

ST MARY MAGDALEN PARISH WILLESDEN GREEN



Binding Edge

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

SYNOD SUMMARY

MESSAGE FROM MGR ROGER

Think back to those dark, cold and damp days of late autumn last year. You may have been surprised or intrigued when you heard me inviting you to take part in the Synodal journey of the Church, begun by our Holy Father, Pope Francis. Indeed, you may never have heard of the word Synodal before – I hadn't! Your generous responses to the various activities we took part in after Mass have truly borne fruit.

Here we are now in the early summer, and I sense some real growth and optimism in our parish. Our celebration of Holy Week and Easter brought us ever closer to Jesus Christ. It was very good to see so many coming back to the Sacrament of Confession before Easter; Good Friday in our church saw large numbers of people coming forward to venerate the cross; Easter with its music, flowers and joy was truly a celebration of the Risen Christ.

I now want us to reflect deeply on the responses which you made as part of the Synodal process. What you have said contains both strengths and challenges for our parish. You have said that during lockdown faith was the constant you could rely on – but many were saddened by not being able to come to Mass. Livestreaming has been a tangible response to that. Many felt part of a supportive community, and its diversity is seen as a great strength. One of the most challenging questions was who is missing from our church and you will see a diagram showing the frank responses to that challenge.

We will now begin a process of responding prayerfully to what we have learnt. As the Holy Father teaches us: 'We must strive to ground ourselves in experiences of authentic listening and discernment [...] becoming the

Church God calls us to be'. 'We must dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish [...] to bind up wounds [...] to learn from one another'.

St Mary Magdalen, pray for us!



PARTICIPATION

WHAT WAS THE STORY OF THE SYNODAL PATHWAY IN OUR PARISH?

A variety of surveys covering a four week period took place, with the exception of holding one evening meeting for post-Confirmation candidates.

The following activities were carried out during the weekend Masses, where attendance is at its best. Pens, paper, post-its notes were available as well as stewards to help out. Each activity was explained by the presiding priest and carried out before the final blessing.

Week 1 focused on the Synod Logo. Week 2 asked parishioners to place a dot on a line representing a spectrum of how included they feel in the parish. Week 3 picked up on one response from week 1 and focused on building relationships. Finally, in week 4, which we called our 'Synod Weekend' - parishioners were asked to fill out the 'Share Your Thoughts' questionnaire.

What does this picture mean to you?

- ☑ The picture shows that nobody can join God's family.
- ☑ This picture means that all people, no matter their gender, age, interests, disabilities, are united and together in the church. That we are all children of God, no matter who we are.
- ☑ People going to church every Sunday!
- ☑ Everyone in the community can be part of the parish. No one will be left out.
- ☑ The picture shows that everyone is equal no matter how they appear or the disadvantages they might show. They need to be treated equally and shown love.
- ☑ An inclusive and diverse community of followers of Jesus.
- ☑ Makes me think of all of life.
- ☑ Invariant, diverse pilgrims on procession.
- ☑ That we all walk together - all ages all nationalities, in one direction.
- ☑ Communal sense, universal Church
- ☑ Collaboratively walking the same spiritual path.

Do you associate with any of the figures in the picture?

- ☐ I can associate myself as a young adult in the picture.
- ☐ A community of people coming together as we do for Mass.
- ☐ I most associate with the person carrying the child. I have a young child and want to support them in the Catholic faith.
- ☐ I am disabled so I feel included in this picture.
- ☐ Yes, a family.
- ☐ I think the girl at the front is like me.
- ☐ The person who helps.
- ☐ Associate with the lady with the disabled man, giving a helping hand in times of need.
- ☐ The lay people.
- ☐ I associate with the red middle-aged man.
- ☐ I see myself in the picture.
- ☐ The wheelchair user & my daughter & my Nan. I empathise with them.
- ☐ Yes, I am walking with them in faith, towards God.
- ☐ I feel part of the community, my community.
- ☐ I associate with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Where might they be going?

- ✓ To a celebration.
- ✓ They are going towards their destiny.
- ✓ Moving on towards a greater understanding of our faith and of life.
- ✓ To God.
- ✓ Eternal resting place.
- ✓ Making a joyful journey to Our Lord.
- ✓ They might be going to the parish together, to talk to God and to take part in the Mass.
- ✓ They are marching together on our Synodal pathway, for a better loving church, united in Christ.
- ✓ Going to meet Christ. We need to prepare ourselves. (Christmas is coming!!)
- ✓ They all have a common destination.
- ✓ Following the path of God.
- ✓ Walking to God.

☑ The church is a community, open and inclusive for all. Just like Jesus welcomed all. We are all on a journey together to continue to build a church for all.

☑ To me this picture means faith, because everyone is going to church together.

☑ Everybody of all ages, all races, abled and disabled - all on the same path on a joyous and wondrous journey.

☑ We are all at different stages on the journey of life but all ultimately, going in the same direction.

☑ Searching together, not as strangers but family.

☑ We live that in church! - It gives me hope.

☑ The whole church - all encompassing.

☑ Community of different individuals coming together as one.

☑ Even though we have our differences - we walk together in Christ.

☑ We are a family of God.

☑ We are all journeying through life together as ONE, living and following in His Footsteps.

☑ This picture means love for me.

☑ The Good Shepherd is with us in this journey of our ups and downs in life

☑ The picture represents to me the concept that we all belong

☑ A community that stays together

☑ Moving in a common direction, forward, looking ahead together.

☑ The young are the future, leading the way

☑ It denotes a journey and also represents one of industry.

☑ Celebration of God's love. We are all on a journey together.

☑ It shows me what a happy society might look like

☑ Unity of the church - following the path of Christ, especially at this time.

☑ We are the body of Christ: The Church. Every man, woman and child of every persuasion and ability.

☑ A colourful community.

☑ Diversity - lots of different types of people

☑ We are reminding ourselves that most uses of of humanity and that we must love and show compassion to all our brothers and sisters.

Do you think anybody is left out?

- God's creators
- New born babies
- A blind person and a deaf person with a hearing dog
- There is just one elderly person, so we need more!
- Other faiths and communities.
- The homeless
- The housebound
- LGBTQA community and non-traditional families
- No, as long as they extend the hand of hospitality to all
- Individuals all individuals are made very precious!
- We cannot see who is rich or poor or their colour skin. We are all together, we are all one
- No one is left out and no one should be left out.
- I think the people who do not go to Mass are left out as they have distanced themselves from the Mass.
- A pregnant woman
- The unborn child - from the moment of conception, we belong to God's family on earth.

☑ On their way to help people in need.

☑ On a journey with a common mission.

☑ On a pilgrimage

✓ To praise and worship our Lord

✓ They are going to church because it is the place where we are all together

✓ In the same direction, of peace

✓ They are all travelling in one direction, in union, looking forward to doing something together.

✓ All going on the same path in life and that is towards God.

✓ Going to visit Jesus.

☑ On their way to the Kingdom of God

✓ Pilgrims on a journey of life, towards heaven.

✓ They are going to encounter the word of God.

✓ Going to church to be healed

✓ It feels like an oasis - going where they are needed.

☑ Going towards the future together.

✓ In our eternal and merciful God.

☑ On some through an uncertain future, together

✓ Moving forward in life together.

☑ Going to spread the word and love

✓ To wherever their flocks take them.

✓ To build a church, leading in God.

✓ They are all heading towards putting their faith into action.

✓ Moving towards The Almighty

☑ The work to heaven.

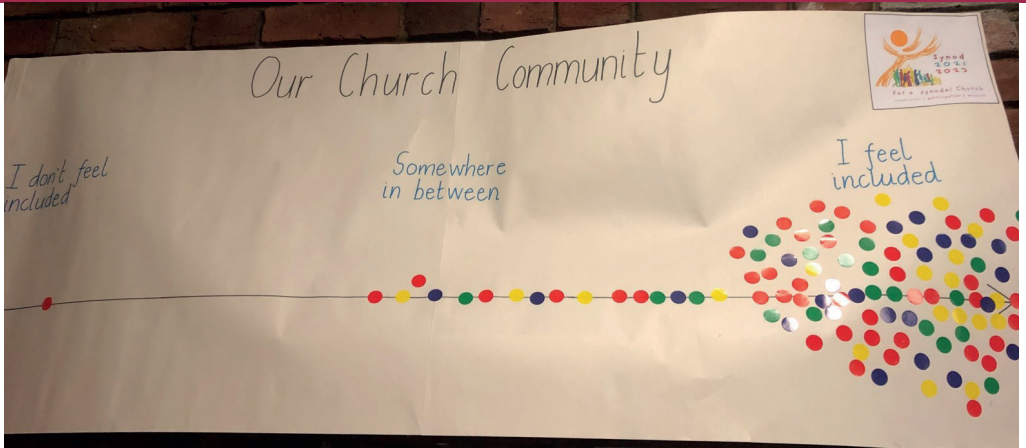
☑ Journey of the right path following Jesus eternal life - the path of glory. Our own Calvary.

☑ One being going to Mass.

☑ On the way to follow the cross leading to Jesus.

Thank you for your responses about the Synod logo. We collected about 278 replies and here are just some of them.

PARTICIPATION



WHO?

Approximately 500 people took part, submitting over 500 written responses and 400+ in the spectrum activity.

Some parishioners preferred to answer the questions at home, and forms were returned at a later date. Some of these were discussed with people who do not or have not returned to church.



COMMUNION

OUR EXPERIENCES OF JOURNEYING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

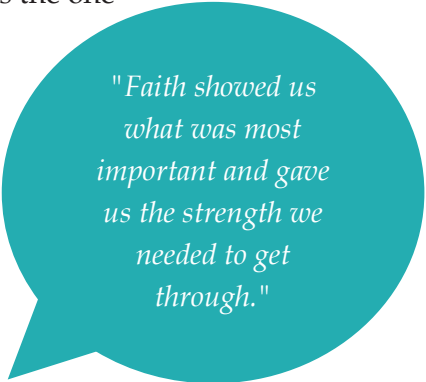
A large number mentioned how grateful they felt to be able to take part in online Masses from our own church and from around the world. For many, this significantly lessened the feeling of isolation, one parishioner said "it gave me peace".

A large number of parishioners mentioned how they drew strength from their faith- "it was the one constant we could rely upon."

Having trust in God helped so many cope through the worst of the pandemic. "I trust in God that all will be ok"

Many found strength in how the community reached out and cared for one another.

The online services were one of the best things to come out of lockdown, going forward – live-streaming of funerals and other services, can reach the housebound and all people around the world. "I loved the 'round the world Rosary' set up by the Pope."



"Faith showed us what was most important and gave us the strength we needed to get through."

WHAT BROUGHT JOY?

A place of safety and the sense of togetherness.

"Christ's love is what brings me joy!"

For many, this sense of belonging is fostered by the priests, who always welcome everyone.

Great joy was felt when the church reopened, at first for private prayer and but especially when Mass was able to be said again.

COMMUNION

"I am an immigrant here in the UK. I have no family here. Going to church every Sunday is like a fresh breath of air. It guides me and enlightens my cluttered mind. The church gives me peace and a feeling of safety where I can pray deeply when communicating to God."

Many felt joy and comfort in being in such a diverse community.

Sharing in the one faith and knowing that you are supported through the kindness and friendship of others.

WHAT CAUSED PAIN AND SADNESS?

A few parishioners felt the church closed too easily and felt its absence acutely.

Disappointment was felt at not being able to meet family, especially for those who live alone and for those who did not have access to online services.

Loss of well-being - body and soul.

Many parishioners mentioned their great sorrow at all the suffering and huge loss of life.

Not being able to go to Mass saddened many. "It was very difficult not to be allowed the sacraments for so long."

The absence of priests attending the sick and dying, was also keenly felt.

"we should never be left without the Sacrament of Confession and the Eucharist."

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MISSION

HOW WE FEEL INCLUDED AND WHAT WE WISH TO CELEBRATE

- the sense of being part of a supportive community and feeling the strength in our unity
- helping out in the parish
- being welcomed with a smile
- through participating in different activities
- forging relationships as we practice our faith together
- the sense of belonging is very important to many

"It brings us joy to know that we are welcomed to any Mass we attend. The parish is transparent and communicative, and goes beyond just attending a service. We see and hear pockets of other parishioners' lives, which brings us closer."

"It is a way to feel part of the community. I love the parish and I am grateful for the faith journey shared with others. I find it a prayerful parish, caring and warm. I am very thankful for our priests who bring us and help us to meditate on the Good News. Thanks to all."

The spectrum of how included we feel in our church community overwhelmingly showed that the vast majority (roughly 90%) feel included, and only 1% placed themselves on the opposite end, leaving the remainder somewhere in the middle. 415 parishioners took part in this activity.

MISSION

AREAS OF MISSION THAT NEED DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

To:

Be more inclusive.

Be more visible in the local communities by creating opportunities to get involved in outreach work. For example, reaching out to those with mental health problems, the poor, homeless and other marginalised groups.

“The church is seen as always open to other faiths and communities but maybe other faiths need to understand that better – could the church do more in sharing that message?”

Create opportunities to learn more about the faith and the doctrine of the church, and what we are obliged to do as Christians.

Encourage more young people (who are seen as less visible and seem to have lost interest in the church) by developing activities they would be interested in, for example in a youth group. They may find it difficult to relate to the formality of a Mass but may engage more in practical activities.


“The Church needs to be more welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community and make them feel that their sexuality is valid, that they are good people and belong in the church.”

Help for those who find it physically difficult to get to Mass e.g. the elderly, the disabled, the poor

Communication is seen as very important and the use of social media.

MISSION

- Celebrate different ethnic communities that make up our church. This was brilliantly done at the 'At Your Word Lord' launch in Wembley, but sadly, not developed further.
- Organise a Parish Mission to get people back to church and invite lapsed.
- Open the dialogue to all communities and translate the message in a more modern language.
- Hold events on certain topics where people can talk about their journeys and struggle, which could help people relate, build trust with the people in the local community and get advice on things that they struggle with.
- Form women groups - to discuss all aspects of womanhood e.g. being childless, daily duties, supporting each other, children, motherhood, marital issues
- Leverage the school relationships much more. A broad, diverse and committed community is present there, yet the connection to our parish church and leaders feels weak. The children are the future of our faith, and the way to their hearts and minds is through families. Much more needs to be done to bring these faithful into the hearts of this parish.
- Youth club/engagement.
- Speak with organisations that work with different groups to see where the church can help. St Patrick's church in Soho is given as a good example of outreach work in action.
- Establish a forum that will bring groups together and build wider links with other clubs and faith institutions.



"Prayer group revival, similar to the Charismatic movement we had in the 1970s-80s with invited speakers and music."

MISSION

Help divorced people feel more welcome in the church.

“The social values of the Church attract people, the doctrine does not.”

Some parishioners think that if the church is able to present itself as a modern institution, accepting of all – and not just for those who adhere to tradition, than it may seem more manageable for a modern person/family. The vast majority of people want to belong and experience a community, so why not our church?

Conversely, others think that dialogue can only be built on the truth which must not be diluted to suit modern times.



MISSION

OUR DREAMS AND DESIRES

A Church that truly reflects all the diversity of its members. A Church that is full and alive across all age groups. A Church with more spirituality.

An inclusive church for all – a church that does not condemn people for being different or for the choices they may or may not have made.

Communion with other denominations – especially the Orthodox Churches.

Evangelisation - to spread God's love, bringing others to the faith.

For the Catholic Church to carry on its mission and message, it will need to open the priesthood to women.

For the church to stay strong and for attendance at Mass to grow and the lapsed to return.

A Charismatic Spiritual renewal in our church that would encourage the young people back through the traditional teachings given to us in the Gospels.

That the church finds a way to love and welcome the LGBTQ+ community into its life more, validating their sexuality and not being made to feel like a “biblical leper” for it.

That we can freely express our faith and joy in Christ throughout the world without fear of ridicule. That the whole world embraces Jesus Christ.

We can just hope that we continue to have priests to say Mass and serve the congregation. We are lucky in Willesden Green, thank God.

MISSION

NEXT STEPS

PENTECOST SUNDAY – 5TH JUNE 2022

MASS AT 12 NOON FOLLOWED BY PARISH LUNCH

ALL WELCOME

PENTECOST TO AUTUMN 2022 – PERIOD OF REFLECTION

REFLECT ON THE NEEDS OF THE PARISH AND HOW WE COULD RESPOND



Thank you to Maria Nowicka and Francis Thomas
for their work with this process.

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