



## Parish of Our Lay Help of Christians & St Lawrence

### SYNOD

#### Themes emerging from conversations

##### What does it mean to you to be a 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.

##### What are some of your 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).

##### What are some of your 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 our 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.

*2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 – Ash Wednesday*