



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

SYNOD 2021-23

PARISH REPORT

The Parish of Holy Family, Cardiff

Introduction - Holy Family Parish

Holy Family Parish is situated in Fairwater in the north-west of Cardiff.

The current parish church opened in 1980 and the previous church building, which is adjacent, is now the parish hall. It serves a socially diverse population with parishioners drawn from a range of social and economic circumstances.

The area is served by a catholic primary school – also called Holy Family – situated in Pentrebane. This is a small school of about 150 pupils with a high proportion who are not baptised catholics. The catholic secondary school that used to serve the area – Bishop Hannon – closed in 1987. Currently, pupils from Holy Family School go to Corpus Chris Secondary School, though some opt to go to non-catholic schools.

Holy Family Parish is linked with St Mary of the Angels Parish in Canton and served by one priest – Canon Peter Collins. He has the assistance of retired priest Canon John Maguire and three deacons.

As with other parishes across the United Kingdom, Holy Family's mass attendance has materially fallen since the pandemic. Across the weekend masses during 2018 numbers attending averaged just over 300 but currently stands at around 180. Holy Family has a particular need to encourage more young people and families to attend mass.

Holy Family has a tradition of being a friendly and welcoming parish. It has active choirs and musicians, groups such as the SVP, SCRAP and Befriending the Bereaved, extra-curricular classes such as Tai Chi and other social activities. However, it is acknowledged that, during the pandemic, a number of these groups have found it more difficult to function effectively. During the pandemic, the parish, in conjunction with St Mary's, began a weekly food distribution service for those in need. Currently 'Reaching Out' delivers food to around 70 households across the parishes of Holy Family, St Mary's and St Francis. Pre pandemic the parish supported the provision of a night shelter at St Mary's for the homeless.

Within the geographical area of the parish there is a very large residential house building programme, Plasdwr, which will eventually see the construction of 7,000 new homes over the next decade and a key aim of the Parish is to spread the message of Holy Family to bolster the congregation in the forthcoming years.

Methodology

<u>The period up to Christmas</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Comment</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Synodal organisation team formed - Agreeing methods of obtaining opinions and views - Producing questionnaires on communion, participation and mission. - Further meetings to arrange for collection of opinions. - Meetings between Holy Family Synodal team and wider joint meetings with sister team at St Mary of the Angels. - Terry Morris address at masses to encourage participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggestion box for written comments sited near entrance to church. - Planned meetings in church hall after Mass on three weekends in Jan/Feb 2022. - Box included on website for comments - Individual discussions within groups of the Parish and Synodal team reporting back on their comments. - Canvassed views of non-catholic friends and colleagues - Useful discussion of issues likely to arise from the parishes and the methods by which we collect them and make the parishes aware of the Synodal process. - Understood the likely delineation in comments relating to the parishes themselves and the environment of the churches and wider doctrinal issues, both of which will be essential to be a listening church.

<p><u>January 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening exercise commenced - Feedback questionnaires made available at all masses - Meetings after Saturday evening Mass 22nd Jan and Sunday morning 23rd Jan. - Parish prayer cards distributed 	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch of the listening exercise through both meetings and written responses - Questionnaires designed to receive feedback from people who wished to provide a full range of comments or were unwilling/unable to do so through face to face meetings - Good attendance at both meetings and very useful presentation of opinions Prayer card designed to support synodal process
<p><u>Feb 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings after Mass on 5th and 6th and 12th and 13th February. 	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good attendance and very useful discussions and feedback at meetings after Sunday masses. Poor attendance on the Saturday evenings due to a combination of exceptional weather and the meetings clashing with Wales matches in the Six Nations - Written responses to questionnaires received

<u>March 2022 onwards</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Comment</u>
	<p>- Assessing responses and opinions</p> <p>Production of report</p> <p>Communicate outcome of listening exercise to the parish</p> <p>Begin to identify actions required in the parish to address the feedback received</p>	<p>- 20+ questionnaires returned to box with a full range of opinions.</p> <p>- A number of responses on the website suggestion box.</p> <p>- Notes gathered from group meetings after Masses.</p> <p>- Parish report completed and submitted to Cardiff Archdiocese</p> <p>- Agree best approach to feeding back the results of the Synodal exercise to the people of the parish.</p> <p>- In conjunction with parish council, agree the priority actions to be taken forward by the parish.</p>

The Synodal process is fundamentally about listening to as wide a range of the people as possible in order to gather views on the role of the Catholic Church in the 21st century. To that extent the approach adopted in Holy Family has resulted in a good response from parishioners who have provided a rich source of well thought through opinions and ideas. These suggestions of actions required by the church tended to relate either to those that the parish itself should address, or, to broader doctrinal points for the church to address centrally. The former will be incorporated into a parish action plan to take forward and address the local feedback; whereas the latter will be eventually, along with the views of parishes across the Catholic world, presented for consideration to the conference of bishops in Rome, led by the pope.

Communion: How does our Church function in our local area?

Holy Family has a tradition of being a friendly and welcoming parish. It has active choirs and musicians, groups such as the SVP, SCRAP and Befriending the Bereaved, extra-curricular classes such as Tai Chi and other social activities. However, it has challenges in having an ageing congregation and has, as have all parishes, suffered a large drop in attendances since the pandemic.

There are a number of very able and regular volunteers that assist the clergy to keep the church running but they are in need of greater support.

There is a very large residential building programme close to Fairwater which will deliver 7,000 homes over the next five years and a key aim of the Parish is to spread the message of Holy Family to bolster the congregation in the forthcoming years. It is a great opportunity. There also need to be closer links with the school and there is a university halls of residence not too far from the Parish.

Feedback received of ways to foster stronger communion within the Parish

- Greater use of welcomers at the church door before Mass and tea and coffee mornings/events after Mass.
- Those who have drifted away from the Church may come to baptisms, confirmations, weddings or funerals – must make them feel welcome.
- Explore ways of bringing back/ retaining young adults who drift away from the Church – explore ways of making contact with this group, such as special social occasions, masses for young people with families in which they can play a part as readers or speak briefly about their lives, ambitions etc. A majority view and recurring point was that the Church must be involved in issues that are relevant to younger people – global warming/the environment/inclusivity etc. There were views that the Parish and the wider church should have a stronger digital presence through apps and social media.
- More messaging around the excellent “Reaching out” community foodbank run by the Parish – use as springboard to widen the community involvement in the Parish.

- An SVP shop and community centre has opened in the former St Claire's Parish Church and is becoming an important facility for several parishes including Holy Family.
- Build on excellent work of groups fostering relationships with other parishes and denominations – eg churches together.

Broader doctrinal views relating to communion

- A number felt that those who are divorced and remarry without an annulment should be allowed to receive Holy Communion. Some also felt that those who belong to the Church in Wales or were baptised in other faiths should also be allowed to receive.
- The majority made the point that the role of women in the church should be increased. There remains a very traditional view of the role of women in the church. Some thought initial change could be through the ordination of women deacons but many went further to say that they were in support of women priests in order to support equality as well as the serious lack of clergy and to support those clergy already struggling with a number of parishes.

Participation: How do we work with others in supporting our local area?

We have mentioned already the drop in attendance following the pandemic. The pandemic put major constraints on many aspects of parish life and it is important to restart these events as soon as possible.

Having the Mass available online during lockdown was considered to be very important. It was recognised by some that there was a risk that this enabled those who were otherwise able to come to mass to stay at home and not fulfil the obligation to attend, but others commented that the advantages to those who were housebound as well, as the wider availability of Mass, outweighed these concerns.

Many emphasised the importance of ministers taking Holy Communion to those unable to come to Mass. As well as the Sacrament, this has an important role in addressing isolation and loneliness.

It was discussed that the falling numbers of priests means that the laity will need to do much more. Within the Parish it is therefore essential that there is an increase in the number of volunteers that assist in its running. At a higher level, it is important that the Church sets out a clear process and principles for how it envisages the laity becoming more involved in the future.

Many highlighted that children and young people are very unrepresented in our parishes and the church at large. It is of vital importance that this is addressed as a matter of urgency. Children's liturgies stopped during the pandemic and should be re-established as soon as it is safe to do so, but these should involve the children being visible and able to participate in the service itself and not just in a side room (e.g. by a 'show and tell' of their paintings or readings). There should be greater use of technology and social media to communicate with this age group and there need to be "stewards" in charge of getting the message out in each parish. Other suggestions for the young included youth clubs, Easter and Christmas parties.

Fostering further links between school and church was discussed.

The background to the discussions under “Participation” was that society has become more secular. It is important for the Church to play an active role in modern life. It must not appear too rigid or authoritarian but it was recognised that it must also sustain the teachings of the faith and not feel that it needs to drop all its principles. The laity still looks to the church for moral and spiritual guidance.

Some suggested that other communities could be invited to speak to the Parish – visiting priests or those from other faiths and walks of life.

It was repeated that it was very important that this Synodal process is not a “one-off” and that lay people have a continuing role in guiding the Church in the future.

Mission: How do we take the Gospel message out from our parish community?

A number of methods were suggested as follows:

1. A friendly and informative Parish (and Diocesan) website.
2. A pamphlet with information about the Parish and offering a warm welcome to be distributed in our area – especially the new estates currently being built.
3. Newsletter and social media notifications tailored to young people – need to use the internet and social media more.
4. Using the work of the foodbank to get the message out to the wider community that the Parish is there and caring for them.

At a macro-level, a large number said that there should be better general communication of the positive influence and values of the Catholic church. While there have been terrible and regrettable things occurring in the church in the past, such as the child abuse scandals. The Catholic church needs to demonstrate that it has listened and attitudes are much more tolerant and understanding than previously. These developments need to be communicated more positively – the media tends to report on the church in a historic fashion. Any other matters that do not fit under the three thematic headings of Communion, Participation & Mission

Other points that do not fit under the three thematic headings of Communion, Participation & Mission

The majority of those who provided feedback felt that priests should be allowed to marry. With the shift in attitudes over some decades, many thought it was vital to assist their wellbeing and to provide financial and emotional support in running of-ten large parishes and in appreciating and assisting in the issues of their congrega-tion. The church already admits married priests that convert to the Catholic church so it would be a natural next step. It was said that a start could be made by facilitat-ing the further ordination of married deacons to the priesthood.

Some of those polled stated that much of the church’s teaching on behaviour was being ignored by the majority of catholics and needed to be reviewed – in particu-lar its views on contraception. It was also stated by some that the church needs to be more tolerant of different lifestyles.

Some stated the view that the wealth of the church as whole should be better dis-tributed to help the poor communities around the world.

Some of the views of the non-catholics polled as part of this exercise including a general position that the families of many of those who describe themselves as “non-religious” are still keen to have hymns and standard prayers at their funeral service. Less so but still important is the church wedding and the baptism of chil-dren. It suggests that people still believe but perhaps that they do not feel suffi-ciently welcomed or recognised by the church or that it reflects their daily beliefs or is at odds with how they conduct their lives. Some specific responses we re-ceived from these people included the Catholic church being “less rigid – needing to be more than asking people to attend mass for an hour a week”, needing to be more understanding of modern family structures, ridding itself of its poor image following scandals such as child abuse and opening itself up as being at the centre of the community instead of at the periphery. At a macro-level, this is a challenge in the light of being relatively ignored by modern general media, but spokesper-sons for the church should be more visible, the church should improve its methods

of communication and local parishes should open up more to the community, whether Catholic or not.

Sign Off

This Report is submitted to the Diocesan Synodal Team on behalf of the Parish community of: Holy Family, Cardiff

It is an honest reflection of the work undertaken over the last six months and has been endorsed by the Parish Advisory Council.

Signed..... Parish Priest

Signed Parish Representative

Once complete please forward to:

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The Diocesan Synodal Team wishes to convey its appreciation for all the work undertaken in the preparation of this Report