

An examination of the Christ the King Synod Report, and suggestions on how the People of the Parish might take the Synod report forward.

The Synod process examined the views of the parishioners under three general headings

1. Participation
2. Mission
3. Communion

The first point to make is to recognise that there are matters that have been brought up in the report, that we as ordinary lay parishioner have no power to alter. These mainly relate to

- who our priests are- Single men/Married men/Women
- Women's role in the Sacramental life of the Church
- What should be done about the perceived Wealth of the Church
- The inclusivity of the Sacraments.(Divorce/remarriage/reception of the Eucharist)

It is entirely legitimate for these items to have been raised in the Synod discussions, and highlighted in the report. Having been brought to the attention of the Archdiocese and higher Church Authorities, it will be interesting to see whether and how these matters are addressed in the final analysis.

One of the paradoxes of a large scale consultation such as this, is the range of views expressed-some people want no change, or even a return to earlier times and practices, and some want radical changes at all levels. Urban Myths and partial truths are often expressed as definite "Facts". It is also true that it is much easier to point out what is wrong with the parish and church at large, than it is to offer ways and means of improvement. If we are to gain anything from this process, we must recognise that for those matters we can influence, the answers lie in our hands. The report states that "We must all take responsibility to do this.

The positives

The report highlighted many positives

- There is a healthy spirit of lay involvement
- There are numerous groups appealing to various ages and interests which run successfully. These include but are not limited to Mother and toddler/junior club/bereavement/liturgy/music groups, and the Circle of Friends
- The volunteer stewards and the general Covid safeguarding process was seen as a great success
- The Live Streaming of masses and other services continues to be a great success
- The parish is financially sound
- Christ the King church buildings are well maintained and fit for purpose.
- Christ the King Primary school is a successful and well respected entity.

- Christ the King parish is well represented on many of the Three Churches groups

The negatives

The report also highlighted a number of negatives

- There was dissatisfaction that there is no longer a 10.30am Sunday mass, which was regarded as the Family mass with a Children's liturgy.
- Communication between parishioners was difficult because of the lack of a Parish register
- The Newsletter was considered to be of poor quality and content.
- Communication from Clergy to people was stated as being poor
- The Clergy and higher Church Authorities were seen as "autocratic" and "out of touch". There is a disconnect between the people and the ordained priesthood.
- There was a perceived lack of Leadership
- The parish has an aging mass going population This may put the future of some of the church Groups at risk
- The participation of young families is limited

The "abandonment of the 10.30 mass" is mentioned twice in the report, saying that it was the result of a decision by the parish priest. This is not the case. Due to the limited number of priest, the previous Archbishop instructed all parishes to reduce the number of Sunday masses. At the time there was one priest serving the three churches, with assistance being given by the parish priest of a neighbouring parish. A working party, with representatives from all three churches, was set up to decide on the various mass times and locations. It was inevitable that compromises had to be made by all three churches, and resulted in the current mass times. Whilst it may not be everyone's first choice at CTK, the process endeavoured to make the widest choice of mass times for the majority of people. With regard to the Children's liturgy, there is no reason why this cannot be part of the 9.00am Sunday mass. However, several invitations for volunteers to run the Children's liturgy have not resulted in a positive outcome

Improving Participation

This can be seen as both a strength and a weakness of the parish community. There are many examples of high levels of participation in parish activities, a good example was the stewarding during the pandemic. However there are a good number of examples where a request for volunteers has not resulted in a good outcome. Examples of this are

- The flower group
- The cleaning group
- The social group
- Help for the junior club

- Nominations for the Parish Advisory Council

Improving participation will only be brought about if more people are prepared to step forward and take an active part in parish life. The more people to carry out these tasks, the less onerous they become for all.

Collectively we must seek to involve younger people in the ecumenical and secular life of the parish, as without their involvement, the future of the church is in jeopardy.

Improving Communications

There are several quick wins to be had in response to the process

1. The newsletter- this has been restored to its original format of 4 pages. The content and layout of the newsletter should be reviewed on a continual basis, and an expanded Editorial group could be set up to improve the quality and production of the Newsletter
2. Parish Register –this is regarded as a necessity however, what information is held, who has access to this information, and where the information is kept and safeguarded, are all questions that need to be addressed and agreed by the Parish. It would be up to each individual to decide whether or not they would be prepared to provide their personal information, and the task of collecting, collating and maintaining this register will be a significant task requiring a financial and time commitment
3. When the new members are elected to the Parish Advisory Council at the AGM, a “Who’s Who” board with pictures can be compiled and displayed in the church porch, so that individual members can be identified. In that way any suggestions complaints and ideas for improvement could be communicated through the PAC members to one of the bi-monthly PAC meetings

Improving Leadership

Leadership was a common thread that ran through all three themes of Participation, Mission and Communion. It mainly related to a lack of leadership at parish and diocesan level.

Leadership should not be a single point responsibility. We have a collective responsibility to be both leaders where it is appropriate, and also committed followers at other times. The parish leaders and especially the parish clergy, must have a higher visibility and must not only be involved, but must be seen to be involved in all aspects of parish life.

It will also be up to each of the parish group to show leadership and decide for themselves how they will implement the synod recommendations.

With the appointment of a new Archbishop, it is hoped that a new broom will sweep away this criticism of lack of leadership, and engender a new spirit of enthusiasm in the diocese that will cascade down through all levels of the Church.

Finally, a big thank-you to the small group of parishioners, who devoted a great deal of time and effort in managing the Discovery phase of the Synod process. What is now needed is similar commitment from the whole parish community, in the Delivery Phase of the process.

Prepared by and on behalf of Christ the King Parish Advisory Council in response to the Synod report