



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

SYNOD 2021-23

PARISH REPORT

Parish of All Saints
Newport

To be submitted no later than **Monday 21st March 2022**

Introduction – Special Characteristics of the Parish

- Nine churches of varying sizes. Five primary schools and a secondary school
- Four hospitals
- Diverse community – people from Iraq, Syria, Philippines, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Ghana, India, Pakistan, Italy, Spain, Poland, Latin America, china
- 1405 adults and 608 children on parish register
- Parish groups include three SVP conferences children’s liturgy, intercessional prayer groups, music groups and Alpha group, Divine Mercy and Sacred Hart
- Parish served by three priests and one deacon with addition support provided by retired priest
- A leadership team
- All Saints Parish covers the city of Newport and the surrounding area. It is one of the most deprived areas of Wales
- Population 319,221
- Population is 98% white. Of the total population 57% are Christian, 30% of no religion and 4% Muslim

Methodology

<u>Nov 2021</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Comment</u>
	Synod Team comprising six adults was formed and took part in two Zoom meetings to scope the way forward.	
<u>Dec 2021</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Comment</u>
	<p>Synod team met and devised a parish questionnaire entitled ‘The Big Question’.</p> <p>Weekly parish newsletter used to raise awareness of the synod.</p> <p>Synod prayer cards printed and distributed throughout the parish.</p> <p>Synod prayer said at every Mass during December.</p>	

	distributed for maximum penetration at Christmas. Copies also posted to the housebound.	
<u>Jan 2022</u>	<p><u>Action</u> Synod Team met to finalise presentation for face to face meetings.</p> <p>Four public meetings and one zoom meeting took place at different sites across the parish and at different times of day to maximise attendance.</p>	<u>Comment</u>
<u>Feb 2022</u>	<p><u>Action</u> 150 synod questionnaires returned. Synod team undertook interrogation of responses.</p> <p>Two synod team meetings held to analyse the data.</p>	<u>Comment</u>
<u>March 2022</u>	<p><u>Action</u> Two synod team meetings held to finalise the content of this report.</p> <p>Each of the six members of the synod team took responsibility for analysing responses to two questions – drilling down to extract key issues and themes relating to communion, participation and mission. This data was combined with responses received at the public meetings.</p>	<u>Comment</u>

<u>April 2022</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Comment</u>
<u>May 2022</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Comment</u>

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

Direct quotes from respondents are indicated in italics

- The overwhelming response from our parish is that most Catholics are caring, loving and non-judgmental people. However there are groups of people who are marginalized and feel excluded particularly LGBTQI, divorced, the poor and homeless. As a universal church, we need to be more welcoming. Jesus walked on “the wild side” – seeing problems and seeking to provide solutions in a non-judgmental way. How does the church move forward unless it is more inclusive?
- Marginalisation also includes women, who make up a greater proportion of our congregation. Women need to be more involved in the liturgy and this should be encouraged by the Catholic hierarchy.
- *“My Catholic community feels a safe and welcoming place to be. The declining numbers at Mass have increased a sense of friendliness and familiarity, but at what cost? We need to be more welcoming.”*
- *“As a practising Catholic who taught in a Catholic school and was a Eucharistic Minister I no longer feel welcome at Mass. I am divorced and my marriage was annulled. However I chose to remarry a divorced man. My husband has converted to Catholicism and all the family still go to Mass but feel saddened that we cannot receive the Sacraments.”*
- *“In a large parish like ours, with nine churches, there is the unfortunate tendency to be territorial, depending on which church we belong. I am delighted that we are emphasising that we are one parish. We are one church and we exist to evangelise.”*
- Jesus says, “Love one another as I have loved you”. We are all on a journey to heaven and we need to take more opportunities to support each other in our faith journey. This cannot be just left to priests. We have all been called to witness to Christ.
- We need to be more open and welcoming to strangers in our church. During the pandemic live streaming Masses has enabled people to come together. However this can never be a substitute to being present at Mass and receiving the Sacrament. Now that churches are open again, we must build on the stewarding of the COVID Mass. It takes a lot of courage for people who are not regulars to walk through the door. It demands that they are welcomed by a friendly and supportive face.
- We need to find tactful ways of encouraging lapsed parishioners to return to Mass post Covid. This should involve a visit from a priest nun or lay person and also through phone calls. Our priests did a wonderful job during the pandemic with livestream Masses and phone Masses. We also posted newsletters to those not able to access the internet and held Zoom coffee mornings.
- *“I think we need to set up prayer cells in our various church communities where people can pray together. It’s very important that those who feel alone, isolated and excluded can find encouragement, fellowship and support.”*
- Fundamentally the parish needs to reach out to young people. This is not just a parochial issue but a national one. How do we encourage young people? This seems to be a hidden secret which the Conference of Bishops needs to help us with.
- How open are we about our faith to others. In the workplace, would you know if other team members were also Catholic? I am not sure I would and it is very sad.
- *“I believe that as a parish we are trying to walk side by side but personal politics and back biting get in the way. Covid 19 has been a blessing in that it has brought the best out of people. Far more people have had the opportunity to be involved rather than being stifled by the*

powerhouses who seem to take control and make people feel unwelcome. I am excited that our parish has started a journey of mission, but even now the moaning and groaning is trying to get in the way because it is not what some people want. It is time to let the Holy Spirit do the talking.”

- Living in a world where we are encouraged to be independent, it makes it harder to trust that God knows best. The Holy Spirit is misunderstood by Catholics. But we must be guided by the Holy Spirit through prayer, contemplation and action. We must be aware of our preoccupations and prejudices and be open to new ideas.
- *“I want more people to be involved and encouraged by personal approach to find the time, confidence, opportunity and awareness of how they can use their talents.”*
- We are part of a large parish but the congregation in church is small and old. If we cannot grow Mass attendance we are not viable. There are lapsed Catholics we do not look for and there are elderly and lonely people we do not visit. There are primary and secondary schools in the town with whom we have little contact. This is not a criticism of the clergy because they are stretched to the limit.
- Regarding volunteers, we need to initiate a parish audit where parishioners can match their talents and skills to what needs to be done. Training and upskilling can then come on line.
- We have no parish council. It has been suggested that one be initiated comprising representatives from each church community. Perhaps this would foster a sense of unity, which is lacking. It has also been suggested that there be parish meetings periodically to reflect on how we are doing in the light of the Synod themes.
- In many quarters, the church has the reputation of a negative organisation, with a lot of emphasis on ‘sin management’ and what shouldn’t be done, rather than the beauty, truth and goodness inherent in the gospel. If we are to move forward, we need to focus on celebrating the loving service of the poor and the efforts of Catholics in the areas of health, education and social justice.

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

Direct quotes from respondents are indicated in italics

- *“I attend Mass but otherwise I am not involved. I would like to be, but as a gay man, I don’t feel I would be welcome. We need to encourage people to get involved by approaching them personally.”*
- We tend to leave things to the same willing minority who have always done the jobs. People don’t like to put themselves forward/volunteer but when approached and asked a person they are willing to do whatever is asked of them.
- We all need to feel wanted. I believe my parish is trying to encourage a sense of involvement and ownership. There needs to be a greater desire from everyone to become a servant of God. The questions should be, “what more can I do?”, “What does God want me to do?” Listen to the Holy Spirit.
- Catholics are generally not good at speaking out in church or public. There is a general feeling of embarrassment at expressing our views and opinions. This could be because of a lack of knowledge about our faith and Bible. We need to emphasise and teach the basic tenants of faith. We need confidence and sound knowledge.
- Scandals involving the Catholic Church have contributed to making us less likely to participate and speak out. Many feel let down.
- We are often asked to approach politicians etc. about moral issues. It would be refreshing to hear more in the press from our leaders, Catholic lay and religious, anxious to take a moral stance. Occasionally our Bishops will make a statement but too rarely. Are they too concerned about upsetting people? Other denominations appear to be better at speaking out. It should not be only premier league footballers talking about injustice and poverty. I sometimes think we work on the principle that we need to keep our heads down.
- *“I do participate and am very happy with my parish. There are so many opportunities to attend Mass. It is difficult to understand how our priests manage it but they serve us magnificently. I am very happy with the start of the Alpha course. We do need to encourage participation and ask people to help. Our priests should not shoulder the whole responsibility of the organisation and running of the parish.”*
- All parishioners should have the opportunity to be more involved in the liturgy. Some people do not feel good enough to offer themselves but Jesus is forgiveness and is willing to accept those who seek his mercy and repent. I wonder if the Church needs to evaluate some of its teachings to become more inclusive and in line with the world today.
- We need to encourage lay leadership. Traditionally it has not seemed to be as encouraged as other denominations.
- Fundamental to our survival as a church is succession planning. This is of paramount importance in encouraging young people to come to Mass and take an active part. The majority of our readers, Eucharistic ministers and welcomers are 50yrs+. Young people are the future of our church. If this needs radical change, it must be done.
- *“Pre pandemic I was heavily involved but have found it difficult to get involved since the churches have reopened. I just need to encouragement to feel I can contribute once again.”*
- *“My daughter has a learning disability and we feel isolated when attending Mass. For this reason, the online Mass has been very successful for us as my daughter can be free and there is no one there to judge her.”*
- *“I know it is my responsibility to participate more, but it is very difficult to get to know others in a large parish such as this. People have more skills than they realise but do not always make*

the connection that they can be put to good use in church. We need to be more open to the Holy Spirit but how do we recognise when the Holy Spirit is calling us.”

- It is of crucial importance to the health of the church that we are able to meet fellow Catholics. We are a community and can only function as such if we are able to check on fellow Catholics who are in good/poor health, or showing signs of stress and need to be followed up. We need a common approach to the issue of support for the most needy and vulnerable people in our community. This means we must work with the wider Christian community and voluntary organisations who care as much as we do for the poor, lonely, the ill, those losing memory and those who are casualties of diminished social support. If we can find better ways of working together, we can be more effective than we are.
- We need to do more to collaborate with other churches. There are good ecumenical relations between Churches in the city and we need to build on this. The generosity and welcome of the Methodists in Ringland, in offering the use of their church building following the closure of St Gabriel’s was highlighted.
- Some people find the fact that we cannot share the Eucharist with other denominations has caused hurt within families.
- Catholics need to get more involved with civic duties. It is important to be visible as Catholics offering our faith perspective on local and national issues.

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

Direct quotes from respondents are indicated in italics

- Our mission is to carry out and continue the work of Jesus on earth – to make disciples. Traditionally, Catholics are poor at Mission. We do not spread the gospel unless we are approached and asked about religion. We do not proclaim our faith but in an increasingly secular age, we are apologetic for what we believe. This is not helped by what is seen as an intransigence on many issues by the Catholic Church.
- We have experience of people of different faiths knocking on doors and evangelising but this is not part of the Catholic way. Through our baptism we are called to be holy and witness to Christ. The church must inspire us and equip us to evangelise.
- *“I think that our understanding of mission has been eroded for decades through bad catechesis and lack of evangelisation. How can we evangelise when most Catholics cannot articulate their belief and faith?”*
- *“In a parish like ours, with nine churches, I can’t help but feel we are more concerned about church buildings and the fabric rather than mission. With three full time priests, nine buildings – three of which are Grade 2 listed – this is energy sapping.”*
- Actions speak louder than words. We lead by example and spread the good news by our actions - kindness, compassion, understanding and love. We are generous at supporting the missions, sponsoring projects in the third world, donating to food banks and introducing projects like Love Christmas. Getting involved in local initiatives is a prayerful way of spreading God’s love. However humanists do all this. Are we winning disciples for Christ?
- Catholics treat their faith as a private matter. We are embarrassed and uncomfortable to talk openly about our faith as we lack the knowledge and confidence. We need to expand our knowledge by becoming more involved in Alpha and bible study groups. Understanding the word is vital.
- When using the missionary approach, we must draw in those who are on the side-lines like lapsed family members and parishioners. They may be waiting for an opportunity or invitation to join in.
- We could learn a lot from our brothers and sisters in the evangelical church in their enthusiasm and love for Jesus. Not only do they show their commitment financially by tithing, but by giving more of their time and talents. More public displays such as processions and outdoor Masses may be beneficial.
- *“I feel the voice of the church in the current world is not as loud as it could be. We have become so sophisticated and want to challenge and have evidence for everything. We cannot justify and rationalise miracles and why people die of incurable illness. This issue of innocent suffering and pain has been around for ever. But now people demand evidence for a loving God. The Catholic press needs to market our faith more effectively.”*
- We are starting to look out having looked primarily inward for a long time. We currently have the Alpha course running and this will build. We have sacramental formation and are refreshing the catechesis course.
- Why are Catholics so self-referential and afraid to cause offence? This holds them back from being objective missionaries.
- The Church is held back because of a lack of diversity in clerical and lay leadership. The leadership of the Church needs to be more reflective of its membership and population. This would show that we are prepared to mission seriously.

- A parochial approach to mission is needed: Youth Masses, Youth Eucharistic Ministers, open door days and testimonies. We also need to market ourselves perhaps by delivering Christmas and Easter cards throughout neighbourhoods showing our masses and services.


Any other matters that do not fit under the three thematic headings of Communion, Participation & Mission

- The church should allow priests to marry. This would support a priest's vocation and wives could be there as partners in mission. It would also prevent the isolation and loneliness of priests.
 - There is an urgent need to look at the way the church approaches formation and vocation. The vocation crisis needs to be considered in depth. How do we move forward to foster and encourage vocations to the priesthood?
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Sign Off

This Report is submitted to the Diocesan Synodal Team on behalf of the Pastoral area of All Saints Newport

To the best of our knowledge we believe this to be an honest reflection of the work undertaken over the last six months and has been endorsed by the All Saints Synodal Team and discussed by the Parish Leadership Team comprising of members of the clergy and the laity. We also declare the Synodal Team are working to present this report to the wider community of All Saints.

Signed: 

Parish Priest

Signed 

**on behalf of the All Saints Synodal Team:
Anastasia Chikoti, Esther Gomes, Ian Hambleton,
Mary Nichol, Christopher Pugsley & Tamzin Simmons-
Robertson.**

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