

This is an account of the subjects raised in our Synod discussions that directly relate to our local parish. A much fuller version containing every one of your comments (global and local) has been sent to the diocese.

Our Lady of Peace Parish Synod Summary

Q1 What does it mean to be Catholic?

To believe in Christ and live according to the teachings of the Church, acknowledging the Pope as leader on earth.

Mass, sacraments, universal Church.

Q2 What are your experiences of the church doing something well?

Welcome to all/Community

Many people feel welcome, the community is caring, it was a safe haven during the pandemic, friendship and sense of belonging, both worldwide and locally. A sense of identity and stability.

The Youth Club in Eton Wick was the best experience.

Good organised response to the pandemic, adapted well (live streaming, distancing, reception duties) and quickly, involving volunteer parishioners. Wake up call for the Church to be prominent and help each other in the wider community.

Enjoyed Fr Joe's men's group.

Able to support/direct people who need support/extra help.

Suspension of obligation during Covid and ability to watch live streaming.

We have good support in our catholic schools.

The catholic church in our local area (Slough) is well known for its excellent charity work in the local community, particularly with the homeless.

Charitable & pastoral support for poor both locally & worldwide e.g. SVP, Cafod, Pro-Life etc. (over 60% of people mentioned this).

Rosary & other parish groups, encourages laity involvement.

Priests available for the sick & dying.

Education

Our church organises bible studies (not everybody knew about them) and is a focus for communal prayer and devotions.

Catholic schools have a good reputation and families strive to get their children into them because of their high expectations of morals, behaviour and their community feel.

Keeping deposit of faith safe – sacred traditions/magisterium

Mass and the Sacraments

Worldwide Mass & all the sacraments, incl masses for sick, children's liturgy etc. Brings people together. We personally encounter the Body & Blood of Christ and are helped to grow closer to God.

Provision and preparation for the Sacraments – Baptism, Reconciliation, FHC and Confirmation.

Music makes Mass joyous.

Suspension of obligation during Covid, stopping sharing chalice during Covid.

Anyone can come.

Clergy related

Varied types of priests (rulebound/open), chaplaincy.

Wonderful priests who give example and encouragement to live our faith (in our parish).

Spirituality

Adoration, retreats, bible studies, mission with the Sion Community followed by a post mission prayer companion.

Based on the bible & teachings of Jesus explained to us by clergy and great communicators.

Have a good understanding of who and what we believe.

Open to many ways of praying & worshipping God (quiet/musical – all kinds) but with stable framework and clear moral expectations. Gives a way to live your life well.

Our faith gives us hope our prayers will be answered, it keeps us grounded.

Communal prayers and devotions, listen and respond to each other.

Charismatic renewal flourishing.

Q3 What are some of your experiences of when things have not gone so well?

Welcome to all/Community:

Don't do enough for the divorced/separated.

Not obvious that people are welcome. Older people feel lonely, isolated, Covid made it worse, it's easier to watch livestream from home.

No connectivity amongst people, don't know each other's names. Those who have moved away are scared to come back – feel lost and alone.

Nothing to help those with mental health problems.

Judgemental of those seen not to measure up, - the divorced, LGBTQ people, shift workers who don't make Mass regularly. Not a place of compassion.

Folks too set in their ways – too many individuals who like to be in charge of groups, no chance of changes to Readers.

No fellowship after Mass.

Ecumenism:

This has been neglected lately especially in our parish.

The general public do not understand what it means to be a Catholic. There is a lack of understanding and misconceptions from other denominations.

Church of England accepts Catholics to receive communion but not the other way round.

Education:

Too many rules, rigid, very narrow viewpoint, priests following the rule book, we should live by 'what Jesus would have done', more flexible, less judgemental.

Not enough mercy, love and acceptance.

Not enough said about the Kingdom of God, no proper teaching and explanation of the bible/scriptures. Any formal instruction of the faithful is limited to preparation for the sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Learn from other faiths how they work with their youth. Fail to engage, nurture or encourage young people. Not enough activities/programmes for young people – these points were very prominent.

Different teachings are creeping in. Lack of consistency in teachings, priests saying different things leads us to form our own opinions.

As a parent of an autistic child the church fails to meet my child's specific spiritual needs.

Dependent too much on the schools to play the part.

Too much importance given to political issues, what is the church doing on a practical level about sustainability?

Mass & the Sacraments:

We are not allowed to stand during Consecration if we are unable to kneel and so we have to sit down, but I am genuinely in awe of what happens during this sacred moment, I believe in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Some people don't like confession. It's a church rule, not a rule from Jesus (in its current format).

We don't have general absolution but it would help people to come back and give them the strength to carry on; one person said do away with individual confessions.

Comments – Too much emphasis on how we sin, sin of contraception to be abolished; noisy before Mass, easier access to Baptism, more engaging services, need uplifting music. People should go to Mass when they can and because they want to.

Mass is too fast and not reflective enough.

Active homosexuality no longer to be considered a sin.

Canon Law should be modernised.

Lack of diversity in Leadership.

Clergy related:

Varied experiences with priests, some foster unity and belonging and are more open, some are traditional.

Pre-pandemic - Bishop was wise providing a young Parish Priest with a second priest, we were listened to much better, it was a happy place.

Not enough priests.

Don't recognise role of women in the church, especially round decision making, need more women in all aspects of church life. Respect and recognition to come directly from Rome.

Priests should be offered Spiritual Directors.

Priests have no experience of work or family life and so can't relate to people with understanding.

Difficulty understanding clergy who are not from the same culture.

Personal renewal is lacking, teachings should not only be dogmatic.

In a 24/7 secular world – too much consumerism and social media.

No retreats with international or renowned speakers. Not enough speakers, retreats, missions.

Church needs to re-evangelise itself.

Spirituality:

The church is too formal and lacking in understanding.

We are not seen as evangelical

We don't promote unity and love in married couples

Abuse:

Clerical abuse of all forms wasn't acknowledged or dealt with quickly and robustly enough. Not enough accountability, too much power.

Too many girls/women have suffered judgementally re sex/marriage.

The church has been grossly negligent, arrogant, lacking in humility, ghastly, horrendous, in denial, criminal. Protocols no use unless honoured.

The abuse damaged the body of the Church and penance should be done.

Pope Benedict should be stripped of his title and so should every other abuser in the Church. In the rest of the world they would have lost their jobs at the first suggestion of abuse, they should not be above the law.

Parish:

Too much emphasis on collecting money. No regular accounts published and no minutes of PPC meetings.

Badly organised, fragmented, groups in isolation, territorial, divided, no accountability financial or otherwise.

Money spent on vestments and chalices when we badly need the car park resurfaced and a meeting hall.

Parish Priest has too many responsibilities outside the parish should be focussed solely on the parish.

Some people less able to hear – large space & different accents.

Should divest some wealth to help those in need (not all agreed).

The church has been closed during Covid, it should be open at all times.

Need new benches and to tidy up the church, name in bold/big letters, lighting.

We have no Parish Mission statement and don't know what is planned for the future.

Q4 What are your dreams for the Church?

Welcome to all/Community:

To be able to discuss things with other people (like in the Men's group).

More parish events. Extra activities to bring people together. Theatre trips and outings for less able and older folk.

To become a community rather than just individuals. Share meals regularly, building up each other. After Mass have gatherings, talk to each other, tea/coffee with conversations and questions, also during the week. Original model of community in Acts – caring/sharing/helping financially and with food.

We need to publicly show our love to those who do not feel welcome. To be a place of compassion and love, more friendly, more inclusive, less condemning. The parish to be more welcoming to people of all genders, races, ages, creeds, abilities, personalities, divorced, gay, unmarried and all sinners. Embrace everyone regardless of background or who they are.

A more relaxed, more informal and understanding church. Pope Frances already embodies many of these characteristics: humility, compassionate, non-judgemental and we need to practice these.

Support families with younger children.

'Resting Catholics' should be welcomed back without judgment and no one should be excluded because of the way they self-identify.

To continue to reach out to everyone and have more pastoral care – teams that could be called upon as Priests are too busy with their heavy workload.

A forum in which groups come together to share experiences, outline needs and formulate plans of action in harmony to maximise on their strengths – 'may they all be one.'

Priests to be more friendly to parishioners.

Ecumenism:

More contact with and more openness to people of other Christian traditions through St Andrew's Shared Church and Churches Together.

Holding non-Christian events to attract non-Catholics.

I dream of Christian Unity and the power it brings if we work together on major and minor issues. We hope for reconciliation between all faiths by reaching out to other faith Communities.

More Eucharistic hospitality.

Education:

Explain and teach the Bible more. To understand the sermon better and 'take home' learnings from the scripture. Re-education, have the teachings of the church explained and be accessible to young people and to adults.

To be a missionary church we need to understand our faith better so we need more adult faith formation and more bible study. Re-evangelisation of the baptised.

Let's be more like St Paul and welcome all into the love of Jesus.

Regular periods of instruction outside of mass itself, to give us the knowledge with which to sustain and defend our faith and to fend off widely held heretical beliefs.

Make a particular effort to engage teenagers using the media they use and also with social clubs/events to give them a sense of community and belonging.

Use of modern tools (Bishop Barron Youtube, Scott Hahn EWTN, David Pawson's introduction to the Bible series on TV and Youtube.

Mass & the Sacraments:

Have Masses in other languages.

Consider other special groups for Mass e.g. family and children

General absolution should be the norm...individual confession for those who need/want it.

Reintroduce Benediction.

Easier access to Information about the annulment process and more understanding of divorced people, especially if it was not up to them that the marriage ended.

To focus on helping all children who want Holy Communion to have it, as evangelisation should start from an early age - children missing out due to deadlines seems ludicrous.

To have the children more involved in the Mass – say readings, have a youth Mass, singing, serving, youth rosary groups.

Have young people in CWL, SVP etc.

Engage youngsters through music, colour, technology, fun and joyful activities. Give them more responsibilities

Clergy related:

More priests. That we foster a community which encourages new vocations to clerical life so we don't run out of priests and nuns.

Make celibacy optional.

Married priests, women deacons, women priests, women bishops.

Decision making at all levels should include women.

Of the many people with these dreams there was one person who did not agree.

Spirituality:

Centrally organised pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome, Lourdes, Fatima and Medjugorje with local contacts and pick-up points to help parishioners to travel more easily.

To be seen as more openly evangelical, bringing more people to Jesus and not to be frightened of this primary mission of the church. Laity and clergy working together to bring the love of God to everybody.

To encourage each other in the practice of our faith. Dreams shared with parishioners and testimonies of Catholic faith – but not from same folk.

Vision and example of sharing / caring church at all levels, instituting the Gospel's teachings – love one another as I have loved you.

Teaching on meditation. The importance and power of prayer.

That the church will not be an empty building, converted into apartments, but that the church will be full of spirit and vocation that the Holy Spirit will renew the church, our society and the world.

Reform Canon Law.

Abuse:

Worldwide – for it to have the courage to admit to wrongdoing and sinfulness (abuse by priests and ordained people) and to make public steps to correct, discipline or punish transgressions.

For the church to set an example to the world of awareness, humility and repentance.

While great strides have been made towards healing survivors, more help is needed.

Parish:

To have a parish mission statement and know what is planned for the future. Clear objective to make the parish united and committed. Need to make the parish structure sound.

To have Parish Council and Parish Community meetings and minutes of them, a quarterly financial report and to know who are the members of this council.

Repaint church interior possibly by volunteer parishioners.

Improve parish web-site, more pictures, more inspirational.

Churches in a Deanery need to combine resources.

Parish Facebook to have more than endless mass streaming– maybe masses could be confined to YouTube.

Planning - fewer instances of events clashing. Communication and helping each other across ministries.

That the various organisations that work within the church, work together to maximise their strengths – 'may they all be one'.

For the church to remain open.

Locally: kneeling facilities at OLOP to be improved.

Creating a safe space where there is a non-judgmental dialogue around the subject of abortion, drug and alcohol abuse etc.