

# Parish & Community Synthesis Form

## How to use this form

Thank you for your generosity in taking part in the Synodal Pathway in the Diocese of Westminster. Please use this form to tell us the story of the process in your parish or community. This will ensure we can include your experience within the diocesan synthesis that we'll prepare for our Pre-synod Diocesan Gathering on 19<sup>th</sup> February. We hope to be able to tell the story of the synodal pathway across the diocese, so that together we can discern what the Holy Spirit might be saying to the Church in Westminster. It will also help us make our formal submission to the Bishops' Conference, for the national and international stages of the synod process. Please note, we will not be identifying any particular parishes or communities. Reference to anything within your synthesis will be anonymised.

## Including extra information:

- As well as completing this form, you are welcome to send any notable examples of the 'Group Session Record Form', 'Share your thoughts Form' or 'Simple one-to-one / group conversation form'. These can be included to emphasise particular experiences or insights which enriched your synodal pathway. However, please ensure that you also synthesise these experiences using this Synthesis Form.
- You are also welcome to include a small number of high resolution photographs of any walls of post-its / flip charts, which help illustrate your synthesis. Please ensure that the writing is 'in focus'.

**Deadline:** Please return by **21 January 2022** to Deacon Adrian: [adriancullen@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:adriancullen@rcdow.org.uk)  
*If you are able, we welcome your Synthesis to be returned earlier.*

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**Name of Parish or Community** St Thomas of Canterbury and the English Martyrs. Royston Hertfordshire

**Name(s) of who compiled the synthesis** Peter Brazier

**Email address** peter.brazier.55@gmail.com

**Date of Submission** Click or tap to enter a date.

**How many people took part in your synodal process (please estimate if necessary)**

**Approx** 25 + several contributions from those not present at the Synod afternoon

**How do you think the participant(s) in your synodal pathway would describe themselves – tick all that apply:**

1.  Committed to Faith, Regular attendance at Mass and participates in community life e.g. Member of pastoral council/ attends prayer group/reader/volunteer
2.  Committed to Faith, Regular attendance at Mass
3.  Faith & Church have some relevance. E.g. Occasional Attendance at Mass
4.  Culturally Catholic but Church has little relevance
5.  From a different Christian tradition

6.  From a different faith community
7.  Person of no faith

There are five sections – please try to complete them all.

### **1) What was the story of your synodal pathway in your parish/community?**

- What were the main steps you took?
- What was done to engage as participants and to reach out to the peripheries?
- Approximately what proportion of people in your active parish/Church community participated in one way or other?
- Were there any groups of people whose participation was especially noteworthy?
- Were there specific groups of people who did not participate for any reason?

The Synod was launched at mass and included in the Newsletter as well as on the Parish Website and Social Media platform.

A representative was selected and attended the opening mass at Westminster Cathedral and details of the online events were made available for anyone who wanted to attend- they were required to request the joining instructions.

Updates were included at mass and were available in the church by way of a large notice board with options to update.

A parish synod afternoon was arranged and attended by some 20 plus attendees who followed the process and detailed the output for all the parish to see.

All were given the opportunity to update the notice board or to submit comments and ideas by e mail. This was arranged to enable any unable to attend to have the opportunity to input. Various notices regarding the process were displayed and updates provided by newsletter.

The representative also spoke to various people to try and seek additional input.

The draft return is to be put on the parish website and mentioned at mass and in the newsletter to enable late additions or comments to be added.

### **2) What experiences of ‘journeying together’ were shared?**

- What experiences of ‘journeying’ during the pandemic were shared? What insights did this reveal?
- What experiences were shared more generally of the Church ‘journeying together’? What had brought joy? What had caused pain or sadness?

- Who did people feel were missing from the Church community? Did participants share anything about the Church's experience of journeying with and including others beyond the visible Church community?
- Was anything shared about how the parish/community works together or how co-responsibility is put into practice?

Three groups reviewed the input and were found generally to have made the same comments.

#### Experiences

There was widespread distress while attendance at mass was not possible.

#### Joy and Sadness

Sadness was felt as it was difficult to reach out to each other and several mentioned sorrow at not being able to see each other and talk 'face to face'.

Pain was mentioned by all in that they were unable to receive Holy Communion.

#### Joy

There was much comfort in the provision of online mass and the zoom prayer groups. There was also mention that many took the opportunity to reach out to each other by phone.

The sign of peace on facebook brought much joy and was widely used for messages.

There were positive messages thanking the volunteers who acted as stewards and helped on line.

### **3) What experiences were shared about the Church's priorities for mission?**

- What did people wish to celebrate about how your parish/community lives its mission?
- How did people feel included in the way the parish/community decides priorities for mission?
- What areas of mission did people say were being neglected within the Church?
- In what ways did they see partnerships with people beyond the Church developing?

There was a positive response to what had been organised as it was felt that we were telling the wider community that we were open to all.

Pope Francis was seen as a force for good as he was not afraid to challenge governments and those in authority as well as asking all the church community to listen to each other and to remain faithful whilst not being afraid to spread the love of God.

People looked back fondly on the recent Parish Mission and it was felt that it would be good to hold a similar event once we return to whatever the new normal will be.

It was commented that we need to review what community means and to explore opportunities to involve those who would not normally attend mass. There were several who mentioned that a good start would be to reach out to lapsed family and friends to find out why they no longer attend and then analyse the reasons and plan to see if we can make 'mass' and the church community relevant again.

All agreed that living by example was important.

#### **4) What was most significant about the whole experience?**

- What did you notice about how people participated? What attitudes or feelings stood out?
- What was particularly significant, surprising or unexpected?
- What topics or issues gave rise to diverse points of view?
- Which stories or real-life experiences were especially moving and why? (Please anonymise – we only need a sense of the experiences shared.)
- Which experiences seemed to have strong resonance? Which experiences were mentioned less but are significant?

Those who attended agreed it was a good process to follow.

2 mentioned that to be more inclusive consideration should be given to a discussion on married priests and the wider role of women in the church. It was felt that if this was not addressed many of the younger generation would find attendance less attractive. It was agreed however that this is a sensitive topic and change for the sake of change is wrong.

There was mention of a friend of a parishioner who was widowed and met a new partner who was divorced. She felt unable to reconcile her faith with living with a divorced person as they were not able to marry. This generated mixed views but when discussed in a group of 6 there was a feeling that 'the church' could have been more understanding although this was a difficult topic.

### **5) Overall, what were the fruits that the Holy Spirit has brought about through this experience?**

- What dreams, desires, and aspirations for the Church were expressed by participants?
- Were there any particular issues that the people felt the Spirit was inviting the Church to pay more attention to?
- In what ways did you sense the Holy Spirit inviting your parish/community to grow in synodality?
- Based on what was shared, what steps might your parish/community feel called to take in their journeying together?

The conclusions were;

We need to be inclusive and welcoming to all.

We need to be less judgmental.

Whilst we like structure others to don't fit our structure or view need to be welcomed

We all say we are fine- we need to share our concerns

We need to embrace differences

We concluded that we are all on the same journey but that we are all at a different stage and not all follow the same path to get there so being inclusive and welcoming is essential.

## **Optional: Is there anything else you'd like to share?**

Other comments were added after the 'meeting' and included the following.

There was grief that we were a secular country and it was felt that we would have coped better with the pandemic if we were a more faith driven society.

We need to remember that not everyone wants to join in everything as we are not all the same.

We need to be an example of Catholic practices and values.

We need to be welcoming to those with different views and to be open for all to join in.

### ***Including extra information:***

- You are welcome to send a few notable examples of the 'Group Session Record Form', 'Share your thoughts Form' or 'Simple one-to-one / group conversation form'.
- You are also welcome to include a small number of high resolution photographs of any walls of post-its / flip charts, which help illustrate your synthesis.