide between the Church and its parishioners, and with that separation goes a certain degree of confusion and timidity in one's faith. The laity is not being taught and led in the right direction and the lost sheep seem confused wandering lost in the modern wilderness of society. For example, not so long ago I led a small group from our church in a discussion. I asked: if you were stopped in the street and were asked by an opinion polling organisation, Who was Jesus? What would you respond? The group replied: He was a teacher. A wise man. A healer and so on. No one said, He is the Son of God When I questioned that point I was told, We don't say that sort of thing publicly in this country! I fear that the laity is hesitant because they are not positively led and perhaps they are not taught enough from the pulpit about the basics of their faith and what it means to live it as a daily example. It is as if the Church is in hiding, confused and sending mixed-messages on many issues such as The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, social issues such as sexuality, abortion, divorce and social behaviour in general. Some priests have voiced the opinion that Communion is only symbolism based on the Last Supper, and seem to have by-passed the Gospel of John Chapter 6. As Christians/Catholics we are aware that our views are out of step with society. It is understandable that it is so in a secular country. It is often too daunting for an individual to speak out one's faith freely because, more often than not, our Church, (the Catholic Church), does not speak out and stand out as a beacon of Christianity. For example, often on TV we see so-called comedians and celebrities mocking Christianity and often getting very close to blaspheming when referring to God, Christ or the Saints. Does the Catholic Church, (or other Christian denominations for that matter), stand out publicly and pronounce that this is a step too far and that certain comments are inappropriate and surpass the understood freedom of speech tenets of society? By remaining silent as a Church, it demonstrates Christianity in retreat, and that the Church, (if it were a business), has reached a state of managing decline rather than moving forwards as the nation's conscience and proclaiming the Word of God. The Church's silence on major issues makes it more difficult for the individual to be a lone voice in a secular world. Our Church is made up of people who made a free choice at some stage in their lives to devote their life to the priesthood. This is laudable; however, with each vocation the individual priest carries a very special and heavy responsibility and will be answerable ultimately to God when asked, What did you do to proclaim My news to those you encountered in life?

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

On an individual basis, I have known some priests who have been very conscious of the seriousness of their vocations and have acted in a very Christ-like manner. However, with the passage of time it is becoming ever clearer that modern priests are far too busy with committees and bureaucracy at the cost of tending to the flock. It is as if the Church has become a business and its priests have become employees with a 9 to 5 trudge, (or longer), with an eye towards pleasing ones superiors in the organisation. The Church needs to re-focus its priorities with the advance of secularism and at a

time of an ever diminishing captive audience of parishioners. The primary role of the parish priests is to be a guide to their parishioners. However, with increasing responsibilities demanded of them to participate in committees, diocesan meetings and other groups, they can unwittingly become distanced from the very people they are there to serve. The growing support of the priest by the laity taking on some responsibility of the running of parishes has been a positive change, as it allows the laity to feel that the parish 'belongs to them' and they play a role in the way their parish is run. However, this should enable the priest to make stronger connections with his parishioners, such as home visits, hospital visiting etc. rather than leaving this to deacons, nuns or other members of the laity.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
See above. The Church, through various charitable organisations (Missio, CAFOD, SVP etc.) does a lot of good work in the local community and further afield. However, it seems as though only Catholics are aware that these are catholic organisations. Does the Church on a local and national level need to make its work in the community more obvious to those outside the Church? If the good that is being done in the community name of Jesus is not seen by non-Christians, how would they know what the Church teaches regarding social justice?

What are your dreams for the church?:
A confident, united Church, speaking with authority about God, Christ and what Christianity means to individuals now in this life and in preparation for the next. That is the primary and only purpose to being a Church, a Pope, or a priest. To proclaim God's presence and His will for humanity.

CAFOD – Northampton

Process Used:

All CAFOD volunteers were invited to a zoom meeting. 8 were able to make it. Information was sent out before the meeting. At the meeting, the Synod prayer was prayed. This was followed by active listening to those who wanted to share, time for reflection and sharing of what was heard. Then agreeing a feedback response.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

• The Church as family. Through the Church we reach our brothers and sisters across the world. Because they are our family, we can feel close and not afraid. We are all the same – all part of global family. We come into contact with people from everywhere – can understand where conflict is happening. We are one but different • Sense of identity – we celebrate the same liturgy everywhere in the world and connected through our charitable activity. Don't feel an emotional connection to the global Church from being in my parish however, we are connected to the global church by people in our own parish who come from other countries. • Partnership and interconnectedness – We can learn from other communities, it's a two-way process. Dignity of the person. We can benefit from learning and listening to others. Once you give, you don't want to stop there – you want to continue the relationship and they too are thinking and praying for us. Online platforms have really helped in developing this. It's not the Vatican's responsibility. We can all make a difference. • Outreach - through our parishes we are able to reach out to our brothers and sisters around the world. One way we do this is via CAFOD. We are able to listen to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. A listening Church can hear and respond to the needs of the Church locally and globally. Often it's hard to feel part of the global Church but charities like CAFOD help us feel connected with people overseas, with their lives and hopes.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

• Celebrating diversity - Our parishes are diverse and we have experience in celebrating that diversity to grow our understanding of our global Catholic community and how we can better be in solidarity with our sisters and brothers. For example : □ Holding parish lunches with different ethnic communities to celebrate diversity □ At Pentecost, have readings in different languages. □ By supporting a CAFOD project, we learned about the community there and having a virtual meeting with people there made it real. • Virtual presence – able to be virtually present with more people in our country and with communities overseas and to celebrate our faith together. Feel part of the global community. • Outreach - through our parishes we are able to reach out to our brothers and sisters around the world. For eg, holding fundraising events to help others in great need. One CAFOD event was casino. The nuns came along and one of them kept winning all night. Always smile when I think back on it. We raised a lot of money for CAFOD. • Sharing Stories - Listening to the stories of people who come from other countries within our communities helps us connect with the stories of their communities overseas.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

• Inward looking - When we feel we cannot help our brothers and sisters overseas as well. When clergy make up the minds of their parishioners and refuse to allow 2nd collections to be held saying our local communities are in need themselves without allowing people to make their own decision. It is often the poor who want to help. Who are we to deny them this opportunity? • Lost link within parish with online communication - with the challenges of the pandemic some parishioners are not travelling to church. The regularity has been interrupted and may be difficult to restore. Worry we've lost things that we may not get back – without effort. • Lack of communication - between schools and parishes. They seem to work in isolation from each other and from the wider

community.

What are your dreams for the church?:
• To be more outward looking. We can get caught up in trivia in our own small groups and parishes. We need to do as much as we can to help our brothers and sisters throughout the world. • To see online prayer, mass, talks etc.. continue and be a regular thing connecting us all even when we go back to normal. • To see more schools and parishes hold partnerships with each other and with overseas schools and parishes. This will help bring us closer together and enrich us so much more. • That we have space and time for story telling of others experiences and lives. Need to look for ways to realise this. • To be a Church where ALL feel welcomed, valued and have a sense of belonging. In this way we will have people of all ages contributing to the life of the Church to enrich and grow it. Remember going to Mass in the cathedral in Calcutta. One of Mother Teresa's nuns came up to me and asked me to do one of the readings. They made me part of their community and congregation. Hope that we can be a lot more welcoming and take advantage of cultural diversity. • To remove misunderstandings and grow in peace with others. • To keep Synodal conversations going on even after this Synodal process. • To have our communities come together when we return to normal

Reaching the Margins – Individual Conversation 2

Process Used:

A one to one discernment with a Catholic that goes to Church very occasionally

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Once a Catholic, always a Catholic. A sense of belonging to a big family. A good education for those that go to a Catholic school. Feast days like Easter and Christmas have meaning.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Church gives a a sense of solace and personal peace, especially during difficult times. Praying is very comforting in Church. Pro life stance There are some very good priests.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Some priests interpret the doctrines very rigidly The priests that were paedophiles and then covered up by the Church Catenians The Vatican's wealth The Church's stance on contraception and divorce/remarriage The fact that Anglican priests could become Catholic priests even if they were married - if that's the case, all Priests should be allowed to marry and have families. It would help them be better priests.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That the Vatican is more transparent and outward looking Recognition of divorce and remarriage Priests and nuns allowed to marry and have families Allow contraception to help prevent world poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS

Little Chalfont Prayer Group

Process Used:

This is the response from a prayer group meeting in Little Chalfont that draws people from Wendover, Great Missenden, Chesham, Little Chalfont, and Marlow. We heard the Sunday Gospel Luke 6 17, 20-26 and reflected on it. Then listened to each others responses to the questions. The headline thoughts are below.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
As a Catholic from birth I choose to remain in this family linked to Jesus. The sacraments are a life spring to me. Vatican II helped to regain conscience. I am proud to be a Catholic. To belong to a world wide family with shared beliefs that sees the best in each other. To be part of a loving worshiping community that reaches out to others. To belong to a church that is forgiving and serves Christ. Having grown up knowing nothing about other faiths The church is a place of comfort and I am able to fall back on prayers. It means faith and never being alone. Not always proud to be catholic but turn to God and have stronger faith.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Social Justice encyclicals that inspire and encourage eg. call for minimum wage, work of the SVP, soup runs and food banks. The foundation of medical care and Education. No one is excluded. Belief in Jesus Christ and the Universal nature of the church. Community groups for mothers. Love of Neighbour. Growing up it was narrow and concentrated on sin its better now. Living faith. In the past there was so much going on for young people. Grew up in a church where young people wanted to be involved.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Sad provision for young people is lacking now. Needs more emphasis on youth. Youth clubs, Cubs and scouts, football teams. Children's Liturgy needs to start up again. Disappointed with the Church and the way the hierarchy have behaved; they have not been open and honest and do not listen so the Laity have not been consulted previously. The choice of a safe pair of hands for Bishops rather than charismatic leaders who have canonised respectability. Paedophile scandal. Threat of closure of Churches. Need to believe writing to the bishop will make a difference so need for a proper complaints policy. Loss of Latin Mass. Poor public image where all the good in the church is not promoted enough. Shortage of priests does not help

What are your dreams for the church?:
The Holy Spirit will inspire us so we can tell the world of all the good in the church. Clergy who are better cared for and better supervised. Equality for all, allow married and women priests so a future female Pope? Look at these Catholics how they love EVERYONE Begin again and really celebrate the faith Accessible education in the faith for adults and more small community prayer groups

Turvey Abbey Group

Process Used:

Response of the Face to Face Synod Group at the Monastery of Christ our Saviour Turvey, Bedfordshire The process of periods of scripture, silent prayer, gracious speaking and gracious listening was a blessing and joy to take part in. These responses were drawn together by a note taker but edited by all the members of the group as being their recollections of what they listened to as friends and strangers opened their hearts to speak. Our grateful thanks to the Diocesan team for preparing notes, handouts and prayer cards. Marie Heath (Face to Face Synod group Monastery of Christ Our Saviour, Turvey, Bedfordshire)

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Present at the meeting were a Benedictine monk and five women. In response to the question Why am I a Catholic? they variously described the Church as the place where they 'found Jesus' or experienced God, particularly, in some cases, through love of the Eucharist. Membership of the Church was seen as a joyful journey providing through its ancient history and fidelity to the truth an anchor in a complex world. The group reflected on the beauty of Catholic liturgies and the music, hymns and colourful pageantry of processions and feast day celebrations. More negative comments concerned the poor religious teaching some received as children as well as a lack of kindness experienced by some girls educated by nuns. Others had very positive experiences of Convent education. The exclusion of women from positions of authority within the Church was deeply felt and it was thought that children also, to the extent to which they were able, were not allowed enough participation. In a complex and difficult situation requiring sensitivity and understanding one person felt no compassion from Church authorities but only a sense of exclusion. The question of sin was touched on at the end with some describing the fear instilled in them by the concept of the harsh judgement of God, of hell and an unhealthy sense of guilt which stayed with them.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

The group noted the ambiguity of the word 'Church' with responses sometimes referring to the hierarchical institutional Church and sometimes to the local Catholic community The group expressed joy at belonging to the Church founded by Jesus Christ. The Church's past cruelty expressed in such organisations as the Inquisition, did not detract from this. It was felt that the Catholic Church was respected as a moral force in the world today. It was seen as a champion of the poor, speaking up for refugees and contributing financially to aid programmes through organisations like CAFOD. The current pope, it was felt, was widely respected throughout the world and greatly loved by Catholics.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

Some looked back with nostalgia to a time in their lives when the priest had a genuinely pastoral role and visited his parishioners. (One person reminded us that the early Christians met in one another's houses) A sense of separation was expressed between the priest and his people and the situation has resulted in a loss of unity among parishioners. Some people expressed a sense of alienation from the Church itself. The disconnection of priest and people was thought to be partly attributable to the shortage of priests but also to inadequacies in the priests themselves. Many young priests were perceived to be very right wing, immature and out of touch with the concerns of ordinary people particularly as regards marriage and complex LGBT issues. More serious were the many stories of child abuse by religious and priests which, caused some people to feel ashamed to be Catholic. It was felt that we need to share our spiritual lives with one another more and with members of the whole Christian Church. Parents need to share their faith more with their children. It was a sad fact that many children of Christian/Catholic parents no longer believe.

What are your dreams for the church?:
This question inspired strong feelings in the group. It was felt that for the Church to be truly missionary it needed to be relevant to the world we live in so that its message of love for the poor, for sinners, for all humanity could be heard. It was the message that was important, not the Church. Some felt there was an over - concentration in our churches on peripheral concerns to do with the Church as an organisation to the detriment of its essential message. We needed to go out to people and not wait for them to come to us. However, some have the vocation not to go out but rather to remain a presence of prayer and work within the Church drawing others to them. Unity also figured strongly in the responses. We were reminded of the meaning of the mass as a sacrifice of the whole Christ, head and members, offered to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. We are all one body which requires a striving for unity among ourselves as well as respect for other Christian denominations and other religions with whom we work. Someone mentioned elitism – seen by some as a tendency among Catholics. A local ecumenical foodbank was seen as a good example of Christian cooperation. The mission of the Church requires renewal and it was felt we need good mature leaders open to change to bring this about. However, we ordinary lay people are the Church and need perhaps to remind ourselves of the promises made at baptism and of our lifelong baptismal grace and call. Many spoke of the dream that the whole people of God in our Church listen to the prophetic words of Pope Francis on humble spirituality, non-judgemental inclusiveness and global concerns and, having listened, take his words to heart by active response. The importance of prayer was once more stressed and was particularly relevant as we held our last session at the end of the week of prayer for Christian Unity. It was felt that disunity existed where there was a lack of depth in communication. This synodal process we agreed has enabled us to speak to one another at a much deeper level than is customary largely due to the times of silence and the emphasis on listening. At a deeper level it is possible to find a unity that may not be apparent on the surface while it is often at superficial levels that we disagree. This seems to have an application for the whole Church.

Process Used:

An additional response to the Turvey Abbey group

What are your dreams for the church?:
I would like to see the church becoming more supportive of couples who find themselves in same sex relationships. I see them as being in a loving, supportive, faithful, relationships & being as honest, compassionate generous as any other. Lots of us Normal people find their life style obnoxious & so display quite cruel prejudice. Christians should be loving & tolerant. I would like to see Christians having events outdoors so be a Glass Church where we are visible to the public. Make books like the Pope's book let us dream & other devotional material made available & encouraged. Blessings. Mike.

Diocesan Justice and Peace Group

Process Used:

We followed these questions, trying to answer each question in turn, not as a group, but with individuals giving their own answers, some but not all of which were shared by others. Answers are not given in any particular order.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be part of a wider community with shared values, values which are based on the teaching of the Church and which motivate us to try to improve the lot of humanity in general. To be following a set of everlasting truths grounded in traditions stretching back to biblical times. To be part of a universal Church operating in very different environments throughout the world. To be part of the wider grouping of Christian Churches; rather than Catholic this question would have been better phrased as Christian in the Catholic tradition.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Responding to the needs of both the local and global community. Being a focal point of outreach, education (in a lot of countries), support and prayer. All the help given to communities both here and in countries where the needs are so much greater. A lot is being done in both fields and the Church has shown itself to be adaptable to meeting needs which are always changing. By way of example while church involvement in health care is no longer a priority here, in other countries it is of vital import.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
A stress on obligations as opposed to commitments willingly volunteered, for example in Mass attendance, where, in theory, denial of communion follows failure to attend. The tendency of some to pick and choose, so for example to concentrate on abortion issues while ignoring the great needs of those from cradle to grave, and the work of charities like CAFOD, or vice versa. Evangelisation – people worried to force their faith onto others and hence don't talk about it. Those on the margins or outside the church are ignored often rather than welcomed. Since the end of World War II the decision making process has become increasingly unfit for purpose. Now we face the spectacle of a male dominated clique clinging to power and all too often getting things wrong. The expertise possessed amongst the laity is too often ignored by clergy with little or no expertise in the subjects in question. Thus, poor translations are inflicted on the laity by bishops who may have many skills but translation is clearly not one of them. The welcoming of people new to a parish is by and large absent and little is done to keep engaging those who have completed the RCIA or the youth. The injustice suffered by women in being excluded from so much is blatantly unfair. To have put women in positions of authority in Christ's time would have been unthinkable. Now a male dominated hierarchy of mostly celibate clergy is anachronistic. The present set-up has been unfit for purpose for far too long. The arrogance coupled with ignorance of some bishops and clergy is damaging both to the Church and the majority of bishops and clergy who are trying their best to do difficult jobs in trying circumstances. Gospel readings concerning the Pharisees conjure up comparisons with the often legalistic approach of the Church's hierarchy. Christ mixed with sinners. We are supposed to condemn the sin but not the sinner; denial of access to communion is just one example of the Church's failure to live up to this ideal.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To be able to look at ourselves first before moving on to address the problems facing the Church as a whole. To have a Church that comprises a fair outward looking community where all feel they are really part of it and are loved as if members of one great big family. To have a Church capable of

dialogue, of including people of differing views who are able to discuss their opinions in a relaxed and constructive manner without being defensive and forming warring camps. To have a Church where falling congregation numbers and a lack of impact amongst those with no connection is no longer a problem and where infighting and pettiness is a think of the past. The Church becomes God's Kingdom here on Earth where Justice and Peace flourish and love visibly abounds with care for ALL of creation.

Women's Ministry Group

Process Used:

The women invited by the Women's Ministry Group to gather on October 16 were asked to share their experience and their dreams of being women in the Church. The dialogue (six groups of approximately six women) encompassed both local parish and wider Church level, and the outcomes can be summed up across six main areas. (Quotations from the women are written in italic).

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
Leadership and decision-making More leadership roles for women was at the forefront of the lists of dreams. It was asserted that while women are very active in their parishes, their voices are not heard enough: Not always asked for opinions, don't feel listened to. Women serve and do nearly all the menial jobs, as well as catechetical and prayer ministry, but their voices are largely absent from more important decision making. In our parish you need to ask a man if you have an idea. As a catechist, my leadership is not always properly recognised. Most women dreamed of proper recognition for their intellectual abilities, to be able to bring my whole self, not to have to leave my intellect at the door. They dreamed of equality in decision-making to feel equal, to have more influence. Circumstances could be envisaged in which women could be given overall responsibility for a parish. Ministry and evangelism Most of the women agreed that they would like to hear women preaching. One mentioned a friend who wrote homily notes for preachers and found herself listening to her own writings at Mass! Women aren't trusted to preach. Some Doctors of the Church are women, but they wouldn't be allowed to preach at Mass, even now in the 21st century. There should be a new appreciation of feminine insights. Individual charisms are often not appreciated and vocations discouraged or unsupported. Many women expressed a desire for women deacons in the Catholic Church in England. Some women dreamed of women priests and one group, a female Cardinal. Many groups also spoke of unspecific spiritual leadership roles in the parishes. As our church is our Mother, we need to have more evidence of motherhood as leadership. More opportunities for formation and training should be open to women. The role of women is vital: they are often the ones involved in evangelisation. Girls and the Church The limited roles for girls in church was a concern. Some parishes have had female servers for twenty years; a few still don't allow them today. One parish allows girls to be acolytes, but not altar servers. The reason given: if girls were allowed, the boys would disappear. Mothers reported that they found it difficult to explain to their girls the reason for the limited roles available to women in the Church. They hope and dream that the young generation will want to continue to live out their faith within the Church. Mary and other Biblical models Some groups spoke of the need for Mary's strengths rather than her docility to be emphasised. They wanted Mary's powers and humanity properly explored. It was noted that Romans 16, which mentions Deacon Phoebe and other women in leadership roles in the early Church, is not included in the Sunday lectionary. The Woman at the well was actually the first evangelist; Mary the first witness to the Incarnation; women, the first witnesses to the Resurrection. It seemed clear to the women at the meeting that Our Lord intended women to be at the forefront of his Church. However, it was generally agreed that women and men experience the Church

differently, and asserted that Patriarchy is in the culture of our Church. Women's views on the Priesthood The personality of the priest is what shapes a parish. An urgent need to educate clergy about unconscious gender bias was expressed by more than half the groups to help them be more aware of the female perspective. Some questioned seminary- based formation, feeling that priests can come out of seminary ill-prepared for parish life and inexperienced at relating to women. Positive aspects of having married clergy were mentioned. It was suggested that the role of the parish priest could be reviewed, including discussion of what roles could be created to better support him. There was discussion about the title 'Father'. What does it mean to be 'Mother' in the Church? Synodality It was clear that, without exception, the women at the meeting have a deep love for the Church. While they recognised that change could be painful, all felt that change is needed and possible. Many women felt that the Church requires modernisation. This would necessarily involve changes in canon law. They sense an urgency to transform the Church to help it become more inclusive and diverse, and they want the priests to move with us. The men need to be open to change, to journey together with us.

Music group - Christ the King, St Barnabas Cluster, Milton Keynes

Process Used:

These are the responses from the music group in Christ the King, St Barnabas Cluster, Milton Keynes. We have followed the structure for short sessions suggested in the resources and split the reflection over three short sessions (one per week). We have prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit using the Synod prayer and used reflective pauses as graceful listening as suggested. Below are the themes that we have identified in response to the questions.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
1) God's plan - Faith / certainty that what happens is the best thing that can happen. Believing and knowing that God has a plan for each one of us. This allows us to let go of pain, sorrows, concerns and everyday thoughts, makes every day life lighter and less burdensome. 2) Sacraments and liturgy – We find help, reminders and strength in the liturgy, services, mass, rosary, sacraments and in particular reconciliation. There is joy in praying as a community at mass, understanding the liturgy of mass better through being part of a music group (before when mass was in Latin). And there is strength and encouragement to continue on our Christian path through reconciliation and regular Communion and other sacraments. 3) Catholic tradition – Thankful for our parents who have brought us up in the catholic religion, but difficulty to do the same with our children who might not want to come to church. Although it is always a pleasure to hear the Scriptures and the homilies in Sunday masses, we don't know the Scriptures and the documents of the Church well enough to confidently engage in a discussion with those who challenge our religion or just ask us more about it.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
1) Inclusiveness. Church in England is much more open to families with mixed religions or denominations and these families feel more welcome and not judged, which is very important especially now where fewer people practice their catholic faith actively. 2) Approachable clergy. Parish priests and other priests are very approachable and happy to make time to listen and talk to parishioners.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
1) Lack of co-ordination of social and worshipping activities outside of Sunday mass. After loss of parish administrator the engagement by lay people to keep up the existing social events has rapidly decreased because of the lack of co-ordination and constant encouragement by parish administrator. 2) Volunteering is forever. Give the reduced engagement by lay people, if you agree to a task, the task will stick with you forever. It is difficult to reduce the time or effort given which makes it difficult to convince people to engage in the first place (catch 22 situation)

What are your dreams for the church?:
1) A church that excites young people. A church where the leaders at all levels are excited about the church and can covey this and share their excitement with our young people, where young people find ways of coming together with other young people. An environment that offers them interesting clubs and activities and safe spaces where they can grow up with others and make friends. If they make friends with other young people with the same values it is more likely that they feel a sense of belonging and stay within the church also as teenagers and beyond. 2) An appreciative church. A church where more lay people are involved and appreciated for their service, where they are seen as a person rather than just someone that does a specific task. Lay people need to feel that they are appreciated in order to do things for love and not for duty. Again this will increase the sense of belonging to a community with a (common) mission rather than a group of people that come

together for the same Sunday mass. Need to create real bonds among people in the community so that they also feel supported in need and feel they belong to the community. 3) Women in church. A church where women are accepted as equal as men, especially when we believe that we are all God's children and want to put our talents to good use; where women can aspire to hold the same roles as men. 4) A church that is real. A church where other recognize that we are catholic by our behaviours rather than our words, where we really care for others especially in periods like the lock-downs or more individual circumstances; where we go the extra mile to include those at the margin of the church community.

Reaching the Margins – conversation with 2 non-practising Catholics

Process Used:

Largely, our parish (St John Henry Newman, High Wycombe) has submitted group responses, but the following are the discernments from 2 lapsed Catholics I saw on a one to one basis. These parishioners wanted their discernments sent directly to the diocese.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
The possibility of being part of the original Christian Church A potential sense of Community and togetherness An embarrassment following Priests found guilty of paedophilia and subsequent Church cover up. Part of a Church that is stuck and unyielding

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
It can provide a moral compass It can provide a sense of Community and friendship It can maintain a constancy through life's, and the world's adversities It is an advocate for peace

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The Church has an inability to change its own rules, even when they do not go against the Ten Commandments or Jesus's teachings. It is stuck in the past and cannot adapt to modern times, except when it suits them and generally the changes are too small to make a real impact. The rules imposed can make the Church look judgemental and some rules are cold and unempathetic, completely against Jesus's own behaviour. Where Jesus was loving and forgiving, understanding and insightful, the Parishes in High Wycombe and the Church in general can be anything but. The Church's rules on contraception and divorce and harsh and uncaring. Their behaviour towards women is outmoded and disrespectful. The current Priests appear to be more intractable and less understanding of the trials of modern life and stuck in pre-Vatican 2 years. People are leaving the Church as a result. The Church's behaviour following the paedophilia and cruelty revelations were appalling and damaging Negative sermons telling us how not to be, rather than highlighting our potential for kindness, empathy and tolerance. Some sermons have made us feel angry as they were so judgemental and harsh.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That the Church changes it's rules regarding all the above - changing the rules does not mean going against the Commandments or Jesus's teachings: priests used to marry, there is nothing in the Bible that suggests women cannot be deacons or even priests. So, greater flexibility and opening hearts and minds to change. The rules on divorce (especially for those who tried to save their marriage) and contraception and very harsh indeed - changes here would be very welcome. Listen to the people that comprise the Church far more, reaching out to all Catholics. Make the Church truly follow Jesus's teachings on being tolerant, forgiving, non-judgemental, accepting and loving. No one should feel estranged and unworthy.

Diocesan Youth Adults Group

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Seeking truth. Made in God's image. Counter cultural in the way the Church calls us to live – IN the world but not OF the world. Followers of Jesus Christ. A reason to live and be happy. Hopeful. Close to God. I wouldn't know what to be without it. Direction, journey, progression of self and relationships. How to love. We are Jesus in the world. Bing part of the Body of Christ. It's not easy but nothing easy is worth it. Identity. Firm foundation. We can live freely because of the Church's wisdom. 'We are not made for comfort, we are made for greatness' – Pope Benedict. True freedom and joy. A place where you find out what you should do so that you have fullness of life. It all comes back to the Eucharist. I always want to be with Jesus. Without Mary, we wouldn't have Jesus. Everything is a gift – is grace. Something I should be more grateful for – a privilege which is often uncomfortable. Something I want to share with others, despite it being something the world does not expect.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
The beauty of 'proper churches'. Magisterium. Tradition – everything has a reason – links to our identity. Well organised. There is a structure in all things. Morality. Ability to take what is good in a culture to praise God. Wisdom. Liturgy. The Saints. Sacraments – don't get these anywhere else – a gift, brings closeness to God. Salvation history. Doctrine is clear and is merciful when taught in good practice eg. No assumptions made about who is in Hell. The Church holds dignity highly. Compassion and forgiveness – knowing you're forgiven through absolution of sins. Surrounded by good priests so that my gifts can be used and fostered. Seen and loved as a young person in the Church. Loving environment to grow up in. Opportunities for adoration/private prayer in churches. The physical church buildings give us a place to call home. Familiarity and universality. Devotional life – novenas, rosary, saintly devotions.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Welcoming (or not welcoming) new parishioners. We don't always share our message properly. We don't always educate properly. We focus too much on the sacraments with young people who do them and then disappear – a wider approach to young people experience in the church is needed. Bishops let us down in the 1970's when they didn't write a Catholic curriculum for our schools and just accepted the national curriculum – missed opportunity for teaching the faith more widely in the schools. Priests 'got lazy' with Catechesis and passed responsibility to schools and it became more a conveyor belt of sacrament – get them 'through the door'. Evangelising not done properly – not enough sharing of our beauty. Logo for Synod. We don't talk Jesus enough. We aren't proclaiming the Gospel to the whole world. The Mass isn't explained enough – the beauty can't touch people if they don't understand what's happening and why. Skirting round difficult conversations. People don't feel they can come as they are. Bad experiences of accessibility for the disabled incl. visually impaired, wheelchair users. Converts can feel bewildered. Politicisation of faith.

What is your dream for the Church?
Be who we are meant to be – Do what Jesus did, stop playing about! 'say the black and do the red (reference to liturgical instructions in Missal etc.) Be proud of who we are. Confession lines as long as Communion lines. Let's love each other as God loves us. Every town should have a monastery and perpetual adoration chapel. A more community friendly experience. For people to have faith and be part of their everyday lives. Inclusive – reach out to everyone – in a Holy way and not compromising, surely we should be the most inclusive place in the World. See love in action in our churches. All

people should know that God loves them. For our children to be members of the Church throughout their lives.

Christ the King, Bedford. 'Walkers for Health' mixed denominations – age group 60+ (8-10people)

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
• Catholic faith is passed on through the family
• Faith is important regardless of religion or dogmas of faith
• General view, God is blamed in times of crisis

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
• Faith keeps a person going, the Church supports individuals and families

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
• Things could go wrong if help is not sought and the Church is blamed
unchristian behaviour in churchgoers is not easy to understand or accept.

What is your dream for the Church?
• To progress in our faith

Keralan Community, Christ the King, Bedford

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
• Community united in Christ and worshipping God together, happiness, united in same beliefs
• Belonging to a universal church

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
• Organising events to spread the word of God. Charities to help other people. Welcoming.
• Gathering people in faith for celebration of Mass/ prayer meetings/ transferring the faith to children
• Operate schools and hospitals overseas
• support needy, poor and suffering during pandemic / charitable and humanitarian organisations

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
• There are churches but lack of priests and daily Mass in neighbourhood especially for the frail and lonely with no travel facility

What is your dream for the Church?
• The church will continue to help the needy and spread the word to people who are lost in life.
• Glorify God, proclaim Jesus Christ to the world
• Support and assist the poor and sick with love

Youth group and leaders, Our Lady of Walsingham, Corby

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
I'm a son of God – I have salvation. Experiencing what Jesus went through. Find strength in my faith. I have a relationship with Mary and the Saints. It's something I've grown up with after being baptised young.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
I'm a son of God – I have salvation. Experiencing what Jesus went through. Find strength in my faith. I have a relationship with Mary and the Saints. It's something I've grown up with after being baptised young.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Discussion groups to grow in faith. Use of technology like Zoom and Teams, good for meeting people from other parishes and the wider church – builds community. Accessibility to sacraments – just need to speak to a priest to start the journey, RCIA really good, church being approachable for anyone. Outreach – reaching out to young people, Mission Northampton (evangelising), reaching out to Housebound in parishes. Big increase of online input like Fr Mike Schmitz and Bishop Barron. How Masses are 'structured' – following the order of Mass, following what Jesus did, tradition. Youth events – socialise, spend time with God, meeting the wider Church – could do more of this. Feast days being celebrated. Sacraments are a good thing we have in our Church. Provides a space for community. Go out to people who are sick in hospital. Groups that support community like SVP. Priests are good – good in confession. Children's Liturgy being offered for little kids.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Outreach/Evangelisation – some good but can be better, be more outward looking than inward looking. Are Catholic schools/Church reaching out to state schools, doing enough to bring young people up in the faith. Should be more Catholic secondary schools. Current arguments over Mass traditions eg. Latin Mass. Mass can sometimes be boring for teens – how can we make it more engaging. Need young people to be Catechised well – not always the case.

What is your dream for the Church?
Taking good example/practice from other faiths/denominations and putting into practice in Catholic context. Could there be more scope for regular Mass with schools. Possibility of more collaboration between Diocese' to help build feeling of Church community. Could we do more to get to know the scriptures – like 'Life Groups' from other denominations. More outreach – in the town, advertising more online. An increase in Vocations. Outward looking and growing with more people coming to know Christ. More encouragement to people to grow in their living out of faith. Putting resources into the right people to reach people in ALL spaces – eg. The Chosen series, Instagram/YouTube etc.

Confirmation Group, Christ the King, Bedford

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
Christ the King Parish, Bedford: Synod Conversations.(Confirmation teenager group and young people)

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
• Family / Values / Education. Gives sense of belonging through Baptism and peace.
• Proud to Catholic

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
• Inclusivity / Diversity / Charity. Welcoming everyone, a good place to be at peace.
• Community / belonging / caring for the world

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
• Sex abuse cover-up/ lack of female ordination/Anglican married priests, but not Catholic ones.
• Many people still feel that not all people are equally welcome eg. gay people, some of it is misconception.
• Too much emphasis on sin and young people switch off.

What is your dream for the Church?
• More openness, transparency more open to change in society
• More priests, more people teaching
• Follow Pope Francis and the Church will thrive

Staff Synod Group

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
We had three meetings over zoom on Thursday lunchtimes, available for all staff whether Catholic or not. A total of 10 staff took part, although not everyone went to all the sessions. We began with prayer and Scripture reflection, and used the questions as the basis for a spiritual conversation.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Hope for something bigger than us, a sense of purpose.
Challenge – pushes us out of our comfort zone
Comfort from the Church – but not necessarily comfortable at Mass.
A cradle Catholic experience but with charismatic experiences via a Baptist friend
Catholic school, but not a Catholic upbringing. Became part of the Church on marrying a Catholic.
Experience Church as a big family/community, but more ecumenism would be good.
From outside the Catholic Church – experiencing the Holy Spirit. But doesn't happen at work as much as it could.
Growing up in Ireland in big Catholic family – amazing to move to London and feel being a Catholic was something people could choose.
Being a Catholic means God's love, the truth of Jesus, and hope for the world.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Welcome and involvement as a new Catholic – support from the parish
Pilgrimages, regular events, Lux weekends – but they don't help with parish life. We need more teaching on their level.
Church is good at preparing people for the sacraments, but not so good after programmes are finished, particularly post-confirmation.
Church is good at providing the tools – eg sacramental programmes – but leaves parishes to get on with it. Need more support.
"Thriving Catholic communities" – make more of it
We have a good solid base – our history, global church. The fear is that we could lose it.
Alpha course – v effective at generating new people.
There are lots of opportunities to do better – look at best practice going forward, especially around equality, diversity

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Lay involvement – priests expected to do so much more than their ordained role, eg be accountants, managers etc. How can lay people use their talents across the diocese?
What professional development does there need to be for priests for this to happen?
Church needs to be more engaged with the world – all of us as believers in all aspects of our lives including politically and militarily.
We need to be better at using people's talents.
How to free up ministry from those who have been doing it for years?
Current situation with the priests is just fire-fighting. We need a structure and strategy. Married priests?
Through either a lack of ability or a lack of desire for change what we cherish could be lost.
The community aspect is not always there – eg in comparison to Ireland.
People in the pews could be less gossipy and unkind.
We need to be honest about the position we are in so that people can really get on board.
Are we a Rolls Royce engine in a rusty Mini body?

What is your dream for the Church?

Where we are going depends fully on us - we need to change with a changing world. The changes of the future are only just starting, we need to be able to meet them. But priests need to get comfortable with change and allow it to happen.

Engage with people who have newly opened minds post pandemic.

"My dream for the Church is a Church where everyone belongs"

More lay people involved - how can we be more co-responsible? Nurture a sense of baptismal vocation.

Most of the volunteers are women but not in the decision making. If we have women doctors of the Church, why can't they play a greater part? 2 tier system.

Foster a better culture of engaging volunteers from people who have done Synod as the people who have brought the churches through covid are all exhausted.

A dream of having enough priests!

Clergy need more care – shoulder to cry on.

We need a strategy for priestly provision for the future, it's too difficult pulling together supply priests.

Priests to revisit why they became a priest – the joy of their vocations.

That the faith continues for our children and grandchildren – need better ways of engaging with them. Young people have so much to share and teach us – but they need to be there.

Engage young people with the subjects they are concerned about.

More opportunities to be open to the Holy Spirit

Recovering our early sense of mission

Reaching out to those who no longer come – evangelising in the supermarket. But would be good to have help with this, eg what to say tactfully .

Make Mass so good people want to come.

A dream of an agile church that can respond to people's situations

We need to treasure the past, but not get stuck out of fear.

A Church big enough to accept Jewish Christians – a second Council of Jerusalem. Would unleash a torrent of grace.

Don't take too long thinking about it – get active!

Deacons' Group

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
Zoom meeting of permanent deacons facilitated by Fr John Urdris.
We explored the joys and challenges of our ministry, before praying about our dreams for the Church.

What does it mean to you to be a deacon?

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Our Joys
Ministry - funerals and baptisms
Parish priest's encouragement and support has formed a partnership with him enabling him to accomplish more as a priest.
The joys of ministry, accompanying people in dark times, eg preparing for funerals
The joy of being there for the people
The joy of preaching and of being immersed in the Word
The awesome privilege of this 'ministry of the threshold', this 'liminal' ministry
The grievous disappointment as to the lack of response and engagement of laity
The joy of giving yourself in a prison context people always looking for a way out or forwards from their current situation.
Encounter of the sacraments in so many ways, as an individual and as a deacon
They are a revelation of the goodness that is found in the people
The privilege of sharing in both joys and challenges at one and the same time
The experiencing of other people's faith
Preaching is wonderful but it is good to realise that folks don't always want to receive what you are hoping and trying to give - good to shut up and listen.
Visiting families before a funeral and being allowed into them to share with them.
Being amazed by their lives and experiences
Being able to help and guide people in arranging funerals.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Our Challenges
People aren't always as enthusiastic about our faith and spirituality
Not being able to anoint the sick
Lack of engagement of parishioners who want to be served not to serve
Lack of understanding, eg what is a suitable Mass offering from a wealthy parishioner
Being in a parish that has been unstable now for 7rys
Where are people finding Jesus - no parish sign-ups for 24hrs for the Lord
Being able to accept grievous disappointment -
When people we have been in a relationship with just walk away - eg during baptismal preparation and then after baptism gone.
How the institutional church presents itself, especially to those who are marginalised. Terms like 'inherently disordered' are offensive and disrespectful of the integrity of our brothers and sisters who are gay or trans. Our speech needs to reflect a conversion of heart that truly affirms the dignity of others.
The Confirmation production line. Hoping that you have broken through to at least one or two of them.
Frustration of initiating things and not being able to follow through on them especially when others won't step up.

Leadership and engagement are two of the big issues facing us. 'Called & Equipped' is an important part of the answer to this for the laity. 'Kick Start' offered by Divine Renovation is available for our priests, but there doesn't appear to be anything like this for deacons. It would be good for everyone to see that there is a positive drive to provide ongoing formation for ALL.

What is your dream for the Church?

A Church …

Where there is cognisance of the need to feed my sheep. The shortage of priests which has been causing parishes to close, especially in outlying towns.

Deep concern, anguished love, for the future of the church have arisen out of our synodal process, frequently this expresses itself in terms of the desire for more priests. The ordination of married men to the priesthood, as already carried out in the Ordinariate and in the Eastern Catholic Church, would not only provide more priests, it might also actually strengthen priestly celibacy for those who are called to this way of life.

Where deacons assist priests by anointing the sick, enabling more people to receive this sacrament at urgent times in their lives.

Where videos of our Bishop's pastoral letters make him better known to his people, strengthening his teaching ministry and building links between bishop and parishioners. These would be shown in parishes where facilities permit and linked to parish websites to allow viewing on personal devices.

Where the process of priestly formation is more fit for purpose, and where we learn from the way in which orders such as the Jesuits and Dominicans carry out discernment and formation, this would be followed by an extended period in several parishes ministering as a transitional deacon.

Where the ongoing formation and development of deacons is not just ad hoc and left down to individuals to pursue if they want to do so. The days of reflection are wonderful and more opportunities for longer retreats should be encouraged.

leadership and engagement are two of the big issues facing us as priests, deacons and laity but whereas 'Called & Equipped' is an important part of the answer to that for the laity, there doesn't appear to be anything for our priests and deacons and, in my view, there should be. An example for our priests is 'Kick Start' offered by Divine Renovation on which Bishop David seems to be quite keen. It would be good for everyone to see that there is a positive drive to provide ongoing formation for ALL.

Where deacons are more minded to engage with each other periodically in prayer and fellowship, sharing experiences, challenges and joys as we have through this synodal process.

Confirmation Group, St Mary's Church, Dunstable

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
This is the feedback from group 1 from our confirmation programme (4 groups in total). This was part of a class on March 14th 2022, using the group feedback process given by diocese. The age profile is 14 – 16 years old. The catechists collected the feedback and took great care not to influence the feedback.

Group 1

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Learning & sharing. Being guided & having faith. Following God and spreading His word. Having belief.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Teaching young Catholics. Welcoming. Sacramental preparation. Donations. Community.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Church experience during Covid 19. The atmosphere has changed post COVID 19.Lack of support with disabilities. Mass feels rushed. Lack of people. Lack of young people. Communication with parish.

What is your dream for the Church?
Faster moving. More modern. More people - more young people. Church is more active and outward focussed. More women in church roles. More connections with other faiths/races.

Group 2

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Feel part of a family, and we are representing the next generation. Don't need to worry about death - we go to heaven. We can talk to God. We are part of a community. Charity & goodwill.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Fundraising/charity. Children's liturgy, choir, first holy communion, tea/coffee morning. Being part of a community. Catholic experiences at school. Being involved in mass.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Not enough for young people. Long masses. Church is homophobic. Doesn't feel modern.

What is your dream for the Church?
Encourage young people and families. More modern. Screens for hymns. Communications we can engage with. Married priests. Female priests. A more inclusive church. Building a bigger community.

Group 3

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
You are never alone, God is watching over me.
Doing the right thing.
Being part of a community.
Going to church.
Being able to pray and being forgiven even if you have done the wrong thing.
Going to mass.
Being part of a religion.
Strengthening our faith.
Being closer to God.
Someone to listen to us.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Helping others, charity, Cafod, the Ukraine
Bringing people together as a community so we all feel valued.
Welcoming people to participate in the mass like singing hymns.
Collection boxes, raising money.
Church is always there, it is open and you can go and see the priest.
Foodbanks

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Mass not interesting for children.
During covid not being able to join in with mass.
History repeating itself, controlling people, telling them what to do.
Church not being peaceful.
Not working with other religions.
Conflicts between religions.

What is your dream for the Church?
If the church could interact with other religions and not think that just Catholics are right.
More music, a more reliable atmosphere.
Be more inclusive for all groups, like deaf, blind and disabled.
Making mass available for everyone, mass online for the sick.
Little less formal, have specific masses for children.
Have more discussions and be have a mass out in the community spaces.

Group 4

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
A sense of community, where we can all live our lives following the ways of Jesus Christ.
A belief in a God we can worship and his Son Jesus who can guide us.
It is something I can be proud of, a tradition that I honour and trust in, led by the Pope on earth, pointing us to Christ.
Going to celebrate the body and blood of Jesus in the Mass.
A feeling of family.
I am still working that out.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
The charity work it does across the world.

The welcome I feel, the chance to be forgiven and not judged.
When I see good Catholic speakers talking in public about their faith and sharing the Good News.
The community aspect, when we can share together, like in the coffee mornings.
Using the new technology to share the gospel, like with social media, streaming or Zoom.
Being a voice when others have none.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Sometimes I think the length of the Mass doesn't take into account those that can't access it all, like for people that can't hear or see well, or can't concentrate.
Not sure that the timings of the Mass on a Sunday reflect the needs of the families that need to attend.
Uncertain of the teachings and some people think I am a racist, sexist or homophobic because I am a Catholic.
I am not sure that it really cares about the young people, I can't see them there.
I think it is strange that only men can be Priests, it doesn't seem fair.
I think there are some groups that feel left out at Church. Everyone should be welcomed.

What is your dream for the Church?
There are more Priests and enough of them to carry on with the Catholic Church. Maybe if they were married they might join and they could understand family life.
The Church would talk to other Religions and work together more to help everyone in the world.
That young people have something to make them feel like they belong.
The Church to address the things that have gone wrong, especially when people have been hurt.
I want there to be more convincing teaching about the faith and why we believe what we do.
I want to understand why we don't accept everyone's life choices.
The Church can get more modern in the way people can hear about it, read about it and understand it.

Individuals

#1

Process Used:
I have been aware of the Synod from the first announcement by Francis. I have been reflecting and reading as widely as possible in order to begin to bring my concerns and hopes into some sort of helpful perspective and order. Prayer has also supported my reflections and memories of past endeavours to renew the Church. I have not actively participated in any face to face or other online meeting devised to facilitate parish responses.
What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I have been a Catholic from baptism shortly after my birth-thus, a cradle Catholic. My father was a convert in the 1930s and my mother was born into a Catholic family. I attended Catholic schools with the exception of secondary schooling and taught during most of my full time working life in Catholic schools. I also continue to support the local Church in voluntary roles. Although I have a great interest in other faiths and beliefs, I am immersed in the Catholic faith despite many reservations and disappointments.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
It is hard to respond to this question. I recall the great support of my now deceased local parish priest and others (including the then bishop) when my father died suddenly and unexpectedly when I was just nine years old. There are so many failings that occasions of doing something well can be obscured. Perhaps the now flawed mission of Jean Vanier deserves a mention. There are others now unnamed and partly forgotten who did minister to and support those with learning disabilities. Vanier at least recognised the needs of those with learning disabilities and did something about it. His personal flaws and abuses were a tragedy.
I have encountered many reflective theologians and philosophers who have helped me to deepen my knowledge and understanding. But it is a disappointment that the authoritarian and controlling approach of John Paul 2 and Benedict greatly hindered contemporary theological exploration at least within the Church. I am unsure of my attitude here and as time passes, my views may very well develop. They usually do so.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The failure of the Church to properly incorporate women into leadership and ministry-a this is a serious flaw. It indicates a failure to acknowledge contemporary understandings of gender and equality. It further continues to support the great difficulty of what is termed clericalism-the notion that only the ordained male clergy are minsters of the gospel.
The failure of the Church to fully acknowledge the global menace of child and other abuse and to properly address both the cause and the suffering of those involved. This is a scandal. At least, issues are now being addressed in the UK and in some of the more economically developed nations-where secular attitudes have given those affected a voice which asked to be heard.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I do not dream but I have hope that the Church takes the opportunity to renew and reform before it is too late. I recall the Pastoral Congress in 1979 in Liverpool and the great hopes of Vatican 2-both initiatives which were either quashed or only partly realised. I hope that the factionalism in the

Church is resolved before greater harm is done. I hope that clericalism is recognised and steps taken to remove this and in turn to develop the priesthood of all the people. I hope that synodical thinking becomes a natural part of a living Church. I hope that Church authorities listen not just to those responding to the Synod but to those who have moved away or are not linked to any faith.

#2

Process Used:
Praying to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
For me , it means belonging to the church instituted by Jesus and the Apostles and so being part of the body of Christ, to receive His sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, all to help me, and my brothers and sisters in Christ to grow in love of God and neighbour to hopefully get to heaven.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The traditional Latin Masses are done well but are hard to find for most people unfortunately.Making people feel welcome is done well.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
A lack of Adoration and not enough Confessions in many parishes as well as no preaching on sin and the four last things has adversely affected the faith of many in my opinion.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I would like all churches to have altar rails back so that all can receive Communion on the tongue kneeling, more silence in the church (instead of all the chatter) to promote a much greater reverence for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, only priests being able to handle the Eucharist and for them to take it to the sick and housebound, more sacred music to help raise mind and hearts to heaven instead of guitars and school type songs that do nothing to elevate even childrens' minds to God.Also frequent Adoration and early Masses for working people and some system to enable people to visit Jesus whenever they are able or need to, instead of the churches always being locked (except when services are on). Also more available Confession times with the option of behind a grille.Also preaching on sin and the four last things to help save souls and attract people back to church.

#3

Process Used:
Parish priest spoke about the synod and then sessions were held to discuss. I was unable to attend the sessions.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To have faith in Jesus and to love him. To follow Catholic Church's teachings and to stand up for what is right. To lead by example and hopefully inspire other people to follow Jesus. To have a community of fellow Catholics to grow in faith together.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Faith formation events/courses to help deepen faith. Technology (e.g. Zoom) has helped facilitate this especially during pandemic. Fortunate to have several churches in the area so plenty of opportunity for Mass, prayer groups, Adoration, social events etc. Basic Christian acts of reaching out to people in need and being supportive. Volunteers stepping up during covid restictions. Greeters to welcome people to Mass. Priest & deacon are friendly and take time to chat to people.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Too much chatter before and after Mass in the Church - unable to pray and highly distracting /disrespectful. Conversations and catching up can be held outside or in the hall. Confession by appointment only. It would be great if there was a set time each week especially for full time working as you don't always know in advance when you may need confession! Inconsitency between parishes, confessions not held in the confessional booth but in other local parishes it is. Overhearing parts of confession (substitute priest) when it's held in the Lady Chapel, limited privacy. In some cases irreverence for the Eucharist. Some members of congregation taking Holy Communion back to their seat and then consuming. Dropping host. Unable to receive H.Communion on the tongue. Lay Eucharistic ministers giving blessings to those unable to receive Holy Communion.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Church and parishioners are respected by non-Catholics and non-Christians so they are at least open to hearing the Good News. Unambigous messages and teachings from the Vatican. Unity in the Church. More vocations to priesthood & religous life. Strong supportive community, St Martin de Porres, Luton, Beds.

#4

Process Used:
During each Mass I have attended in my parish, we have said the prayer to the Holy Spirit for the Synod. I attended two Synod meetings with my parish. I have read the summary of my parish feedback document and whilst I have no reason to doubt it reflects what people said within meetings, it does not really reflect my own views at all and so I have felt drawn to give an individual contribution. I respect other people's contributions and am glad that the Synod process has allowed people to express views which might not otherwise be heard. At the same time, I wish to dissociate myself from the views expressed in that document.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
As a teenager/young adult: Youth 2000 in Walsingham (the centrality of the Blessed Sacrament and the coolness of their worship songs) and the Faith Movement in Woldingham and Stonyhurst (the wonderful way in which they teach you how to love God with your 'mind' as well as your soul and strength, by actually talking about what - and why - Catholic teaching is) and World Youth Day with the Pope (the wonderful Popes we have had and the witness of universality of the Church). In my parish, Youth SVP, and a very welcoming Saturday Night Choir. A parish priest, Fr Gerald Moorcraft, who quoted Scripture in conversation and did not pretend to be anything other than a Catholic priest. The opportunity for weekly Confession and Adoration before the Saturday night Mass. Being welcome at daily Mass during the holidays. At university: The Oxford Catholic Chaplaincy being designed around the life of students. Daily Mass was at times you could make it before lectures or at lunchtime. Mass was combined with lunch for £1 afterwards. Adoration and Night Prayer was followed by drinks. The student's social life was woven into a life of prayer and Sacraments and we were able to enjoy those things in good company and in a holy way, avoiding extremes of student life. Throughout my life: Priests universally being faithful to the celebration of Mass and Confessions. I have never come across a lazy priest. All of the priests I have come across have diligently celebrated Mass and Confessions as well as doing much more that we would never know. Recently: Fr Mike Schmitz Bible In A Year podcast which I accessed via the Hallow app EWTN Radio for Britain and Ireland which I can listen to instead of the secular talk radio I used to listen to all the time during the pandemic and which depressed me no end and was a temptation to despair and blaming others. Now, I listen and am uplifted and educated. The Hallow Catholic app which allows you to listen to people praying when you are on your own but want the comfort of others leading the prayers The Universalis app which allows you to access the daily Office and Mass Readings but also importantly enables hourly one-line extracts from the Office of Readings to inspire me and bring me back to thoughts of God as I get engrossed in other things throughout the day. The Formed Catholic app which is basically Netflix for Catholics. Here, I found talks about saints' lives which have genuinely inspired me to greater devotion - for example, The Life of Padre Pio by Matthew Arnold taught me about Padre Pio's five steps to holiness, - Saint John Paul the Great by Jason Evert and Mother Teresa of Calcutta: A Personal Portrait by Leo Maasburg. Marian consecration in the tradition of St Louis de Montford (I used Fr Michael Gaitley's 33 Days to Morning Glory book). This is 'the quickest and easiest way to holiness'. Everyone should hear about it! The Marians of the Immaculate Conception - a group of priests whose charism relates to Mary and the Divine Mercy - in particular, Fr Michael Gaitley MIC's books, and his best one in my opinion, 33 Days to Merciful Love, and his second best, The Second Greatest Story Ever Told, and the podcast of Fr Joe Roesch MIC which allows you to listen to St Faustina's Divine Mercy in a Year. It's called: Saint Faustina's Diary In A Year. The Catholic Shrine of Walsingham - a yearly pilgrimage there with my family since age 14. The Poco a Poco podcast by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal - young priests chatting to each other effortlessly weaving in conversation about a life of faith whilst being fun and normal. Our parish

priest, Fr Lijo Jose, introducing Adoration for an hour before weekday Mass, with the Morning Prayer being recited and Benediction at the end. Making Confession easy by it being easily available weekly and sometimes, e.g. during Lent, daily. Padre Pio's Five Steps to Holiness intended for all people, not just religious or priests:- Weekly Confession (a room becomes dusty even after just a week - so do our lives); Daily Communion; Twice daily meditation prayer; Daily Examination of Conscience; Daily Scripture Reading. The Divine Mercy devotion: Jesus' message of Divine Mercy is for now and it is wonderful that we celebrate this more and more in the Church. Fatima: The First Saturdays devotion and daily Rosary. It is wonderful that some parishes make this possible and known about. The Northampton Diocese disability Mass organised by Fr Kevin and Sean Ballantyne. All the parish churches that are open during the day. E.g., after going to Mass in the morning when I am out and about, I will often feel the need to visit the Blessed Sacrament. I can't always do that when I come across a church that is locked, and I do not like to interrupt a priest's day by asking him to unlock it. God bless all those people who have managed to find a way to make our churches open during the day! Again, our priests! They dedicate their lives to follow God's call to serve us, and thanks to them, we can attend Mass and be present at the Sacrifice of Calvary, the Last Supper and the Resurrection. Through their actions, God makes himself present to us in the Eucharist, and through their actions, God makes himself present to us in the forgiveness of our sins. I can meet Jesus because of our priests. Thank God for these priests and God bless them. The Catholic Church being the beacon that shines out as faithful to God's revelation throughout salvation history, even when unpopular, for example: protecting the lives of unborn children, the definition of marriage, teachings on chastity, the priesthood as Christ instituted it. The fact that, if anyone wants to find out WHY the Church teaches what it does (especially on the subjects we might find painful), they CAN find it out and in having it explained to them for example via Church documents such as St John Paul II's 1994 Apostolic Letter on reserving priesthood to men alone (https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html), people can appreciate why the Church teaches this. The way in which many of the doctrines that people may find hard to swallow are in fact lovingly and gently explained. We are not simply told 'you must believe this' but we are told why these things must be the case. This is possible, if we are able to research and read Church documents, or if we are lucky enough to have them explained to us by people we know throughout our life. This also applies to some rules which may otherwise appear hurtful, but we can understand are for our own good - e.g. circumstances when people are unable to receive Holy Communion, or where a blessing cannot be given to a legal marriage. Where we are willing to listen to the full explanation for these teachings, a lot of hurt can be avoided, and we learn what we can do to remain faithful to God, sometimes even when the vocation might be very difficult indeed, keeping in mind the loving God who asks great things of us, but all these things will seem little when we see what he has done and does and will do for us.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:

My dreams for the Church... If any of us has a disagreement or disappointment about the teaching of the Catholic Church, my dream is that we will remember that the Church is founded by Christ, the Church is Christ's Body and his Bride, the Gates of Hell will not prevail against it, it is not for us to appoint ourselves as Pope, and if we were to turn from the Church, 'to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life'. We are always being welcomed by God with open arms. My dream is that we will turn to Christ and his Church for the answers, not turn away from him. If we do not understand why the Church teaches something, my dream is that we will ask and ask until we understand as best we can. My dream is that we will understand the difference between things which the Church can amend and things which the Church cannot change and that we will be faithful and obedient and full of love, taking the saints as our models. My dream is that all will hear and

respond to the call of God's mercy, asking for God's mercy, being merciful to others, and trusting completely in God's mercy. That God will grant light to all of us sinners, and that we may come to believe and realise St Faustina's words are true: that although sin is an abyss of wickedness and ingratitude, the price paid for us can never be equalled. Therefore, let every soul trust in the Passion of the Lord, and place its hope in His mercy. God will not deny His mercy to anyone. Heaven and earth may change, but God's mercy will never be exhausted. (St Faustina's Diary 72).

#5

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

• To know how good God is so I may realise how humble I should be yet know that He loves me even though I am a sinner and may always be • To know that God gave his only Son to suffer and die for the forgiveness of my sins • That I must keep trying knowing that I will never be perfect and that God does not need me to be perfect • To keep practicing forgiveness even though I may keep failing • To put others first even to be servant-like • To know that all will be well in God's hands so to practice trusting Him constantly • To regularly be silent so to be able to hear His communication to me

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Individuals at St Bernadine made me and my parents very welcome when we first joined them from a different parish. Another time when I feinted during a service, I was taken good care of by people there.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

My wife, who is from a C of E up-bringing did not get a good feeling when we were seeking dispensation from a priest to get married in my wife's church. From that point onwards she was very reluctant to come with me to that Catholic church I attended every week.

What are your dreams for the church?:

. I dream that for people open to practicing a faith to be attracted to our Christian faith because of what they experience with us as individuals and in celebration of Mass. . I dream of having a no-jargon, and a every-persons vocabulary liturgy and any other service. . I dream that of all the things that may put people off the format of our services, the words used should not be one of them. Please consider changes, however difficult, such as no Latin anywhere including hymns, difficult to follow prayers, etc. and no morbid, down-beat hymns except at the Passion or other times that require the depiction of sadness. . I dream of Praising God with others all through the mass, not just when it doesn't lose me because of historic phrasing and a very somber mood. Please use only plain and up-to-date language. Do we not want to keep the children in church after they are not forced to attend by their parents? Then do we not want to attract young people from outside our church? These young people may have faith in them but they will not be attracted to our church that makes no attempt to speak their language. Also – please encourage all priests (or a trusted youth worker), if there are children in the congregation – to address the children, even briefly, to allow them to feel/know that they are valued in the church. . I dream of the whole hearted acceptance of women priests in our church. Is this really a difficult change? Would our Lord really object to this? Would it be a real insult to Him or even the Apostles? . The best services I've attended are the ones that have been with plain speaking words, upbeat hymns (with no Latin), a simple, inspiring Homily by a humorous priest and friendly people around. . I was born and raised a Catholic and have regularly attended Mass but we could learn a lot by observing and copying elements of other denominations without losing all the essential elements from our own denomination. Is it now, not more important than ever to join with our brothers and sisters by Praising as similarly as we can to each other? I can tell you that I am not a great Christian or Catholic and I may not have said anything new or unique above and I apologise if I come across as very critical or blunt but my intension instead is to come across as passionate to see Christianity not just sustain and even just grow but to be rejuvenated and, with all the modernising changes (none that would dis-please our Lord) even explode into a new joyous era. Thank you for reading this and your time and effort in your contribution to this Synod process.

#6

Process Used:
Reflection on how the church has supported my family when I was growing up and my parents got divorced in the 1980's and then to how my own children now young adults in their 20's, stopped attending mass as early teens and how we can make the church more relevant to young people. On a global level the challenges of continuing as a Catholic in the wake of scandals, child abuse and financial and that they keep coming, which then leads to disillusion that process are not in place to protect the vulnerable and rebuild the reputation of the Church

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
For me it is a faith, which comes as part duty, habit and my belief/ faith. I am not evangelical, as this is not in my nature but the church and its actions often don't make me proud and so it's difficult to promote being a Catholic

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Catechism at my parish as my children were not in Catholic school

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Divorcees, the support they receive depends on the priest, which is wrong, no support for the children in such circumstances. Not universally welcoming LGBQT+ and other people on the margins of society. It appears that each parish priest can run the parish as they're see fit and as someone who has lived in many places this highlights the good and the bad approaches; from cliques to support for divorcees, to being controlling and not open to suggestions and dismantling church groups and community. The church needs to review the priesthood and not just when it suits them, in the time of admitting Anglican priest and families into the Church. More non clerical roles, to support the priest, more roles for women. Mass needs to reach young people and the homilies need to be relevant to real life.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Be more transparent, take accountability for wrong doing and out processes in place to ensure no reoccurrence To reach young people and be relevant to the world we are all living in To be truly loving, welcome and supportive

#7

Process Used:
1) I read the various Synod local, diocesan and Vatican literature: Parish Newsletters / the Vatican Handbook / the Diocesan Handbook / the Participation Sheet / the Social Media Toolkit. I also attended some Diocesan webinars. 2) I have sent out the Diocesan Handbook, the Vatican Handbook, the Participation Sheet and the suggested Questions to 2 groups that I invited to a Synod Meeting - the parish Laudato Si Group and my wider family. Neither meetings have yet taken place.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I feel that I am following Christ. I feel that I am following the Church He established. There is nowhere else that can bring me closer to Jesus. The Catholic Church is a source of much Grace. And it is my duty to point out where she could do better, rather than to leave the Church.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
There are 4 main areas which I believe the Church would greatly benefit from embracing. 1) Bring the animal kingdom into the Mass Liturgy, Bidding Prayers and Sermons. God's Covenants were with all creatures. God loves all creatures. Their suffering and their lives matter. We never hear about them at Mass, which means that grass roots Catholics don't hear about them. This leaves a black hole in our moral conciousness. We only hear about our duty to our own species. We have a duty to all creatures and to their habitats. 2) Have an animal/green group in every parish. The natural environment needs all of us to act. My dream for the Church is for green/Laudato Si/ St. Francis groups in parishes all around the world, as common as St. Vincent de Paul groups and Legion of Mary groups. 3) Every parish should have an environment policy, at least as a reference tool for parish activities, if not as a ratified parish document. 4) Parish and diocesan newsletters and websites should encourage contributions from readers/subscribers, from both individuals and from groups. This would cause people to feel much more a part of the Church, and it would mean learning and ideas coming from grass roots to leaders, not just from top to bottom.

#8

Process Used:

This is an individual submission from someone in the Parish

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
Today there is a crying need in Europe to address, at its source, the drift away from the Faith, especially among the young. In the past, Congregations/Societies were founded throughout Europe with a special call to evangelize developing countries, and were largely very successful. Today, there is an urgent need for the Congregation for Evangelization to set up a Congregation/Society – with a male and female branch – with a special charism for re-evangelizing Europe. Otherwise, Europe will soon become a pagan land. For such a venture to succeed, formation is of crucial importance. Formators need to be people of deep prayer and religious conviction. They need to be mature and relatively young, have good practical intelligence and a proven record of relating well with young people. They need, especially, to be imbued with the spirit of Vatican II and the vision of Pope Francis. Candidates need to be vetted and chosen by a team that is expert and experienced. As the Congregation/ Society matures, it may think of setting up a Branch in each European country

#9

Process Used:
This was prompted by the Synod document produced by St Theresa's, Princes Risborough. We were very unhappy with the document which to us does not represent the Parish as we have found it. We have recently moved to Risborough and found it to be exceptionally welcoming and friendly and we have found the Parish Priest to be both kind and caring. The document does not seem to reflect this at all and we feel we need to give a point of view which is more positive and would accord with what we personally have found.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being a Catholic is an integral part of our lives and gives a framework for the way in which we live.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
We have found that in difficult times in life the Church has always been a source of comfort and support. On a local level, this is evident by the number of groups which make up the Parish family to encourage us all to work together.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
We are all aware of the scandals which occurred in the past, but hopefully these are being addressed in a more positive way than previously.

What are your dreams for the church?:
The Church needs to more flexible in it's approach to including married priests and perhaps women priests or deacons.

#10

Process Used:
I have prayed and contemplated at length about how to respond. This is one of the most important processes that I may ever be involved in to ensure that the direction of the church that I love and am an active part of continues to do the work of God.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being a Catholic is belonging to a very broad church. The Catholic church consists of members who are ultra traditionalist/conservative right through to those that are modernisers and evangelical. And it manages to keep all of these within one church. Being a Catholic to me is very much linked to Faith of our Fathers the link to all of those that have gone before me in the sign of faith. It is the very centre of who I am, what my moral values are based around, it influences the way I live my life, it gives me a purpose and gives me the understanding of eternal life in Heaven. It is about the message of eternal life. It is also being part of the universal church with the Pope being the head of the Church on Earth.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Mass is the same whatever the Parish/Country/Language which means that you can attend Mass wherever you are. When the Church communicates properly and takes moral stances when it is appropriate. The way in which the Church facilitates missionaries and Parishes in the most difficult and deprived circumstances. CAFOD, SVP.... which demonstrates the Church in action.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The Church has not always communicated as well as it should have done on a range of different issues. The acceptance that all humans can commit sin and that some sins have consequences beyond those that can be forgiven within the confessional. Being open and honest - diocese having a project to raise money as a one off to get things sorted and then needing to ask for money again a few years later. How money is spent at diocese level and the centralised way contracts for, for example repairs to buildings, are dictated to parishes without any option for change. Catholic Schools no longer having daily prayers, having to opt in to attending Mass, Schools not having leading a Catholic life at the centre of everything they do. And the lack of a system to encourage and facilitate teachers who are Catholic to teach at a Catholic School and to enable them to become leaders to ensure that the leadership of Catholic Schools are practising Catholics. The lack of work to ensure that the Youth that are Catholic continue with the Faith. I will never forget a visiting Priest asking the congregation at Mass Where are all the young people? Are you all celibate? He has a point, I was probably the youngest there and I was in my late 30s! The understanding of the difficulties of those Catholics that are married to those that are not Catholic. This means that there is an imbalance in commitment as Catholics are unable to remarry after divorce. Which means that the Catholic is more likely to accept things within a marriage that the other half of that marriage would not accept. The lack of focus on Prayer.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A Church that is open and welcome. That understands that it is broad and there may be areas that you may not like but that you accept because it is part of your Faith. A Church that does not change quickly and does not listen to the loudest group but understands that the Church is based in tradition and to move away from the Faith and traditions of those that have gone before us would be a move that could split the Church. (the introduction of females into the ministries of the Church of England is not something that should be repeated. If you can not take all with you then it is not the right move). A reinvigoration of the positives of Vocations. This should not include the changing of the Priesthood into allowing married/female Priests this would increase the likelihood of splitting

the Catholic Church. When was the last time that the Priesthood... was really explained to Catholics? A Church that engages with young people to give them the message of eternal life. St Teresa of the Child Jesus, Princes Risborough

#11

Process Used:
A lot of thought and prayer

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I am a convert (1969 aged 21) from a practicing C of E family. My faith is based of a belief in the real presence of Jesus in the consecrated host and my relationship with God. I have never doubted this is my path in life. I think everyone I mix with knows I am a Catholic.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
There not being women priests Our priests being celibate. They are an example of how we are called to live if we are not married. Streaming the Mass during the pandemic. I have had to shield and don't drive.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The changes of just a few words in the Mass and the creed. The church being closed. We have not passed on to our children the habit of calling into our churches for a few minutes, or longer when we passed by or used the church car park. Benediction and rosary. Sometimes said in the day so only attended by those who are retired. Another tradition not passed on to our children Sunday evening Mass for the teenagers who are out Saturday night and either in bed or playing sport on Sunday morning. Perhaps an evening Mass for those who work

What are your dreams for the church?:
For every family/individual to be asked to be included in the work and the decisions that are needed for the running of the parish. For the Church to be welcoming and open to others, believer and non believer. To live more simply, so there is more for those less fortunate than we are. For us all to share the love God has for each of us. And hope that the Holy Fathers dream is realized.

#12

Process Used:

Discussed the questions at prayer group and prayed about it.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being a Catholic means that I have a constant awareness of Jesus in my life and I am able to come closer as well as having a deeper relationship with him through the Sacrements especially the Mass.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The church is welcoming to all. It is serving the community by raising funds and supporting the local homeless charity NOAH.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
At my father's funeral the priest upset the family - some members deeply - by stopping my brother during the Eulogy saying there wasn't enough time for all that, even though the Eulogy that my brother prepared was only 2 to 3 minutes long. This has meant that my three siblings have left the Catholic church. One brother is now part of the Anglican Church but my other brother and sister are either non practicing or hostile to the church.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That we can somehow be able to know the names of the people that we see every week and have some small groups of parishioners in the parish that can meet together and support each other. We need to be more sociable as well as prayerful. St Joseph The Worker Luton

#13

Process Used:

individual thoughts - looked at all on this website

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Baptised as a baby but not brought up practising, I sought out knowledge to understand and strengthen my faith. This mainly came from my choice to go to a Catholic secondary school run by nuns. I amproud to know Catholicism is directly handed down from Jesus, through Peter and the Popes (- but sad and a little disillusioned to learn about the history of some Popes and some Church practices). I value belonging to Jesus and receiving the sacraments.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The worldwide family and belonging feeling - when going to different parishes I am always made very welcome . The priest making time at end of Mass to be available to say Hello/goodbye/how are you to each person who attended Mass and wishes to speak Giving Mass sheets and books out so everyone can follow the Mass and understand what happening. The charitable work done in so many ways, I had not realised how many special groups there are set up within parishes as well as likes of Cafod and incredible works of nuns and monks The retreats available for learning and quiet reflection in our busy world

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Shameful handling of Abuse and other misdemeanours leading to some bad reputation ,mistrust. While understandably respecting and needing to re-adjust the sinners, the Church failed it's people as has not respected or protected either in hindsight or for future , their vulnerable parishioners. Many small but significant happenings in my Parish have caused me to be very sad and have to dig deeper to find resilience and a way of accepting that the happenings are due to the way in which 'the boss' (our Priest) think it best to be done - albeit a great many of the congregation are not happy. It is also a fact that when people (Priests) are overworked due to shortages and also may not have (at that time in their lives) the empathy and understanding from life's experiences so they have a completely different agenda/focus of, then this has caused me to think less of them than I should. I constantly remind myself they have given their life to this calling - but in my heart I still have problems with reconciling some actions with what I understand and believe to be good practise and feel some are letting down the whole. Not listening to their congregation is a big downfall.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Priests should be able to marry - this might help the shortage. Women should have responsible and high roles - culture has changed in modern times More dialogue - so partnership/fellowship are upheld and everyone feels valued - everyone has a tale to tell and some grain of wisdom to impart as this synod shows The courage to be Transparent : own mistakes and show everyone, from the Parish to the World stage that things are being addressed and sorted - now! To inspire it's people and help us Laity to gather in more

#14

Process Used:

Time spent reading, trying to understand what is expected of me. I have brought this to time spent in prayer especially before the Blessed Sacrament.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
As I grow older and have more time available, there is nothing more precious than to spend time with Our Lord. For some fifty years He has been a great feature in my life; a constant source of support, be it through daily Mass when possible, the Sacraments, Retreats and Pilgrimages. I am frequently aware of His guidance and presence. I feel that being a Catholic has enabled me to grow in faith and as a person.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Celebration - is definitely a great strength. I look back fondly at all the occasions I have attended which have given me great joy and appreciation of what it is to be part of a Catholic community. I guess my experience of Lourdes is a prime example. Education - many of our schools have wonderful reputations and are a gift to not just Catholics, but the local community as well.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
It saddens me greatly how much we have lost because of a shortage of priests and sisters. The church has to move with the times, so many good and gifted priests have been lost because of their human frailty and yet it is in that frailty that we should be able to support them. Falling in love is only natural, especially once the love of Our Lord is fully experienced! I am also conscious that there is generally not enough structure in place to support our priests. Their role should not be managerial but pastoral. With this in mind, every parish should have at least some office support, especially with ever changing technology. There should also be some provision for their day-to-day well-being, especially as many of our priests are no longer young. There should also be a structure in place when a presbytery changes hands. Whilst some support may come from the parish this should not be a given, especially with our ageing congregations.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That we become more inclusive, less judgmental. Pope Francis is such a wonderful example to us all of how we should conduct ourselves and yet despite all his efforts the Vatican is still dominated by men whose desire is to wield power, seemingly totally lacking in humility. Celibacy is a wonderful gift but we have to recognise that marriage should not exclude, but be regarded as bringing extra gifts for the benefit of all. We have to ordain priests who are married and we must also consider ordaining women as well. We do have talents and skills which are needed if the church is to thrive. I think the latter is especially important for encouraging young people!

#15

Process Used:

Prayerful reflection and discussion.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Identity as a child of God in the family of God. Access to the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. True teaching re the sanctity of life among other issues. Belonging to the communion of saints in the Body of Christ. Responsibility to witness to the Gospel and serve Christ in others. A personal relationship with Jesus as Saviour and God. The gift of Mary's Motherhood. Having a perspective on the importance of the life to come not just this one.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
This opportunity to make an individual, anonymous submission. Youth work and adult formation that supports young people in their personal relationship with Christ and in defending the faith and living according to it. Catholic Voices. Alpha. CaFE courses. Life in the Spirit courses. Interdenominational ministries. Apologetics courses. Bible courses e.g. Bible timeline. Our wonderful priests and bishops who attract people to the faith.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I did not see my views represented in the feedback from the parish synod, which I know are shared by some, hence this submission. Some felt unsafe to say everything they felt. We need training to understand and defend the faith in a loving way. At one time we were asked to give money to the diocese then it was spent on an organ in another parish. This does not encourage tithing via the church/diocese as we had no say– we would have rather invested in evangelisation. Other denominations e.g. evangelicals can teach us so much about outreach and welcome and seem to employ more people to make this happen well. We have parishoners who consult mediums, practice reiki etc, and are involved in various other eastern/new age spiritualities. Formation about the dangers of this needs to also reach those who only come on Sundays. There's a lack of information about and access to support for living according to Catholic teaching that would keep people safe in body and soul. E.g. There are organisations that support natural family planning, and one that supports LGBT+ people who wish to live within church teaching (Courage) but it is not these that I see promoted. Hence the difficulty in and drift away from living by church teaching.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Young people and adults will be given access to formation opportunities equipping them to answer questions in a loving manner about our faith using evangelistic, catechetical and apologetics resources such as Catholic Voices, crediblecatholic.com, Alpha, teaching on Natural Family Planning and chastity education to protect in body and soul. There could be a provision to celebrate and bless the commitment of a celibate same-sex couple to live together as family and as examples of heroic virtue in their celibacy. Promotion of Courage. The term matrimony could be used rather than marriage to refer to the sacrament connected to the willingness to be open to procreation and parenting of children, to help clarify its distinctiveness from civil marriage. An encouragement for ministries such as Unbound (Heart of the Father) which will help with the growing mental health issues. An increase in teaching among priests and faithful of the spiritual hazards of the occult and Eastern/new age spiritualities. More encouragement of charismatic renewal to fill the spiritual gap which people are seeking to fill in non-Christian spiritual practices and more encouragement of eucharistic adoration. Praying together with the fervour and faith that we can see in Christians of other congregations, to inform and empower outreach and service.

#16

Process Used:

I've simply spent some weeks thinking about what to say. My parish organised meetings but I find it difficult to speak out in a group and thought this method would work better for me.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
A sense of belonging, to the church and to God and to a worldwide family, and friendship and association with people with whom one shares core beliefs and outlook on life. A connection with generations past, a heritage.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
I was lapsed for over 20 years but was welcomed back to the church like I'd only been away a few weeks, like I had continued, despite my absence, to be a part of the church. Staying open during the lockdown period, when legally able to, and the ability to participate in Mass said online from within church. Very comforting and very important. Also a phone call from my parish priest, Fr Lijo, during this time. The kindness and compassion of the parish priests in the 7 years or so since I have been back at church. I feel valued and supported.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I wasn't able to attend a catholic primary school (a lack of places) and apart from formal preparation for first Communion and Confirmation I feel that my Catholic education is very poor. It's a shame there couldn't have been more provided for children outside the catholic school system and I feel this led in part to my absence from the church for so many years.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That whilst being welcoming and showing kindness and compassion to all that we will not adapt ourselves to suit a fast changing society but will stand firm in our beliefs and customs.

#17

Process Used:

First and foremost, I prayed. I have also read the documents provided by the Diocese of Northampton, some of the documents provided by the Vatican, articles in the catholic press, particularly in The Tablet magazine and various mainstream websites, but not social media. I have also read books about the history of the Church and the papacy, as well as looking-up historical documents such as the report on the National Pastoral conference in Liverpool in 1980. However, I must reiterate that I have prayed and asked for God's guidance in framing my responses to these questions.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Firstly, I need to stress that I think of myself as a christian who worships in the catholic way. I believe that Catholicism contains some truths that have been lost, or buried, in other Christian communions. One example is that I am sure that when I partake of the Eucharist, I am willing entering into the continuing life of Jesus Christ (in a way that is beyond my understanding), but that provides me with the sustenance I need to continue to be one of his representatives in the world. I think the catholic church is correct when it say the eucharist is actually the body and blood of Christ; it is not just a memorial celebration of the last supper. I also like the seasonality of the liturgy and feel that being part of a global church makes me more aware of others less fortunate than myself. Finally, I must add that I have actively chosen to remain a catholic even though I have witnessed, during in my lifetime in the church, some truly appalling behaviour by people who claim to be catholic followers of Jesus; this has occurred at all levels - in parishes, in my diocese and in the worldwide church. I have stayed simply because I can think of no other Christian community that is any better (and some do appear to be worse).

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
I was a child when the Second Vatican council happened, but even as a child I knew something momentous was happening; I truly believe that was the work of the Holy Spirit. I also believe that the Holy Spirit was at work in Liverpool in 1980 during the National Pastoral congress. In more general terms, I think the Catholic Church is correct to stand up for human dignity and rights, including those not yet born or at the end of life. I has at times, been good counter-cultural witness, willing to stand up and be counted.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Sadly, at all levels within the church, these experiences far outnumber the ones where the Catholic Church does well. On a global level there is the world-wide phenomenon of paedophilia by catholic priests; the use of nuns as sex-slaves; the abuse of money for example, the scandals surrounding the Vatican bank; the arrogance that a (supposedly) celibate, male clergy knows better than married couples how to conduct their sex-lives; the utterly un-Christlike description of homosexuality as intrinsically disordered; the unforgivable statement by a Pope that the laity must not to even think about having women priests (blind, unthinking obedience is obviously not the preserve of the Nazi party) - the list is almost endless and these are just things that have happened in my lifetime. If one looks at the history of the Church, particularly the papacy (who like to constantly remind us that they are actually St Peter, here and now) there is simony, forging documents and presenting them as articles of faith, hypocrisy, greed, licentiousness - where was Jesus in all this? Then at the local level, we have priests who act as if they alone are the parish; I worshipped at Guardian Angels in Aylesbury where our parish priest nearly brought about the closure of the parish because he didn't tell us what he discussed with the Bishop and Dean. He kept us completely in the dark (no meetings or consultations with the laity whatsoever) until we were informed the parish was to close. When we

had a meeting to discuss the closure, with the Dean present, and to ask why this had happened without our knowledge, our parish priest (the one who is supposed to care for us) shouted at us that we deserved the closure because we didn't attend his prayer meetings or bible studies, and when one Polish parishioner said she knew of a Polish priest who would gladly say mass for us, he said that could not happen because - these are his very words - it would not be the same. Just what kind of arrogance does it take for a priest to believe that he, and he alone, is the parish and that without him it may as well go to pot? To add insult to injury, we then had to listen to our Bishop saying what a spiritual man this priest is, whilst carefully avoiding any reference to his total lack of consideration of the needs of his parishioners - do the laity really seem that stupid and blind to the clergy? Finally, I have not even touched on issues of the imposition of a revised English liturgy written by non-English speakers (who used the word consubstantial until it appeared in the creed?), a going-back-to outmoded phrases in the mass (which we must use because every else does - hints here of the Nazi I was only obeying orders - it wasn't right then and it isn't right now) and the recent, retrograde steps in the use of inclusive language (for the sake of accuracy, we are told), despite the fact that the Vatican website uses brothers and sisters, in England and Wales we are only brothers. Our leaders, cardinals and bishops, have been unfailing hopeless in defending our language, our bond to other Christian communions in the UK forged when we originally changed to an English liturgy, and above in defending the laity who they should be serving, but who they prefer to tell what to do because they alone (the clergy) have the power of discernment. Would that they had discerned the presence of paedophiles in their midst, to name but one example!

What are your dreams for the church?:
I dream of a Church where the priests and laity are equal partners in running it; in a Church where the hierarchy no longer exists, but where all - men and women - are recognised as being Chosen and with equal, but different responsibilities within it. I fully acknowledge that priests are the spiritual experts but that does not make them better, or closer to God, than lay people - just like medics are health experts, but no better or worse, than their patients. I would like to see a Church that doesn't think sex is inherently sinful, that admits that married people have a valuable contribution to make towards policy, that humbly accepts that it has things to learn about reproductive technology and that bases any conclusions it comes to on scientific facts rather than dogma (remember condoms and HIV!). I dream of a church that is open to new ideas, or even old ones - priests were once allowed to be married and why not have woman in the role? I would like to see a church that is merciful, as Jesus was: one where people are not turned away because they had a child before they were married, and above all one that does not refuse burial to a loved-one because they didn't regularly attend mass. Above all, I would like to see a Church that knows how to say sorry for what it has done wrong; that doesn't try to hide mistakes but openly acknowledges them and promises to learn from them; a Church that does not pretend to have all the answers, but acknowledges that it too is working its way towards God's kingdom using all the talents of everyone within it; clergy and laity, together.

#18

Process Used:

This response is a personal one based on reflection and prayer

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
One one level it is a clear part of my identity, and my families identity. On another level it is belonging to a community who share and support each other in their faith journey. Most importantly it gives me the strength to lead a better life, and one where i consider my service to others, and not just my own needs.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Church does so much well, but the Churches direct and indirect impact in charitable activities is its purest expression of love to the world. When you see church members need to support others, both inside and outside our church you know that you are in the presence of something special.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Our Churches teaching on homosexuality is wrong, it seems at odds with Christs mission, and most painfully it has pushed people away from our catholic community. Within my own wider family I have two members who have struggled, and eventually given up, trying to reconcile their nature with our teaching.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I would like to see a more inclusive Church, one that is more focused on welcoming everyone, and one with leadership that is more reflective of our community. I dream of a Church where women have equal status to men, and where every parish mission is inclusion and charity. I dream of a world that see our Church through its charity.
St Mary's, Dunstable

#18

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

A calling to be close to God, to praise Him, to practise my faith, to strive to live by the example of Jesus Christ and some of the examples of some of the saints and prophets. To strive to improve my knowledge and to live out the virtues. Participating in Mass and praying in Church are most important to me, followed by frequent prayer, reading scriptures, and learning to live out my being Catholic to help my neighbour and forming a community. Most important is spirituality of the Mass and helping me come closer to God.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

My parish/s: charity work, adult groups (in some parishes, some - not). Wider Church/Vatican: Again - helping others through its charitable work.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

My parish/s: Diminishing community/social togetherness. Not able to get ethnic groups from other countries involved. In fact, not reaching out to get different people involved (regardless of race, sex, age) and instead it targets what appear to be 'favourites'. Little involvement of children! Church has done very little to assist with both adult's and children's knowledge and understanding of their faith and to help them live out their faith. It needs Sunday school for both adults and children every Sunday/Saturday! There is no Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) offered anywhere in the centre of the diocese. Wider Church/Vatican: Scrapping TLM and trying to belittle its importance. Moving away from the spirituality and reverence of the Mass towards a noisy Church too focused on the community as opposed to Jesus Christ and God being the centre of the Mass for each individual, meaning its losing its most important elements of the Mass. Church is giving in to secular/liberal voices and thinks it needs to change to benefit their demands. This seems to be the focus of vatican 2 and beyond. Church is no longer acting in unison and is refusing to listen to traditional voices or is not engaging in proper dialogue. Church is choosing to ignore certain evils and injustices happening around the world, including those being persecuted for choosing to decline the covid jabs and whom are having their livelihoods at grave risk (especially when they have genuine moral and religious reasons that would normally be respected) - it is silent over such important issues, choosing instead to focus on less important issues such as global warming. It has not done well about the covid jabs - encouraging abortion-tainted jabs when their is no grave reason that justifies them and for which there is no clear evidence that these substances are safe. It's a scandal! Also, many Churches were stopping some people from attending Church - demanding that they adhere to covid safety measures or else being penalised.

What are your dreams for the church?:

I dream that children could master knowledge and develop strong faith and moral values, and for them to practise their faith daily and frequently. I dream that adults and parents also master their knowledge and develop strong faith that they can help pass onto children and others. This is what is lacking in the Church. If the Church wants to reach out to others to bring in more parishioners then it needs people to be able to reach out to others. It needs people to embrace their religion better by practising it better and more frequently - both on a personal level and as a community. It needs between 1-1.5hrs of Sunday school for parents &/or children at least every 2 weeks. It needs a separate apologetics group every 2 weeks for 1.5hrs for adults only. t needs to utilise its new hall to good use and also run social groups for children and adults to form a closer nit community. Cathedral hub should begin to offer traditional latin Mass every 2 or 4 weeks. Cathedral needs to run groups like Legion of Mary so it ensures people are more active with their faith and reach out to community better.

#19

Process Used:

These Synod responses include my responses but also the points made to me by other Catholics who are mainly not going to church due to health reasons or because they never go to church and who have not been asked to participate in the Synod. They are probably not even aware it is going on. I then discussed them with family members who are heavily involved at their parish level and have involvement with several other parishes as one of them used to run the house of several priests.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be looking towards and open to others, to all in the spirit of Christ.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Masses, study groups, involvement with charities or the community to deal with poverty, etc...

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
'-Older people telling me they feel abandoned as they no longer see a priest or get a phone call when they cannot go to church anymore. Priests are very busy but people want to see them and communicate with them directly even if it is 10 min a year. -Not being contacted at all by any parishioners when did not go to church for a long period of time due to illness. However always contacted when fundraising or events. -Witness of behaviours towards others from people well known in the church which are not Christian behaviours at all and makes you question if you want to be part of the church.'

What are your dreams for the church?:
Fraternity and social friendship as described by Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti and before him St Francis. More modern and open outlook to the current issues facing young people and society in general.

#20

Process Used:

Meditation on scripture, prayer, gracious listening and gracious speaking.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
i) Happy to be a Catholic and to belong to the one true faith which is rich and beautiful; an enduring faith founded by Jesus and comes down to us in the fullness of the Truth through Apostolic Tradition, Sacred Scripture, the Church Fathers, and the Magisterium. ii) Hurt and betrayed by fallen clergy in a broken world. The scandals and the leaders' response and cover-ups have wounded the Church, the Body of Christ on earth, and damaging the reputation of the Church and all Catholics. iii) Loneliness, as family, friends and increasing numbers of youth lapse or leave the faith.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
i) When the Church acknowledges, accepts, and celebrates our difference to other Christian denominations. Catholics are meant to stand out and not be like the protestant Christian denominations. When we stand out in our difference as beacons, to bring back our Christian brothers in other denominations to Christ present in the Tabernacle. ii) Liturgy and the Latin Mass which emphasizes Worship, Adoration and Reverence to Christ present in the Tabernacle. The Latin Mass provides a distinct identity for young Catholics and their numbers are increasing at the Latin Mass. iii) Rich history in establishing the foundations of Western Society from Law and Justice, Education (all the old and ancient Universities were established by the Catholic Church) Health, and hospitality. iv) Magisterium Authority which provides unity and coherence. The Universality and Authority of the Church provides reassurance of stability and continuity in the Catholic Church in an ever changing world and social order. Other Christian denominations lack such authority, so when they have a disagreement, the church breaks up into different factions resulting in over 30, 000 Christian denominations worldwide. There is only ONE Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. v) Social justice and out reach groups.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
i) Poor catechesis which has led to a loss of the transcendental at Mass, and Adoration and reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, decline in devotion to Our Lady and the Saints, poor understanding in the importance of and an increasing decline in receiving the Sacraments. ii) Two thirds of Catholics receiving Holy Communion do not believe in the Real Presence. iii) The celebration of the Mass not recognized as worship but is now seen as an optional form of entertainment. iv) Cafeteria Catholicism where Catholics choose the bits of Catholicism they like and reject the parts of the faith they do not like or with which they disagree. v) Diminishing dignity, role, and position of the Priest. i) The Priest facing the congregation, gives a theatrical impression of the Mass, especially for the young, and so contributing to the Mass being viewed as entertainment, and the Priest as performing a stage role. vi) Increasingly churches no longer seen as parish families and communities but centres to go for Mass or sacramental preparation. vii) The set age of 7 /8 years for preparing children for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Sacramental Preparation and receiving the sacraments seen by parents as another activity they need to tick off their list like swimming badges or dance grades. Children should be invited by the clergy and catechists to prepare for the sacraments when they and their family have demonstrated their readiness for formal sacramental preparation. Commitment to the weekly Mass and taking part in and supporting parish life are indicators of such readiness.

What are your dreams for the church?:
i) Unity, understanding and acceptance where parishes can offer both the Novus Ordo Mass and the

Latin Mass without the them and us mindset, suspicions, and distrust; and where the Latin Mass is recognized as a legitimate part of the Universal Church and not an alien off shoot. Where the true beauty in both forms of Mass worship is recognized and valued; and where we remember that in both forms of the Mass, our focus and sole objective should be the adoration and worship of Christ truly present in the Blessed Sacrament and in every Tabernacle. ii) Novus Ordo Mass where the Priest faces East for the consecration because of anamnesis – the point in the Mass when we are at Calvary at the foot of the Cross, as Christ pays the price for our redemption. Jesus died with his back to the Temple facing West. The congregation face East and Christ on the Cross; and so, should the Priest face Christ, as he intercedes and offers the sacrifice for the people. iii) A Church where Priests are allowed to give sermons rather than homilies; the later can be restrictive whilst the former would allow for more teaching. iv) A Church which is attractive and provides a distinct identity for our young people. v) A Church which stands out and is different and CATHOLIC, and which does not try to blend in with other Christian denominations or fit in with or accommodate the passing changes of the world. vi) A Church which teaches its people, especially the young, the TRUTH, and explains the reasoning behind Catholic teaching. vii) A Church where readers for the Liturgy of the Word understand and take seriously their role in proclaiming the Scriptures and where Jesus is first encountered in the Mass. viii) A Church where in parishes everyone does a small job in the church rather than leaving the jobs to be done to the faithful few. Jobs also for children and youth. ix) A Church where parishioners can meet to pray, discuss the weekend's Mass and reading, and support each other in small home groups as modelled by the Early Christians, and as practised in other Christian denominations today.

#21

Process Used:

Thought. Experience.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It means I am of the same company as St Thomas More, St John Fisher, St Edmund Campion, and all the Catholics through the ages.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
When the Church offers the Sacrifice of the Altar in accordance with the rites handed down to us through the centuries under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. When the Church stands up in the public square to defend the teaching of Christ and the Apostles. When faithful pastors proclaim that teaching.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
When spokesmen for the Church suggest or say that what the Church has taught as objective truth over the ages is no longer true, or was never true, or show contempt for that teaching. The implication is that what today's spokesmen claim as true may in its turn be rejected by the Church of the future, and in this situation there is no point in listening to the Church. Why waste time listening to a maths teacher who on Tuesday says 2+2=4 and on Wednesday says 2+2=5?

What are your dreams for the church?:
For the Church to bring to belief in the Gospel on to those who do not currently believe in it, and to do so starting from those who live closest to us, that is, atheists, Protestants, Muslims, lapsed Catholics.

#22

Process Used:

It is our responsibility to not be silent in a situation where we have been put as a church and as a Catholic

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It is all my live. It is a blessing to be able to call myself Rome Catholic. To be part of Jesus Christ baby united in one Holy Catholic Church.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Church need to always stay and protect the true faith, true Jezus's teaching without compromising on anything. That what Church done for many years, until the modernizm took priority in Church thought. Live through tradition, teach the tradition and concentrate on saving souls

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Peaple can't be without God, we are made of his image. We start to think of ourself first befor God, putting our law befor God's and changing God's words to suits us instead of working on ourself to improve our lives how God want us to be. We stop teaching children God's roules and his moral guidance, we not leave through that rules and Goods word. I sadly can't agree with out Pope, I can't support his words which in many situations are not following what Jesus Chriist teach us.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Sacraments, sacraments.. leave through sacraments. I would love to see true belives in real God's presents in Eucharisti. When peaple are kneeling and receiving holly communion on the tongue by consecrated and only by consecrated heands. To celebrate the presence of God in this most holy sacrament with the seriousness and reverence that should be displayed.

#22

Process Used:

The process which I have been using to discern responses to Synod questions is my life and a sum of experiences during the journey through four decades since I was baptized. As a part of the Body of Christ I am obliged to know and develop knowledge by being familiar with Holy Scripture, the magisterium of the Holy church, catechism and participating in Sacraments especially penance and attendance to Holy Eucharist on a daily basis. Also an example of saints carrying the same name as mine: Catherine from Siena and Catherine from Alexandria - their wisdom, love and reverence to Lord Jesus and devotion to Holy Spirit and Our Lady are very helpful in go forth in virtues in which I am suffering distinct deficiencies. Their spiritual discipline is motivating me to follow a narrow path by the footsteps of Our Savior Jesus Christ. Using common sense, observing reality, reflections and critical thinking is also a useful process being involved to give satisfying answers. According to teachings of Thomas Aquainus' on how to maintain sanity and develop own sanctity in the last days and how to be a brave witness of Christ while facing persecutions, bearing the Cross of my life without ceasing and sharing joy and power of Resurrection.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

To be a catholic means for me a huge responsibility as a woman, mother and wife to live according to God's calling assigned in appointed time and fulfill it according to His will. Also I must and I want to put every effort on the path of salvation of my own soul, and souls of my children which God in His Wisdom gave me to raise them to take active part in the Divine plan of Salvation. To be a catholic means to me stand firm with Unchangeable Truths of Ten Commandements, stick to techings given by Our Saviour in order to mortal sin like abortion, homosexuality, wrongly understanding of freedoms, possibility of condemnation when reject God’s Mercy and defending life, it’s value and dignity from conception to natural death. My talk must be yes - yes no - no. I can not compromise with this world, którego postać przemija Being Catholic, finally means to be a light and the salt in this broken world. To gain strength from the Holy Eucharist, from Adoration from prayer with Rosary to go and win souls that are perishing. Minister humbly, first to my family and to my brothers and sisters in need and at the end of the day could say s St. Paul l I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Especially in these challenging times, It is not about hiding, it is all about serving.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

It is good that a new place was builded for parishioners and guests where there is a space to tak, share experiences, grow in spirituality, and children are catechised. I mean the new center of St. Thomas and Cafe 1850.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

Well, as we have a pope apostate, who destroys the church openly ,what can I say or ask? I will ask where the bishops and cardinals are ? Why does nobody say Non possumus. My heart is aching, but Our Lady's Immaculate Heart will triumph.

What are your dreams for the church?:

With all respect, but this question is on the level of children in year one and should not be stated in a survey in serious matters like this. Honestly I don’t understand such formulated questions. We are the church that has stuck to reality and with one goal before our eyes - salvation of souls and eternal life with Our Loving Father. It is not a good idea to daydream especially when the world is changing so fast and touches every aspect of our life and not in a good way. Rather, we should focus on work,

prayer and real problems of the church and its people i.e. what we can do to 100% of attending to the Eucharist gain a faith in the real Presence of Our Lord. Ora et labora, never opposite. Hope a vision of Saint John Bosko and prophecy saying that the Immaculate Heart of Mary will Triumph will come true very soon. Can we go back to what's important? Thank you Keeping all clergy in my prayers. God bless you.

#23

Process Used:

Whilst the questions in their precise form have only recently been framed the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to the question What is Church have been important to me for many years. Given that this is the first real attempt to involve all the people of God in such a process for over 40 years I immediately returned and re-visited the eight reports produced by the various groups at the National Pastoral Congress (NPC) back in 1980. In many ways it was envigorating to re-live the very real sense of hope that things could change and that the lay voice might be heard which the NPC evoked. In other ways it is sad and dispiriting to realise that so little of what was proposed and put forward has been adopted and how relevant so much of it still is over forty years after the event. And, of course, there is prayer and meditation on what God is saying to us through the Scriptures and conversations with like-minded people

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Perhaps the blunt, and probably shocking answer to that is Not a lot. I would suggest that a better question might have been What does it mean to you to be a Christian or, at a pinch What does it mean to you to be a Catholic Christian. It is quite simple to answer why I am a Catholic. My mother was a Catholic. (My father was a practising Anglican – my Grandfather, a Canon of Coventry Cathedral). I was brought up as a Catholic. I went to a Catholic public school. I was lucky enough at University to become involved in a very vibrant Chaplaincy, to live in what was almost a commune set up by a priest and to become involved with a large number of other people of my age and outlook in a progressive Parish in London. From there I got married moved to Bedford and came to know the ss.cc. community serving Holy Cross, who operated on the basis of collaborative ministry and who were our friends (and in many cases still are 20 years after they left Bedford!) as well as our priests. We, the laity, old and young, felt treasured, valued and important. Frankly, and adopting a biological analogy I would never have been anything other than a member of the family Christian in the genus Catholic. As a Catholic Christian it is important to me to be outward looking and to try, however poorly, to reflect the joy of knowing Christ in everyday life and interaction with others.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

1. Showing God's love for all he has created. The work of so many Church bodies in helping the less fortunate. In this I am mindful, however, of Pope Francis' warning on the first day he was elected Pope that without spiritual renewal the Church is in danger of becoming a compassionate NGO. But, like a sacrament the Church's active outreach to others is an outward sign of inward grace and as a tool for evangelisation is invaluable. As it says in the second letter of James faith without good works is dead. The work of CAFOD, Missio, Pax Christi, the SVP to name but a few makes me proud to be a Catholic Christian. 2. Pope Francis. Electing Pope Francis was certainly something which the Church did very well! He has turned the whole focus of the Church from blind obedience to the rules and regulations to asking the question in each situation which arises what would Jesus do. Despite all the opposition he seems to face he has made the Church more compassionate, more thoughtful, more humble, more connected to the world and, to an extent, more equal. 3. The scandals which have beset the Church can often mean that we (or at least Society) can overlook that the vast majority of priests are doing the best they can in very difficult circumstances. I am sure we all have experience of instances where a priest has gone out of his way to provide help and support when times have been tough. We are often very lucky in the priests that we have. We should treasure our priests, support and affirm them but that does require them to allow us to do so and not put themselves on pedastals 4. The Social Teaching of the Church is such a wonderful resource and not just for the Church but for the world. Many politicians of varying religious views and of none have commented that their own idea of service and what is right is based on the Church's Social Teaching from Rerum

Novarum in 1891 to Fratelli tutti in 2020. 5. The example of the saints and martyrs particularly the Maximillian Kolbe's, and the Oscar Romero's - those who lived out their faith and died for their belief that the purpose of the Church is to serve others and not just herself. 6. The Second Vatican Council. I will not claim as part of this process to have re-read all the documents which the Council produced but I have re-read some of them and also re-read for the nth time Peter Hebblethwaite's splendid biography of Pope John XXIII. There is so much material in the documents of Vatican II that needs to be better shouted from the rooftops, so much that can or should inspire us all.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
1. Shame, not so much because there has been clerical abuse of minors, nuns and seminarians, but at the fact that the hierarchy have, almost without exception, chosen to put the reputation of the Church above the plight of the victims. It seems to me inconceivable that Bishops and others in positions of authority in the Church who have been found to be personally responsible for such cover-ups are still in place. 2. The refusal of the Bishops to consult with or listen to the laity on important issues. By way of example I would just mention the introduction of the new translation of the Mass in 2011, the reintroduction of certain Holy Days of Obligation in 2017, the reinstatement of abstinence on Fridays again in 2011 and more recently decisions about the use (or lack of it) of inclusive language in the new lectionary. The Bishops are not the Church and should stop behaving as though they are.

What are your dreams for the church?:
1. We need a root and branch reappraisal of what it means to be Church. If Christ were to return and see the organisation that His Church has developed into would he be saying to our Church leaders the same sort of things that he said to the scribes and pharisees of his time? 2. The Church needs to set aside its rigidity, its rules, regulations and structures and approach the situation in which it finds itself with the simple question What would Jesus do? 3. The role and ministry of the laity (and in particular, women) needs to be reappraised. We all share in a common baptism and call to serve. There needs to be a far greater and on-going transparency in the way in which the Church is run and decisions are made. 4. The liturgy is vital to the life of the Church and particularly to a Church which is seeking to evangelise. A turgid and lifeless liturgy, combined with a translation that reads and sounds as though it is a product of Google Translate cannot be allowed to continue. 5. The whole process of priestly training and formation needs to be re-examined. There needs to be more emphasis on education and training within the wider educational community. It is a real concern that new priests only need a biretta to make them look and act like the priests of my pre-Vatican II childhood. Cardinals and Bishops seem happy with the clerical suit. Why not new priests? Seminarians should spend more time in the real world so as to see their vocation as being a part of the Christian community and not somehow above it. 6. Parishes are communities, whose members, in many cases, have served and worshipped in the same Parish for many years. Priests come and go and yet it is the priest who, to a very large extent, can adapt parochial outlook and practices to suit his own tastes . The powers of Parish Councils need to be enhanced. 7. It seems that many people have fallen away from the practice of the faith during the pandemic. Urgent consideration needs to be given, not only to the wider question of evangelisation but how to bring back those who have detached themselves from the Church over the past two years. 8. Young people are the future of the Church. As Father James Mallon has rightly said in Divine Renovation Confirmation has become for so many of our young people the sacrament of exit from the Church. We need a Church which continues to nurture our young people beyond the sacramental programmes and to involve them far more in our parish life so they see that they are valued.

#24

Process Used:

Three Group sessions after 3 masses

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
1. The Church reaching out to humanity 2. Global impact and doing what other churches are not doing 3. Standing up for moral values 4. Helping the poor through Cafod 5. Priests visiting the sick and also at the point of death

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
1. Discrimination - not showing the same love and concern for each other 2. The priest tackling issues from the world view 3. Not involving women 4. Catholic schools are expensive

What are your dreams for the church?:

#25

Process Used:

The rosary, the divine office and the deposit of faith handed down across the generations nourished by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the intercession of Our Lady and all the Angels and Saints

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be Catholic is to be Christian; to be part of the faith given to us from Our Lord to St Peter who was the rock upon whom Our Lord built His church. To be Catholic is to share in what Our Lord has purchased for us through his life, death and resurrection for the multitudes. For to be Catholic is to be part of the church that Our Lord founded and to be part of the faith through which Our Lord promised salvation.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The church does rational philosophy well; she is able to educate the ignorant, clothe the naked, offer shelter and food to the poor. My experience of that which is done well is the revent offering of the Holy Sacrifice by our holy priests in the form handed down from the time of the Apostles, through St Gregory the Great and St Pius V. The beauty of the artwork and the sacred majesty of Gregorian chant.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The ignorance from so many towards those of us who deeply love the church and Her history and traditions. The use of banal and secular objects, music and decorations that desacralises the liturgy and life of the church The completely uncharitable attitude from the Holy Father and the Curia towards those who wish to use pre-1969 forms of the liturgy (missal or pontifical).

What are your dreams for the church?:
A full restoration of the ways of the church before 1969. A restoration of the beautiful music, the simple, reverent and dignified manner of the religious life and the beauty and authority of the successor of St Peter.

#26

Process Used:

Personal reflection and reading of the Catholic Herald I am over 70 and have had a varied Catholic life - still practicing and hope to get better

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
As a cradle Catholic it has been there all the time supporting me in life's daily round 'Forgiveness' and 'Love' being the essential elements. The Last Supper, Communion, Mass, Breaking of Bread, call it what you will has been enacted for 2000 years and people the whole world over embraced this one act. Accepting the Gospels to be correct in principal: The birth of Christ - The Crucifixion - The Resurrection all become profound events in history. Society today is more confused - but Faith and private devotion can prove a major feature to life

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Support from some very good priests at times of personal difficulty such as, but not limited to, bereavements

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
While there is better recognition of the laity there is still a reflection that the clergy are executives, the archdeacons are senior managers and the bishop is the managing director, who pray then are we in the pews ? We should be more like the shareholders rather than the shop-floor workers. Long Sermons, particularly where the point get lost. As Ronald Knox said: A good sermon should be like a ladies dress short enough to arouse interest but long enough to cover essentials

What are your dreams for the church?:
Married Clergy should become accepted. The 1,000 year old ruling on Celibacy should be rescinded. It was only brought in to stop church wealth being lost to family inheritance. Equally female Deacons and Priests should be accepted. There is no impediment to woman being priests. Indeed there is evidence that women played a role in the life of the early church until the society of the time change its view toward women. According to St John the first person to witness to the resurrected Christ was a woman. Additional comments The Church should give full consideration to the statement by Cardinal Hollerich of Luxembourg that the Church's teaching on gay sex is 'false' and should be changed. According to the Jesuit Cardinal the traditional beliefs of the Church, rested on an unsound sociological-scientific foundation which left them open to correction; all as reported in the recent Catholic Herald.

#27

Process Used:

Thought and prayer

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I believe in the love God has for me and the fellowship of my local congregants.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
I think through the guidance of Pope Francis, we are slowly learning to take the path of acceptance rather than condemnation of those that do not meet the ideals of the church. Remember that Jesus always accepted sinners. Locally, I find our priests very approachable.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I think that the church bureaucracy can sometimes hide within its outward image rather than deal with wrongdoings.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That local services of Word and Communion can take place when full mass not practicable. Just because some powers do not feel this a suitable substitute, doesn't mean that the congregation should not benefit from hearing the word of God and coming together in Holy Communion.

#28

Process Used:

Came late to thinking about it because away from the parish at crucial times. Have read much of what has been available in written form in the Parish, but admit to being very ill prepared when the deadline arrived,

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It provides a template against which much of my life has been lived

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
My Catholic Secondary School, led by a Priest who was at ultimate pains to prepare us for our lives, social, academic and religious. This wasn't taking the best and making them the priority, but rather demanding and refining at all levels. Charitable support. Inspirational teachers.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Dogmatism, without any charitable tempering. Hypocritical stance on the part of some of some of those in office Scandal complicity to preserve the 'good name' of the Church

What are your dreams for the church?:
Arrive at a set of principals that will engage the young as without sacrificing all that has been hard earned over the centuries. To be central to the Christian Tradition, whilst still engaging with those holding differing views, and other belief systems.

#29

Process Used:

Quiet reflection led me to the parable I remember hearing as a child . Luke 6:47 - 49

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
The man who digs deep and lays the foundations of his life on rock This can be very challenging at times, living in a largely secular world, but by attending mass I am reminded and strengthened in the belief that I am part of a wider communion with a common creed.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
My children were able to attend a catholic primary school in a our parish which enabled them to grow with a positive sense of community, family and shared values which has stayed with them in their now young adult lives and given them firm foundations on which to build their own lives.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
For our church to continue to grow I would like to see our priests being able to marry and raise children so they can share and understand the joy and challenges this can bring.

#30

Process Used:

Self reflection with partner

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be part of a community that cares for anybody and everybody within the limits of one's ability, talent and time. To be a grateful but unworthy member of Christ's body.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Spiritual communion throughout the pandemic. CAFOD's work throughout the needy world. Laity involvement in visiting and taking communion to the sick and housebound. Ecumenism

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The demise of our parish council meetings The demise of our pastoral area council meetings There seems to be a demographic split between the north and south of our diocese.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Encouragement for the youth to come back to the church

#31

Process Used:

I attended a facilitated meeting at my church. But after answering the first two questions we ran out of time on the third most important question. So I've given my more detailed thoughts below to ensure they are included.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
To be more inclusive - to be gender neutral. By that I mean women accepted in all roles such as priests and bishops. Also transgender people. For the church to accept gay people and gay marriage. For the church to preach monogamous loving marriage regardless of gender, as a basis for family life. For the church to grow and retain its young people not to loose them to the secular world that is so falsely attractive to them. To preach its message of love to all to care for all especially those at the margins of society to help those in need. To make the world a better place and to give hope for the next world.

#32

Process Used:

I have thought carefully about all matters important to me over the last few weeks.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I am not currently a practising Catholic but am prepared to continually review the options.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Not applicable at this time

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I am appalled that the Church has not fully resolved the issues around sexual abuse. It appears to be out off touch with the modern World eg towards gay couples, divorcees, and towards those who prefer the Mass and Sacraments according to the 1962 Liturgy. Although I no longer attend Church. I found the Latin more uplifting.

What are your dreams for the church?:
The Church needs to fully resolve the issues around sexual abuse and rid itself of the conspiracy of silence which still exists at times. *It needs to review its approach towards gay couples, divorcees, and those of its members who prefer the Traditional Liturgy, many of whom are relatively young. *It needs to actively explore the options for addressing falling vocations especially in the Western World if it is to become relevant again .

#33

Process Used:

I tried to submit my ideas to the local parish, but I am not sure if they were transmitted or even taken note of.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I am John Wijngaards. You will find my story on Wikipedia. I am 86 years old, a Catholic priest and theologian. Throughout my priestly ministry I have tried to serve the good of the Church, of God's People, as well as I could. When I resigned from the active ministry in protest against Pope John Paul II's assertion that women were definitively excluded from the priestly ministry, I continued to serve the Church in a 'prophetic' function. I established www.womenpriests.org. I also founded the Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
As a missionary in India, as Vicar General of the Mill Hill Missionaries and in various professorial functions since I have come to know the Catholic Church in all continents. Everywhere I have, in general, been impressed by the service and loyalty of religious, priests and other church leaders. The Church is a life saver for countless people all around the globe.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
In my recent book 'Ten Commandments for Church Reform. Memoirs of a Catholic Priest' (by John Wijngaards) I document the serious issues I came across mainly in the way the Church is governed. I list the following ten recommendations for Church reform: 1. Allow theologians and other scholars unrestricted freedom of research without fear of consequences. 2. Recognize that a pastoral leader’s first priority is caring for people, not upholding ecclesiastical institutions. 3. Select perceptive administrators in the Roman Curia, not narrow-minded bureaucrats intent on blocking Church reform. 4. Appoint open-minded pastoral bishops, not hard-line traditionalists. 5. Abandon the misguided repression of sex advocated by St. Augustine who maintained that any sexual act not geared to procreation is sinful. 6. Grant parents freedom to plan their families responsibly. 7. Give women full access to holy orders. 8. Allow priests to benefit from the support of a loving spouse. 9. Respect the God-given dignity of every member of the community – treating grownups as adults. 10. Update church doctrine and practice after listening to the advice of independent competent scholars, pastoral councils and experienced pastors. - I have published 34 spiritual books in my life. Many of those provide extensive reasons why my recommendations are entirely in line with the mind of Christ and true Catholic Tradition.

What are your dreams for the church?:
My dream for the Church is that it fully implements the decrees of Vatican II. Many of my recommendations above were already expressed by the Council. The Church should be less top-side down in the way it is run. Far ore responsibility should be entrusted to the laity. I also think that if the Church manages to clean up its own house, more people will return to the fold.

#34

Process Used:

I've drawn from my experiences of 86yrs of being a Catholic.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being a Catholic is part of my identity. The Mass is all important to me. However, I have a love/hate relationship with my church as my answers will show.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The contribution the church has made to to the world of Art and Music has been immeasurable. Mass in the vernacular and communion in the hand. The acceptance of clergy from other faiths has been enriching. The creation of Eucharistic ministers and deacons. The clergy more approachable. Family events more meaningful especially for non Catholics. Pope Francis, an inspired choice.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The child abuse scandal, most shamefully dealt with.The perpetrators protected, the victims vilified. The treatment of unmarried mothers especially in Ireland was nothing short of criminal. Babies were sold, murdered and the church was complicit in all of it. Abortion should be allowed in the cases of rape, incest and a life threatening situation for the mother. Permission given to twice married Boris Johnson to marry for a third time in Westminster Cathedral while divorced catholics who have remarried are refused Holy Communion. Thus creating a law for the high profile and rich and another for the rest. No wonder there are empty pews. The church has lost its credibility.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I hope this survey is taken seriously and not kicked into the long grass.If our church is to survive it has to reform and it must come from the top. Pope Francis is my one hope but he has an uphill struggle with the college of cardinals. Men who have held sway for centuries and are reluctant to relinquish their power.

#35

Process Used:

I have prayed for guidance from the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It provides a framework for me to try and live a good life for the benefit of my soul and that of others.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
It has become more inclusive and welcoming - albeit in a patchy way.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
*I feel ashamed that my Church has not fully resolved the issues around sexual abuse and that a conspiracy of silence remains in some areas. *In some ways it appears to be lacking in charity and inclusiveness eg towards gay couples, divorcees, and (given recent communications from the Vatican) towards those who prefer the Mass and Sacraments according to the 1962 Liturgy. I say this as someone who attends the Mass in both English and Latin. I note the not insignificant number of people under 40 who prefer the Old Mass so it still has a part to play in the life of an inclusive Church. With respect, I cannot see how the recent proposed restrictions can be justified on charitable and other grounds. *The Church should consider addressing the falling vocations to the priesthood by looking actively at providing a fast-track option to Ordination for married or unmarried people with late vocations -many of whom may be retired but may be solvent and may be productive for many years hence.

What are your dreams for the church?:
*My Church needs to fully resolve the issues around sexual abuse and rid itself of the conspiracy of silence which still exists at times. *Urgent review is indicated of its approach towards gay couples, divorcees, and (given the recent communications from the Vatican) towards those who prefer the Traditional Liturgy, many of whom are relatively young. *The Church needs to actively explore the options for addressing falling vocations especially in the Western World.

#36

Process Used:

Reflection

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To believe in and worship Jesus, have the Pope as head of the Church, be a member of the worldwide church, belong to a local parish.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Being able to go to Mass anywhere in the world, having a strong leader, the charismatic movement. Swiftly moving on-line when the pandemic struck and thus expanding not contracting. The feeling of belonging and fellowship. On holiday in Tuscany, I was made very welcome at Mass in the local church even though I speak no Italian. I was invited to come with other parishioners to receive a blessing and holy card from the priest after Mass. (Maybe he was newly ordained?)

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
It was at my first Holy Communion that I first realised that other children's parents went to communion with them and I couldn't understand why my mother didn't, I still remember the feeling. As I grew up I discovered that she had been excommunicated because she married a divorced man - my father. I loved my father very much and considered him to be a good man, I knew my mother to be a devout Catholic and so I didn't feel this was right. The experience of my first 2 children's Holy Communion was also blighted in a different way, whereas mine had been a big and important occasion, my children after having received instruction were just told to come to communion at Mass on Sunday, as if it wasn't anything special to be receiving the Lord for the first time. My third child however received First Holy Communion with other children from the school and it was celebrated, of course I was there and also received Communion. Different parish priests - different attitudes to children. In the past, the lack of love shown to sinners, they were despised and looked down on and to be punished, there were double standards. Anglicans know the bible much better than we do, in fact I think most other religions know their own beliefs better than we do. In the past we were taught to keep our heads down and not tell that we were Catholics and we didn't talk even to each other about our faith. Certainly we didn't evangelise! Teaching faith was the priest's job, nothing to do with us, I now think and hope that is changing.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To be reconciled with all Christians and spreading throughout the world, all worshipping God and living a truly Christian life. To be more loving, understanding and forgiving of each other, so that more people come to know God as a loving Father not a distant figure and come to know Jesus in the gospels and want to follow Him.

#37

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It was what I was born into

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Catholic community I'm in is great. But for someone who hasn't been to church in awhile, I can't single out anything they've done well.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The Catholic community I'm in is a bit dead. There's not a lot for young children or teenagers like myself and The heating in churches is also terrible, every time I sit in one its freezing. Within my generation there's a massive stereotype amongst Christians, Catholics and Anglicans, which is the fact there's still a lot of communities that still are either racist and/or homophobic. Which puts a bad image on the religion altogether. My parish is not like this but I've met other people from parishes who are and this needs to be fixed.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I don't have a dream for the church.

#38

Process Used:

> Good afternoon, Father. > > In response to the request to participate in the Synod, I understand, from the Latin Mass Society, that you are our representative, as Canon. Thank you, I'm advance, for accepting my participation.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
> As a parishioner of both the New and Traditional masses, here is what I'd like to include. While Latin/English masses are different, I find that each mass provides unique opportunity for a deeper experience with Christ, however, the rubrics and study and practice of the Canon for the Latin Mass provides beauty, and time for reflection and prayer during the entire mass; especially at the consecration, while the new mass provides opportunity for daily attendance. The Latin Mass also helps us connect with our roots, something of which my childhood catechism lacked. > > In my honest opinion, there could be much more reverence at the new mass. While adhering to Vatican 2, parishioners must realise that irreverence before, during, and after mass, was never the goal of the Council. Reception of communion in the hand is not reverent. Likewise, wearing a veil, or praying personal prayer in Latin does not make one holier than others. It is a personal, choice. > > Having a chat before mass and disturbing your neighbour is not loving, and so on. Severe modernism, surely, was not the intent of the Holy Cardinals and Bishops of Vat 2. Additionally, while both masses are efficacious the truth is that Latin is one of the three Sacred languages written on the cross of Christ. It is, the language of our church, and should also form, at least in part, a portion of the new mass, which it does not, in most churches.

#39

Process Used:

A few thoughts for the Synod as I did not take part in the discussions. Much of what follows has already been expressed in Pope Francis Let us Dream. Concern for the little people, the humble, the simple, the poor, the marginalised, the ones without a voice, the weary and oppressed, whom Jesus called 'blessed'. (Pope Francis 8/6/14 address) Fr Ken Payne

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:

1. An essential key to the Synod should be the promotion of lay leadership in all aspects of church life, and this could include married priests and women. However, these last two aspects should be left to the decision of the Bishops' conference and dependent on the culture of the country. 2. There should be an emphasis on personal prayer by all, laity and clergy and silence. The latter is often overlooked and one reason why young people are put off the liturgy in our churches is because there is a lack of contemplation. The importance of awareness of our breathing is also important. The world-wide Christian Meditation movement can teach us a lot in this regard. Children have been shown to relish this. 3. The promotion of small active groups led by lay people. This is already highlighted in Canon Law – 516 and 517 which states – If because of a lack of priests, the diocesan bishop has provided that participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon, to another person who is not a priest or to a community of persons (who are not priests) he is to appoint some priest, who, provided with the powers and faculties of a pastor, is to direct the pastoral care. 4. An important corollary of this would be to ensure that such groups were linked, twinned with similar groups in the poorer areas of the church. 5. A further corollary would be to work with groups, with other Christian and non Christian bodies. There should be as much co-operation as possible regarding climate change, sea pollution and other threats to the environment. We have to live out our faith by caring for our common home and helping young people who suffer from a pandemic of loneliness.

#40

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
If I could say one thing to the Synod it would be Christians Unite I am an old Catholic. I have seen the Church lose support from both my friends and my family who live good lives without religion. Most have left because of what they see rigid dogmatism in a democratic society.Some because I might have provided a better example. We share an Anglican church with our Anglican friends and have good relations with the Baptist church. If all were together we would be so much stronger. If we do not get together we will become still weaker At grass roots level a merger would be possible. It may be far more difficult higher up the chains of command but if they can not get together then the grass roots may continue to fade away

#41

Process Used:

scripture for reflection---- the healing of blind Bartimaeus and ongoing reflection

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
For me being a Catholic is my life. I am aware that Jesus loves me and is at my side accompanying me on my journey to Him. Participation in the Sacraments play a huge part in my life. I try to go to Mass every day and after receiving the Eucharist , I feel that I can face the rest of the day. Reading Scripture, praying the Divine Office and reading what the Fathers of the Church and saints wrote is also part of being Catholic for me. Equally as a lay person I try to on pass what I receive by taking Holy Communion to the sick and sharing my beliefs.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
'-Celebration of the Sacraments with addition of choirs and organ music. -I have participated in beautiful baptisms, first holy Communions ,weddings and funerals. -Also the church charitable organisations such as SVP, CAFOD, ACN. -The participation of lay people with financial help for missionaries around the world. The relief that the Church organises with Catholics to provide for the distressed when there is natural disaster or famine or war. Live streaming also during Covid has been amazing.'

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Covid has also unfortunately resulted in Churches closing even when government has allowed them to open. I know many have felt abandoned. The church too can be very rigid with rules----Whilst not questioning the fundamentals of Church tradition I feel that the church must read the signs of the times. e.g.baptism now requires parents to attend classes beforehand.That will not be suitable for everyone and I think it is better that a child is babptised than not at all. E.g. 2 people who want to be married civilly but have a church blessing at the civil venue--not allowed. The Church whilst

What are your dreams for the church?:
My dream is for a more pastoral church. This would involve the priest being able to help his people along with their problems but at the same time not be restricted by superficial rules whilst at the same time accepting the tradition of the Church . This would not be to go down the road of popular support because that I believe will fail but to be open to the Holy Spirit and genuinely help families who face so many problems and especially the young adults who as soon as they leave home feel that they are inhabiting a different world. Most in the church understand that rules are there for a reason but in other cases people are alienated and walk away.

#42

Process Used:

Short period of reflection - I love my faith. As I wrote these answers - I received a prayer by text from the mother of a friend who I went to Catholic school with over 20 years ago. I thought this was poignant while thinking about the hopeful future of the Church - so here it is: Morning Prayer, Lord God my Father, You have said in Your word **For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.** Lord, Your plans are much greater than my plans,So open my spiritual eyes so I can see your plan that You have for me, In Jesus name I pray . AMEN

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being Catholic is part of who I am. It frames my values and gives me the strength I need to follow them even though the world might encourage me to do otherwise. There is something beautiful about a Catholic church where you walk into mass in a different country, a different language but you still know the mass, you celebrate with others as one with God. I also really love the moments when you walk into an empty church, light a candle for the departed and sit in silence and feel the presence of God with you - it is comforting and fills you with inner peace.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Catholic schools, outreach to those in need, structure of the mass, priests and nuns that care and enrich lives, adapting to the pandemic allowing virtual attendance to protect others

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The only negative experiences that I can think of have been around a few priests who were selfish and self serving - they can have a huge impact on a parish.

What are your dreams for the church?:
My dream for the church is for it to continue to evolve to this modern world without compromising its core values. I love being Catholic but there is a lot of animosity towards Catholics due to the sins of the past. I would like to see the church repairing those wounds and moving forward in a positive way.

#43

Process Used:

Personal reflection

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being Catholic is belonging to a community that brings structure and support to my relationship with God

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
During the pandemic my local parish made an effort to pray together. This was the direct result of a tireless Deacon who kept everyone going. The Church does things well when there is a representative who works to support the parish community - appointing and encouraging such people in key positions makes the Church connected to individuals

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The Catholic church does not appear to value single childless working females. They are the forgotten people - useful to do things but do not have a value, even ignored in communications. There appears to be a hierarchy that values Men above Women - Families above Single People - Retirees over those still working. The Church does not encourage the whole community of parishioners socially and spiritually. I see Church congregations diminishing because there is no effort to understand and encourage everyone to join a community - so gradually people lose interest in attending regularly

What are your dreams for the church?:
I would like to see the Church grow as an inclusive vibrant modern community - without losing the structure and traditions that define Catholicism. Belonging to a community that values and encourages everyone - irrespective of gender or whether they have children or partners would help to ensure that community grows.

#44

Process Used:

I read the supporting documentation

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Sadly to be in a church that is at serious risk of losing its way. The terms of this question suggest an insular approach. Are we not supposed to be Christians first and foremost?

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
While you might want to stimulate a feeling of optimism, when facing all the problems confronting the church, this section wastes space

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I dislike the way the diocese is trying to structure responses to the synod. The Pope invites us to be angry so I will follow his advice. To ask us to describe what it feels like to be a Catholic is a monumental blunder indicative of insular thinking. Are we not supposed to be Christians? Why should we list what is good about the Church? Surely we should be focussing on what is not so good or indeed plain wrong and then getting angry about the continuing failures to put matters right. Is the Holy Spirit really male as the synod document says? When I was received into the Church some sixty years ago the hierarchy as a body was held in high regard. Chinese torture consists of a slow drip drip that eventually drives the subject mad. That is as good a description as I can manage for the hierarchy's performance in the last sixty years. It has now culminated in the exposure of our Pope Emeritus as one of the many who mishandled sex abuse cases. It may be that the number of bishops who have been guilty of sexual or financial misdemeanours are a minority but when you include those who have colluded or otherwise turned a blind eye to such cases, if it does not become a majority it does become a really substantial minority. I think the Holy Spirit is telling us that the present procedure for appointing bishops is no longer fit for purpose and as a direct consequence the Church's decision making processes need substantial overhaul. Currently individual bishops and parish priests either receive no management training worth the name or receive little benefit from it. Take Pope Benedict as a high profile example. With a reputation for being a brilliant academic he was put in charge of an important diocese where he proved that he did not have the qualities necessary to manage. He is then chosen as Pope in a process dominated and manipulated by Vatican insiders. We have a ludicrous position where the laity include experts in every field of human knowledge and expertise who are routinely ignored by men, mostly elderly, whose primary expertise lies in the field of theology. On the one hand you can feel sorry for men put into positions for which they are so ill-equipped. On the other hand you can despair when forced to witness the sheer incompetence inflicted on a Church suffering quite needlessly from its own inability to use the resources at its disposal. The inadequacies of our bishops are reflected in parish priests. Many confront the difficulties they face with heroism. Their efforts are undermined by the substantial minority who mirror the faults of the bishops. A small example; our parish priest refused the help of a parishioner who was an office manager; she explained that the parish contract for a photocopier was costing far more than it should; confronted with someone who knew more about the subject than he did, the priest fairly angrily rejected her offer of help. When little examples like that are repeated across the Church and then added to by even greater ones such as the investment made by the Sardinian Cardinal recently sacked by the Pope, the unnecessary damage inflicted on the Church by clergy well out of their depth is immeasurable. Yet another area, where in recent times the clergy seem to have become obsessed, is sex. The old adage that if you are not competent in a subject you can become a consultant comes to mind. We now have a synod process which should lead to a renewal and rebirth. Thus we should become an outward-looking evangelising Church. But we have

every reason to fear that this will be diluted by a group of elderly men who have sadly lost their way and are desperate to cling on to power. I think the Holy Spirit is telling us that in future the clergy should have only an advisory role in decision making on managing Church assets. We should let experts from the laity decide. The other howling current deficiency is the exclusion from the priesthood of women and, for the most part, married men. In Christ's time empowering women would have been absurd. He dealt with society as it was. There are still parts of the world where women are subjugated by men; within the UK women can and do suffer from discrimination; none of this is justification for the Church doing likewise. I have written this with my wife who fully shares the views I have given.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A church that welcomes everyone and where everyone feels genuinely a part of a wider tolerant community. A church that should condemn the sin but not the sinner. A church which demonstrates its love for all, not just many. A church whose leaders practise forgiveness not condemnation. In short a church which is not at all like the bickering unpleasant mess that the Catholic Church is fast becoming where cardinals openly accuse the Pope of heresy. Put another way I would like to see a Church that accepted and followed the example and teaching of Pope Francis. I don't mind what you do with this submission as long as it is included in the responses

#45

Process Used:

Self reflection

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Sensing Gods presence, listening to others, being kind. Reflection and a deep inner relationship with God. Living a life of service in what ever way I can. Being able to contribute to the church community Participation in mass

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The soup kitchen Embracing St.Edwards not just as a place of worship, but Father Gregorys attention to detail for every mass, making it warm, inviting and inclusive, along with recent redecoration and refurbishment. The homilys Father Gregory prepares enables the message of the bible to be meaningful in our everyday lives. COVID safety has been top notch, thank you to all the stewards, and for Father Gregory for COVID safe implementation Having an organist, so uplifting. Kettering is so lucky to have such a talented committed member play for the congregation. I go every Saturday evening, and look forward to hearing the traditional music and hymns I remember.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Not so much not gone well, but sometimes the teachings and beliefs of the church are difficult to process and are at odds with human rights and government legislation, when it comes to choice and what is right and wrong. On the occasions when a member of the church community has had a few minutes to talk about their cause, and we are asked to fill in cards to send to an MP (at the end of mass) it has felt the church is entering into a political zone that is beyond prayer.

What are your dreams for the church?:

#46

Process Used:

Praying, researching, discussing and following current religious news has discerned me in my responses.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
My Catholic faith is my 'Lifeline' in following and preserving Christ's teachings in God's Ten Commandments.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Under the current strong leadership of Our Holy Father Pope Francis, we are seeing some contrition for some of our past failings, more transparency and openness in the ways the Church teaches and practises the Catholic faith in accordance to God's Laws, first and for most, and not by following Man's Laws to the detriment of our beliefs. The introduction of Virtus and this opportunity for the lay people in the Church to voice their opinion and address their concerns openly to our clerics, religious leaders and our Christian community.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Alas, The Church appears to be too passive and almost silent to controversial modern issues such as Christian persecution around the world, co-habiting, contraception, conversion therapy, LGBT+, homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia. The Church appears to put a greater emphasis on not to offend the 'status quo' and 'not to rock the boat' in fear that The Church would be criticized publicly by the state and the media. These facts weakens our credence, our faith and our beliefs.

What are your dreams for the church?:
My dream is to see Our Catholic Church run under the leadership of Our Lord Jesus Christ as taught to our early Christian apostles, brothers/sisters and martyrs, especially after Pentecost when they were filled by the Holy Spirit. They spoke openly without fear but with strength, courage and determination to put God's Laws to paramount importance. even to death. We need to get back to basics in order to regain our position of a credibility in leading our world for a better future for our children, grand-children and future generations for many more years to come.

#47

Process Used:

Prayer and reading

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be a member of the Church founded by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Access to the sacraments and the associated graces in order to live in accordance with my vocation and the means to salvation. Assurance of the Church's teaching authority a means to form one's conscience and a radical turning away from the secular towards the sacred.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Beautiful liturgy, in particular, but not exclusively, the traditional latin Mass. Providing a constant sign of hope and contradiction to the world. A sanctuary for all those (like myself and the prodigal son) who having recollected themselves, turned away from their sinful lives and returned to the faith of their fathers. Welcoming returning Catholics (e.g. Landings). Papal visits Pope St John Paul II in Coventry & Pope Benedict XVI. The simple holiness and dedication of the vast majority of priests that I have encountered both before and after my lapsation.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Attempts to evangelise by means of formulaic, corporate style, missions. The young people in my family and of my acquaintance are not seeking or attracted by *a church* which tries to meet them where they are and then proceeds to tell them that they are just fine as they are - the equivalent of doing embarrassing dad dancing in the night club! They seem to respond very well to THE Church which offers them the good news, beauty, hope and salvation and a radical alternative to the transient and unsatisfying pleasures of the world. Recent stories of financial corruption and sexual immorality in the highest levels of the Church are a scandal. The seemingly spiteful targeting of traditional Catholics by seeking to curtail or even forbid the celebration of the traditional liturgy which had only recently been encouraged by the Motu Proprio of Pope Benedict XVI. Failure to apply any pressure to the Pharmaceutical companies to encourage them to use non-abortion tainted testing and production processes.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is recognised by all peoples as the Church founded by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and their means to salvation. I would love to see the Church confidently proclaiming the good news and our means to salvation, the need for prayer, repentance and the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

#48

Process Used:

Thought and private prayer, following discussion with family members who have taken part in parish synod meetings, hearing their views and their brief summaries of the views of others who were at the meetings.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I feel it to be part of who I am, not something I could ever opt out of. I feel part of the Communion of Saints, albeit an unworthy part. I feel I have been lucky enough to get in to the lifeboat, as I could never swim ashore without it.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
It has managed to pass down the Faith through the centuries, continuing to be a channel of God's love for us through the Mass, the Sacraments and unchanging teaching, despite the great handicap of being always full of sinners.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I was born in England in 1950 and when I was young there were several Masses every Sunday morning, all of them packed out, sometimes standing room only. That is very much not the case today. This drop in numbers must count as something that has not gone well.

What are your dreams for the church?:
My dream for the Church is for it to be whatever Christ intended when He set it up. I do not know what that is, but I do know that He will be with it all days, and trust Him to make all things well.

#49

Process Used:

'- Quiet reflection'

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Belonging to a Christian community and trying to live your life according to Gospel values. This includes practicing your faith and marking key rites of passage in your life with the church's sacraments: baptism, confirmation, marriage etc. as appropriate. We try to develop and maintain a meaningful relationship with God and to share our faith with others. We should respect other faiths and beliefs and treat others with love and kindness as Jesus showed us to.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
'- Catholic education - Spiritually uplifting acts of worship - Charitable organisations - Community links and establishing a sense of belonging - Support for those in need - physically and mentally'

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
'- Church congregations that are intolerant of young children acting like young children in Mass - this tends to be more from the lay people than the clergy but not always - Clergy who are more focused on the rules of the church than Catholic, Christian values - Friends whose marriage has ended in divorce, through no fault of their own, being refused holy communion and re-marriage in church - Priests refusing to baptise children because their parents do not attend Mass every week and consequently hindering that whole family from further developing their relationship with God - Making members of the LGBT community feel unwelcome and second class'

What are your dreams for the church?:
'- A church that truly practices the loving and inclusive values we believe in to all members of society - A church that is as attractive to young teenagers and people in their 20's as it is to older generations - A church with expanding congregations because it has reached out to all in our society and helped them to see the glory of God and the value of following Christ's teachings'

#50

Process Used:

Contemplation about the balance between charity and honest criticism and observation. Prayer to discern the difference between the church 'at its best' and 'at its worst'.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Belief in the person of Jesus to lead me to God and the Catholic Church being the optimum route to that end.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
At its best the church can provide a bridge to heaven and a clear vision that God is present in our lives and that Christian teaching is both relevant and a source of happiness and contentment throughout life's ups and downs. Good priests take their role seriously and demonstrate faith, intellectual competence and humanity. This is demonstrated by a professional approach to their duties both on and off the altar and a grasp of what it means to be a Christian in an increasingly secular society.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Poor preparation by priests for the liturgy. Dreadful patronising sermons; sometimes unintelligible, sometimes childish or banal and often all three. Dumbing down of (or no ability to explain) theology or church teaching. Being unable to provide a plausible explanation to support church teaching.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I would like to feel that I belonged to a church which I did not have to apologise for. A church whose standards exceeded expectations and which had a better understanding of the lives of the laity. A church who could confidently express its teaching with enthusiasm and in a manner that withstood intellectual scrutiny. A church which could reveal and point the way to a greater reality.

#51

Process Used:

I have not followed a particular process to discern my response.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To be devoted to Christ, to seek to follow him and grow in love for him; to believe in and practise the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
During university and in the years immediately afterwards I increasingly fell away from the faith until I could describe myself as a lapsed Catholic. When I moved to Oxford, I believe two experiences of the Church were instrumental in my return: the serious, public witness to the faith of the Oratorians (for instance through processions in town) and my chance attendance at a Traditional Latin Mass, which, in retrospect, helped me to understand the Novus Ordo and helped me regain a sense of the sacred. I attend Mass at the Cathedral, but those few experiences of the TLM have shaped me profoundly. Since then, I have had the good fortune to meet many good priests, both in Oxford, Northampton and elswhere. Their faithfulness, care and compassion has been absolutely vital to me.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
n/a

What are your dreams for the church?:
To stay true to Christ. To help people rediscover the sacred. To help people rediscover their humanity and their love of neighbour.

#52

Process Used:

My desire can help the church improve and modernise , perhaps I was guided by the holy spirit who knows

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I follow my parents religion. I respect the Catholic church however there are many aspects of it which I think of very poor indeed. I almost feel as if I'm a Catholic in my own private world as opposed to the world of the Catholic church

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
All the priests I have ever met are excellent human beings and tremendous advocates for the church. It is a shame that the Catholic church has had such bad press recently but my own experiences has always been positive. I am humbled by the dedication of parish priests.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
SYNOD 2023 AIM. To reflect on the Church mission and to reflect on what steps the Spirit invites us to take in order to journey through the third millennium. First of all I have to say in the spirit of truth I think that the idea of asking the Catholic population for their opinion is doubtful proposition as it will result in a million different ideas which cannot be distilled into any directive or aim. It is the epitome of something being done by a committee meeting but in this case the committee is potentially over I billion people! My suspicion is that in the end it is an exercise and that the decisions will be made in the usual way, by men who are not conditioned to change very much. The Church service in the UK It cannot have escaped notice that the majority of the congregation of most UK Masses are older than the median age of 45. In Marlow there is rarely a dark hair in sight. In my opinion the reason for this is that younger people find the mass inaccessible in its current form. As Richard Rohr said, the problem with the mass is that it's SO boring especially in the UK. When I was working I was briefed on the characteristics of the X generation. They were intolerant of hypocrisy and prepared to stand their principled ground . We are now up to the Z generation and I don't believe that they will tolerate being bored with biblical texts which are quite frankly often unbelievable , yet every Sunday we hear these indigestible scriptures. We explain it (if we do) by saying that what they really meant was such and such but often the contradictions and mythical aspects of the scriptures and new testament are too obvious to be ignored. We do not now believe in talking clouds and demonic entities that can often en-mass occupy and individual and make remarks as they are cast out. The Church has already updated some of the old-fashioned Bible such as Mary Magdeleine being the woman out of which Jesus cast seven demons. I am aware that books such as The Great Themes of Scripture (again Richard Rohr) can make us look at these scriptures in a different way but for most churchgoers they are bewildering and should not be read just because they always have been. As it is, the Church is already quite careful not to read some of Saint Paul's less Woke texts! God did not have us evolve with a questioning mind for us not to be prepared to ask questions and to be told that certain things are infallible dogma. Jesus may not have intended a repetitive message week after week as a means of celebrating his new covenant. I believe the solution to the problem with the Mass is to make it proactive and accept comment and opinion, as indeed Jesus did. Have a ten- minute question and answer session. Do not stick to repetitive text. The only authorities who lecture and expect no push back are the regimes of autocratic countries so we should be prepared to question some of the more indigestible text in the scriptures and the mass. Some areas that I think need to be addressed: The Creed. This is a poor prayer. Why do we recite the Creed? We don't say, the sun will rise tomorrow because we know it will. Is the Creed a

form of self-brain-washing so that if we say it often enough it must be true? I accept that it is an acclamation of faith but they say that if a lie is said a million times it becomes true. I am not suggesting that the Creed is a lie but if it is true we don't have to keep repeating it. The implication is that we don't really believe it at deep down but if we keep saying it then maybe it will be true. Most prayers are either in praise or in request. The Creed is a series of statements. Also it makes a lot of susceptible statements: I believe is the raising of the body… really? Does it mean the body of Jesus or is it suggesting that we will be raised as humans in our imperfection? If so at what age? Even Jesus said that we would be as angels (referring to a question about a woman who marries several brothers) so any afterlife is spiritual. I believe in the holy Catholic Church this sounds more like swearing allegiance to the flag, it is a pointless statement. there is a lot of ascending and descending in the Creed. He descended into Hell. There is no Hell. Watch Fr Richard Rohr's homily on Hell. He says as an introduction amusingly : I'm going to give you hell! Basically Father Rohr rightly dismisses it. Jesus spent much of his ministry telling us to forgive, so it is unlikely that we will be punished for errors in our life as that would be the hypocrisy which Jesus condemned so much. Anyway why would he descend into hell, apart from of course to release all the trapped souls! Also since Jesus arrived just over 2000 years ago and Humans arrived about 300 million years ago how were thousands of generations of humans to understand sin? Mostly we behave in ways similar to our nearest relative the chimpanzee, we have evolved characteristics which are often called sin but are inherited for survival and to compete for genetic superiority. From thence he will come to judge the living and the dead. This would have been entirely against the teachings of Jesus, he would tell us to judge no one. Besides how can a person be judged bearing in mind the circumstances of people's lives vary so much. Someone from a poor dysfunctional criminal or violent family is unlikely to be as good as a Catholic brought up by stable Catholic parents in comfort. The Bible is contradictory about forgiveness, Jesus even tells his disciples those sins you withhold will be withheld but elsewhere he says if you do not forgive, your own sins will not be forgiven. As I say, the Creed is a poor prayer. It is mantra and not a normal prayer. It is another by rote part of the Catholic Church service. Born of the Virgin Mary. I have read that Isiah's literal translation was that a child will be born of a young woman. It is an old -fashioned human perspective to see a virgin as something clean and sinless. There is no flaw in a human not being a virgin! Anyway Jesus had brothers to whom he no doubt bore a family resemblance so Mary clearly was not ever virgin, besides Joseph was of David's line so the idea that Jesus was to come from that line is not possible if the impregnation was by God alone. There is no reason why the messiah could not have been the son of Joseph arriving in the world by the natural means that God created. I note that Saint Paul never refers to Mary's virginity and not all of the new testament does. I believe the second Vatican council discussed the matter and it is no disrespect to reconsider the matter. In my adopted Hail Mary, it acknowledges that Jesus never said that he was God as well, the epistles of John make reference to it but he wrote after Mark and Matthew so why didn't they refer to it? Many biblical references suggest that we are all God's children in Romans 8:16 Paul says, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God. Hail Mary, full of grace, You are blessed and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus, Holy Mary mother of Jesus the son of God, Pray for us sinners, Now and at the hour of out death. Peace to people of goodwill, this again is against the teachings of Jesus. He did not come to just deal with people of goodwill, anyway if people without goodwill are not given peace the chances are there will be no peace for the rest of us! As Lionel Blue said in one of his thoughts for the day, I am deeply sceptical of prayers which optimistically ask for too much for too many people. You know the all the people of Afghanistan etc. It is just said to make us feel like good Christians but it does not work. Most prayers are not answered, however the prayers for large masses of people, or for world peace simply do not work. It is an exercise in being nice and has no effect whatsoever apart from making the people saying the prayer feel righteous. We should pray for something specific not general all the persecuted Christians of the world stuff. This type of prayer and reading happens every mass and it is just wishful thinking. I suggest it is stopped. Some other aspects of Dogma and doctrine need to be addressed: Assumption into heaven: there is no justification for this dogma. I am willing to bet that

Mary died just like everyone else. She was not beamed up a la Star Trek. Overall the Catholic Church seems to place a lot of emphasis on Mary. But I see nothing really exceptional quoted of anything she said or did except for the Magnificat which I am sure was the work of the author Luke. She, like many of the prophets and characters in the Bible, was just an ordinary person like the rest of us. There is no disrespect in acknowledging that. Also even Jesus never said he was God he said was the Son of God it is not a literal phrase, as the Jewish Joke goes God did not have a son, he was a bachelor. God is not a person but a spiritual entity and for sure we are not made in his image as I don't think God evolved from apes. I think Jesus referred to God as his father in the sense that we are all God's children. Jesus was the Messiah and that is all he ever claimed to be. If we want the Church to be attended more by the Z generation we have to have less demons and unlikely texts. It is not Harry Potter and quite frankly some of the Churches accepted truths are actually quotes from 2000 to 3000-year-old myths and beliefs. People then were not as informed as we are now. We now know more about the world, evolution, science and life on earth. The Z generation will not accept some of the mythical beliefs of the Church. We have to modernise the Catholic Church with the evolving times or it will be left behind. The church has a wonderful spiritual role in the world and I get spiritual enlightenment going to Mass but more from the thoughts that I drift into rather than the voices from clouds and God said to such and such to Joshua type of readings. Jesus had to accept the existence of demons because everybody believed in them then just as people believed in wicked witches 500 years ago. We don't have to talk about demons being cast into herds of pigs now. I don't think that children have to learn the catechism now, at least I hope not. It is the sort of brainwashing that we should leave to the Madrasa's where children learn the Koran by rote and little else. As the Jesuits say, if we can get them by 16 years old we will have them for life. However the younger generation has been brought up to be more questioning and less accepting of teachings which don't make sense to them. Personally, as an aside, I don't think God should be terribly proud of the chaotic world of his creation. Fate determines that some humans having tragic lives and the world for many is a dangerous and random place. We can be our own evidence of the loving God but there is a lot of evidence of an uncaring God. If we are loved by God why did he give us a place to live so fraught with danger, pain and heartache ? (albeit with a great deal of happiness and joy also) and why allow us to be inclined to behave in a way which is often called sin? If we are the children of God and if he loves us, then evolving us to behave as we do and allowing us to live in such a dangerous world is akin to parents allowing their five-year old to go out in the traffic! I am sure God did not design the universe and our arrival to test how his creation would cope! To summarise, the Catholic Mass is a repetitive relatively dull ceremony and words are often said by rote (The Creed, The Gloria etc.) The Communion must stay of course but we needn't hear the same repetitive wording week after week. Scripture readings are selective, there are misogynist references in the Epistles which are avoided, however the Mass does not seem to worry about what seem like drug fuelled readings from the Apocalypse and it ignores completely the many contradictions of the New Testament. Sins are forgiven except blasphemy against the spirit for example. As I said many of the old testament readings are beyond comprehension and unbelievable. But we all sit there quietly because that is what we have always done. There is no room for questioning or misgivings. The Church is not North Korea, push back should be accepted if the Church and the Mass is going to have any relevance. Jesus didn't mind push back and discussion so why should we be subject to incontrovertible dogma and doctrine. I often sit and think I disagree when a sermon is given. I'm all for faith but I don't like blind faith. So in summary, referring to the question posed, I think that the Church Mission through the third millennium is to take quite substantial steps into the modern world, encompassing all we now know about how it works. The Mass needs to ditch the things that nobody really believes. There is no point in an obscure reading from Revelation for example. The Church should make the Mass interesting and encourage churchgoers to pushback if there is some content that they find spiritually indigestible. I know the church does not want to change with fashion but that is not the same as modernising. Even the dress of Pope, Bishops and Priests could be updated. I don't see much relationship in Jesus and the disciples preaching in the clothes of the

day and the extravagant hats and gilded uniform cassocks seen at the Vatican and amongst the clergy. I doubt that the Church will change much, it has a captive audience in places like the Philippines and South America however I note that many of the younger generations of these countries are less enamoured. These younger Catholics are the people that the Church needs to think about when it considers its future in the third millennium. A sobering thought is that the second largest religious group in the United States are Catholics who have left the Church. If the Catholic Church was a business it would ask for external risk assessment and for an independent agency to analyse how it is doing. Of course it is not a business but it is arrogant of the Catholic Church to think that it can analyse itself. This Synod should also be inspired by independent analysis. In particular in the Mass we should not say things we cannot believe in and that we do not mean. I have highlighted many of them here, it is words by rote and as such is virtually meaningless. I challenge the church to actually believe every word that is said during the Creed the Gloria and several other parts of the Mass. If they are not to be believed they should not be included. Let's not just do this by rote. Paul Carroll

What are your dreams for the church?:
I would like the church to move without changing fashion but to modernise. My previous comments on what the church is not doing well some it up we have to review many aspects of what we now claim to believe. We cannot have the Catholic mass where we recite things which are clearly not true, and which we don't believe anyway.

#53

Process Used:

Consultation with PP. Reflection on 1Cor 12:31-13:13. Reflecting on my experiences of life, particularly as a Permanent Deacon.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Opportunity for Spiritual renewal & refreshment – particularly at Mass, when the love of Christ in the Eucharist comes poignantly closer to me than the love of any other can. Appreciation of Reflective Prayer Years ago in a mood of prayerful reflection at a time of extreme anguish and isolation, brought on by the loss of my son and the foreboding that soon I was to lose my dear wife too, I happened to re-read these familiar words, from the parable of the prodigal son: While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and ran to him, clasped him and kissed him. [Lk 15:20] In that moment, I experienced sudden clarity of a hidden truth and my life and faith changed completely. The reason the father observed his wretched son coming home was because he had been watching and worrying about him through all those years of absence and now could not wait to be with him. The barrier of his son's stupidity between them was swept aside and the Spirit of Love was not to be thwarted. Christ is uncompromising about how we should love God and our neighbour as ourself. He spells out how we cannot love God if we do not have respect for ourself. Likewise failure to love our neighbour is equally failure to love him – all three elements are vital for the Spirit of Love to prevail. Christ instructs us to be loving and trusting as little children are and when we pray to address God as Our Father.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Well prepared Liturgy with an inspiring sermon & uplifting music. Formation for & Ordination as a Permanent Deacon. At my interview with Bishop Leo, when applying to be a deacon, I expressed doubts about my suitability on account of having decided years ago that I was not 'cut-out' to be a priest. He assured me that the permanent diaconate was rather different in that it required: having one foot in the sanctuary and the other in the market place. This appealed greatly to me, but I was unsure how it might happen in practice. Clarity soon emerged as chatting at work about possible activities in retirement, I mentioned what I was doing. I expected ridicule, as religion was never discussed – it did not happen. Instead, I found later people would seek me out for a chat – from curiosity or sometimes wanting to discuss their personal problems. An appreciation developed of the barriers between them, the church and spiritual life – barriers of ignorance, doubt, scepticism, indifference, or fear of the unknown. Sadly also, there were feelings of hurt, rejection, of being wronged and of impossible obstacles apparently provoked by life's circumstances. Distressingly also, I became acutely aware of the barriers within the church and the prevalence of an us and them attitude. The awareness & essential importance of the diaconal role became clear & how it carries Christ's word to life beyond the church. Ordination and with it commitment to my role in the wider world brought me into contact with others of different denominations, of other faiths and of none. It is clear though how the Spirit of Love is everywhere. Apparently, barriers are too. Consequently, I firmly resolved to be FRIENDLY and WELCOMING to all as far as I could – regardless of who they are. Frequently, this took me way outside my comfort zone – but making others feel at ease with me is essential. I believed absolutely that the Spirit of Love should not be denied.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Lack of tact & compassion shown by some clergy at times of bereavement, crisis & tragedy. Apparent lack of showing love & compassion – unlike Christ would have done – to those in distress or need with persistent, arrogant, aloofness & impatience, by many priests & some notable

Catholics, oblivious of the potential hurt, obstacles, barriers & division being caused, The handling of my retirement from formal ministry, which caused unnecessary distress & incredulity to me & others.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A marked change of attitude regarding: WELCOME – COMPASSION – SENSITIVITY – UNDERSTANDING – GENTLENESS - MAKING OTHERS FEEL AT EASE – LESS TALK & MORE PRO-ACTION – engendering a constant awareness of the SPIRIT OF LOVE towards everyone. Since retirement I have restructured my life and am able to say that God has been gracious to me & others have shown the Spirit of Love. Even with the current restrictions, I have travelled and visited various other churches, where my reception as a stranger often has been indifferent or non-existent. If I manage to make eye contact with a priest, sometimes a smile is returned, but often I am just ignored by clergy and laity alike. I am not especially surprised by this, but the comparison with my experiences of going to church, on my travels in America years ago and of my first visit to what became my parish in Buckingham several decades ago, is stark indeed. During the last century, with its wars and horrors and with people being better educated than at any time before in history, the general population became increasingly aware of the failure of establishments and of how they were exploited by the privileged. Cynicism, suspicion and lack of trust has been the result and establishment behaviour has only reinforced these tendencies. The accounts of Christ; in the Gospels, reveal how at all times he was loving and caring to all, especially to the sick, lame, poor and underprivileged. He also chastised the religious leaders of the time for their aloofness and for the yokes they placed on their subordinates – with all their rules and disdainful judgements. Surely, as Christians we should be endeavouring to emulate Christ's example? But if, with deep humility, we held up a mirror reflection of ourselves: 1) Might we see ourselves as others see us? 2) Would we appear very different from those in the Gospel narratives? 3) Because of stubbornness, casualness, insincerity or timerity, is the church seen as just another establishment, with irrelevant customs and practices, that fails to deliver? 4) As Christians, we ought to be like highly polished mirrors reflecting the Light of Christ, allowing the warmth of the Spirit of Love to radiate from us, but are we projecting a dim image from a tarnished surface or even showing the back of the mirror to others? Looking back over the years, I remember the buzz that Vatican II generated and even though it caused argument, there was also a feeling of the Spirit of Love as we engaged enthusiastically with its outcome because the church appeared more 'open and inviting to us'. It has been said that on being asked what he hoped to achieve by calling the council, Pope John XXIII opened a window and replied that he wished to let in a breath of fresh air. Since then it appears there are those who have been striving to create barriers to keep out the draught! People everywhere respond to and engage with friendliness, gentleness, sincerity, love, persuasion and understanding. Conversely, injustice, indifference, coldness, compulsion, insincerity, brutality, insensitivity, obligation, fearfulness and division has the opposite effect leading to rejection and resentment. If Christians, particularly Catholics, do not reach out to others in the Spirit of Love, but appear distant, unhelpful, uncaring and aloof – what is there to attract others – to stop them just shrugging and walking away to look somewhere else? AMARE ET SERVIRE – AD MAJORAM DEI GLORIAM – DEO GRATIAS

#54

Process Used:

Prayer

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To live life to a certain moral standard and in line with the Churches teaching,

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Liturgy (When done well). Ecumenism. When we work together with our brothers and sisters of other denominations things happen. Admitting married Anglicans to the priesthood. Increased participation of the laity.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Liturgy (When not done well). We have lost many good priests because they cannot continue to leave a celibate life.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To see married men called to the priesthood ordained and accepted by a hitherto celibate priesthood. To see greater efforts at Ecumenism, To see even more involvement of laity To see the Church reach out much much more to lapsed Catholics and those outside the Church. But first to put its own house in order.

#55

Process Used:

Reflection and discussion with others

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
This is very hard to define in words - I see it as the bedrock of my life from which everything else flows. I am lucky as I am also in a position where it has allowed me to be part of a very supportive community for many years, having the community around me and contributing to it where I can. Being part of something which spans the globe and having connection to people all over the world in different situations and countries is valuable and something I really appreciate

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
RCIA As the local catechist for this I have first hand knowledge of how the current programme and build up to the Easter Vigil supports people on their faith journey. Although I know how important his conversion was to my father through he life as a Catholic and from letters found after my parents died I know it didn't have this focus and my grandmother's elderly conversion in the 1970s definitely did not either.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
1.SINGLE PEOPLE I'm in no doubt I was able to become part of my supportive Catholic community becauseit changed when I had a family. In the approximately 10 years before that it was actually a very lonely place to be, going to church on my own (my husband is not a Catholic). From talking to single people I know I am only too well aware that things have not improved in the last 35+ years. Rightly we support families and young children but single people are neglected, even dare I say in the way some priests describe things or worse ignore them in their homilies. Some will have made a conscious decision to lead a single life but in a great many cases it is a result of a great disappointment, unfulfilled dreams or even the decisions of others foisted upon them, all of which are burdens to carry which receive scant attention and support. 2.WOMEN - I am no theologian but I'm unaware of anywhere Jesus said that women could not be priests or deacons - indeed there were female deacons in the church until the 13th century. It made sense in the context of His time on earth for Jesus to choose 12 men because it would have been impossible for women to lead the itinerant life priesthood required in the early church. On the contrary Jesus was very respectful of women and the early church certainly depended on them as benefactors and supporters. So, any rule against the ordination of women is, as far as I can see, an ancient man made rule which is being clung to without sound foundation in spite of the shortage of vocations - of course there is a shortage when, thank goodness, the times of coercion to the religious life are over and the church persists in ignoring the resource of over 50% of its congregation. I suspect a 'conservative' response to this would be to allude to that much used phrase 'the special role of women in the church'. Frankly the phrase is patronising and 'a put down '. Yes women do a lot of the behind the scenes work from catechists to church cleaners but it still leaves the gifts and talents of many underutilised. And just for the record I'm not a young woman having a rant but a 70 year old grandmother!

What are your dreams for the church?:
Harmony among all Christians , unity eventually That the church is respected as a source of and for good That any investigation of abuse is IMMEDIATELY handed to the police in the relevant country for impartial and open investigation Engagement with younger people 18-40 in particular who face so many pressures from the world All Catholics being valued equally, - women, single people, gay people as well as anyone in a family whatever the shape of that family

#56

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It means having faith that Jesus is our salvation and only hope

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The church is always clean and there are lovely people who always help you.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I would like the church to be open all the time like it was before covid.

What are your dreams for the church?:

#57

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
To belong to Jesus

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Contacless payments

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The church should not be closed, it would be better to leave it open at all times

What are your dreams for the church?:
A strong community who loves Jesus

#58

Process Used:

prayer and much deliberation!

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Having chosen the Catholic faith for myself as a child, it is where I have found my home, which best expresses my experience of the Divine, and allows me a place in which to grow.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
1) The continued inspiration of individuals who follow the teachings of Christ to help their neighbours and communities. Those rare clerics who did not reinforce the constant government/media message of FEAR during the pandemic, but continued their work with dedication to their vocations and their parishes. Their courage in the face of govt. interference and social disapproval, creatively, is testament to their faith. Not all persecution comes from the outside! 2) Engaging with the much-persecuted homosexual community. Many of us have friends and loved ones who are not heterosexual. We love and cherish them for the people they are, the people God created. JESUS teaches us by His words and actions to love EVERYONE, and especially those marginalized by society, which includes the LGBTQ+ community. 3) My dear friends, including many priests, who have enriched my life and my faith, and who are walking with me as I navigate this life.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
1) CLOSING CHURCHES DURING THE PANDEMIC: This has set a disappointing and dangerous precedent allowing for state/secular interference in the spiritual domain, and affected the lives of all people of faith at a time when we most needed our connection with the Lord and the Sacraments. It also effectively exiled priests from their parishes. 2)REINFORCING THE NARROW VIEW TO FOLLOW THE SCIENCE: This presupposes The Science in question to be one united entity, and not in fact one possible opinion in a discipline of many possibles. Is the Science all we are? 3) TRUST IN THE LORD?: Am I alone in my belief that I put my trust in GOD, NOT GOVERNMENTS? * Where was the message to Follow the Lord? Where that to TRUST IN GOD? *How often in the Gospels are we told to Have no fear? The Lord has never promised us that we should never know suffering or death. The Church's reaction to the pandemic showed us that we have little faith in God's design for our lives, and ultimately, prioritize the physical body over the spiritual. How many Christians brave actual persecution and risk death daily just to meet the Lord in His House and receive the Sacraments?! This was definitely a missed opportunity to test our faith and to show the world what a life in Christ means. (The elderly and medically-compromised could still have been protected, as per The Great Barrington Declaration et al.) 4) THE MYTH OF SAFETY: - Not challenging the lockdowns (the Extraordinary Burden), which ultimately created more damage to ALL members of society by increasing poverty and starvation; domestic and child abuse; mental illness and deaths from all causes, including suicide, in the pursuit of the myth of safety. How many suicides are worth one covid death? Lockdowns are essentially a luxury of the affluent, who have comfortable homes and gardens, and can work/ study from home. Not so easy for those in cramped, high-rise homes, with no access to gardens or rooms of their own! -Promoting the use of experimental vaccines which make use (either in production or as ingredient) of cell lines from babies who were aborted, albeit historically. This shows a level of hypocrisy: we promote the sanctity of ALL HUMAN LIFE, unless we are personally at risk, and will then happily support an industry which thrives on the use of fresh tissue from babies aborted ALIVE, in order to stay safe. When did staying safe become the goal of our human existence? If the Apostles and many of our glorious saints and martyrs had stayed safe, we would be a very minor church indeed! (The continued pushing of said experimental vaccines is, in

effect, a nonsense, as they neither prevent infection, nor transmission. Thus the belief that vaccination protects others is mistaken. Will the Church support those people who have sustained damage (sometimes very serious , even fatal) from the vaccines, I wonder.) Having worked with the public throughout the pandemic, I have encountered so many wonderful, brave people from other faiths (and none), who put our Church to shame. 5) LATIN MASS: The harassment of the Latin Mass Community has increased division. I have never been to a Latin Mass, but what little I know seems very beautiful and inspiring. As an important part of our heritage, I do not think it should be eradicated. It may be something of an affectation for some, and perhaps the Latin community needs a reminder that we are not a Church of elites, but are the home of all who follow the teachings of Christ. In a time when institutions the world over are promoting DIVERSITY (some even genuinely), should we not be the tolerant Body of Christ we tell the world we are?

What are your dreams for the church?:
1) ORDINATION OF WOMEN: There are so many exceptional women religious in our Church- the unsung heroines of Christ. Some may truly have a vocation to the priesthood. This would be real equality.
2) ORDINATION OF MEN REGARDLESS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Chastity and celibacy are not the preserve of the heterosexual population. Neither is religious vocation. The issue of abuse is not one of sexual orientation, but of unhealed damage and repetition. My priests have been a great source of support (spiritual and emotional) and friendship. the abuse I suffered took place in the home.
3) SUPPORT FOR PRIESTS: Our priests are a valuable resource, providing much more than sacramental duties. They, like those in medical, psychiatric and therapeutic services, need their own emotional and psychological support network. They are counsellors, therapists and friends, available 24 hours a day, to their parish families, often living alone without the support of fellow priests and housekeepers. Isolation during the pandemic has high-lighted this. (I still support celibacy for God's ministers: - the impracticality of priests with families to be sent wherever God calls them. Imagine the upheaval of uprooting all those spouses and children from jobs and schools, grandparents and friends. Not to mention the cost. -Those who do not have children of their own have more space in their hearts (and in their lives) for others.)
4)SMALLER DEVOLVED GROUPS: Despite the trend towards globalization (with its inherent risk of totalitarianism). a smaller community-based approach provides an inclusive environment in which individuals have a vested interest, preserving character and culture, so long as the basic precepts are upheld. We are more inclined to preserve what we have inherited and love, and use our resources creatively to improve what we don't. Priests from outside the community would continue to prevent staleness .
IN CONCLUSION: St John Paul ii, in Memory and identity, 2005, spoke of celebrating national (and even regional) identity, as this does not equate to hatred of others and their differences. Unity does not necessitate being identical. Opening the priesthood to a wider group (see above) could well alleviate the vocation crisis, allowing for smaller, more engaged parishes, with fewer single-priest households, thereby offering greater support to both priest and laity. God has already given us everything we need. Perhaps we can look back at our rich history and carry forward what has been good, both in terms of the Church and our secular communities. Technology and science are not the future of humanity: the spiritual life is! Thank you for taking the time to read this! God bless .

#59

Process Used:

Prayer and meditation

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It means everything to me. I know that the Catholic Church is the true church and that by receiving the sacraments and trying my best to follow Jesus Christ is the way to eternal life.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The church's stance on abortion, birth controll, homosexuality and women priests etc by standing up for these matters regardless of public opinion.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The child sex abuse and the way its been handled by the bishops for example moving the offending priests to another parish where they continued to abuse. The internal squabbling of the bishops especially over women priests, its supposed to be a closed matter. (its not what we want its what God wants). Also the Latin Mass whats wrong with it, its beautiful. The church should get on with what really matters which is spreading the faith and teaching our children so that they understand how important it is to have faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I would like the church to teach us the truth and be strong and not give way to modern opinions that says anything goes - this is the modern world - the church needs to update etc. Nothing is a sin anymore, (the church is becoming luke warm) and if that is the case why did Our Lord Jesus Christ die on the cross to save us from our sins. If the church keeps to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the catechism of the church then people will respect it, especially young people who need proper guidance.

#60

Process Used:

Praying the Holy Spirit to guide me and send me wisdom, discernment, prudence and courage.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It defines who I want to be, how I should lead every aspects of my life and it gives me clear guidelines to stay close to God and do His will. It also gives me a sense of belonging to a loving community. I gives me a sense of responsibility as witnessing my faith to non catholics by following all the catholic principles.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
When I arrived in my local Parish, I was really broken, having gone really astray. I received healing through the sacrament of reconciliation and the priest was very firm and clear in his guidelines but he showed me God's mercy and love. The community gave me a sense that I was still loved and gave me lots of opportunities to do better things with my live. I felt I was not judged and that the Church offered me the only true path to redemption. The churches where I have been in the UK were very inclusive with a true international community. Lots of us were foreigners and the church is our family.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
In my country in France, my experience of catholic church was good overall but some catholic people could be very judgemental even towards priests! As catholic people we are at our worst when we think we are better than others, particular better than other christians. Actually my experience is that there is not such a thing as a good catholic. Most of us have committed grave sins. So when there is hypocrisy it really damages the Church. Also some people will lack patience, and expect people to reach the ideal way to Love God without recognizing that we are all on different journeys. To hear some of us right after mass criticize their neighbours harshly is heart breaking. I have heard also of people not feeling welcome when they wanted to get their children baptised or married because they were not in perfect situations and/or not prepared to fully commit yet. I think it is a shame because we should be able to all come as we are, where ever we are on our journeys. Some of us will fail but we should all be given the chance to receive God's grace. Sometimes someone might not be ready for the Sacrament, but they could benefit at least that a blessing or prayer is said for them in the Church and encouraged this way to go further later.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That the Church remains humble and a place where people are patient, loving and understanding even though they remain clear about the way to really please the Lord. A place that is truly supportive but also a place where you learn to discern and grow spiritually. I am blessed to belong to a Parish where I have received all this. I would love this experience to be the same for all people everywhere.

#61

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It's the most important thing. It's believing that Jesus died for us.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
It's very good that the church is clean.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I'd like the church to be open all time and to receive the Holy comunion in the mouth.

What are your dreams for the church?:
I'd like all of us to love each other and pray together.

#62

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Catholic is having faith in Jesus.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Keep distancing in the church and keeping the church clean. Also contactless payments are a very good idea.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
That the church is closed most of the time. It should remain open.

What are your dreams for the church?:
For the Church to remain open.

#63

Process Used:

Discussed with family.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Treating people with kindness and respect. Having good values. Being accepting of everyone.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
My personal parish is very charitable providing food for the homeless. The parish has been good at implementing safety procedures during the pandemic.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Historic Child abuse within the Church- not being dealt with correctly. Modernisation and updating of its teachings- still holds outdated views about homosexuality, and females being equal to males. Forcing opinions about abortion laws- trying to encourage parishioners to petition against this.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To be more inclusive and welcoming to everyone. A lot of the Churches views are old fashioned and need to be updated. As a society in the last 10 years we have become much more accepting of anyone who may have previously been seen as different whether that be due to gender or sexuality however I have not seen any progress in the Catholic Churches views. Unfortunately this is a view widely shared by the public and even personally as a Catholic in my mid twenties has sometimes left me feeling like I do not want to be associated with the faith. If the Church allowed Females to be Priests and Priests to marry and have a family then this would massively help with a shortage of young priests and also undoubtedly would have reduced the number of Child Abuse cases in the past.

#64

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It means to be with Jesus, to know that He saved me.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
That there is someone who leaves the church open in this difficult time.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
'-That the church should be always open. -That the priest should give the holy comunion in the mouth and not only on the hands. -We should have more adorations'

What are your dreams for the church?:
'-We should attent the Holy Mass with a lot of faith and humility -To be able to take Jesus on the toungue'

#65

Process Used:

I sent this lapsed Catholic the information so she understood what was involved and was able to think deeply about her responses.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I feel nostalgic about the RC Church as I was raised a Catholic and went to a Catholic boarding school for 8 years. But my faith and the RC Church parted ways during my 30s. I think it was the number of Anglican priests that moved to the RC Church over the ordination of women into the Anglican Church. I now attend an Anglican Church from time to time.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The international nature of the Church The focus on the poor.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The unmoving dogma on the celibacy of priests. No ordination of women The eternal tension of whether contraceptives should be allowed

What are your dreams for the church?:
I was at school during Vatican II. We need a Vatican III to make positive changes. But I now feel too out of touch to have any dreams.

#66

Process Used:

I spoke to a lapsed Catholic face to face for discernment - the below is what she told me

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
When I was a child, the Church meant safety. That's because I went to a Catholic Primary School and was happy there. So, safety, warmth, friendship. Now I am 30 years old and the Church now feels like an old fashioned way of worshipping God. For many, the Church does not feel safe, friendly or inclusive.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
I went to St James Church in High Wycombe (now closed) and it was so friendly, such a kind and loving Community. So, I think it's very good for nurturing Communities and friendships, especially for those that need it.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Now I am an adult, it feels like the Church isn't a safe, inclusive place to be, especially for gay and transsexual people and people who are divorced. Also, as a young woman, I feel the Church is male dominated and treats women like second class citizens. The Church's view on contraception is so wrong. I don't know any Catholics that don't use contraception - it's so outmoded and the outcome for women could be catastrophic.

What are your dreams for the church?:
That it is the loving Church I remember as a child but that I now realise was a child's view. I wish the Church could be a safe place for anyone, anywhere no matter what their sexual orientation is or their marriage status, for example. I also dream that their will be women priests one day soon.

#67

Process Used:

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Response to the Synod 2021 - 2023 consultation The Vatican's current website contains the attached document; Preparatory Document For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission. https://www.synod.va/en/news/preparatory-document.html What I understand it to say is that this Synod is a consultation between the clergy and the laity in the Catholic Church. The purpose is to generate views on how we should journey together to develop priority steps that will enable us to grow as a synodal Church. It is evident that this document has been written by persons who are highly qualified in Catholic teachings and Ecclesiastical Matters. Also, I find that many parts of the document are very relevant and touch a cord with my personal priorities, particularly: On page 2. 'examining how responsibility and power are lived in the Church as well as the structures by which they are managed, bringing to light and trying to convert prejudices and distorted practices that are not rooted in the Gospel;' On page 4. '6. This situation, which, despite great differences, unites the entire human family, challenges the Church's ability to accompany individuals and communities to reread experiences of mourning and suffering that have unmasked many false certainties, and to cultivate hope and faith in the goodness of the Creator and his creation. However, we cannot hide from the fact that the Church herself must face the lack of faith and the corruption even within herself. In particular, we cannot forget the suffering experienced by minors and vulnerable people due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons.' Regarding a relatively pragmatic issue, in my view, this document is written in such complex Ecclesiastical language that an educated lay person is very likely to struggle to understand it. In short, to be blunt, it appears to me that there is a large proportion of 'Ecclesiastical Gobbledegook' in this document, which will be seen as being used to obfuscate issues or to intimidate the reader. In the UK we have an organisation called The Plain English Campaign, which awards a 'Crystal Mark' for accessible documents that ordinary members of the public are likely to understand. They run a service for transforming a document, full of complex jargon, into one that is comprehensible to the vast majority of English speaking people. http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/about-us.html I would happily make a significant financial contribution to having this document 'translated' in this way. However, the major issue that I wish to raise is the position of women in the Catholic Church. As a mother, I know that children learn about the Catholic faith primarily through their mothers, who bring them to Church and encourage their spiritual development. Women in the UK realise that although women can become head of state or a prime minister, or hold other top positions of responsibility in society, they cannot do so in the Catholic Church. Also that this is unlikely to change in the next decades. The Catholic Church's view is that women can take the main responsibility for human physical health and psyche, but not for the human soul. Hence most young women see no future for themselves in the current Catholic Church in the Western World and will not teach their children about the Catholic faith. In my view, whereas the abuse of authority that has occurred in the Catholic Church can and must be recognised, atoned for and prevented in the future, due to this position of women, I feel very pessimistic about the future of Catholicism in the Western World. I feel it is likely to die out, probably in my lifetime. Yours sincerely Dr Anne Raynal

What are your dreams for the church?:

#68

Process Used:

A long life as an active Catholic and a professional study of history and theology.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Everything

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:
The attached page gives my hopes and practical plans for a re-vivified church. I hope they are not just dreams. Moving towards a re-vivified Church [While these points are presented in numerical order that should not be taken as indicating any relative importance or linking between them. In the eyes of the proposer they are independent propositions.] 1a. The Church should learn to treat its adult members as adult Christians and encourage them to grow in their faith through their insights and experiences, religious and lay. They must be genuinely encouraged to participate in a meaningful way in the Church's decision making at local and national level, so that the Church benefits in its turn from their more mature belief and practice. b. One practical suggestion here is the statutory establishment in each parish of an elected parish council that meets monthly, publishes its minutes and has authority to discuss general parochial and pastoral matters. This would be a small but practical step towards realising the Pope's desire that the Church 'inverts the pyramid'. 2. As a priority, the Church should legislate for the ordination of women deacons, so that they become a general feature of its structure within five years. 3. Within ten years the Church should legislate for the ordination to the priesthood of men who are married. 4. Diocesan bishops should move around their dioceses in a regular way, not just on official visitation but living in each parish for a regular period (say two weeks), saying Mass there daily and generally participating in its parochial life. 5. Adult instruction and learning: there is a serious need to develop further the opportunities for adult Christians to have a solid base on which to build their commitment to the faith and especially with regard to any evangelisation they might be able to develop. A welcome start has been made on this through diocesan initiatives using modern means of communication. It is an area in which parochial councils, with their local base, might have much to offer.

#69

Process Used:

I prayed and discussed the issues with my husband.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
For me, being a Catholic is absolutely central to how I live my life. It informs my decisions about everything from how I handle challenges to the jobs I take and the companies I work with. At the very core of who I am is Catholic - it's my central identifier before gender, race, relationship or any other facet of my personality. It guides me and protects me, it inspires me and brings me comfort in challenging times. The richness of the Catholic Church gives me so many ways to interact with God! From the sacraments to devotions to pilgrimage and music - the vast diversity of the opportunity it provides for me to connect with Christ blows me away! The seasons of the Church's year provide focus and the way the Church celebrates its main festivals helps connect me to its great history. I'm incredibly proud to be a Catholic, despite all the challenges it brings. That's part of it too. Being part of a family is about working through differences and challenges. It's about saying sorry when you've done wrong and making reparation so that relationships can be healed. This is what it means to me. It's relationship with God and His people.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
I am so grateful for the Church's teaching on suffering. None of us experiences life without suffering and the secular world's vision that it should be avoided at all costs and that it has no value is incredibly damaging. Understanding that suffering can have value, not only for you but for others, if you choose to view it that way, can take your mind away from you and to others and to give you purpose in the darkest of times when purpose is so hard to find. I would be lost without the Sacraments of the Church - what a blessing they are! For the Church to provide these exceptional moments of grace at key times in our lives keeps me wanting to go deeper in my faith.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I feel strongly that the Catholic Church holds the fulness of truth - but is terribly poor at communicating it. In mine and my husband's years of running RCIA we have always taught the full truth of the Church's teachings - even when uncomfortable to do so! Oftentimes a cradle Catholic will accompany a friend or partner to the sessions and almost always they - and the candidates - have no issue with what the Church teaches just that they have never know why it teaches it! And sometimes these are important teachings like the perpetual virginity of Our Lady and the Church's teaching on sexuality. We can't simply tell people what the Church teaches but why she teaches it. This is what is often missing from people's understanding. There is a great truism that says poorly formed Catholics become Protestants and well formed Protestants become Catholics and I feel that this is such a large part of why the Church loses people. If we're not forming them then the world or others will and if they don't know enough to defend Mother Church - or themselves - when told that they worship Mary and the Saints or pray to the dead - then we will lose them. And that will be on us. As a woman who very much wanted children and wasn't able to, abiding by Church teaching to not pursue this through IVF or similar (though many Catholics encouraged me to - proving my point above, somewhat!) I would be grateful if the Church could extend its understanding of marriage to not just being in the context of having children. For those of us who dedicate our lives to the Church in a way that we never could with a family, this is profoundly hurtful to us. We are a family of two. We're a family of two because we are living according to the teachings of the Church - please don't make us feel invisible.

What are your dreams for the church?:

My dream for the Church is of joyful, well informed people who know, understand, love and defend their faith - rather than looking to change it. A Church of people willing to conform themselves to it rather than to conform the Church to the world. (Romans 12:2) The Church is not an NGO - there are hundreds of those. My dream is of a Church committed, primarily, to the saving of souls, to drawing others into a relationship with Christ - focused not on this world but the next.

#70

Process Used:

involvement with other people; reading and informing myself; educating myslef on the process; prayer

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Being part of the oldest church, being proud of my tradition, belonging to a family

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
reverence and devotion; education through ongoing catholic schooling; some reaching out to bless the poor (e.g. Christmas gift box appeal)

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
inclusivity social action engaging with relevalt and current issues like climate change encouraging the young

What are your dreams for the church?:
ecumenical inclusive (all ages, ethnicities, gender) retaining the richness of tradition yet welcoming new ideas seen as a beacon in leading social action in society full of people of all ages church venues to be used by broader society for community engagement to bless those most in need of help and support Bedford

#71

Process Used:

Prayer and conversations with my wife / RCIA group

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
A convert from Orthodox Judaism to the Catholic faith, being Catholic is at the core of my very being and the very essence of what it means to be a human being. Being a Catholic has opened my eyes to the fullness of God's love, truth and mercy - not just for me as an individual but for every single person. The Catholic faith provides me with both a faith and moral compass in the truth of God's love for us and the actions that result from it. I feel very privileged to be part of the Catholic community and have met some wonderful people who have guided and continue to guide me on my faith journey.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
I love the fact that the Church is open to listening to how the Holy Spirit is moving - especially with new movements within the Church. One such example is Youth 2000 - a movement for young adults that helped form me in my faith in the early years of my conversion to the Catholic Church. 25 years ago it provided me with an authentic experience of the beautiful treasures of the Catholic church - namely The Mass, Eucharistic Adoration and The Rosary, all within the context of peer youth Ministry and the wonderful support of many Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Religious communities. As a result of this movement, I have personally witnessed thousands of young adults growing in their Catholic faith and crucially, understanding the core of the Church's teachings on faith and morals. This movement continues to be bear much fruit - with numerous vocations to marriage, the Priesthood and religious life. In more recent times, I have experienced the powerful gift of Divine Renovation - for me, a movement that is asking the questions better than any other on where the Church is at in these challenging times and how to re-discover her identity. Rather than focussing on programmes and projects that date back to the 1970's, this movement is successfully asking the right questions and is not afraid to be open to radical new answers. Thank God, this movement is spreading rapidly throughout the world and is already bearing much fruit.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
As I am passionate about good formation in the Catholic faith, I always find it a source of great pain when I hear of Catholics not knowing or understanding central elements of our faith - usually as a result of poor formation received. My wife and I have run the RCIA classes in our parish for several years and more often than not, established Catholics accompany candidates on their journey into full Communion into the Catholic Church. Without fail, the most common response we hear is I never knew that was what the Church taught on that. This usually refers to specific issues relating to the Church's moral teaching on pro-life issues e.g. contraception or IVF treatment. Sadly, our experience is that most people have never had the opportunity to hear the truth of the Church's teaching or have never been provided with the foundation for the Church's teaching. As a result of this, much confusion has resulted - with many people no longer knowing or understanding the Church's teaching on so many areas of life that are under severe attack today from secular society.

What are your dreams for the church?:
My dream for the Church is that all people have an authentic, welcoming, loving and beautiful experience of Church - first and foremost through participating in the Mass, the Sacraments of the Church, all liturgies / prayer groups and more generally speaking through every contact or experience with the Catholic Church and her members. As stated earlier, it would be wonderful if all

people were provided with the opportunity to go deeper and gain a deeper understanding of the Church's teaching on faith and morals - with the ultimate goal being the deepest possible union with Jesus Christ. Tied in with the Church's evangelistic mission, I also hope that we are able to reach out in love and authenticity to our brothers and sisters who have left the Church or had no experience of church in their lives.

#72

Process Used:

There was no process. I first had to find out what you meant by Synod - why can't you be more communicative? Then I had to find this page - why can't you make it simpler? Then I find this illogical list of pre-conceived questions, going totally against the whole concept of a personal submission. This is not an open, listening Church. It is a closed, domineering and bullying Church.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Why do you ask this question? I believe the Church is the true Church. To be a Catholic, to me, means I belong to the true Church. I also believe Catholics do not have a monopoly on holiness. I also believe the Catholic Church, and its hierarchy, has lost its way in its arrogant belief that it has a monopoly on truth, and lost its way in what constitutes love for God and for other human beings.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
A small number, or percentage, of religious, are loving, friendly people, and their interaction fosters an increased friendship with God.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
A large number of religious and lay members have lost any semblance of understanding their goal - to live and die with God. As a result their behaviour fosters an arrogant Philistinian belief that only they know the true way to behave, totally devoid of any true love for their fellow man and for unfortunate souls who might have lost their way. Why are Latin Masses not good - ridiculous. Why must hymns be unmusical? Why is there no laughter in church? Why do we get force-fed that Jesus had no fun, and no loving family life? Why are there few married clergy? Why are there no women priests? All too often, because some short-sighted person thousands of years ago had no imagination, or strength to propose what was really right, leaving us with a bigoted version of their limited vision.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A full church, full of love and compassion for everyone that would like to be part of it. A church which people want to be part of. A church that does not discriminate or drive sinners away. A church for the people Jesus came to save.

#73

Process Used:

Discussion with family and friends

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
A follower of Jesus Christ

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Local priests actively helping their needy parishioners and quickly offering an online service to participate in the mass.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Not all priests are good preachers and so some sermons are not always 'on point' and need to relate to life today. The whole paedophile issue in the Church is a scandal and the Church should not cover up but pass on the accusations to the police.

What are your dreams for the church?:
Sermons to be given by preachers who are able to energise their congregation. I would welcome good preachers regularly moving from parish to parish. These preachers need not be priests but could be lay people. Bearing in mind the reduction in vocations I would not mind women priests or indeed married priests. I also would no mind sharing a church building with another Christian church if the economics made sense. On my travels I recall such a church where different christian denominations used it at different times for worship.

#74

Process Used:

Prayer and conversation Years if observing changes in the Church

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
Very very important

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Standing for Her beliefs, non wavering

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I would love more Latin masses, the closest is an hour away for us The homilies are too watered down Very disappointed the churches closed during covid, and priests not caring about their parishioners

What are your dreams for the church?:

#75

Process Used:

reflection, meditation and prayer reading scriptures praying to the Holy Spirit discussing in the family home reflecting with close friends who share the same faith tradition

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
to be grounded in tradition; to have many riches to rely on and to dip in: life and example of the saints, the Catechism, the papal encyclicals, to receive the sacraments, to be able to trust in the teachings of the Church to interpret Scriptures; to share my faith with others and be ready to give an account of why I am Catholic.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Lay communities (e.g. Franciscans, Ignatian Spirituality); retreats and pilgrimages; some social action.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
building community; welcoming new comers; presenting an image that is very alien to anyone who is not Catholic; long liturgical prayers; being in touch with current events/ culture.

What are your dreams for the church?:
A place where I am happy to invite anyone to; where people are engaged together to serve and to tackle social issues; where faith practices are taught and explained; where young people feel welcomed; where worship is uplifting.

#76

Process Used:

Personal views

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
I believe that it defines my way of life and supports my views about love and understanding of all people

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Its continuing work in its various charities are undeniably of great benefit to the communities and people they touch

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
I believe that unless the church changes dramatically it will lose its significance and legitimacy in the public eye. I believe that root and branch change is required and the church will have to allow and encourage female priests, married priests, homosexual priests of both sexes and move away from the old patriarchal ways that have little relevance in todays society. Coming from an Irish background I saw first hand how the church became to involved in the politics of the country and taught its message by fear, to the point that the country was held back by dogma and its teachings on sex for example being just about procreation and something not to be enjoyed gave the very notion a stigma. What happened in Ireland and throughout the catholic world surrounding child abuse of the worst forms is the direct result in my opinion of pursuing a male only order with none of Jesus's message of family and love. Having recently finished reading about the Medici family in Florence, Italy it is apparent that the hierarchy of the catholic church for centuries was corrupt and was there to serve its own ends, with corrupt Popes in it for the wealth and power, they had mistresses, illegitimate children and often were responsible for the deaths of many people. I have been lucky enough to visit Rome and the Vatican and wonder wether Jesus would be comfortable sitting in such comfort surrounded by luxury when so many of the world are starving and live in abject poverty and be happy that many in the Vatican are corrupt and still in it for what they can get not what they can give. Recent cases of corruption at the highest level evidence this and blight the country. I do not believe that the message of god should be taught by fear and that the church should concentrate on preaching the true message of Jesus, that all gods people no matter what sex. sexual preference, marital status, beliefs, financial position etc are welcome and treated equally without fear of condemnation in his eyes The church should be preaching love and reconciliation to all people and telling them that they are welcome and not in a state of limbo because they don't fit the criteria. Over time, because it will take time, the church has to change and I believe that the church should be helping more people understand the message of Jesus which was to love one another as his father and mother loved him and preach that message before everything else, Jesus did not shy away from people who had gone through difficult times and I don't know of any of his teachings that stated that women could not be priests or that priests could not be married or that loving some one of the same sex was a barrier to the priesthood or a wider enjoyment of life. It may surprise you when I say that my faith is strong, it is, however I believe that my views are shared by my many catholics and I don't think anyone can deny the church is struggling at this time and needs to change. If the Synod is about wanting genuine comment on how it needs to reform then I applaud it. I feel that the church is growing ever weaker and becoming as an institution irrelevant in todays times.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To be involved in everyday life not just theological and be inclusive of every person in the world no matter what their personal styles or choices and provide a supportive loving environment. To see married priests, female priests, gay priests and lay people and for the true message of god preached that has no place for fear and banishment. To have sex and such matters openly discussed and promoted as something wonderful and not sin full and to be ashamed of.

#77

Process Used:

Prayer. Long family discussions before engaging.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
What we say in the Creed

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Following the traditional Catholic faith, standing strong despite current ideologies that are very anti-Catholic (even the Pope has been saying some confusing things). Our parish plays lots of traditional hymns, which are very rich and meditative. Community of believers.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Being too concerned with every governmental rule and not concerned enough about feeding and leading the flock - as a medical exemption I feel judged by priests and congregation when I lower my mask to avoid asthmatic breathing. Closing the churches and not receiving the Eucharist was the worst experience in our Catholic life. Lack of fearless priest, who are not afraid to teach the people: instead of a solid homily we often get some watered down nonsense

What are your dreams for the church?:
To learn about and understand the basics of Catholic faith, to grow in faith, then we will be able to live it and defend it. More people will join (saved souls).

#78

Process Used:

My own reflection on how the church is doing for over 2000 years. I used prayer, understanding the liturgy, reading through history of the Catholic church etc.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
It means that I am special. That we are all heirs to eternal life.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Sadly, nothing.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The Pope's cruelty in banning the Latin Mass whilst asking people to be tolerant and to stop sound proofing yourself from others.

What are your dreams for the church?:
For the Roman Catholic Church to have two global Catechism courses for youngsters and adults. 1. From the ages of 6-18 with a clear formal pattern and structure, which the church would expect every youngster to attend and learn, either online or physically. 2. A history course for adults above the ages of 18 to study the history of the Catholic church. How can we be true Catholic Christians if we do not know these two things?

#79

Process Used:

First and foremost prayer. But also looking and observing what is happening.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
My Catholic Faith is the most important thing in my life.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
The Church is the truth. It is the guardian of the teachings of Jesus Christ. I do think it could better protect these, and sow less confusion. The Church gives us access to the sacraments. The sources of grace through which we experience God's love for us. The Church is where we recieve Christ in the Holy Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our faith. The local parish church is a place of encounter, a place for us to celebrate the sacrifice of Mass but also a gathering place for the local community. However, we need to make it more so by supporting different communities and trying to offer better support networks. Becoming more of a social hub.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
We need to stop the liturgy wars! The recent latin mass measures have seemingly caused much division. The two forms should be seen as mutually building each other up, not in competition with each other. We also need a renewed focus on 'the great commission to baptise all nations' and convert people. We need to start teaching the fundamentals and basics of the faith again and help people, especially the young to see that Catholicism is true and has relevance for them in their lives today. This is not the same as making it modern or cool which in some cases actually turns people off and can be seen as patronising. It is being true, teaching the beauty and transcendent nature of our faith and not being ashamed of it. Perhaps we could also focus a little less on the global warming and migrants, as important as these issues are and more on the salvation of souls? The Church can be bad at transparency and sometimes honesty. This is a perception that people have especially with the abuse scandals. Personally no more plane press conferences from the Pope.

What are your dreams for the church?:
My hope is that we will see a spiritual renewal in our diocese and in the Church as a whole. This will not be easy. The Church is going through a difficult time. My hope and prayer is that we can encourage the lost, the lapsed, and the apathetic to come back to us. But I think this can be done by being true to ourselves and who we are and what we believe and not by changing with the times and the current fads.

#80

Process Used:

1) I read the various Synod local, diocesan and Vatican literature: Parish Newsletters / the Vatican Handbook / the Diocesan Handbook / the Participation Sheet / the Social Media Toolkit. I also attended some Diocesan webinars. 2) I have sent out the Diocesan Handbook, the Vatican Handbook, the Participation Sheet and the suggested Questions to 2 groups that I invited to a Synod Meeting - the parish Laudato Si Group and my wider family. Neither meetings have yet taken place.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:

I feel that I am following Christ. I feel that I am following the Church He established. There is nowhere else that can bring me closer to Jesus. The Catholic Church is a source of much Grace. And it is my duty to point out where she could do better, rather than to leave the Church.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:

What are your dreams for the church?:

There are 4 main areas which I believe the Church would greatly benefit from embracing. 1) Bring the animal kingdom into the Mass Liturgy, Bidding Prayers and Sermons. God's Covenants were with all creatures. God loves all creatures. Their suffering and their lives matter. We never hear about them at Mass. We only hear about our duty to our own species. We have a duty to all creatures and to their habitats. 2) Have an animal/green group in every parish. The natural environment needs all of us to act. My dream for the Church is for green/Laudato Si/ St. Francis groups in parishes all around the world, as common as St. Vincent de Paul groups and Legion of Mary groups. 3) Every parish should have an environment policy, at least as a reference tool for parish activities, if not as a ratified parish document. 4) Parish and diocesan newsletters and websites should encourage contributions from readers/subscribers, from both individuals and from groups. This would cause people to feel much more a part of the Church, and it would mean learning and ideas coming from grass roots to leaders, not just from top to bottom.

#81

Process Used:

Thoughtful reflection over my relationhip with the Church and the Church's treatment of its members

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
The more I think about it, nothing. I'm ashamed to be affiliated with the Church that has harmed so many people, and continues to hold such strong inflexible stances against abortion, euthanasia, LGBTQ+ people, and women in leadership roles. Being told that I am committing mortal sin and should not receive Communion for being the way I am (hurting nobody) is such a sad stance from a Church that supposedly bases itself on the teachings of Jesus who invited all to his table.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Survives and maintains its strong stances that make it an unwelcoming place for others, and inspires and motivates its members to block laws that would allow for human rights to prevail. I've spoken to abortion clinic protestors who are encouraged by the Church to guilt vulnerable pregnant people making the hardest choice of their lives (often for the good of the potential life), to people who cite the Church as a reason for being 'against the LGBTQ agenda', and the recent bill on euthanasia was largely struck down by Church pressure, meaning that so many will continue to die in agony and ungracefully against their will, having less dignity than an animal.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Stop transferring priests who have abused children, stop spreading messages of anti-abortion, anti-euthanasia and anti-LGBTQ+, stop supporting bills and actions that are anti-abortion, anti-euthanasia and anti-LGBTQ+, stop paying priests' salaries and encouraging us to give 'heavy donations' to the Church at the same time. If I'd been born a man I'd be tempted to be a priest just for that, but with the current Church structure not allowing women to have such leadership roles it wouldn't be possible anyway. Stop denying priests the right to a family life, other denominations have shown that a person can be an effective church leader while having a spouse and children if they desire.

What are your dreams for the church?:
To accept its members as they are. To give a message that it does accept everybody unconditionally, and not just say the words but make drastic changes to its structure, actions, and rules. Give women and LGBTQ+ people (why not both?) the opportunity to become priests, bishops and higher, why not a female Pope? My dream would be for the Church to be a place I want to go and feel comfortable with my community and my relationship with God, not a place where I'm reminded that I'm not worthy to even receive Communion and am 'other' because of the way I am and my beliefs of social justice.

#82

Process Used:

Felt that I needed to get my thoughts and feelings about the Catholic Church to a group of people that could potentially action something, rather than just through general conversation.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
The opportunity that my parish church offers me to commune with my God. A quality faith school discerning of its intake. My local Catholic school has recently been closed down and the diocese had been in negotiations with another non faith school to take over the site. This is not acceptable if you want another generation to embrace the faith and with the diocese constantly claiming that the Catholic school and education is important.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Theoretically, it enables access to the sacraments.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
Lying. Be honest, tell the truth about what is going on and tackle issues head on. Stop going for quantity of priests rather than quality. I have been in parishes where terrible damage had been done to the parish itself and it's community and no thought has been given to either from the diocese. In addition, stop moving priests to cover up their inadequacies. And favouring individual parishes thus creating a selective club.

What are your dreams for the church?:
For it to stop being dishonest. For the clergy to go back and look at the Gospels in order to follow the tenets of faith and service displayed by Jesus. Face the reality, engage with the people and don't treat them like idiots. Jesus didn't treat anyone like an idiot. If they didn't understand he explained it to them and he was accepting of EVERYONE.

#83

Process Used:

My responses to the Synod questions are motivated by my life in the Catholic faith.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?:
As a Catholic, it is important to me that I believe in the holy trinity, I hope for life ever after, and I love those I meet. It is important to me that I believe that Jesus Christ came to save us. Finally, it is important to me that I am not a Catholic on my own. I find life with fellow Christians more comfortable.

Experiences of the Church doing something well:
Given there are so few of us, the church is good at reaching out into the community, though the general population needs much more community.

Experiences of when things have not gone so well:
The church should stop saying to people whose life is miserable that it is their vocation. Thus the church should stop doing less. In respect of what I said earlier about being the only Christian, I believe that abortion is wrong, but the church says nothing about the wrongness of being an unwanted child - a state which a Catholic can never grow out of and they remain unwanted and solitary for all their life. This, I think, is a rejection of the Catholic faith, not loving thy neighbour as thyself. I we can't love each other, how can we love God? I'm sure the late Sir David Amess was human as the rest of us, but the gracious things that colleagues said about him, he was a beacon of what it means to be a Catholic.

What are your dreams for the church?:
There will always be people who attack faiths for putting God above man, but my dream for the church is that it's doors are open to non-Catholics and a place of solace and comfort not a place which is weird, oppressive and a place to fear and nor are we some kind of born again crackpots. I welcome the TV series Fr. Brown in this, but I note some TV series pretend that a church is Catholic, and there is no tabernacle, monastery where no prayer takes place. They know we are Christian by our love. I also much enjoyed the programme on the Benedictines, some of whom I know. Another dream is for vocations.

#84

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
It's my life. You know that in times of trouble you know where to go – straight to God. God is with you through everything. 'I couldn't get out of bed without Him'

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
Reaching out to people. Has become more open – teaching more spiritually – inclusive, not teaching using fear. Homilies really reaching out to people and teaching them to love not to judge. The work of the Sisters in Parish/School – Sr Joan, Sr Stephanie, Sr Cecilia, Sr Elizabeth –their work with bereaved, courses on the Holy Spirit, music with children, spiritual guidance and much more. The Church's work with lepers on Molokai Island that I experienced a little of when visiting.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Isolation during COVID – lack of communication and guidance of how to continue without Mass. Could be more support for lonely/struggling – people in parishes to talk to when in need.

What is your dream for the Church?
For the Church to be one, united in love. Reaching out to the young to bring the WHOLE family closer to God and to the church. More use of Music and Dance with the young in Mass as it is uplifting for the soul

#84

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
I am privileged to be a Catholic. I regard myself as following, together with all other Catholics now and once living, the same teaching handed down directly from the apostles who were taught by Christ. I have the certainty in the fundamentals of my beliefs and how to understand the scriptures. Despite all the historic and current travails caused by its sinful human members, I am confident it always was, is and will be the body of Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?
• The apparent ever decreasing number of priests are still somehow managing to provide the Mass and other sacraments to the faithful.
• Continuing vigilance and improvement is always needed but the England and Wales Catholic bishops have established a good safeguarding system.
• Pope Francis is setting a wonderful example to all Catholics, other Christians and the world by his poverty and following the footsteps of St Francis and Christ. He is striving to bring the Church in line with the important Second Vatican reforms.
• They can never be a substitute for physical presence at Mass and to receive the Eucharist, but the recent livestreaming of Masses and other services has enabled those unable otherwise to attend to do so on-line and has been a great success.
• Not quite doing well, but the recent standardisation of Diocesan Parish websites enables all parishes to attain the same standard plus full information to their parishioners.
• Some excellent courses such as the Bible timeline provided to parishioners.

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Many Catholics misunderstand their faith and probably arising from this some have a lack of reverence inside Churches. A lack of understanding also leads some to cease to practise their faith. The Church is generally very poor in use of new technology and has little information automatically always on-line.

What is your dream for the Church?
I wish that all Catholics should properly understand the wondrous beauty of the Mass and their faith in general. The Church should help to resolve the lack of information by much better use of new technology. Every parish should have links to
• the full text of the Bible – both the Vatican and the US bishops have links to the links: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_INDEX.HTM
. https://bible.usccb.org/bible
• the Catechism of the Catholic Church– it is scandalous that hardly any Catholics know this sublime document exists which could resolve so many queries for Catholics and non-Catholics alike about the teaching of the Church https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM
• the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church – a wonderful information source for young people
• the Catholic bishops of England and Wales website
• I appreciate the danger of non-official Church sources but there are countless other information sources such as Catholic answers (https://www.catholic.com/), Catholic Productions, the Augustine Institute, etc
The Church is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. As the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit it is automatically all of these. I long for the human membership of our pilgrim Church who are inevitably sinners who strive for holiness to be even more one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic. The world would recognise it as the body of Christ. To achieve this the Church should be united behind the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and St Francis, and one in accordance with Christ's prayer

(Jn 13:35). I also aspire for the laity to be able to fulfil their vocation to spread the gospel and evangelise and sanctify the world in accordance with Vatican II's Apostolicam Actuositatem.

#85

From: Fr Kenneth Payne

A few thoughts for the Synod as I did not take part in the discussions. Much of what follows has already been expressed in Pope Francis "Let us Dream". Concern for the little people, the humble, the simple, the poor, the marginalised, the ones without a voice, the weary and oppressed, whom Jesus called 'blessed'. (Pope Francis 8/6/14 address)

1. An essential key to the Synod should be the promotion of lay leadership in all aspects of church life, and this could include married priests and women. However, these last two aspects should be left to the decision of the Bishops' conference and dependent on the culture of the country.

2. There should be an emphasis on personal prayer by all, laity and clergy and silence. The latter is often overlooked and one reason why young people are put off the liturgy in our churches is because there is a lack of contemplation. The importance of awareness of our breathing is also important. The world-wide Christian Meditation movement can teach us a lot in this regard. Children have been shown to relish this.

3. The promotion of small active groups led by lay people. This is already high-lighted in Canon Law – 516 and 517 which states – If because of a lack of priests, the diocesan bishop has provided that participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon, to another person who is not a priest or to a community of persons (who are not priests) he is to appoint some priest, who, provided with the powers and faculties of a pastor, is to direct the pastoral care.

4. An important corollary of this would be to ensure that such groups were linked, twinned with similar groups in the poorer areas of the church.

5. A further corollary would be to work with groups, with other Christian and non Christian bodies. There should be as much co-operation as possible regarding climate change, sea pollution and other threats to the environment. We have to live out our faith by caring for our common home and helping young people who suffer from a pandemic of loneliness.

Father Kenneth Payne
(ordained priest 1960)

#86

The Synodal Church
As cradle Catholics my wife and I were strong supporters of Vatican 11 but disappointed that with the death of Pope John XX111 many of the changes proposed by the Council were sidelined.
Over the past 40 years we have engaged in a number of "conversations" at Parish level looking at how the Church should develop in order to better serve the people of God. New initiatives were embraced but there was no fundamental change and the initiatives withered.
Pope Francis is on a mission to change the Church in line with Vatican 11 and needs our support for radical rather than cosmetic change.

Q1 What does it mean to you to be a Catholic?
A1 We believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the true Church founded by Jesus Christ. As members we are able to participate in the Eucharist and enjoy the redemptive love of Christ. We have a set of precepts to follow which inform our relationship with God and our fellow human beings.

Q2 Your experience of the Church doing something well.
A2.
The Catholic Church does overseas work extremely well .Cafod and similar organisations including Missionary Societies provide vital support in the provision of development aid, education and medical assistance on a global basis. At home the work of the SVP and other Catholic agencies is well appreciated.

Q3 Your experience of when things have not gone well.
A3 The Child abuse scandals and the cover ups by the leaders of the Church to protect the institutions at the expense of the victims has been deeply damaging to the Church in the UK and around the world. The leadership of the Church has been found wanting and perhaps the way we educate our priests needs to be reviewed. Is it appropriate to have young men in an all male environment being educated that they are "special"? Clericalism is sadly still a major problem and a factor in many of the cases cited above. It is notable that in our experience priests belonging to orders such as The Carmelites, Dominicans and Sacred Hearts do not seem to see themselves as special so perhaps Diocesan seminaries could be part of the problem?
The ambivalent attitude of some Bishops to Pope Francis's ruling on the place of the Tridentine Mass has been very disappointing.

Q4 What are your dreams for the Church.
A4 A church in which the views of the people in the pews can be heard by the Pope unfiltered by a leadership that often simply ignores them.
A Church that recognises that the overwhelming number of females in the congregation must lead to their greater involvement. This is not just more flower ladies and catechists but female deacons?
The shortage of home grown priests demands a rethink: why not ordain willing Deacons to the priesthood? These men [and possibly women] have life experience beyond the seminary walls and being of the Parish are well placed to recognise and respond to local issues.
Our dream is for a Church which attracts those young people, including many raised in the faith, who currently do not see it as relevant to their lives.

#87

What was the process you used to help discern your responses to the Synod questions?
Prayer.

What does it mean to you to be Catholic?
Sadly, it is currently an uphill battle, fighting against an increasingly secularized institution.

What are some of your experiences of the Church doing something well?

What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?
Poor quality sermons which do not promote authentic Catholic doctrine; heavily Protestantized liturgies which discourage reverent reception of Holy Communion; neglect of the sacrament of confession by the clergy on the basis of grossly over-inflated health and safety 'covid' rules; use of these rules to practically abolish Communion on the tongue; forcing clergy and encouraging laity to accept abortion-tainted 'vaccines'; ineptitude and timidity of bishops in the face of an aggressive anti-Christian secular agenda.

What is your dream for the Church?
A return to authentic Christ-centered liturgies with reverent reception of the sacraments - Communion kneeling at an altar rail, receiving on the tongue. Inspired leadership by bishops who are driven by faith not fear. A bold and confident rejection of the modernist, neo-pagan ideologies that are being pushed on the church from various pressure groups who do not speak for the majority.

Synod Gathering Feedback

Summary - session 1

Session 1: What was the most joyful thing, the most disheartening thing, the most surprising thing we've heard? Where were the prophetic voices?

Most joyful
Love for the Church
People pleased to take part - young, old, not usual suspects
Hearing the faith of the members of the parish - telling stories
Being together again
Being able to speak openly - feeling safe
Learning a new process that can be used elsewhere
"Unlocking our voices"

Most disheartening
People not taking part - cynicism, apathy, not trusting the process
Fear of saying the wrong thing
Lack of young people
Very hard to reach the marginalised - we tried!
Timescales - initially difficult to understand process
Some parishes did not talk about the role of women/married priests
Overwhelmed clergy

Most surprising
"That this crazy process is working"
Number of people who want dramatic change - divorced, LGBT more inclusive church
So many people saying the same things
How much young people wanted their voices heard - when they took part

Prophetic Voices
Role of women, particularly in church
Youth
Small is good
We need bottom up/top down to bring about change
The Pope is prophetic
Listening in unexpected places
Revolutionary process - if we are serious things will change

Summary - session 2

What new perspectives have opened up? Where is the Holy Spirit leading us? What should our next steps be as a diocese?

There was such a variety of responses to these questions that this summary can only bring together the main themes. The full text is below.

New perspectives

What the laity can do when they are empowered/invited. This has been a mostly lay-led process.
Make more of this into the future.
People are more open than we thought
We need to keep talking
Engage laity to step up in parishes, and share best practice
The process has highlighted key elements of things already known
Highlighted that we should and can reach the marginalised
Allowing women to talk about their vocation within the Church and encourage this

Where is the Holy Spirit leading us?

The Holy Spirit is the power in the Church - will work wonders
We will/must change
More openness/listening/parish councils
"We are the agents of change!"
The vision and mission for the pastoral area is endorsed by this process
Pastoral care of those not in 'good standing' with the Church
Holy Spirit asking all to listen
To give positive direction to the young ones
More diversity in the hierarchy of the Church

Next steps

"Try and reach the parts other Synods have not reached!"
Spirit needs to help us to re-organise the Church for the world of today
Need for parish plans , eg day of reflection, to take the Synod process forward or people will be cynical
Every parish should have a parish leadership team, including finance committee
Clarity from diocese regarding LGBTQ+, divorcees, married priests. Parishioners need to know and understand
Encourage the youth by asking them to get involved
Show people what we have to offer
Become one people guided by our bishop
All the diocesan groups - eg NYMO - are included in the outcomes of the Synod and be ready to act
Examples of good practice from each parish recognised by the diocese
Produce resources to help parents guide their children
Make it ok to come back
Women deaconesses - parishes will close unless we have women as ministers

Full text: Session 1

What was the most joyful thing, the most disheartening thing, the most surprising thing we've heard? Where were the prophetic voices?

NB - not all feedback sheets had their group number on.

Group x
Most joyful
Young people sharing the joy
Sharing our faith with others
People pleased to be asked for their views and have the chance to contribute
Love for the Church, people, Jesus, priests - God's community
The listening process a gift that can be used in other situations
Diversity of people involved
Listening to youngsters in schools - lifted our hearts. All about Jesus, not about structures

Most disheartening
People are angry and hurt. Many grey haired people, only 3 youngsters in church.
Families stop coming because nothing for children.
Different views on receiving the sacraments
People pushed away, and not drawn back following difficult circumstances
Lack of engagement by parishioners and parents/teachers at school
Fear of saying what you think - not saying the right things.
Overwhelmed clergy

Most surprising
This process
People were splitting off faith from politics
Dreams simply put
Involved whole church universally, hopefully guided by the Spirit
Surprised the process particularly well organised and proactive in this diocese.
Loyalty in spite of negatives

Prophetic Voices
St Paul - I have become all things to all men
Role of women, particularly in church
Youth
Rooted in the word of God
Catholic Church isn't flip-flopping from change-change
Children worshipping and knowing the wonder, power and beauty of God

Group x
Most joyful
Seeing people come in both young and old
Hearing the faith of the members of the parish
We rarely talk about God or our faith journeys
Just meeting and speaking about spiritual matters
Two way channel of conversation

Most disheartening
Lack of young people
That which has been excluded in responses
Initial cynicism - led to some not engaging
Overwhelmed clergy

Most surprising

Beauty of liturgy
Want of change/adaptation

Group x
Most joyful
Real conversation with people
"Unlocking our voices"

Most disheartening
People most active were the ones involved - hard to reach families and marginalised
Nothing will change, it will be diluted

Most surprising
Number of people who want dramatic change - divorced, LGBT more inclusive
Turn pyramid upside down

Prophetic Voices
Turn pyramid upside down!

Group x
Most joyful
Children were happy to be part of this
Felt part of a family
Openness of people to love

Most disheartening
Youth - went through sacraments and felt isolated, not cared for, other churches more receptive
Mass and homily did not seem relevant to young people - 'influencers' are more relevant
Inconsistency of rules and their application

Most surprising
Other churches are more receptive
Lack of understanding of faith
"Priest's job is not ours - leave it to the priest"

Prophetic Voices
Youth experience and feedback from their world
Need a bigger voice and message of what matters
Those who teach on behalf of the Church should be skilled to do so
Re-learn how to communicate

Group x
Most joyful
V joyful, people wanting to join, something important for them
Sense of harmony, friendship, we are all so similar
Cathartic experience - not being corrected when speaking their views
Privilege to hear people's honesty
Going to people's homes for individual conversation
People trusting the process
Being thanked - because it was worthwhile

Most disheartening
Attempts to reach people on the margins failed
Small % of parish involved
Negativity beforehand - nothing will come of it
Initially v hard process - disbelief it could be done
Usual suspects attending initial meeting

Most surprising
Harmony - thoughts mirrored elsewhere
So many people saying the same things
People we thought might not take part, did
Surprising re married priests

Prophetic Voices
Some inspired thoughts

Group 5
Most joyful
Expressed sense of community, love of God, belonging
We are good at keeping the faith teachings/doing the right thing
Talking and sharing

Most disheartening
Not having answers, eg lack of priests/ignorance of faith among parishioners
Not knowing what is happening in other countries
Human frailities/lack of real communication/no mention of women's role
Reported experience of newcomers - church cold, lonely, unwelcoming

Most surprising
That this crazy process is working
Difference between what people say and what they do
Effort people have made to continue to attend Mass through the pandemic
People have had more time to read the Bible
Children have wanted their voices heard in this process
Zoom = good for housebound

Prophetic Voices
Small is good
We need bottom up/top down to bring about change
The Pope is prophetic
Youth voices

Group 6
Most joyful
Heartened by today, opportunity for ordinary people to talk.
Good experience of small groups with facilitators.
Dreams were important - survival important!
Now need open discussion with clergy

Most disheartening
Not always a good uptake in a large parish, but the quality of feedback was amazing.

Some groups mostly grumbled and didn't seem able to look to the future.
How do we engage those of other faiths?
Big questions for the whole church not addressed
Some parishes did not talk about the role of women/married priests

Most surprising
15% parish attending - and enthusiastic

Prophetic Voices
Friendship of others
Listening in unexpected places

Group 7
Most joyful
Love of community - tea and coffee after Mass, Alpha courses
Coming together - after Covid especially
Value of being part of the universal Church
Passion of what it means to be Catholics
Seeing women be joyful about the dream of women's ordination

Most disheartening
We don't share/celebrate our faith enough. We are not passionate enough
Passionate RE teachers needed
Passion for faith in the family also
Lack of response to the Synod process in general, lack of willing listeners
Still a large gap between lay people and clergy (both people not coming forward, and people not being asked)

Most surprising
Phobia about saying to others that you are Catholic
How people opened up
How engaged people were with this process
How many people wanted to see more involvement of women
The number of divorced people who felt ashamed to go to Mass

Prophetic Voices
More roles for women
Depth of response from young people
Consistency of church teaching
Bigger role for laity
We don't need to wait for the outcome of this process, we can run with this now.
How the young can be miss-understood

Group 8
Most joyful
Joy in returning to church after having time away
Ongoing study available to individuals - a blessing
Confirmation group was delighted to be involved.
Feeling part of the family, at home. Having things in common.

Most disheartening
Discussion with youngsters - they have experienced the sacraments and feel nobody cares about them within the Church. Feel more welcome in other Christian churches where they feel more welcome and loved.
Those too old for children's liturgy feel excluded and unable to understand message of Eucharist
Youngsters learning from social media rather than the Church.
Divorcees feel excluded and isolated

Most surprising
Lack of understanding of the faith - a low bar
Leaving so much to the priests rather than stepping up and taking an active part. This would be more like a true family.
LGBT - need a clearer message from the Church, not "no" but an explanation.
More joined with other denominations.
Those teaching the faith need to be fully qualified and informed

Prophetic Voices
Disassociation of youth - in areas improving but still much to do
Tended to be older people who took part in the conversation
Need priests to be bolder in speaking up on church teaching.

Group 9
Most joyful
The depth of the sharing
The release of individual outpouring of people's stories
Opportunity of people taking part
Voice of women heard
Marginalised - support and joy from those we were not expecting
Divergent views, reflection of the larger part of the Church
The Church being willing to listen
The effect on the facilitators leading the conversation
Rediscovering gifts

Most disheartening
Passive response of the parish
Timescale, rushed to organise
Reaching those on the margins was challenging
Many did not want to get involved
Cynicism about the Church's response
Very few men involved

Most surprising
People wanting to do this more regularly
Generated follow up activities within the parish
Answers from the children and what that meant for them
Prophetic Voices
LGBT/divorced people and inclusion in the Church
Wake up and do something
Revolutionary process - if we are serious things will change
Listening Church
Reaching out beyond the "Catholic bubble"

Group 10
Most joyful
Quality of purpose and communication
Able to speak freely, to express views 'from the heart'
Small beginnings - safe space to say very different things
Good use of prayerful silence
Speaking without criticism

Most disheartening
Some things not seen in perspective - eg child abuse occurs in all professions/walks of life
Process mostly taken up by the regular church members - difficult to reach the margins
Integration of 'non-British' parishioners difficult
Youth mainly absent
One parish made everyone fill in a form after Mass!
Difficulty of knowing how any changes could be made
Some clergy quite resistant

Most surprising
Emotional response - some cried in group sessions
Delighted to have this opportunity
Those who needed most support were least represented

Prophetic Voices
Need to be more inclusive
Role of women
Support for priests caring for a cluster of parishes - overworked
Move towards change inevitably slow
Need for deeper ecumenical understandings
Education of adult Catholics - deeper understanding of our church, faith, discipleship, social action, inviting others to experience what we do as Catholics

Group 11
Most joyful
Getting to know people - hearing them tell their story
Knowing that the information is going to the Pope - change is coming
Honesty of people
Respect for each other
Appreciation of support

Most disheartening
Challenges of families with physical challenges find it difficult to access fellowship
People felt individual living not appreciated with the faith and teachings
People feeling sad

Most surprising
People losing their faith in the church
Catholic teachings are restrictive

Prophetic Voices
How the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church through the Pope

Group 12
Most joyful
Celebrating our lives
Reaffirmation of the love of being Catholic
Talking together as a community
People getting involved in the sessions (not normal individuals!)
Honoured to serve God and the Blessed Mother
Listening to the youth
People coming together to be positive about the future of the Church
Priests love being priests
Belonging - a peg that we can hang our lives on
Joy of being able to question without blame
Humbling

Most disheartening
Mistrust of the institute and hierarchy - disempowering
Scandals - hiding/mismanaging
Decisions not justified or shared
People not wanting to admit to being Catholic because of the scandals
Negativity about reaching out
People feel isolated at church/excluded
People not feeling able to defend the Church and their faith
Liturgy and language of the Church - too old and dated

Most surprising
People stuck in their own bubble
Response positive to Pope Francis!
Faith keeps people coming, not the Church
How open people were
Almost like a counselling session for people feeling hurt
God is in all of us

Prophetic Voices
Hearing the Holy Spirit in all ages

Full Text Session 2:

What new perspectives have opened up? Where is the Holy Spirit leading us? What should our next steps be as a diocese?

New perspectives:
Invert the pyramid? More leadership from the laity
People are more open than we thought
Shared responsibilities between lay and priests
Let the people run the parish "operationally"
Share best practice 'plagiarise with pride'
Youth - we need to reach into their world not expect youth to join our world -eg WhatsApp, Instagram

Keep the channels of engagement
Church listening and open for change
Looking for voices that have not previously been heard, valuing the voices of the people
Willingness of the people to engage with this

Opportunity for change - could be met with frustration if nothing happens as a result of the Synod
Change of perspective of the middle (not the Pope, not the laity)
Awakening the laity to the need to step up to support the clergy

No new perspectives: instead
- A light shone on what we've done
- Sense of the faithful
- God is at the centre of our life
- Openness to the world
- Being part of the universal BODY - we are the Church
- Celebrate diversity of parish

Opportunity to share and not wait for next time, continue dialogue
Priests to do less with laity taking more responsibility - together we can
Don't be afraid of change
Digital church - online for all
General absolution online?

Listening and reacting, communications, dialogue with parish
Look at gaps and find a way - focus on the things we can change
Lack of men in process
Can we activate "passive parishioners"?

Concentrate on 4 main areas: youth, priests, welcome, prayer groups
Start focus groups to continue to work on the issues

Good to see there are things that can be said - people want it to move on
The value of listening - better collaboration between laity, clergy and hierarchy
But some things we can't do anything about - it's not in our power. Change the things we can change, where needed
Sometimes difficult for clergy - how to meet everyone's needs, differences in culture/language/nationality.
Contribution of Catholic schools

Highlighted that we should and can reach the marginalised
Real desire for lay people to be more involved - let's move on from "we've done this before and nothing happened"
New way of engaging with one another
Is the public view of us too harsh?

The process has highlighted key elements of things already known
Willingness to be open about issues
There's a place for women through their own merits
Allowing women to talk about their vocation within the Church and encourage this
Acknowledge the role that women play within the Church at the moment
Acknowledge women's role in the community

Language of communicating - open conversations with church leadership
Being able to raise sensitive conversations
Encouraging all to become good listeners

Laity - are more involved and have to be because of lack of priests
Priests cannot do everything!! Use others with skills
New emphasis on 'awakening' mature Catholics - God isn't finished with us yet
Formation for priests has to change - teach has to be on 'our' Church, not the priest. Has to be us, we need teaching
Priests need to embrace new ways - be brave!
People generally more educated
Make the most of what we've got
Need to reverence God in each one of us
Value each other across the churches - we have lots to learn from other denominations

Holy Spirit leading us:
The Holy Spirit is the power in the Church - will work wonders
We will/must change
Talk with young people to share ideas and engage both groups
We the people, we the Church, we are one, we are many
Wake up for the laity
Living out our baptism
More awareness of the direction of the Church (role of mission)
Promote Pope Francis' teachings and sayings - look outwards
Modernising the Church - listening to each other - having listened take action
Vatican 3?
Back to basics - cherish the faith, openness and welcoming, healing and returning

More openness/listening/parish councils
To be in better communion with God
Holy Spirit is leading us to talk to one another
Change of role - priest as manager, other groups carry out his 'work', rigorous evaluation
Acknowledge different kinds of community - success of zoom in reaching some
Should we have house groups?

"We are the agents of change!"
The vision and mission for the pastoral area is endorsed by this process

Pastoral care of those not in 'good standing' with the Church
How we communicate truths about difficult areas of teaching eg sexual orientation, gay relationships
Should church values change in some areas - contraception, sex before marriage, divorce, even abortion?
Need interpretations we can trust - do we only hear what we want to hear?
Effect of 'fast and brutal' high tech communications - instant responses required

Be more open - not just do the things we always do
The Holy Spirit is leading us to himself
Bring the teaching of the church into the modern world
An openness - are we being lead into unchartered territory?
To be brave - to stand firm - to be ready

Engaging more
Recognising the wider church
Holy Spirit asking all to listen
To give positive direction to the young ones
More diversity in the hierarchy of the Church

Holy Spirit is calling the Christian denominations to learn the good bits from each other, recognise the weakness and move forward in 'God's church' with different expressions
New ways of being Church

Next steps as a diocese
"Try and reach the parts other Synods have not reached!"
Need to talk to the poor, needy, lapsed, young etc
Sharing best practice, success, etc
More opportunities to talk and share
Every parish should have a parish leadership team, including finance committee
Leadership training required
Build on the cluster model
"Train the willing to be able"
Spirit needs to help us to re-organise the Church for the world of today
Social media
Clergy and laity become one

Feed into the national conversation
Pray for discernment for the next stage
Maintain this group/momentum - use it as a model to prepare for mission
Use the synodal process to plan how we carry out evangelisation - unifying the diocese
Identify a common vision/pathway for parishes across the diocese (parish plan)
Continue to meet, listen and pray
How do we love the people in our parish? How do we show love for those outside our parish? (How do they know they are loved?)
Find community projects to draw people into the Church

We now have a voice - we feel more included - we can speak without judgement
This sort of synod should be repeated frequently - build on this opportunity
Don't forget that clergy are human too - give them space
Need to reach out to all ages - respond to people appropriately
Make more of the social teaching of the Church, open to all
Homilies have to be more relevant
Parish has to be welcoming
Go out and evangelise

Explanation of the powers of the Bishop in relation to parish issues - eg communion to divorcees
Clarity from diocese regarding LGBTQ+, divorcees, married priests. Parishioners need to know and understand
Look at Mass times in relation to working hours
Expand the mission
Use the youth to attract the youth
Greater transparency

De-centralisation but balanced

This has been a largely lay-lead process. Lay people can do this!
Need for parish plans , eg day of reflection, to take the Synod process forward or people will be cynical
Engage young people - through confirmation, through Catholic "childline" to discuss issues of faith, not just big events like Blaze but local engagement
Catechesis for parents
Women deaconesses - parishes will close unless we have women as ministers
Ordination of deacons as non-stipendiary priests?
Improving websites, interpersonal communications, D of E type programme for young people
Build communities of love - 'being a blessing to others'

Work plan/sharing expertise/set expectations
Encourage people to come together in different parts of the diocese
Examples of good practice from each parish recognised by the diocese
Produce resources to help parents guide their children
Parent pack/helpline eg St Gregory's society
How do we evolve our communities and live the Gospel?
Plan for priests
Do we really love each other?

The Mass needs to change - it is too old fashioned - style not content!
Increase activities /services for children
Help post-18 yr olds at university to stay involved
Make it ok to come back
Understand the tension between Church and society - remember the truths of our faith
Manage people's expectations about what we can/should change
We have opened up the way we dialogue - benchmark other churches
Think about the language in the liturgy
Understand the strategy for finance etc for the diocese
Involve parishes in the selection of priests

Youth pilgrimages funded by parish communities
Sense of 'downturn' when returning to own parish after excitement of pilgrimage

More Catholics in local and national government
Show people what we have to offer
Continuing good communication
Build our diocesan participation
Become one people guided by our bishop
All the diocesan groups - eg NYMO - are included in the outcomes of the Synod and be ready to act
A plan - another day like this - a 'think tank'
Keep the momentum
Making better use of the website: videos, weekly talks, direct this to young people also
NYMO also to use social model to reach out to young people
Part of the Synod reach out to Catholic schools
Use the Synod ecumenically
Stay faithful in small things

Continue to listen

Be open to ideas
Explore the ministry of lay men and women
Encouraging the youth by asking them to get involved

Ask these questions of other denominations to draw on their strengths and wisdom
Evangelical church is growing - the Holy Spirit is moving
Keep using tools like zoom
Conversion - to a living God
Homilies must reflect how Scripture is working in my life
Build action plans
Improve welcome, community promoted, each parish is accountable for seeing how God is calling churches, priests laity
Needs to be more than a Mass centre
Invest in youth
Invest in teaching older people
Equip people with Biblical teaching to live their calling