

**Report on Synodal Process so far - May 2022**

**In the Edinburgh sister parishes:**

**St Mary Magdalene’s and St John the Evangelist**

**in the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh**

**Introduction**

This is a report for communication to Rome on the response at local level in two parishes to Pope Francis’ call for a worldwide synod involving the whole church. Our Edinburgh parishes of St Mary Magdalene’s and St John the Evangelist combined to respond to that call.

The main body of the report is a summary of what emerged as, in various ways, we sought to listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit. We hope that the report will contribute to the preparation for the 2023 gathering called by Pope Francis. The focus is therefore on messages that relate to the wider Catholic Church. We have not included the material that is specific to our local parishes – we will use that local material to build on the start we have made in this synodal process.

Background information about our parishes and the more detailed description of the different activities involved in our local synodal process are included as appendices. We provide only summary information about our approach in the main body of the report.

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**How did statements come about?** [Return to contents](#contents)

The themes identified below are derived from statements made in our synodality process. After stating each theme, we list a selection of statements exemplifying that theme.

The sources of the statements are:

* Those present at all masses on 26/7 February 2022 were invited to complete questionnaires. These were supplemented by an online version and paper copies for others not present at mass. A total of 268 questionnaires were completed. These included both **‘**tick-box’ sections and 4 separate spaces for further ‘free-text’ comments. The statements in this report come from the free-text comments. More information about the questionnaires, including the analysis of the tick-box responses is in Appendix 2.
* We held 13 ‘synodality conversations’ or listening groups, involving over 100 parishioners. The process, including the three questions considered, is described in Appendix 3. Participants noted points that seemed most important and these are the other main source of material in this report.
* We considered the responses of children at our Children’s Liturgy groups on 27 February (listed in Appendix 4)
* Holyrood Roman Catholic High School invited senior pupils to offer their responses to two questions.

We also invited comment through an online questionnaire from local churches. Those comments are not included in our themed material. We did find them interesting and have included them as Appendix 6.

**Themes**

In this section we seek to give an impression of the thoughts, hopes, and dreams, frustrations that have been expressed through the various formats for our synodality process so far.

We identify prominent themes in the responses – recognising that this cannot be a completely tidy exercise: some statements touch on several themes.

After a description of each theme we give some examples of actual statements made in the synodality process.

**Theme: Relationship to the Church – how it is and how to build it.** [Return to contents](#contents)

The synodality conversations specifically explored questions about our individual relationship to the Church, the Body of Christ, what the church could do to develop that relationship and what we ourselves could do.

There were many expressions of the importance of the Church in people’s lives: community, forgiveness, the reminder of God’s presence in our lives and through the sacraments, guidance with morality and spiritual life, the importance of the Church’s service to the poor.

There was appreciation for the historic continuity of the Church and for tradition. Traditional practices are valued by many.

The valuing of the Church was sometimes put in the context of life changes: and a number of people talked of having returned to the Church having been away often for years, and how appreciative they are of it.

A significant number expressed appreciation and gratitude for the local manifestation of the Church in these parishes – some having felt not at home in other parishes.

There were frequent expressions of difficulty arising from aspects of the wider Church, its ‘rules’ and some of its teachings, particularly those that are experienced as excluding groups and individuals. These issues are listed separately in this report.

**Example statements:**

* Let the Holy Spirit in!
* The Church helps me in harder times and when life throws up difficulties. I feel very positive about the Church.
* I was lapsed for 20 years. I returned to the Church in 2009 and it has changed my life for the better. I love coming to Mass. It gives me such comfort. Thank you.
* We need more groups – small groups where it’s easier to find common ground.
* Continue to listen and offer spiritual assistance like night-time meditation, open church and excellent reading material.
* Engagement - built on in the parish and developed in the diocese.
* It would be good to have more emphasis on working in our community. We should have more house churches - meeting in each other’s homes for prayers then going out to help those less fortunate than ourselves as they did in the early Church. We should spend less time and energy maintaining buildings as this should be spent on the poor.
* The Church is more than its buildings and services. We need to be evangelising and being Christ in action with those in need. The SVP is an example of that.
* Perhaps be more open and welcoming. Feel it is very conservative and clannish in favour of better off and better educated – although my answer is not well thought out at this minute.
* More Adorations and benefit of 40hrs Adoration was huge. If the church can somehow facilitate more of these spaces, it would have a very positive impact.
* Less words more silence and praying is what is needed. The church needs to look deeply at the life of Jesus, not judging people who are different. Bringing the marginalised into the centre of the church, to love all. To be more Christ-like.
* Meetings like this are an honest way for people to express their views safely. Interesting to hear that everyone had things they were not happy about.
* More Adorations.
* It seems a real loss given the power of the human element that there is no time during the mass for genuine parishioner interactions, connecting with people through their stories is a powerful thing and it is being lost.
* We all want to help more but it’s difficult with so many commitments. I’m not sure how…
* Evangelising. Educating, i.e. Bible study, religious education (for adults and children), combating ignorance, teach Church history. I feel that most Catholics do not really understand their religion. The Bible is not read except for excerpts at Mass.
* We need more groups – small groups where it’s easier to find common ground.
* Maintaining the practice of the faith teachings whilst defending myself against some of the unchanging ‘rules’ which often don’t reflect the times.
* Embrace tradition within the Mass and the sacraments.
* Prayer. Teach us to pray. Help us pray.
* A conscious return to the ideals of Vatican II.
* I want to take time to work out feelings and be stranger to see what I can do… I have been feeling alienated.
* I want more space for non-judgemental debate.
* Getting back to concentrating on the teachings of Jesus which is the sacrament of the Mass. Loving God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and your neighbour and not layers and levels of admin.
* I want to continue on my internal journey of spiritual growth and awareness – I believe that this is at the heart of the church and religious practice, being on the inner journey.
* Discussion groups – discuss contentious issues too – faith sharing.

**Theme: Community, Welcome and Inclusion** [Return to contents](#contents)

Many statements were about the importance of the Church as community which is accepting and inclusive; about the sense that certain groups should not be excluded.

Many were concerned about the hurt experienced because of the rejection of gay people – one person talked about “my son who is gay”. Others used various versions of the term “LGBTQ+” to refer to different sexualities and gender differences – saying we should be welcoming to these people and it is wrong that they are not able to be open and be included.

Some people framed this sense that certain groups are rejected in terms of Church “rules” in relation to divorce or contraception.

**Example statements:**

* The Church should be more like Jesus! Be more accepting of all individuals esp. LGBTQ+
* A lot of good people left the Church when they got divorced. They were excluded and were not able to come to communion.
* It should be a place for all people who are in pain and broken – all people – to experience the love of God through what and how we accept and support all people exactly as they are.
* We seem to be/lag behind wider society in LGBT issues. Our ignorance is palpable and obvious.
* The church needs to accept all people regardless – divorced, gay, trans. How would Jesus respond?
* [The Church] feels out of touch with a changing world. I feel Jesus would have been OK with people being gay and women controlling their fertility. I feel ashamed that the church is so liberal on issues like poverty but so reactionary on accepting differences/others. It is one of [the] reasons I moved away from the church.
* The church needs to look deeply at the life of Jesus , not judging people who are different. Bringing the marginalised into the centre of the church , to love all. To be more Christ-like.
* The Church would become more welcoming and inclusive if it went back to its roots eg the apostles were married and women had equal status with men and women priests and bishops.
* The church could become more understanding about human failings.
* People who are outsiders - gay, divorcees, etc - should be freely welcomed into the church and fully integrated.
* We should maintain churches as they are a place of worship. Educate to become more open minded and learning different perspectives instead of shutting down those who don’t see eye to eye.
* The church could consider teachings around the LGBTQ community, and make themselves seem more in touch with the needs and beliefs of young people in modern times.
* There needs to be less homophobia.

**Theme: Concern about the young** [Return to contents](#contents)

Many people expressed concern that we are failing to include young people – who mostly stop coming to mass as they move into their teenage years.

Thoughts about the reasons and the ‘solutions’ varied. Some suggested that more emphasis on traditional Catholic teaching and practice would help. Numerous people believed that young people need to be given more of a place in the church’s life and activities. That the mass should not be seen as the sole focus of their participation – there is a need for group activities that they will enjoy and contribute to shaping, with opportunities to learn and reflect on the faith, to pray and celebrate. Skilled (perhaps paid) youth animators or youth workers may be essential.

**Example statements:**

* The older people are most involved. We need to attract the youth back. Other parishes do it with meals and food and make it more of a social event first.
* Engage youngsters in Justice and Peace to show church is relevant and worthwhile.
* Rethink Mass for young people - less historic language, more focus on applying moral lessons to current and contemporary life, involve them in laity roles.
* Need to talk with young people to understand their perspective.
* Teenagers and young people should be our priority. Discussing how to appeal to them. Publicising that all are welcome in our church./ Reaching out to non church goers. The church is not a club. It should be a community of people with a personal internal relationship with Christ who let that love and relationship flow out to the world, the marginalised, the disadvantaged around them. It should also be a community for people that journey to a deeper personal relationship with Christ.
* The Church in Scotland needs to be more involved in getting children and young people engaged and involved. … more focused on welcoming all to church/mass – especially children. Paid dedicated youth worker in all parishes worldwide.
* The Cathedral has a group for 18-35yrs.
* Be interesting for teenagers.
* Rethink Mass for young people - less historic language, more focus on applying moral lessons to current an contemporary life, involve them in laity roles.
* I’d like to listen to the feedback from the younger people to help them come together to push forward changes they would make the church relevant for them.
* Social functions to involve young people. See that there can be fun as well as solemnity.
* Children’s liturgy is done very well but there is nothing to attract teenagers. Many have competing demands (e.g. jobs, sports, etc) and would attend if perhaps service was shorter

**Theme:** **The role of women** [Return to contents](#contents)

The limitations placed on the contribution of women was a frequently expressed concern, with many requests for more women in positions of teaching and leadership and for women deacons and priests.

**Example statements:**

* The church could be more open to extending the role of women eg as deacons
* The hierarchy in Rome must acknowledge that the only way for the whole church to survive is that they need to evolve like everything else on the earth.
* The laity must be listened to and respected. Especially views on women’s role. Also need a redistribution of the Vatican’s wealth.
* Women’s wisdom and theological insight to be respected and incorporated.
* Address the issue of women priests – 50% of the population – time for a change of heart!
* Women should not be seen as church cleaners.
* I would like to see more open discussions introduced at Parish level raising opinions on topics like women’s roles possibly ministering…I think anyone coming along on their own might not feel they can share on such topics but again LISTENING to others would encourage them.
* Use the talents of the laity especially the women to benefit the whole church especially when there is a shortage of priests.
* The role of women needs to be looked at – deacons for example.
* The church is too far away from society – women priests would be hugely helpful.
* Role of women in the church to create more of a balance. ‘House becomes a home’.
* I would like to study – to know more about being a leader in the church. Could courses of study be highlighted/advertised for women in helping their role grow?

**Theme: Celibacy and married priests** [Return to contents](#contents)

The requirement for priestly celibacy was a frequent theme: why should priests be prevented from marrying and having a family.

**Example statements:**

* More people want to serve God, why limit them? Female priests and married priests.
* The Church would become more welcoming and inclusive if it went back to its roots eg the apostles were married and women had equal status with men and women priests and bishops.
* Priests should be able to have loving human relations – marriage.
* We also should have opportunities for women to be priests and priests themselves to be married. We have to create a more ‘human’ church.
* Is it time to consider married priests? The Orthodox Church have had married parish priests for centuries alongside monastic celibate clergy. The Catholic Church already recognises this in some other churches in full communion with it – why not extend this?
* I believe the global church has important problems in its management structure, in its understanding of sexuality and in its attitude to women. I believe the Church would be transformed by allowing women priests, married priests and by having many more women in the various management roles.
* Allow priests to marry. Ordain women priests
* Married priests, female priests

**Theme: Clericalism and trust in the hierarchy** [Return to contents](#contents)

Many raised questions about the dominance of clergy in the life of the church, disconnected from dialogue with lay people and their commitments and concerns. This was also experienced specifically as a problematic feature of our own diocese where employed lay people have been replaced by priests and religious. There were concerns about lack of accountability.

**Example statements:**

* There’s a requirement for honesty and transparency in financial dealings.
* Be good to see Church leaders more visible in community projects – we don’t just mean turning up for a photo opportunity but participating and rolling up their sleeves.
* I want to see a freedom of information act in the church. Communication needs to flow between the brain and the heart and without this communication the hierarchy is merely a power male based club.
* We need to see/know what is taught in seminaries.
* The hierarchy need to be told that women and married people and lay men must be incorporated into decision on theological and moral matters. The above to be made in Canon Law.
* The hierarchy of the church can appear distant, male dominated and controlling, edicts like ‘Going to Church on a Sunday is an obligation’ turn me right off and make me angry. I want to be treated as a responsible adult.
* Listen to Pope Francis. He is a good man who is trying to live in the world today unlike our Archbishop who would like to reinvent the wheel. Perhaps we need Vatican 3, 4 and 5.
* Leaders leading by example of service. Eg Bishop. I’m doing Bethany nights – come with me.
* This refers to my experience of the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh which I experience as having something very wrong at its heart, involving abuse of power and control. This can be seen in the attempted cover up of the actions of sexual predator Keith Patrick O’Brien – the full truth has never been revealed, causing division and deep hurt – leading to an increase in clericalism, diminishment of role of laity, e.g. the shameful demise of the Gillis Centre – where highly trained and skilled counselling staff in Marriage Care were sacked, and replaced by priests – a great loss to us all.
* The leadership within the Archdiocese seems to have become more traditional with very little thought to the value of the laity. It was heartbreaking to see the lay members of the Archdiocesan team have to leave their posts. They were such skilled people. It seems to be that we have a pre-Vatican II view of the laity – know your place, the clergy are in charge!
* Regular listening between the people and the hierarchy and sharing.

**Theme: The place of the laity** [Return to contents](#contents)

This was a major theme – another side of the concern with clericalism. Many people reflected the Pope’s emphasis on the whole people of God and the need to use all the gifts that are present.

**Example statements:**

* The role of the laity needs to be developed for the church to use the people’s gifts.
* Above all Catholics need to feel free to speak out and be listened to .
* Treat the laity with respect as the educated and intelligent people they are.
* Leadership needs to be shared in the groups in the diocese – use the skills the parishioners have in their daily work.
* I would be prepared to be part of a lay group of women and men, single and married to SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER. These lay groups to also be fuelled by prayer. These lay groups to be worldwide and empowered by Pope Francis
* Consult the laity on a more regular basis maybe using this discussion process.
* Regular listening between the people and the hierarchy and sharing.
* I would like to take part in powerful laity groups. These groups would make their ideas known to Rome.

**Theme: Ecumenism** [Return to contents](#contents)

Openness to sharing and working with Christians in other churches and denominations was mentioned by a few, as was the value of relating to people of other faiths.

**Example statements:**

* I love that our church has the “Holy Huddle” [ the local Ministers’ Fraternal]– Jesus asked us to ‘be one’. I also like that Father Jock interacts with the Islamic and Judaic clerics locally – building bridges.
* As I have grown older, I see the Church as being much wider than the Catholic Church. I would love to see all denominations working much more together.
* Church unity and coming together of other faiths, invitations to celebrate together. Even closer links with schools and community. The young are marginalized and need opportunity to be more involved in the life of the church.
* The church … could be more welcoming to those of different faiths & those adhering to different sets of beliefs.

**Theme: Healing of past hurts – including through sexual abuse** [Return to contents](#contents)

The revealed prevalence of sexual abuse was a concern in itself – recognising the extreme levels of harm inflicted on victims. This was also seen as one factor driving people away from the Church. Some were critical of the Church’s defensive posture and failure to address the historical issue – including in our own diocese.

**Example statements:**

* The church needs to apologise fervently, loudly and continuously about abuse.
* Priests need to speak out LOUDLY about past treatment of women.
* The church needs to show more compassion and care for victims of abuse, Listen to the survivors. Stop protecting the reputation and putting your own needs first.
* I’m angry with the Church over the child abuse issues.
* Church needs to get its own moral compass right, i.e. cover up of abuse. Francis doing better – and seems to be looking to the signs of the times and using new knowledge and science as a guide, sacking hardliners – perhaps there is hope.
* Church has abused its power over hearts and minds, needs to be more humble.
* 20+ yrs of abuse & still revelations of these and public perception of suppression of this. I think church could be more aggressive in rooting this out and eliminating perceptions of coverups. Hurtful as a Catholic to see and read about this.
* As before, no more abuse and no more cover-ups. I have concerns over those high in church living in wealth & luxury. This is obvious hypocrisy.
* How survivors of abuse are supported/cared for needs reviewed.
* The Church should not be allowed to investigate itself in relation to any complaints – sexual abuse or otherwise. This should be completely independent.

**Theme: Engagement with contemporary challenges** [Return to contents](#contents)

Some people were concerned that the Church was not engaging enough with the issues that affect people in our time. This was seen as a concern at all levels, individually, at the parish community and for the Church hierarchy.

Engagement with poverty and with need among our neighbours was also frequently emphasised. This focus was also contrasted with the ostentatious wealth of the Church centrally.

**Example statements:**

* The church could be more responsive to modern issues i.e. mental health issues, addiction, youth and social media.
* Being in Catholic leadership means more than emphasising attendance at Mass. We need more involvement in so called non-religious matters.
* Tackle modern issues within homilies.
* We need to be more active in helping the poor.
* The homily could be about things that are more day today and relevant to daily life.
* Many churches have a counselling service – this would be such an asset. It would back up our desire to offer support.
* Something around the spirituality of ageing might be helpful given the age range of our congregation – and that we are all aging.
* I hear the voices of single people –they are often overlooked in a parish when the emphasis is often on families.
* Get rid of the wealth and give it to the poor, refugees and preferential option for the poor.
* The Church is more than its buildings and services. We need to be evangelising and being Christ in action with those in need. The SVP is an example of that.
* It would be good for us to get out of church building and contribute to the outside
* Teachers need to be aware about teenager mental health and how pressure can affect that.
* Take action against racism and discrimination.
* People who are mentally struggling should be noticed and receive immediate help.

**APPENDIX 1 – Our two parishes** [Return to contents](#contents)

St John the Evangelist and St Mary Magdalene’s are both Roman Catholic parishes in Edinburgh, Scotland within the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. They neighbour each other geographically and have both been served by **Fr. Jock Dalrymple** since 2013.

* The historic church of **St John the Evangelist** is located in the Portobello district of Edinburgh, located at the junction of Brighton Place and Sandford Gardens. The church was completed in 1906.
* **St Mary Magdalene´s Parish** is situated approximately one mile from Portobello on the east side of Edinburgh. The church is located at Bingham Ave and serves Bingham and Magdalene areas. This parish was established in the early 1960’s.
* Whist it is difficult to quantify the exact numbers who identify as Catholic in the geographical parish boundaries it is estimated that currently around 400 people attend Mass at the two parishes on a regular basis.

**APPENDIX 2** [Return to contents](#contents)

**The Questionnaire – 26/27 February 2022**

The questionnaire was completed by those at all masses in both parishes on the weekend of 27 February 2022 with some also being completed later online or on paper.

Two types of response were invited on the questionnaire:

* ‘tick box” answers to three questions
* four free text boxes inviting respondents to expand on the tick box sections with an opportunity to add any further comment of whatever kind.

Graphs showing the results of the tick-box responses are included below.

The free text statements have been included with the notes from the listening conversations to inform the themes outlined in the main part of this report.

The three “tick box” questions on the questionnaire were:

**Things you value about the church**

People value different things about the church as a whole and in our parishes. Which of these matters to you? (Options were: “Matters a great deal”, “Matters”, “Matters Less”)

* It guides my spiritual life
* It offers me Mass and the Sacraments
* It gives me a moral compass
* It's an important part of my heritage and identity
* I belong to the community and value the friendships
* It stands up for moral values
* It gives practical help to the poor and disadvantaged
* I enjoy the music and services
* It helps the young grow morally and spiritually
* It supports Catholic Schools

**Things the church does well**

What things do you think the church, in your parish and more widely, does well? (Options were: “Does very well”, “Does well”, “Could do Better”, “Does badly”)

* Sunday Mass
* Other Sacraments like reconciliation (confession) Sacrament of the sick etc
* Significant life events– baptism, marriage,
* Helping in time of sickness, trouble or difficulty
* Relating to other Christian churches
* Reaching out and promoting the gospel
* Helping the poor
* Helping the young
* Welcoming everyone who comes

**Issues which concern you**

Which, if any, of these issues cause you concern or worry or distress about the church in our parishes or more widely ? (Options were: “A serious concern”, “A concern”, “Not a concern”)

* Lack of vocations to the priesthood and religious life
* Cases of abuse and Safeguarding
* Church teaching on moral issues such as marriage and sexuality
* The position of the laity in the church
* Failure to stick to traditional teaching
* The role women play in the church
* Falling Mass attendance
* The Church is becoming less liberal and more traditional

Graphs showing the responses to these questions are presented in the main body of the report.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to add free-text comments to the tick box questions and any other comment that they would want to make.

Not everyone took the opportunity to fill in the free-text sections, although most did. Those who gave their responses in these sections often shared thoughts that went beyond a strict answering of the question.

The Questionnaire was designed to be short enough to be shared in a large group in a reasonable timescale whilst also trying to include the main issues as covered by the press and from anecdote.

There was limited time for a pilot study but overall the parishes engaged with this questionnaire during one homily time within Mass at each parish and all those who wished to step forward to be involved in future listening groups were asked to leave their contact details or offered a telephone number to call for further information.

The Questionnaire was also:

* available online:
* sent out to email receivers of the newsletters and
* all individuals who expressed interest in this project.

In all, 268 questionnaires were completed. All the quantitative data was counted and graphed. The qualitative data – responses to free-text fields - was typed up and is available

**Results from the tick-box sections of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire included ‘tick-box’ questions:

1. **Things you value about the church.** People were asked to rate a number of aspects of church life. The choices were: “Matters a great deal”, “Matters” and “Matters Less”.
2. **Things the church does well.** What things do you think the church, in your parish and more widely, does well? The rating on this question was among the following: “Does very well”, “Does well”, “Could do better” and “Does badly”
3. **Issues which concern you.** Which, if any, of these issues cause you concern or worry or distress about the church in our parishes or more widely? The issues listed were to be rated**:**  “A serious concern”, “A concern” and “Not a concern”

Graphs showing the numbers of people selecting different options for items referred to in these three questions are on the next three pages.

Note that the blue line is the sum of the orange and yellow lines – counting all those who regard these features as mattering or mattering a great deal. That line just barely dips below 80% of respondents – for the two items “I enjoy the music and the services” and “It supports Catholic Schools”.

This time the blue line includes “Does well” and “Does very well” and this combination includes between 60% and 90% of respondents across all aspects that are listed. The weakest is “Helping the young”.

The blue line includes responses that indicate “A concern” and also those that indicate “A serious concern”. The item “Failure to stick to traditional teaching” is the only time when that combination (30% of respondents) is less than the number registering this as “Not a concern” (57%).

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**The Parish Listening Groups**

Following the questionnaire to the members of the two parishes and others we held a series of ‘synodality conversations’. We used the same approach for two gatherings of parents whose children were involved in sacramental preparation for first communion and confirmation.

The nature of listening was emphasised in line with the reflection of Pope Francis that through deep listening we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The meetings were started with prayer and a period of silence before each question was addressed.

The three questions addressed at each meeting were these:

* Question 1. How would you describe your relationship with the Body of Christ, the Church?
* Question 2. What can the church do to further develop this relationship?
* Question 3. What can I do to further develop this relationship?

Participants shared their responses in small groups of three. Each person taking 3 minutes. After the sharing, people recorded their most important thoughts on “Post It” notes which were gathered up. This process was repeated for each question. The final part of the meeting was an open reflection in the whole group about any points that particularly stood out.

The groups were offered initially over two weeks, held in a range of times in the morning, afternoon and evenings until we were able to identify the most popular times for our parishioners and then extended a further week as interest widened.

The option to just turn up to any of the identified times was also offered. To avoid any confusion and issues of space and accommodation we decided against the original idea of holding these groups in people’s houses and opting instead for the Parish House. Most of the meetings were held in the Prayer Room and then moving to the meeting room where appropriate so as to be as inclusive as possible to those challenged by the parish house stairs.

Nearly every group had two facilitators, one of which began a meeting with prayer and managed the times and timetable of the meeting. The listening stance was explained. Three questions were identified by the steering group and offered in sequence. The whole group was split into groups of three to accommodate everyone time for sharing and listening. A facilitative method from social work, group counselling and other listening models was adopted. This involved time for everyone to share but was limited to three minutes to each individual with the other group members listening. Time to refine and record what was said came at the end of each question. A brief time was included at the end of the session to share in the wider group and, where time permitted, to evaluate the listening model.

Why didn’t some parishioners come to the listening groups? Anecdotal feedback suggests that, for some, the invitation to speak of their relationship with the Church held the possibility of opening up old wounds and they did ‘not wish to go there’. Other comments offered were time pressures, I don’t want to speak and I don’t go to these kinds of things…. etc?

Overall the listening group format has been received positively by individuals and rolled out amongst several groups – over 80 people have engaged in one of these groups.

Quotes from the parishes newsletter about how some people perceived the groups:

“The small groups were great. I would never have spoken in a larger group”

“It was so good in small groups as it gave everyone a chance to speak and be heard.”

In mid-May 2022 we held a feedback and discernment event where all the material from the synodality process so far was displayed on the walls of the St John’s church hall. About 50 people attended. Following a guided meditation, we used the small group listening process for reflection and further sharing.

**The future**

The positive response to the synodality process so far is encouraging. The listening groups have clearly been appreciated by parishioners, and we believe they can be a key element in our process of discernment.

We are clear that the purpose of the synodality process is to help us be open as a community to the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And it is a journey that we have just begun, rather than an event.

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**Children’s Liturgy**

**Synod Questions/Responses:**

**At Masses Sunday 27th February 2022**

1. **What is one thing you like/enjoy about coming to Mass?**

* All the activities we do in here (liturgy)/ coming out of church
* I like coming to church because I feel closer to God
* Like when we do crafty things
* Like going to get the host (cracker) and wine
* I like it because it’s a place where I can relax – at home I can’t really relax
* I like singing the songs
* Singing songs
* Praying is different from at school
* Going up to speak to Fr Jock at the altar!
* Listening to the stories from the Gospel Fr Jock tells us about Jesus’ life
* Learning stuff we didn’t know about (from homilies)
* Fascinated by the echo and being able to wander (little Klara)
* School Masses – good to answer on the microphone
* Excited to be making First Holy Communion

1. **What one thing do you wish was different/better at church/Mass?**

* Be more short [Mass]
* It might feel long because when you’re an adult - life just flies by quicker
* Children’s liturgy should be longer
* More activities in children’s liturgy – plays, crafts, colouring in
* Singing together makes me full of joy
* Difficult to say because I really like it here

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**Holy Rood RC High School**

**Synod Consultation with Pupils – the questions**

The consultation was organised by the school using questions suggested by the Archdiocese. The school senior management shared the outcome with Fr Jock Dalrymple to inform our parish synodality process.

**Question 1**   
Journeying together as a Church implies a vital relationship with God, individually and communally. How can we foster and deepen each person’s relationship with God through Christ? What are we doing well that needs to be maintained? What needs improving?

**Question 2**Journeying together as a Church implies loving concern for those who no longer walk with us, or who lag behind. How can we reach out to the ‘lapsed’, the disillusioned, the wounded, the angry, the apathetic? How can we help them feel they still have a home, and a mission, within the Catholic Church?

**APPENDIX 6** [Return to contents](#contents)

**Comments from local Christians**

Using an online survey, we asked for views from local churches – using five questions. We had a limited number of responses (11) which are nonetheless interesting, so we are including them all here:

**QUESTION 01**

# **What has been your historical perception of Catholicism internationally and locally?**

### -----------

### Traditional worship, hierarchical

### -----------

### Have often thought that Catholics will serve in places and ministries that the rest of us can avoid. Some of my favourite authors are Catholics. Locally I feel a great openness to focus on what unites us and to accept what differences we might have.

### -----------

### Christian, charitable, same as my church family. We all have good and bad things that happen in the larger church sometimes. We just keep praying.

### -----------

### A force for good, but often misunderstood, feared or abused.

### -----------

### A closed organisation, not always in step with contemporary life.

### -----------

### Locally: a church which is warm and friendly inside. Historically: a church whose desire for unity and hierarchy has sometimes led it in the wrong direction

### -----------

### Idol worshippers paying for redemption

### -----------

### Internationally, kind of secretive, hierarchical, a bit focused on mo ey and treasures Locally, very warm, kind and generous

### -----------

### I was brought up a Catholic. I found it too dictatorial and to some extent still do

### -----------

### Deeper spiritual base than other denominations; hierarchy.

### -----------

### Evolving at both levels

**QUESTION 02**

# **Has anything changed in your perception as a result of the way in Portobello we all try to work together?**

### -----------

### Yes. Wonderful joining together of faith groups.

### -----------

### Not really. I absolutely love the way that we recognise one another and work so well together. The Good Friday service was such a joy to see all pastors on the platform together saying the blessing at the end.

### -----------

### I really appreciate how all the churches in Portobello try to work together. I am so thankful for that.

### -----------

### Portobello's example is a most positive attempt to move forward progressively and together and has good leadership.

### -----------

### Yes, it feels like there’s a desire to be more open to others and to share faith

### -----------

### I love the joint approach to Holy Week and other significant times of year and to working together for our young people

### -----------

### I look at catholics with more tolerance

### -----------

### Yes, the local church at grand roots is very "normal". They are warm and generous

### -----------

### I am impressed by the way the various churches work together. In the past the Catholic Church rarely worked with other churches

### -----------

### Yes: the riches of each denomination as well as the challenges.

### -----------

### Yes - I have a more developed awareness

**QUESTION 03**

# **What do you appreciate about the local Catholic Community in Portobello? (And what do you find difficult or confusing?!)**

### -----------

### A constant, a caring priest who is listening to the voice of God.

### -----------

### First and foremost I appreciate their warm hospitality. I appreciate the practical outreach they offer in the community.

### -----------

### I apologise as I don't know a great deal about the Catholic Community. The few individuals I know are fantastic so I would imagine the rest of the Catholic Community is as well.

### -----------

### community, compassion and care. Occasionally, like most Churches' it struggles to effectively communicate and be fully part of the community.

### -----------

### I don’t know very much about it. I’m not aware of who that community is other than the priest.

### -----------

### Appreciate: warm and friendly people; generously sharing spiritual practices like stations of the cross and Ignatian prayer

### -----------

### it's willingness to mix. The idolatry..sorry

### -----------

### I don’t really know it

### -----------

### Openness to sharing in events and strong peace/justice presence.

### -----------

### Some lovely people

**QUESTION 04**

# **What might we do as a Catholic community and as Christians to improve ecumenical relations in Portobello and also in the wider context?**

### Continue with what has started and offer prayer support to the community. Develop and share with others the contemplative part of your worship to help us understand it better.

### -----------

### Deepen our love for the Lord. Deepen our love for ourselves and deepen our love for one another. Continue to get to know one another and share our lives together.

### -----------

### I wish I knew.

### -----------

### Keep meeting regularly, talk and worship together, break down barriers and be tolerant of one another.

### -----------

### Perhaps tell the local community more about who you are and what you do, and find ways to invite others to join in with you.

### -----------

### I think you do a lot already - it’s about rebuilding connections post-Covid. Also working together to send a message about Christianity in Portobello to all the new houses in the area

### -----------

### advertise more widely

### -----------

### I think, locally we are very ecumenical and it's lovely. I think I Scotland wider I'd like to see more integration of Catholic/protestant congratulations

### -----------

### More interaction at congregational level

### -----------

### Perhaps we could all attend retreats together (like some of the prayer evenings).

### -----------

### Youth events. Football?

**QUESTION 05**

# **If you have any further reflections to offer to us about the Catholic Church and/or about our new efforts at Synodality, please do feel free to add them below.**

### I love this approach and these questions. I'm sure they will lead to blessing.

### -----------

### In general, I feel that many Churches are 'out of step' with today's modern society and we should be doing more to work with other Churches and Christian groups to break down barriers, fears and 'educate' our leadership teams as to how best to meet the challenges of today.

### -----------

### It’s great that you want to be more inclusive. To go back to the first question, it’s always seemed to me that the Catholic Church is a ‘closed shop’ and happy to stay that way. Glad to know I’m wrong about that!

### -----------

### The wider Catholic church has to deal with a legacy of things which have put people off it - scandals and abuses. Locally being a warm and listening space for individuals is really important

### -----------

### find a better understandable word for Synodality

### -----------

### Build on the strong spiritual foundations (Merton, etc.) and current efforts of the current Pope.

### -----------

### I have nothing further to add at this point.