



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

SYNOD 2021-23

PARISH REPORT

The Parish of St. Joseph, New Zealand Rd
Town/City Cardiff CF14 3BR.

To be submitted no later than **Monday 21st March 2022**

Introduction – Special Characteristics of the Parish

St. Joseph’s is an inner city Rosminian parish, close to The University Hospital of Wales and Cardiff University. St Joseph’s primary school is part of the parish and St Joseph’s social club. The parish is served by 2 priests, a brother and 2 Deacons. Parishioners are ethnically diverse and many work in the hospital and University. Due to the school and university, the age range is a good mix of young, old and family groups. Approximately 300 parishioners attend Sunday Mass and we had 59 contributions to the synodal process: made up of face-to-face attendance, email and handwritten responses.

Methodology

<u>Nov 2021</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Comment</u>
	<p>The two Parish Representatives were appointed by the Parish Advisory Council and in November attended the online training sessions and developed plans for moving forward.</p>	
<u>Dec 2021</u>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>In Advent an explanation of the Synod process and the term synodality was placed in the weekly bulletin to continue every week until the end of February 2022.</p> <p>The questions from the Archdiocese of Southwark were distributed to all parishioners with an explanation so that they could be used for reflection over the Christmas period.</p> <p>A reflection/response postbox was placed at the back of church for</p>	<u>Comment</u>

	<p>parishioners who wanted to send in written comments.</p> <p>Parish representatives were named and parishioners encouraged to contact them with queries through the parish office.</p> <p>Discussions continued with the parish priest and clergy who remained supportive and enthusiastic throughout the process.</p>	
<u>Jan 2022</u>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Working within the Welsh government’s Covid guidelines, dates for 4 meetings for parishioners in the parish hall were advertised at all Masses and in the bulletin.</p> <p>The Parish representatives spoke at every mass and explained synodality in detail and advertised the meetings, the listening wall and postbox. The Masses were livestreamed so those unable to return to church and watching at home were kept informed.</p> <p>The housebound were asked to let us know if they wanted to take part but couldn't get to the meetings.</p> <p>A listening wall was set up at the back of church.</p>	<u>Comment</u>
<u>Feb 2022</u>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Four (weekly) meetings were held in the parish hall.</p> <p>(Two meetings where parishioners were invited, a meeting where those who had</p>	<u>Comment</u>

	<p>left the church were invited and a meeting for parish groups).</p> <p>An extra Meeting was arranged in St Joseph's social club at the request of the club manager and members, and supported by the Parish Priest.</p> <p>The Archdiocesan Zoom meeting, hosted by Frank Callus, for those who had left the church was advertised together with his contact email address.</p>	
<p><u>March 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>This Report written up after assimilating all responses both written and oral. General themes were identified.</p> <p>The report was shared with the Parish advisory group and parish clergy prior to being sent to the Archdiocese. The report was published in the weekly newsletter and on the parish website. We are grateful to all those parishioners who attended the meetings or contributed their views in other ways.</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p>

Communion- How does our Church function in our local area?

The church provides Mass daily throughout the week with 3 Masses on Sunday. The rosary is said before weekly Mass and Benediction once every Wednesday. Holy Communion is taken to the housebound. Online Masses continue as they did throughout the pandemic. There is an active St Vincent De Paul society, which supports those in need in the parish. The SVP have specifically mentioned “the massive generosity” of the parish during the pandemic which has enabled it to continue to help families in poverty.

Theme: All respondents were happy with the support they received during the pandemic and felt it had brought the parish closer together. A respondent commented that “the spirit was working within the parish” during this time of trial, and that they had found that when the church first opened for private prayer the experience was very moving and humbling. Many commented on how much support the ‘Church’ had given them throughout their life, “In good times and bad”. A commentator said that St Joseph's priests and clergy team were welcoming and friendly, open to listening and working collaboratively with the laity.

Theme: A parishioner felt that Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament should be the focal point of the parish and lamented the absence of the Corpus Christi processions.

Theme: There were comments that Catholics should be confident to speak out about issues such as abortion and should be able to explain their underpinning beliefs with regard to contentious issues to non- Catholics.

Theme: There was division on women's role in the church, one commentator did not feel there should be female priests or deacons and that female roles were distinct but different. Some pointed to biblical tradition directing rules regarding gender roles. Most others felt there should be a greater role for women and mentioned female deacons in the early church. Some men and women thought the church should consider a female priesthood to align with present day attitudes of equality of opportunity and to plug gaps with the decline in priestly vocations. Many felt that Nuns should be able to take on many more active roles in the church rather than remaining cloistered.

One person commented that “the church excludes half the population from its ranks”.

Theme: There was strong support for a married priesthood which again cited the time of the early church and the lack of priestly vocations as a justification for this view. Could a dual pathway of priesthood exist with both married and unmarried ordinations? People also wondered if the recent scandals in the church would have been averted if priests could marry. Another parishioner also suggested that by having a family, priests might better understand the problems parishioners face in marriage and in bringing up children.

Participation – How do we work with others in supporting our local area?

Theme: Prior to the pandemic there had been a drive to enhance the parish community, the parish priest personally approaching parishioners for their input into parish events. This was felt to be more productive of volunteers than a general invitation to help.

Social events and regular fundraising events were organised and enjoyed: at the social club, quiz nights, Union of Catholic Mothers events and fetes, and coffee after Sunday Mass. Walking groups, swimming groups, have been popular in the past and might be started up again post-pandemic.

Some felt parishioners should be encouraged to take more personal responsibility and get involved in parish life. Many felt that parishioners should be encouraged to recognise and use their talents for the community.

Theme: Most people felt that more needed to be done for young people as they are the future of the church. Encouraging the youth to participate was important and people felt that young children need to be given a firm basis for their faith and parents needed to be supported in this task. The parish has sought out young people to participate in the mass as readers, altar servers etc. and some felt it was important to make Mass more interesting and entertaining eg gospel singing, as some young people found it “boring”. It was felt that the strong community activities of the past should be brought back e.g. youth clubs, parish communal events. Personal invitations to groups might help.

The idea of “Messy Church” was suggested where children were welcomed into church and were given access to a variety of artistic and sensory media in order to comprehend biblical stories e.g. sand, paint, paper, water.

Having a chaplain in each school was a suggestion which would increase the development and growth of children’s spiritual development in schools.

One parishioner suggested we should celebrate our racial diversity and highlight Saint’s days dear to other countries. We have a large Indian, Philippine and African population and we could honour their patron Saints and those of parishioners from other countries around the world.

Pilgrimage was also suggested as a wonderful way to inspire young and old to be involved together. We have a local devotion to Our Lady of Penrhys . A parishioner praised Belmont Abbey, which hosts local retreats both face to face and on Zoom, and is a wonderful resource for all parishioners to deepen their spiritual life.

A special Mass and meal were arranged monthly pre-pandemic for young people and University students, it was hoped this could soon start up again.

It was felt by many that vibrant friendly groups would support the parish and welcome non-Catholic local people. “We must stop being exclusive and be more friendly”.

A participant had attended an Alpha course and felt it could be useful for parishioners to deepen and reflect on their faith. Pre-pandemic our deacon ran a Bible study group which supported parishioners' continued spiritual development.

A commentator felt that we needed to examine our role and that of Catholic schools in encouraging young people to develop their personal relationship with Jesus Christ and our mission to go out to proclaim the Good News.

Theme: At a meeting for those who had left the church it was evident that some had felt hurt and excluded. Some people who genuinely loved the church and felt they had a strong personal love of God said they felt alienated and rejected when they disagreed with church teachings on contraception, homosexuality, women's roles in the church, and abortion. They felt they would not be welcomed to return to church where lifestyle choices conflicted with church teaching.

We had a comment about the LGBTQ community saying they felt rejected but they also were created by God and we have a duty of love towards them also.

Some cited Boris Johnson's marriage in a Catholic church as causing disquiet as it was difficult for people who felt rejected by the church to understand. Better communication from the hierarchy about contemporary issues and decision making could be helpful.

A commentator said "the attitude of the church to divorce must change or too many people will be denied the right to receive Holy Communion". It was suggested we should be more inclusive." The Church should re-inforce the "come back to me" message that God is love and merciful.

There were comments that existing parishioners should not be forgotten and should also feel welcome as they quietly practice their faith at the same time as welcoming newcomers. A respondent felt that they preferred a life of contemplation, prayer and worship within the church and were personally not suited to evangelisation. They felt the church should embrace all the various talents of laity and value those whose worship resides in a quieter prayer life.

Mission: How do we take the Gospel message out from our parish community?

Theme: Many commented that our beliefs and hopes were a force for good and that we should celebrate the good things in Christianity and consciously live in harmony with the local community, one person termed this "intentional discipleship".

In order to reach out to the local community there is involvement with the Churches Together Association.

There was a suggestion of organising a “Fathers’ group” or “Men’s group” in a similar way that the UCM supports women.

Quite a few parishioners advocated greater use of technology, such as continuing online Mass, using Zoom for meetings and support groups. This might also help those who have left the church to ask questions in a forum which might clarify some misconceptions, offer support and fraternity and assure people that they are welcome in church.

All local streets are leafleted with invitations to parish fetes and events such as Carols at Christmas and this should continue.

A new initiative has built on previous good work with our local leisure centre. The centre has a velodrome and a “bike-athon” has been organised in May to raise funds for the church roof. The centre organisers have provided the velodrome and parking free of charge to foster local engagement with families.

Our Clergy visit parishioners who are alone or unwell and attend parishioners in the local hospital to offer support. Links between the parish primary school and the church are supportive of Catholic education. Suggestions were made that parents should be more fully included in masses and celebrations in school. The parish supports the Rainbow of Hope foodbank. Homeless people often ask for help at the presbytery.

Any other matters that do not fit under the three thematic headings of Communion, Participation & Mission

Some people stated that they were not hopeful about the synodal process as “nothing changes” and the church hierarchy never truly listens to the people. One commented that they “felt connected to St Josephs but not to the diocese”. All were positive about our present Pope and his leadership of the church.

Some mentioned that the way the Church dealt with abusers lacked transparency and independent oversight, “marking your own homework”. The reputation of the Church suffered greatly from the child abuse disgrace and its cover up in many cases. The culpability and complicity of the hierarchy cannot be ignored. Apologising for this is not enough and the Church must show how it has addressed and rectified its previous behaviour. The details of the current system of vetting candidates for ministries in the church and for preparing them for those ministries must be explained, as must the way in which future allegations will be independently investigated.

One person was concerned that Catholics were forming factions, either from the traditional sectors of the church or liberal sector of the church. They commented that “we must strive to listen to each other with charity and tolerance”.

The age of Confirmation of our Youth and the pros and cons of receiving Confirmation earlier or later for children and which age would best support their future growth in faith were discussed.

A parishioner raised concerns over the enormous increase in childhood allergies nationwide and asked how did the Archdiocese communicate to parents of these children that they can supply hosts which are suitable and safe for them.

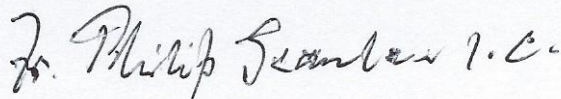
The Church should celebrate and publicise the good works that it does. It is not seen as a good communicator, it needs to be clearer and make greater use of plain language (some of the Synod document were difficult to understand because of the language used).

Sign Off

This Report is submitted to the Diocesan Synodal Team on behalf of the Parish community of St Joseph, New Zealand Rd, Cardiff, CF14 3BR

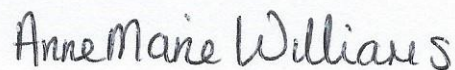
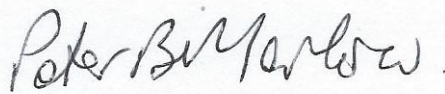
It is an honest reflection of the work undertaken over the last five months and has been endorsed by the Parish Advisory Council.

Signed...



Fr Philip Scanlan IC - Parish Priest

Signed



Peter Marlow

and

Anne-Marie Williams

Parish Representatives

Once complete please forward to:

madeleine.walters@rcadc.org