

**St Brigid's Parish  
Blanchardstown**

**Parish Report**  
on  
**The Synodal Gatherings**  
held  
**1<sup>st</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022**



## Contents of Booklet

	Page
Background	2
Responses to the four questions	4
Emerging Themes	8
What the Holy Spirit may be indicating in this	10
Prayer for the Synod	11

### Background

Last October Pope Francis invited all the baptised, and anyone of good faith, throughout the world, to take part in a time of prayerful reflection, listening, and sharing, so that we can better hear the voice of God’s Spirit, in a sincere effort to bring about real transformation and renewal in the Church. This process is called a “Universal Synod”. “Synod” simply means ‘journeying together’ and it is about a new way of being church together

Synodal Gatherings took place in every diocese and every parish, worldwide. The output from all this listening will be fed into a meeting of Church Leaders at a Synod in Rome in October 2023. Our parish held two Synodal Gatherings in March 2022 at St Brigid’s GAA club in Russell Park, with a total attendance of about one hundred and fifty people.

A team of four “Animators” guided the process, assisted by a team of “Small Group Leaders”. It was obvious from the general buzz of opinion and open conversation that people were coming together as Pope Francis had asked; speaking openly, courageously, and humbly respecting each other’s ideas.

The Animators sorted all the feedback from our Gatherings into similar answers, some expressed by larger numbers of attendees and some by smaller numbers. This forms the first 4 pages of the Report.

A special meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) was called to help us prayerfully discern both the emerging themes and what the Holy Spirit may be indicating to us. Based on this the Animators completed the second 3 pages of the formal Report from the parish to the central Synodal Committee in the Diocese.

We are now presenting this report to you the parishioners. We are aware that Archbishop Farrell is preparing to submit an overall report from Dublin Diocese to the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Ireland based on the reports received from all the parishes. We are also aware that our PPC will use the report to help in parish pastoral planning.

Our parish Animators Gráinne Uí Chaomhánaigh and Mary Tighe together with Máirín Keegan, Pastoral Worker, and Michael O’Connor, Deacon, wish to thank most sincerely everyone who contributed to our parish Synodal gatherings by attending and taking part, by helping in any way and by keeping the Synodal process in your prayers.

*God Bless,  
Mary, Gráinne, Máirín, Michael.*

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

29 May 2022

<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (1<sup>st</sup> Gathering)</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (2<sup>nd</sup> Gathering)</b>
<b>86</b>	<b>63</b>

<b>WHAT JOYFUL EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND CONVERGE?</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>WHAT JOYFUL EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND DIVERGE?</b>	<b>No.</b>
A sense of support and welcome and community	36	Flowers (in church)	3
The Liturgy and the sacraments	30	Example of Pope Francis	2
Music	10	Prayer / Lectio / Retreats	3
Sense of Peace and Comfort	9	Evidence of Change	2
Seeing young people and families in Church	9	God is bigger than the four walls	1
Faith Community coming together to pray	8	Dedication of the Priest	1
Volunteering	8	Non-judgemental forgiveness	1
Universality of Church	5		
Christian witness/ solidarity with poor and oppressed.	4		
Joy in the Church's Teaching	4		

<b>WHAT SORROWFUL EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND CONVERGE?</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>WHAT SORROWFUL EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND DIVERGE?</b>	<b>No.</b>
Women in the Church - lack of meaningful roles.	11	Lack of tolerance, LGBT and those who don't attend.	3
Fall-off of people in the Church	10	Lack of reverence of priests	3
Exclusion of women from the Diaconate and Priesthood	10	Power and attitude of the Church	2
Lack of vocations and aging priests	9	People not passing on the message	2
Scandals in the Church	9	Restriction of married men from priesthood	2
Lack of children and youth	8	No sadness's !!	2

<b>WHAT SORROWFUL EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND CONVERGE?</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>WHAT SORROWFUL EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND DIVERGE?</b>	<b>No.</b>
attending Mass.			
Lack of involvement of young people in Liturgy	7	No daily prayer in children's lives	1
No Faith Development	7	Lack of morality in the Church both past and present. Hypocrisy.	1
Monotonous Liturgy, sermons not engaging.	6	At funerals, the congregation don't know the responses.	1
Church doesn't attract young people	6	Age profile of Church attendees	1
Hierarchical church not listening to community and lay people	6		
More attention to delivering religious education	5		
Lack of respect for people attached to or faithful to the church	5		
Impact of pandemic on local practices	6		
Poor / No leadership	5		
Bad handling / lies / cover up of scandals	4		
Cruelty in Children's / Unmarried mothers homes	4		
Lack of inclusivity / frustration	4		
Sadness at portrayal of church and good priests by the media	4		
Lack of young people and families at mass after first sacraments	4		

<b>WHAT HOPEFUL EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND CONVERGE?</b>	<b>N o.</b>	<b>WHAT HOPEFUL EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND DIVERGE?</b>	<b>N o.</b>
The Church is less authoritarian, more tolerant.	13	Good Works (acts of charity)	3
Lay involvement	13	Catechesis/Teaching of the	2

		Church	
Liturgy and the Sacraments	12	Love replacing fear/ no longer coming to Church out of fear	3
The Synod itself, hope of real change	11	Female involvement	2
Faith in / Love of - God/Jesus	10	History - we've come through worse times. Church always emerges with new hope.	2
Church Community	11	Joy of returning after Covid	1
Youth and the Next Generation	10	Church's response helped me to feel safe during Covid.	1
Universal Hope ("where there is life there is hope" – we must have hope despair is a sin)	6	Universal Church (same church in Spain or Ireland)	1
The presence & activities of Priests, Deacons, Nuns	5	Celebration of big life events (Births, Marriages, Deaths).	1
Online presence of the church - social media/webcam	5	Wider Society - Strong evidence of goodwill in society in general.	1
Prayer	5		
Pope Francis	4		

<b>WHAT ANXIOUS EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND CONVERGE?</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>WHAT ANXIOUS EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND DIVERGE?</b>	<b>No.</b>
Ageing priests lack of vocations	18	Burden of buildings / infrastructure	2
Lack of involvement in / encouragement for / engagement with - Youth	11	Lack of catechesis / teaching of religion in schools / home	3
Lack of inclusivity / marginalised / LGBT+	10	Fear of last things / judgement day	1
Lack of female involvement at the top incl diaconate and priesthood	10	Priests should be allowed to marry	1
Frustration with institution / lack of willingness to change	8	Fear that we will not listen properly to the Holy Spirit	1
Secularism / anti-Christian sentiment / culture	6	Problems are too great for the bishops to fix	1

WHAT ANXIOUS EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND CONVERGE?	No.	WHAT ANXIOUS EXPERIENCES ARE NAMED AND DIVERGE?	No.
Fear that the church won't welcome change	5	Impact of covid on attendances / leading to church closures	1
Francis will be stifled	5	Where will our children go for comfort?	1
Synodal process will come to nothing	5	Lack of home visitation	1
Scandals / restitution means its too late for trust	4	Fear of division in the church	1
Age of congregation / reduced attendance	4	Lack of unity of Christians (ecumenics)	1
Need to get back to basics / watering down the faith	5	Not knowing what is being asked of me by God.	1
		Our culture is too passive in dealing with drugs and other addictions	1
		Lack of commitment by priests to face down those who are pro choice	1
		Fear of identifying Catholics solely as mass goers and ignoring other activities in the community	1
		Not always united voice from Rome on major economic, social & sexual issues	1

WHAT THEMES ARE EMERGING FROM THE GATHERING?
<p><b>Faith/Prayer/Sense of peace and comfort.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church exists not for itself but to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ</li> <li>• Great source of peace and contentment for those who believe</li> </ul>

## WHAT THEMES ARE EMERGING FROM THE GATHERING?

- What will happen to the next generation(s) if we fail to pass this on?
- Need to break open the Word of God for everyone.

### **Liturgy and Sacraments**

- Great source of joy and hope when truly celebrated
- But seen as boring and irrelevant by large numbers of people (both young and old)

### **Community of Faith**

- Strong sense of joy & support in being part of a community of faith; sense of belonging
- Positive experience with involvement of laity in ministry & volunteering
- “A lot done, a lot more to do”; it must be nourished not taken for granted
- Need to be an inviting Church of welcome, reaching out to others

### **Youth**

- Joy in seeing young families but sadness that there are so few & so little follow through.
- Need to encourage, engage and involve all these generations and build relationships in order to keep Church community alive.
- Sacramental preparation far from ideal, needs a lot of work.

### **Sustainable Structures / Fall in numbers**

- Reducing numbers, and ageing profile, of priests, religious and laity
- Need training for laity and clergy in new ways of being Church
- Faithful always on the defensive / justifying their involvement with the Church
- This synodal process is a beacon of hope

### **Meaningful / Responsible Roles for Women**



## WHAT THEMES ARE EMERGING FROM THE GATHERING?

- Church has ignored / denigrated women & women's issues
- Women must be given meaningful roles / responsibilities: diaconate, priesthood, other

### Scandals

- The cover ups were just as bad as the original events
- Perception that Church has been brought to account extremely reluctantly
- Perception that Church is still fighting a rear-guard action to avoid payments for past sins and is being parsimonious rather than generous with victims.

### Lack of Honesty/Authenticity/Trust/Morality – Presence of Hypocrisy

- Church leaders not seen as honest (eg use of terms like “mental reservation”)
- Hypocrisy - Church teaching not being followed in practice (eg treatment of the “least of these” in mother & baby homes, laundries, orphanages, abuse cases, etc – both then & now)
- Distinctions maintained that make no sense to average layperson (eg permissibility of “natural” family planning while banning other forms of contraception).
- Fear that the Synod will come to nothing; nothing will change.

### Exclusion of Marginalised

- Church cannot continue to exclude unmarried couples, divorced, remarried, LGBTQi+, etc
- if you think it doesn't exclude them ... look at points on Honesty/Hypocrisy

## WHAT MIGHT THE HOLY SPIRIT BE INDICATING IN THIS?

‘The reign of God is within reach.  
Conform yourselves ever anew to Christ's example.  
And keep trusting in God's saving grace’

It is time for everyone to take responsibility for the Church, both laity and clergy.

Through synodality we need to find a common voice (laity, clergy & hierarchy) and speak it out.

We need to take a truly honest look at the reality of people's lives in the world today; so as to allow them to be full members of the Catholic Church rather than finding ways to exclude them.

We all need to be authentic and honest in everything we say and do and avoid all hypocrisy.

We must rebuild trust.

We need to bring God outside the four walls of the Church building.

We need to reach out to the frail in our community and build relationships.

We need to reach out to the younger generations and explain our relevance to their lives.

We need to progress women in ministry.

We need to truly celebrate our faith, preach the Good News and break open the Word of God.

We want all people to experience the Love of God.

### **PRAYER FOR THE SYNOD**

#### ***Adsumus Sancte Spiritus***

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, "We stand before You, Holy Spirit," which has been historically used at Councils, Synods

and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal pathway from 2021 to 2023, we will use this prayer.

**We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.**

**With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.**

**We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.**

**Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey together to eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.**

**All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.**

