Dear Parishioner,

Our response to the Synodal Pathway has been submitted to the Diocese. Thanks to those who took part, whether actively or by their prayers. 107 responses to the questionnaires were received (14% of the estimated total of 750 people who attended Mass across those weekends). 79% of respondents were over the age of 50, 11% between 30 - 50, and 5% were under 30 (the remainder did not indicate their age).

There were a number of fairly similar comments expressed in the various responses to the three themes of Communion, Participation and Mission. For we, as the Church, and as individual Christians, are facing a more hostile world than our parents and grandparents, and so we need to reflect on how best to make Our Lord known.

Communion

As the Cardinal mentioned in his Pastoral Letter at the start of the Synodal process, the disruption in the life of all parishes caused by the pandemic affected our sense of community. This was reflected in some of the responses. Comments include:

* Regular opportunities for fellowship and social events were deeply missed during the pandemic.
* The livestreaming of the Mass was, however, considered a huge blessing.
* There was great joy in being able to return to Mass post-lockdown.
* The Mass is the main point where we gather together and more could be done to improve fellowship in other areas.
* Some parishioners felt they were journeying together through the sacramental programmes, the Stations of the Cross or even being greeted with a smile on entering the church.

Participation

As regards participation in the parish, comments included:

* There are few young people and families attending Mass. Consideration must be given to how we attract and retain this important group;
* Even though, through the newsletter, we try to keep people informed as well as possible, some people feel detached from parish life for whatever reason;
* the activities of the Parish Council should be more widely known; while there may be fewer volunteers to help organise, or even participate in, many of our activities, there was praise for those who volunteered for stewarding and cleaning, allowing us to keep the church open and functioning during this difficult time.

Mission

Concerning our efforts to carry out the mission of the Church, respondents felt:

* people seem to understand the mission of the Church in terms of generous giving to local and national charities;
* the parish is more ‘inward’ looking than focused ‘outward’ to the wider community - however there was a consensus that we need to be both;
* it was not clear which way the community was looking and felt a ‘vision statement’ might help to clarify how we best carry out the Mission of the Church, our Mission;
* better formation in the Faith may help develop a more dynamic community life.

There were a number of interesting suggestions and thoughts provided regarding growth in communion, participation and mission, so if you would like to see the full report as sent, it is available to you on the parish website [https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/pinner/](about:blank)

The Cardinal affirmed that, God willing, as we slowly leave Covid behind, this may well be “a unique opportunity to refresh and maybe reshape... patterns of life in the Church.” So, your thoughts about improving our parish life, and ways to help us all to grow in faith hope and charity at St Luke’s would be appreciated. If you might be interested in contributing to this process, please refer to the newsletter for more details.

It is worth pointing out that, the Synodal Pathway was instituted, not just for our parish, but in and for every parish and diocese thorough-out the world. In an exercise like this, inevitably many good things taking place in the ordinary life and work of the Church, both throughout the world and more locally, are taken for granted and not sufficiently reflected on here (Saint John XXIII’s ‘prophets of doom’ are always with us).

We should be much more appreciative, it seems to me, of so much that we already have. For example, looking at all of us outside the church following the Sunday Masses, while allowing for the fact that the three Sunday Mass going groups are in some ways three very different communities, yet, it is lovely to see various different groups interacting; enjoying each other’s company, praying together and being together.

It is not difficult to observe the very obvious bonds of friendship which exist, and hearing of neighbourly help for one another. All this, I at least, find encouraging. Think too about the routine pastoral outreach and catechetical activities, taking place year in, year out, along with the usually anonymous generosity of so many people. These are all very positive things which actually fill me, and I hope fill you too, with hope.

None the less, we must also treasure and care for people who prefer not to be ‘joiners’ and who live their Christian lives faithfully, prayerfully and generously, for we are all individuals and loved by God.

One final observation is this, and I am quoting from a very wise and sensible priest friend of mine: **“It seems to me that, so far as it depends on us, the decline of the Church has been caused by two things: firstly, our lack of faith in Jesus Christ and his saving revelation, and secondly, a spectacular over-estimation of the moral value and intellectual prowess of the modern world. The solution to our decline is therefore, an increase of faith in Jesus Christ, and a much better reading of modernity... This does not mean that there is nothing good about the modern world, or that we should return to the 1950’s. It means that we need to return to the Lord with confidence that He is the solution, ‘*for there is no other name under heaven by which we may be saved... Do not be afraid, says the Lord, I have overcome the world. Therefore, this is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith!’”***

With all good wishes and every blessing to you and to those you love and pray for.

Yours sincerely in the Lord. Vincent Brady