

---

# St. Nicholas of Tolentino Synod Report

Clifton Diocese ~ Bristol, United Kingdom

St. Nicholas of Tolentino community - 26 February 2022

---



---

## Introduction



It is striking how the community that makes up St Nick's has embraced synodality.

Some initially appeared tentative - unsure we were really being encouraged to speak, unsure we were really permitted to speak freely. Others leapt like thirsty people at the opportunity for synodal conversations; so keen to engage with each other, not as passive 'recipients' of faith, but actively engaged in multiple dialogues about what life in the Church means: what we value, what we find challenging or painful - and what we long to change.

A very small number of voices honestly expressed their initial cynicism about the process - but our overall sense is of a community charged with sparks of energy, curiosity, and hope about what the global synod will mean for all of us. We have prayed together for some months in preparation for the conversations we have had; we have confidence the presence of the Holy Spirit has been with us, guiding our encounters.

We know at St Nick's we have the reputation for being a Church of Welcome, where visitors nearly always talk about the joyful character of our celebrations. There is a serious commitment in the community to putting that 'welcome' into practice and trying to extend it into the wider community. That commitment to faith in action is lived out particularly in our ministries of Borderlands, our charity which assists asylum seekers and refugees, and our St Nicholas Bread Foodbank which expanded rapidly during the pandemic and now provides a vital community service to families who do not have enough food for their children and themselves.

Our pastor, Richard McKay, challenges us with Jesus' words. He opens up space for critical thinking about how we respond to the Gospel. The huge response to the synod invitation seems gratifying, but perhaps not surprising; it seems a live response to the Gospel we have heard. It is important to note that the team submitting this report are very confident in our editorial independence and ability to challenge, if needs be, both Richard and our Parish Pastoral Council. We are clear that Richard has sought to act as an 'enabler' encouraging people to say their own truths from the heart. We have seen him actively take steps not to 'shape' what people needed to say or to be a 'filter'. We purposely did not request Richard to submit his own thoughts until we had written the body of the report.

Our Parish Pastoral Council, who have asked us to write this report, play a very significant role in taking responsibility for shaping our community too. The pressures of time and over-stretched commitment mean it can be difficult for the parish to grasp quite how much work those on the

council do, the role they play, and especially how their relationship with Richard, as parish priest, plays out in decision-making. There is a strong sense, however, that the Council seeks to bring in the voices of those from our different national groups and 'hold' our community together.

Around 20 facilitators were asked to help draw groups together for conversations. Thirteen groups met - some physically coming together, some meeting online, and some drawing submissions via e-mail. There was also an invitation during Sunday Mass, particularly aimed at people who had not otherwise been able to take part, to make an individual submission, on post-it notes. This drew a further 60 responses, some in Spanish. In all we think between 120 -130 people have taken part. We know the PPC was concerned we had not been able to facilitate a group for our South Asian parishioners, and it was difficult to properly give time for our children's voices to be heard too. The parish will continue to seek ways to try to include everyone.

Many would describe St Nick's as a microcosm of the global church. When Pope Francis and Bishop Declan urge us to look to the voices of those 'on the margins' - a very high number of our community come from marginalised groups. More than 60 nationalities are represented - more than 50 per cent originally from African countries, about 20 per cent with Caribbean heritage - and we have recently welcomed a group of Spanish speaking Latin American families. A large number of us are living on low incomes; we estimate between 40 and 50 per cent of us work in healthcare. Our synodal groups included LGBT+ and Deaf, both Ministries of the Diocese offered through St Nick's. We also have quite a sizeable group of 'progressive' Catholics who have been drawn to St Nick's because of its strong commitment to social justice in practice.

It is the pressures of time-poverty that cause some of the most difficult challenges across our community. It's hard to practise your faith and make commitments to church activities when so many of the community are on zero hours contracts, working shifts, and have families and other caring responsibilities. That is why the way people have invested their precious time and energy into making the parish synodal conversations happen seems such a commitment to faith. It's not been easy, but, in the circumstances, we think it's been magnificent.

We are not without our tensions as a community - our diverse backgrounds and cultures means we have had strongly varying experiences of growing up within the Church, and we have some strongly differing thoughts about ways forward. At times it can seem remarkable that we hold together - and yet we do. We appear drawn by our love to celebrate the Eucharist together, and that love has spilled out, resulting in the formation of many friendships and bonds across cultures and social circumstances. It is perhaps precisely because we value what we have at St Nick's so much, and because some of our connections are so strong, that we have found the courage to talk about the 'difficult stuff' we face as a Church family - the areas where many people have been deeply hurt by the Church. These subjects are prominent in the voices we have heard and we strongly wish them to be carried forward in this process.

We were surprised to find very little said about the Church and Climate Change, as some in the parish have been making great strides encouraging parishioners to join in Laudato Si work. We were also surprised that, while some strong comments were registered, less was said on issues of racial justice, and racial justice within the Church than might have been expected. We wonder if it has been difficult to initiate conversations around this. Many of us have been delighted at the firm

commitment from Richard, as parish priest, and from the PPC that synodal conversations and consultation will continue, and be embedded into our way of being Church at St Nick's, so we anticipate picking up on some of the issues that have not featured so strongly to date.

It seems, in fact, we are wanting to become 'synodal' so quickly it is a little difficult to keep up with the speed of responses. One of the requests from the LGBT+ facilitator and delegate, after reflecting on the whole community's comments on that topic, is a strong expression of their need for representation from the LGBT+ community at the diocesan discernment and at higher levels in the process.

As delegates it has been an exciting, joyful, privilege to be 'first listeners' to what our community is saying. In the process we've done our best to listen to each other and try to discern what seemed most important to draw attention to.

There are precious voices here, speaking from the heart. We are hopeful they will find their way into yours.

---

# Living Christian values - Love and Faith in Action v/s Teachings

## Manifesting Love and Christian values through Faith in Action

By far the largest number of respondents have made their voices heard on putting 'Faith In Action', and being led by the centrality of love and the Holy Spirit v/s blindly following teachings.

No more is this Faith in Action more evident than the story of one of the parishioners who,

*"experienced the Church as encouraging, even life-saving during Civil War (priest rescued her and her mother and a new born baby in war zone and under gun fire). .... Church provided money and encouragement for education enabling her to get degree and come to UK for Masters"*

A church which does its part in the community and is seen to bring good news to the poor, and active in social justice is one which resonates with the parishioners.

*"Need to put faith in to action - we must not be just 'Sunday Catholics'"*

Every one of the 13 facilitated group raised this topic; some even citing this as the reason for becoming a regular parishioner in this parish.

There is strong sentiment that Social Justice is not an 'add-on' but essential to living a Christian life and serves as a motivation for us to not just be 'Sunday catholics' but 'be challenged to live accordingly'.

Social justice and putting Faith in Action is seen both within the community and outside (no formal process followed to capture these external views; solely based on informal feedback so worth pursuing a conversation to gather external views) as a tangible manifestation of some of the best in Christianity and how it could recover its connection to love.

Excerpts from the cross-section and what they value about Faith in Action can be read here

Need to put faith in to action - we must not be just 'Sunday Catholics' | Source - Journey of Faith

Views on charity, ministry of the foodbank work of borderlands among refugees and asylum seekers | Source - Elderly

saint Nicholas church more than most are doing a lot of charitable work and mission among the poor | Source - Caribbean

Spirit of service to the poor - through meals, groceries etc which encourages all parishioners to practice the virtue of charity. | Source - Zimbabwean community

St Nicks is very inclusive but most importantly the charity work and feeding of homeless people. | Source - Zimbabwean community

Also feed not just spiritually but with excellent education and healthcare and poverty relief. | Source - Facilitators

Seeing faith in action - translating it into service | Source - Facilitators

We receive material, psychological, moral and spiritual support from church and we are aware the church is supporting many others as well | Source - Latin American

like the way that the parish supports causes such as the foodbank and refugees | Source - Women's group

I value Catholic teaching on social justice and peace and appreciate being challenged to try to live accordingly and join with others trying to do the same | Source - LGBT+

I believe this church really tries to live the Gospel message of reaching out to the poor and marginal in our communities. | Source - LGBT+

## **Spirit-Led**

The other way that parishioners connect is through worship. And worship which adores the Eucharist, honours Scripture, overflows with the Spirit, and even innovates in rituals of praise help towards a felt sense of connection with the Trinity and a foundation that individuals can build upon.

it brings people together, uniting them in prayer, praise, worship and being as one in faith. Revelling through the scriptures the Trinity and salvation. Giving us a firm foundation to build our lives upon. | Source - LGBT+

I value the opportunity to worship the Holy Trinity and succour guidance of the Word. | Source - LGBT+

What is good is firstly that the Holy Spirit is still present in the Church, despite our inconsistencies and mistakes | Source - Live streamers

It is built on a strong foundation - the Sacraments, the Eucharist, the Teachings | Source - Parental Sacramental

## **Where is the Love? When teachings blinds us to what it means to be Catholic**

In contrast the push towards teachings without context is seen as a cause of much suffering not just among Church institutions but also as a source of confusion and disappointment for parishioners.

It is often preached that the Bible must be read in context. And espoused in the Development of Doctrine and embodied in the Second Vatican Council.

The mandate of the Church from Jesus to Peter was "to feed my sheep".

Much like Vatican II set out to complete the unfinished task of Vatican I and ecumenical outreach to address needs of the modern world. So too must the Church now pasture its people and tend to the very real needs world in front of it; and not a false idol it wishes was there instead.

I feel the pomp can outweigh the social mission of the church. | Source - LGBT+

learning what is fundamental to the church compensating for the raft of rubbish we have to cope with in the Church. | Source - Facilitators

Problem with very conservative wing of the Catholic Church which seems so voluble in UK - makes me hide my Catholicism publicly. I cannot live their Catholicism - I want my faith expressed in a loving open affirming way - not condemning and rigid. | Source - Facilitators

Tradition means roots in a journey. The Church discriminates so much based on their own rules established when the faithful lived in different historical and cultural contexts, and the rules are taken as the roots and ultimately become prisons | Source - Live streamer

Meaningful liturgies and rituals; the love and the fact that it is spirit-led. | Source - Open group

**Below are some voices with recommendations. It is best to let these voices speak for themselves.**

Stop looking at tensions in the Church as something negative - can be healthy and creative. | Source - Open Group

We really need a profound conversion of heart to see how to preserve what is true in Christian tradition and let go of what is merely traditional. | Source - Live streamers

Just as our ancestors' let go of the blood sacrifices and rituals of the Temple, drawn from pagan traditions, when they gradually understood more clearly God's purposes, we should let go of our idolatrous grasp of patriarchy and paternalism. Early Hebrew religious practises took forms of liturgy from pagan assumptions and norms, but later relinquished those, in accordance with prophetic ministry that God desires justice and mercy, not the blood of pigeons and bulls or grandiose noisy ceremonies | Source - Live streamers

It pains me that almost all Catholic churches are kept closed and locked almost all of the time | Source - Live streamers

Press for the abolition of the latest Missal translation and adopt the 1998 translation, and allow/encourage more flexible and imaginative liturgy. | Source - Fr. Richard McKay

---

## Abuse

What we understand from the voices expressed in the parish synodal process is that abuse within the (Universal) Church is a high priority for conversations we need to have with each other and for the wider Church to be engaged in too.

We are hearing voices expressing a lack of confidence, a breakdown of trust, with the leadership of the Church on this issue. From some Catholics who have direct experience of, or close connection to, abuse we are also hearing there is a breakdown of trust between them and people in their community because of the whole community's failure to respond adequately.

In some of the group conversations we understand there was further discussion about the perceived links between the failures by hierarchy to address the abuse crisis and the consequent damage to the moral credibility of the Church. Some people point to the abuse crisis and make the connection to the severe drop in vocations for ordained ministries and religious life, and people continuing to walk away from the Church. Some people have mentioned friends or family who question why they continue to be in a Church that continues to cover up abuse and has not addressed its systemic nature.

We hear voices, passionately committed to the Church, that are deeply angry and calling for significantly better action from our senior hierarchy. We hear, too, the cry for a sensitive opening up of conversations within our own community. In discussing priorities for writing this report, after absorbing all the comments and other conversations we have had around the subject — this was the issue that came first to all our lips.

One of our parishioners has written about the enduring pain and anger he feels because of what happened to a relative:



*I have great pain over how the Church has enabled clergy and others in authority to abuse children and compounded this by failing to take full responsibility for it. I have a dear relative, now deceased, who was **routinely sexually abused by a priest** in the Catholic school he attended. He told me a little about this before he died; how he tried to bring this up and **wasn't believed**, was dismissed and condemned for the sin of telling lies. His trauma drove him into teenage criminality and I believe it was only the grace of God and his own strength of character that saw him create a positive life for himself eventually after being given a choice by a judge between the military and prison as a young man. He maintained a relationship with God but **stopped attending any Catholic churches** because of **the pain he carried** with him. In spite of the pain he carried he was a kind, gentle, funny and intelligent soul and I look forward to seeing him again one day. His story was never reported and won't appear among all the court cases. The memories of the person who did this and those who accused him of lying remain unsullied by the truth. I am furious about how many times the image of God has been exploited, terrorised and twisted by abuse. For all the stories we know, that are a matter of record, so many more are lost and known only to God, the victims and the perpetrators. I am as furious that our response as a Church, as a community created by love for love, has too often been to ignore the few voices that are heard, to silence them and in some cases to lie. Clergy known to abuse children were relocated rather than punished and their crimes acknowledged publicly. This is a grave injustice that stains us all. I can't explain in any satisfactory way to my questioning older son how this has been allowed to happen, how this wound has not been treated. I believe the Church has **undermined its moral authority** by allowing this **taint to continue festering** instead of seizing the moment to wholeheartedly and unreservedly apologise, cooperate fully with secular authorities and **make such restitution as it can to victims while accepting the righteous anger and condemnation of the world.***

*Abuse should be fully acknowledged and dealt with as fully as possible – this pain will always be with us now, but I believe the only power we have is to choose whether to take a stand and fully accept the consequences – or to maintain a piecemeal approach that **continues to undermine trust** and perpetuate the pain of survivors.*

Need for the Church to both apologise more fully for abuse and also to change structures that enable abuse to happen - changing of attitudes. Post-it notes from Mass

I would like our Church - all our Catholic Churches to be more open to what has happened in the past | Source - Open Group

In Africa - Some clergy exploit (the power of hierarchy) to commit and get away with certain abuses (including sexual abuse) because the victims are too scared to speak - and probably are not believed when they do speak In UK Sexual abuse from clergy is very much highlighted, and this creates a barrier to the reception of the church's Gospel message (because people are more aware of the extent of abuse and failures to address it ) | Source - English Speaking Africans Group

bad things... mother and baby homes, selling of orphans and no(t) least clerical abuse.

"crisis of abuse .. against minors and vulnerable adults" "fails to provide justice for those who have been abused by people within the Church environment" lack of credibility (for mission). | Source - LBGT+ group

we are not operating safe systems in our Church. | Source - Women's Group

We need to be more supportive....of those who have been abused. We are very keen to sweep things under the carpet and that happens with people in our own communities . We (lay people) need to take more control - are we doing that ? What control are we taking? Do people realise — there were more than 200,000 (child) victims of sex abuse in the French report? And it's not just priests who were involved - it's religious and lay people too. How are we (lay people) changing things? Are we saying it is still ok to leave this up to the Bishops? | Source - Women's Group

Issue of abuse .. means it is more difficult to get the Church's message across. That .. is silencing the Gospel. | Source - Facilitators

I would like my community never to assume that the person next to them at Church has not experienced abuse within a Church setting. | Source - Individual Parishioner

People don't understand how it comes back at you. Why would they? it's supposed to feel a safe place isn't it ? I think we've got a long way to go before it feels like a safe place for some of us. Catholics in this process saying "I thought that was all sorted now" or "It's the media attacking Catholics" is choking, breath-taking complacency and ignorance. Worse, you get the feeling some people really do not care - somehow they have no real concept of what it means - it's too remote from them and the attention it's received is in danger of rocking their happy little boat. It isn't just the hierarchy who are responsible. It's all of us who are responsible, and it's about time we woke up to that. Our communities can't be safe places while we're still afraid to speak. The trouble is, you don't speak if you begin to realise that when you try to, you get hurt all over again by people's failure to respond adequately. I don't want to walk away but trying to continue to practise faith can seem like a madness. What kind of a field hospital are we? One very fond of protecting a reputation, and all the while shoving people into the hospital mortuary, trying to cover them up while they're festering with the wounds they received? If you don't know how to make conversations possible with people who've experienced abuse in the Church - then GO TO the people who've survived, who are prepared to talk to you, and ask. And stop assuming everything's sorted; stop assuming because you've put some structures in place that people will feel ok to seek help through them. Prominently put contact numbers for independent external support groups in our Churches - acknowledge publicly that people may need help from outside the Church, and support them to get it. Stop assuming the group of people who've done the hurting can do the healing. Agree, in the Global church, what abuse is. Define the understanding. Talk about the abuse of adults as well as children. Consider the role of the sacrament of reconciliation in enabling occasions of abuse. Tell the Bishops you want them to go to survivors' groups as part of the synodal process and ask for their wisdom and guidance - do not say they can come to you - GO to them.

And listen again to the voices that have long been saying male dominance is one of the factors perpetuating this. | Source - Individual Parishioner

reflecting on a priest saying we should not abandon the Church (in relation to sexual scandals) "but was (it) not the Church that abandoned us to be (the) prey of sick individuals" | Source - Live streamer

.. male dominant leadership - afraid to take action (on abuse and compensation) Action needs to be taken and dismantle . . the male dominant leadership which has shown to be unfit for purpose. | Source - Live streamer

insistence on celibacy .. partly responsible for the prevalence of the clerical sexual abuse and institutional cover up crisis. | Source - Live streamer

Clergy abuse and its cover up. I want action on abuse complaints | Source - Live streamer

The devastating impact of Child sexual abuse and other forms of clerical and religious abuse and the Church's history of cover-up - not looking at the systemic causes, including the power model of priesthood and episcopacy. | Source - Fr. Richard McKay

---

## Accessibility including deaf ministry, inculturation and other languages

Within the rich synodal discussions within the parish, the theme of accessibility was one which was discussed across the groups, focusing on the idea of how the parish supports those who may not have access to Mass and liturgy due to a language barrier, being part of our Deaf community, the elderly, or even conflicting demands on our young people today. By hearing the voices across our diverse community, there is a unique opportunity to continue the ministry of accessibility of the Word to all.

*“Disabled people not to be looked at needing a miracle or with sympathy but valued as they are”*

As part of our parish ministry, the inclusion and accessibility of the Deaf community has been something that has been developed and become part of our Sunday Mass, with signing and live streaming to ensure those members of our community are having a shared experience with our whole community. The support for this ministry was echoed within the Deaf community group who valued the work that had already been done. There was, however, some suggestions on how this could be further developed, with some ideas for the wider church to consider such as training priests to sign and developing a deaf prayer ministry for the Diocese.

Due to the diverse fabric of our parish community, the idea of accessibility was raised by the Latin American community with synodal conversations around how important the translations of the Sunday Mass into Spanish were to allow full participation. There were also suggestions which could help the wider Church engage with all our community who do not speak English as their first language: translations of the homily and translations of the Mass being projected onto a screen in other languages. It becomes clear through the voices of this group, that while they are aware that they have a responsibility to learn English, there are serious obstacles when the Mass and hymns are written in a language that does not support the idea of inclusivity and accessibility for all.

*“It pains me that almost all Catholic churches are kept closed and locked almost all of the time. ....  
If there is too much gold tinsel in churches to keep them open for their essential purpose, get rid of the gold tinsel, sell it and give the money to the poor or to efforts to assist the poor.”*

Across the different synodal groups, one of the significant discussion points was the importance of assimilating other cultures within our community into the everyday fabric of the Church. In the conversations, there was an acknowledgement of the inclusion of music from our wider community which is regularly shared and sung by all the parish, not just those from that cultural background. There as an appreciation for the support our priest in the diversity of feast days celebrated and changes to vestments to reflect our inculturation as a parish. Within the voices, there were, however, some who felt the wider Church needs to consider moving itself forward with inculturation, especially with addressing the obvious white portrayal of Christ, Mary and Joseph that is still part of the rich iconography of the Catholic Church.

*“The parish is very inclusive of all people from different backgrounds”*

#### Voices on the theme of accessibility

- Celebrating mass in sign language. Deaf people are important and valued. Train priests to sign the mass Prayer meeting for deaf people across diocese Use of technology to have screen with subtitles / text for text in the mass. | Source - Deaf community
- When you're a student, from 15 there's so much you have to do with exams and commitments that coming to church isn't feasible at times but there's shame you feel when you don't come, and you get ostracised within communities. People need to unlearn this behaviour because it does more harm than good | Source - Young persons
- Disabled people not to be looked at needing a miracle or with sympathy but valued as they are | Source – Facilitators
- Disability and sin are associated, which is very damaging to the disabled person Source - Facilitators
- We value when parts of mass are translated in our language since we can follow and understand what is happening. We recognise it is our responsibility to learn more English and we value the effort is being done to translate some special readings and messages in Spanish | Source - Latin American
- We have difficulties to fully understand the mass since we do not speak and understand English very well | Source - Latin American
- I would like to receive the homily printed out in Spanish so I can understand what Father Richard is preaching. I would also like to have a translated version of mass being projected in a screen so I can follow and understand all mass, including the songs | Source - Latin American
- It pains me that almost all Catholic churches are kept closed and locked almost all of the time Source - Live streamers
- If there is too much gold tinsel in churches to keep them open for their essential purpose, get rid of the gold tinsel, sell it and give the money to the poor or to efforts to assist the poor. God's glory is not so much reflected in gold tinsel as in the shimmering light on the willow leaves. If there is a risk of sacrilege, use modern technology more intelligently to protect the churches sanctity. | Source - Live streamers
- Community that recognises everyone-housebound, deaf and those who don't have a place to go. | Source - Women's group

- I would like to see more representation of other minority groups in the Church, especially in the language used which should be more inclusive in church texts e.g. removing gendered pronouns in Mass and using “family” instead of “brothers and sisters” | Source - LGBT+

#### Voices around the theme of inculturation

- mention the diversity of the church specially celebration of feast days and seeing the priest wearing vestments of that particular community or country | Source – Caribbean
- Spirit of diversity and inclusion - Welcoming atmosphere for foreign nationals | Source - Zimbabwean community
- Universally I would like to see changes in Inculturation. As a church we have been allowed to celebrate Mass in our native languages. However, we need to be able to identify with Christ, Mary and all the figures we believe in as Catholics. No-one has actual pictures Jesus, Mary, Joseph etc, so why are there always portrayed as White skinned | Source - Zimbabwean community
- The parish is very inclusive of all people from different backgrounds | Source - Zimbabwean community
- Our diversity really matters - all the nationalities gathered. St Nicks gathering in the wider world. | Source - Facilitators
- Inculturation is so important, how differently celebrated, Source - Facilitators Openness to diverse cultures. | Source – Facilitators
- We value being united with other brothers and sisters and feeling each other’s company and support; we feel part of the community and feel comfortable, welcome and supported at church, not just us from Latin America but all members from lots of diverse backgrounds and cultures. | Source - Latin American
- Synod gives an opportunity to have a better balance between the ideal of unity and to allow the Church to be more diverse instead of being so European centric | Source - Live streamers
- Everyone is different, all kinds of races, and we all get on. | Source - Women’s group
- The singing in lots of different languages-links to the idea of universal church and the worship is in a language that is for them | Source - Women’s group
- Church allows inculturation – integration of African culture in the liturgy. This greatly enriches the liturgy, especially through music | Source - English speaking African Persons

---

## Young Persons

A dedicated group for young persons (at University) was organised by themselves, meeting online via Zoom. It was noted the involvement of young persons in the Church and parish community was raised by multiple groups in the community, and not just young persons.

We heard our young adults were initially unsure about whether their views on topics they really wished to address, including matters of doctrine, were among those they were welcome to discuss. It was stressed to them by parish pastoral council members that the synod was an occasion on which they not only could, but were being very strongly encouraged to say what they needed to say. We sense a strong and trusting relationship with the leadership in our Church and love for their 'home' Church community. But it's clear it's been difficult to find time and space to talk about how that connection can continue and and change in order to grow.

We were particularly struck by their use of the word "shame". They are tired of feeling subtly or unsubtly judged and ostracised. When they experience pressure like this - from whoever it may be in the community - they feel "pushed away."

We sensed that there are topics about which they wish to be able to speak freely, particularly to their parents and other elders in the community, but they hold back because they feel people might find it difficult to hear what they need to say.

The submission from our young people was not the longest from the group discussions in the parish, but we sense it is one of the most important. We are grateful they made the efforts to get together despite being separated geographically at their different universities. We know it wasn't easy for them to get together, but despite the many other pressures on them, they did. That effort speaks for itself of their commitment to their Church community. We hear a longing, and some sense of urgency, for their voices need to be amplified within our community and the wider Church. It seems the synodal process of engaging in conversations in different ways and groups may help advance this important dialogue in guiding us forward.

We need to 'go to our young people', as Bishop Declan has reminded us, 'go to where they are', and listen - not judge. Many of our young people have a deep spirituality - we need to be curious about that spirituality and when they wish to engage, be ready to listen. Here they have given us a strong message about what is "damaging" and "pushes young people away".

It was also encouraging to hear their submission conclude with some very affirming, hopeful words!

We strongly suggest that anyone concerned to learn more about our young persons group and why their connection with Church becomes difficult, should read in full their concise, insightful report in the sub-heading in Appendix 2.

We note just some of their points below:

*“St Nick’s is (unfortunately) one of the few churches who address certain current issues and it’s pushing young people away. So many people have stopped going to church once they hit university because building a community like what we know is so hard. There’s nothing more that’s keeping people around.*

*The hierarchical structure. As much as it’s nice for there to be a hierarchy in the Church (it’s needed), it’s become suffocating. Many have seen (understood) from their own parents that if it’s not the priest’s word it’s not gospel. It’s damaging when it comes to trying to change and educate people in these times, where race relations are at an all time high and LGBTQ+ issues need to be addressed.*

*Let’s not determine that the priests have a higher place than the people that attend the church. We are all one in worship. This is especially important with the shortage in priests.*

*Young people .. leaving for Protestant Churches ... because the Catholic Church isn’t valuing them enough.*

*When these other churches come to you to recruit you there’s a big sense of being wanted and that there’s place for you to develop your passions and could lead to your vocation.*

*Once you’re too old for children liturgy groups you become an alter server and when you don’t you wait until you can become a lay minister or a reader. There’s no intermittent group where you belong.*

*There’s also shaming that happens when you don’t come to church every week. ... there’s shame you feel when you don’t come and you get ostracised within communities. People need to unlearn this behaviour because it does more harm than good..*

*Church is a big part of people’s lives so making effort goes a long way! Bringing the community together, it’s not hard to be a good church.*

Source Young Persons Group



Young people not coming back after communion and confirmation. | Source - East African

Catholicism pushes some young people away because of education, social media. Like homosexuality, marriage etc. | Source - East African

Young people are enthusiastic but but this enthusiasm can be stifled and they become alienated | Source - Journey of Faith

Encouragement of children and youth to participate in liturgy, Mass savers, Sunday school for the little ones. | Source - Zimbabwean community

Availability of resources / information regarding the various vocations ( single life, married life,, religious life or priesthood) in the Catholic Church and their importance and the necessary guidance to the youth/young adults to discern their right path to follow. | Source - Zimbabwean community

Nothing directly for young people, even if they are welcome to 'slot in' (serving, choir, reading etc). | Source - Facilitators

they can also be part of the community and participate. | Source - Latin American

I would like the church to organise sessions for our youth so they can receive more support and guidance. | Source - Latin American

Future proofing is about encouraging or mentoring the young people. Could perhaps have a once a fortnight or once a month group that would help with bible studies and encourage others. | Source - Women's group

We need to come back-what do we do with the older children? Could we build greater links with secondary and sixth forms to help support the building of this group. Skills development. Could we start the Youth Faith in Action group for leadership? | Source - Women's group

There is a lack of youth involvement in church activities | Source - English speaking African

Moreover, the Church sometimes seems uninterested in listening to people who are "seekers" and younger Catholics in general | Source - LGBT+

Need to use the gifts of the whole community. Listen to the voice of younger members. | Source - Open group

More valuing of, support for and involvement of our young people. Urgent need to resource work among and with our young people. | Source - Fr. Richard McKay

---

## Women Leading, Married priests, Celibacy, Divorced and otherwise excluded from communion

When reporting on the Parish views on the themes of inclusion and exclusion, the conversations have resulted in highlighting the areas of women leading, married priests, celibacy, divorce, and those who find themselves excluded from the liturgy and it is hoped that by sharing these views, dialogue can begin to start including all brothers and sisters in the whole life of the Church.

For our parish, the involvement of women in leading liturgy, especially Word and Communion brings a rich tapestry to our inclusive ministry. There were fruitful synodal conversations across our parish groups that showed value to the whole community of hearing both male and female voices reading the Word and sharing the journey with an added richness to our concept of universal Church. It is hoped that our responses will encourage a continued conversation about the role of women, and potential for ordination of this fantastic resource. There was also a strong voice amongst the parish synod groups about not ignoring the gifts of the laity in being a strong, active part of the wider ministry of the Church.

*“Why are we ignoring so many liturgical gifts of lay people?”*

*“Something done about shortages of priest also would like to see married and female priest as do not think God made the rules not to have them”*

Increasingly, during the synod listening conversations, the problem of the continuing model of the Priesthood was raised and the need for creative thinking to ensure that there are enough priests or deacons within each parish. This was felt to link with the discussion around the confusion over married and non-married priests, as well as why we could not allow women to become deacons. While there were some voices in the parish who did not see the need for change, there were an overwhelming number of comments that questioned why the change had not yet happened, when there is a desperate need for those willing and skilled to continue ministry for the future.

Exclusion and the pain this caused was also a main theme from the synodal conversation, focusing, not exclusively, on the way that those who are divorced or are Christian, yet not Catholic, or those seeking the healing power of Jesus in the Eucharist, yet not baptised, were amongst the excluded. There was a strong voice which spoke of the injustice of excluding those who are divorced and the problem of clericalism from Priests and the wider Church with rules which are not embracing the true meaning of the universal Church. Moreover, it was felt across the synod groups that if people from other Christian denominations wished to participate in the Eucharist, it is not up to individuals to decide who receives the gift of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit.

## *“Who comes to the Table - need to change rules that bar people from receiving Holy Communion”*

### Voices on the role of women in the Church

- The issue of denying women the right to fully participate in the church's senior hierarchy. We have experienced women in a lot of other high profile roles world over in all sorts of professions and it is at this point that I wonder whether the church has thought about the aftermath of denying women a chance to be involved | Source - Individual Parishioner
- We would love to see women and married men ordained | Source - Individual Parishioner
- Women priests as well as men. | Source - East African
- How we select and train people for ordained ministry needs to change...more reflective of and attuned to the community which is both male and female! | Source - Journey of Faith
- Something done about shortages of priest also would like to see married and female priest as do not think God made the rules not to have them. | Source - Elderly
- To see the ordination of women priests | Source - Zimbabwean community
- The fact that women priests not allowed - the Church is not open to the gifts that women bring | Source - Parental
- Sacramental position of women who have no rights, no voice, no ministry. | Source – Facilitators
- Woman allowed ordination many are called but are denied by the all male dominant priesthood. | Source - Live streamers
- I support women's ordination and consecration. I find the excuses for not doing it already thoroughly unconvincing | Source - Live streamers
- Not had a great experience of women priests-Church of England. | Source - Women's group
- More people should be engaged in the delivering of the homily-especially not just one or two (especially women). If we are to really part of Priest, Prophet and King. | Source - Women's group
- It would be nice to hear from Church of England female priests and their experiences-what are their experiences of speaking from Christ. Perhaps also speak to women from other Church structures to speak to us as a group | Source - Women's group
- I now am not sure that it is right to bar 50% of mankind from the priesthood. There were women in the early church.| Source - LGBT+
- Worry that the whole debate about Women in the Church and ordination - that ordained women could become another form of clericalism. If women and/or married men ordained - not a panacea for all ills but will their own issues. Are we being realistic about the issues to be dealt with? | Source - Open Group

### Voices on the need to increase the participation of the laity volunteers

- Why are we ignoring so many liturgical gifts of lay people? | Source - Individual Parishioner
- It is incredibly important to have a female delivering the homily for the women in the group. We have to make this happen-in South Africa women were leading and we need to step up | Source - Women's group

- Shortage of priests is a concern. How this is tackled should involve both development of laity to take on more ministries + looking at ways to attract more priests. | Source - English speaking African

#### Voices on the issue of married priests

- Issue of priests not being allowed to marry. If this remains the case, I would hope that the church can open up a discussion around this. | Source - Individual Parishioner
- The huge international married priest's movement made many overtures to the hierarchy, but while some individual Bishops were supportive, the Vatican maintained a massive silence. Women who gave up their freedom to be faithful to someone who felt he could not give up the ministry. | Source - Individual Parishioner
- Something done about shortages of priest also would like to see married and female priest as do not think God made the rules not to have them. | Source -Elderly
- The Catholic church allowing priests to marry like the Anglicans | Source - Zimbabwean community
- Priest should be allowed to marry and have families | Source – Parental

#### Voices on the issue of Exclusion from Communion

- It's wrong that divorced people who have re-married are excluded officially from the Eucharist | Source - Individual Parishioner
- It is not up to the Church to judge who may not receive Jesus via the Eucharist | Source - Individual Parishioner
- Everyone should be given the right to have communion as long as they have been baptised within a Christian church. | Source - Young persons
- There are many churches that stop people from receiving communion if you're not dressed right or aren't covering your hair and it's not right. | Source - Young persons
- There's also places that won't allow Christians of other denominations to receive communion because they're not catholic | Source - Young persons
- The Catholic church allowing eligible people from other churches to receive the Holy Communion in the full spirit of Ecumenism | Source - Zimbabwean community
- In many places unmarried parents refused baptism for their children. | Source - Parental Sacramental
- Who comes to the Table - need to change rules that bar people from receiving Holy Communion | Source - Parental Sacramental
- Clericalism and clerical power, the power of the clergy is insidious and discreet - if the priest decides he does not like what you are saying you are excluded. | Source - Facilitators
- Priests wield too much power - act as though the people not really part of the church. Eg divorced. | Source - Facilitators
- Connectedness does not match with exclusion. And the Church excludes massively. Small gestures of exclusions cause a big impact | Source - Live streamer
- The rigid rules on who can and cannot receive communion at mass or other times. | Source - Live streamer
- The church needs to be clearer on abortion, and reception of sacraments by unmarried pregnant women and divorcees | Source - English speaking African

---

## LGBT+

The submissions on LGBT+ have drawn our attention in such a way that we want to highlight them to the diocese and have strong hopes the diocese will respond to the **distressing cries of pain** they hear and give **serious consideration to how they can take forward** these comments in a way that will bring healing.

*“The ministry is incredibly powerful in redressing past wrongs. It shows that all really are welcome. That the words of the Church are not empty.”*

It seems to us that the LGBT+ ministry is playing a very significant role in the life of the parish, and beyond. We sense the responses also indicate that the Ministry, and now the synodal conversations about it, are feeding into a **very important changing dynamic** in our parish.

What we have understood from the submissions is that the Ministry is highly valued. We note the small number of comments made in opposition to the ministry (and hear and understand that those are strongly held views that need and will prompt further conversations).

What is particularly striking to us is that we believe the number of comments insistent on change is a high priority for so many and views in opposition to the ministry are very considerably reduced from what we believe may have been expressed before the Ministry started.

It is particularly interesting to note how frequently and how strongly LGBT+ was referred to across groups and individual submissions - and we have a strong impression that people have highly valued the opportunity through the synod conversations and submissions to express their strongly held views (overwhelmingly positively supportive towards LGBT+ community).

*“I am ashamed of being part of a church that carries out such blatant discrimination.”*

We draw **particular attention to the comments made by our group of Young People** - largely of university age. The facilitator of their group emphasised to us after the submission how strongly they hoped this synodal process might be an opportunity to open up conversations on LGBT and other issues with their parents and other elders. It came across as a very heartfelt desire for communication. They and other groups talk about being “pushed away” because of outdated attitudes on LGBT - it seems to us very important that that voice is carried through the synodal process.

LGBT+ group - selected comments from gay and straight people - who attend the monthly LGBT+ Mass — Full Submissions see relevant sub-heading in Appendix 2.

What do you value about the Church?

I have no doubt I value MY church (St Nicks) more than I value THE Church. What I value about MY Church is that it works towards building and maintaining a heterogeneous community. It also keeps my hope alive

Incredible teachings of Father Richard. Focus on justice and dignity for all. Progressive thinking and open minds of the parish council.

Dedication to the community and support offered to the community ... Real tangible help.

The Church is giving my life meaning.

"The ministry is incredibly powerful in redressing past wrongs. It shows that all really are welcome. That the words of the Church are not empty. They have integrity. "

The presence of the LGBT+ ministry has provoked conversations (in the general parish congregation) and some very striking accounts of people moving from .. ingrained anti-LGBT+ attitudes ... to acceptance and positive affirmation. I believe those changes were accelerated by the presence of the ministry at St Nick's .

What do you find difficult about the Church?

The Christian Church as well as other religions .... can be very homophobic, to the extreme of life, death and eternal damnation.

"I am ashamed of being part of a church that carries out such blatant discrimination."

"( the universal church is ) an institution which causes significant damage to our formation as human beings"

"I love St Nick's . I don't feel confident that the rest of the Church shares the same values. .... this would make me nervous about whether my family would be welcome in the broader Church."

"I fell away from the Church in my early adulthood because of my feelings (about the abuse scandal) about the treatment of gay people"

"shameful treatment of LGBT+ people - damage I believe the Church .causes in so many people's lives, both within the Church and the wider world when it represses LGBT people"

"If the Church wants to remain a place of worship for the current generations, it should make efforts to (sensitively) evangelise those who feel alienated from it.

"wish the Church ..pay attention not so much to what she teaches but what she fails to teach, especially the spiritual rights of LGBT members who feel excluded"

"What is lacking from the Church is a positive and fully formed message for gay people in the same way that it has a positive and fully formed message for those who have a vocation to be parents (like me) or taking orders"

"How should I evangelise to my gay friends? ..... Worse, I don't know if I can truly call myself a Catholic if I cannot do this ? ..... I need to know that this faith is for everyone."

"I find it very burdensome ... I would like to form a loving, faithful relationship with another man ....I would have to refrain from nearly all display of affection to him to remain "Catholic in good standing"

"different lifestyles and sexuality .....almost no help given to people with these issues even though it is well known that very many clergy face the same problems." (comment on wider Church)

"The Church has grossly harmed and destroyed countless people's lives due to ignorance, prejudice and lack of love. It is now vitally important that the Clifton diocese LGBT+ ministry be supported and other dioceses open their doors and make amends for (their) lack of Jesus' love "

The LGBT+ Clifton Ministry is a visible representation of queer Catholics. ... It's important.. (it) as a ministry makes the existence of queer Catholics tangible. It is an inclusive open table and i don't feel that there is any judgement or apology associated with it.

I feel sometimes the premise of this ministry is that it is based on an apology i.e. 'we must do better for a group which have been sidelined and oppressed within the Church' this can act as a barrier to full engagement if this is the message transmitted as there are perhaps younger Catholics who will not have had experience of being taught that their existence is "wrong" There can be too much of a focus on reparation - sometimes it is necessary but it shouldn't be all that there is. ... good that the ministry is willing to change and respond to needs of its community and embrace progression.

"Only one church in Bristol has listened and obeyed The Lord's request and opened its arms to the LGBT community ..... The (universal) Church deems itself better than God by excluding the LGBT + community and making them feel less than human..... Is this what Jesus intended when asking Peter to care for His lamb

"If the Church wants to remain a place of worship for the current generations, it should make efforts to (sensitively) evangelise those who feel alienated from it.

"wish the Church ..pay attention not so much to what she teaches but what she fails to teach, especially the spiritual rights of LGBT members who feel excluded"

"What is lacking from the Church is a positive and fully formed message for gay people in the same way that it has a positive and fully formed message for those who have a vocation to be parents (like me) or taking orders"

#### COMMENTS From other Parish Groups and Individual submissions

Young People — in relation to difficulties that may push young people away from the Church — and in needing to educate people "LGBT issues need to be addressed ". Young people identifying need for their parents' generation to receive more education on LGBT+.

Facilitators - "*Huge problem* of attitude to LBGTQ+ in ( Catholic Church) Africa. *Actively preaching it is evil* and in many countries it is illegal.

EAST Africa — LGBT was raised under comments on the need for change - "Catholicism pushes some young people away because of .....(views on) homosexuality "

#### Parents' Sacramental Programme

Live streamer 3 - some Catholic clergy and lay (political) leaders use incitement of discrimination or acts of hatred against LGBTI to advertise their identification with Catholicism and just use their 'religion' as a stick to harass and abuse other people with.

Live streamer 4 - I like that The parish shows the good the Church can be because of the effort to be inclusive to support the LGBT community

I dislike the appalling treatment of LGBT people especially gay men. The alienation of the "other" who doesn't fit in. The way those who don't fit in are driven away from the Church.

Individual - I would like to see "Gay love to be honoured and sanctioned."

Individual - I am ..pained by the treatment of our LGBTQ sisters and brothers. When young people most need a loving, patient and kind community around them as they become aware of their identity and the challenges they face they feel forced to turn elsewhere.

A close friend . felt from a young age that his future didn't lie with the Church as it was made clear to him relentlessly that he was only welcomed and valued as long as he pretended to be something he wasn't.

We have had a flawed understanding (of scripture) that has led us to condemn people with different sexual orientations for too long. There has been so much time wasted that could have been used to reach out to LGBTQ people, to learn from them and to embrace them as family. I often wonder how many of our beloved saints who we pray to for intercession were gay in their earthly lives?

LGBTQ people should be accepted and celebrated as part of our community and our understanding of scripture and queer theology needs to deepen.

Live streamer "The Church needs to fully accept LGBT people into all aspects of Church Life; *I have had to work through my own prejudices about this*, but I concluded that if they are born that way, that is how God made them so why would he not love and accept them as they are? And why would the Church not do that if God does?"

We have clearly heard also, and draw your attention to, the expressions that expressed difficulty with accepting or opposition towards the LGBT+ ministry. These comments were among those submitted anonymously on post-it notes at Sunday Mass when there was a particular invitation for anyone who had not expressed their voice in the parish's synod process to take part.

One said "Struggle with LBGT"

A second "I find hard" .. (the concept of relationships other than between man and woman)

A third expressed the suggestion that LBGT people should be "embraced" but encouraged to "reform" - indicating a strong belief that this is the approach the Church should follow.

The wording on the remaining two extremely brief comments has been redacted because they may be read as offensive.

People with long experience in the parish said the number of those comments expressed during this process as a sign of very considerable encouragement that there has been a **very substantial shift in thinking** among many, especially those from cultural communities where preaching against LGBT+ relationships is a very strong characteristic and from countries where people considered to be LGBT+ may face long imprisonment or death sentences.

Why do so many people feel pushed out, or have difficulty practising their faith, or evangelising? It seems to us that we have heard (with a small minority expression against) that our own community has experienced dynamic change and we hear a very important call for change in the wider Church on LGBT+

There is considerable frustration, indeed shame, expressed about current Church teaching on LGBT+ and an understanding that it undermines gravely the Church's ability to evangelise. This seems to us the strong message our parish community carries forward in the voices expressed during its synodal process.



---

## Living in a Pluralistic and Secular Society

*“What is the purpose of the parish in today’s changing world?”*

Whilst not explicitly named by the various groups, an underlying trend has been observed about living as a Catholic in today's secular and pluralistic society.

There is general acknowledgement that part of this difficulty arises from a shift in socio-cultural landscape. Church guidance on this subject would be welcome.

The other part of the difficulty is the sour fruit borne of other issues which have been raised. The brand and wider perception of the Catholic church is one which has made many people keep their faith private. They feel ostracised in wider society not because of their faith or belief in the Trinity; but because of unaddressed issues within the institution of the Church.

It is one thing to accept alienation for choosing to believe in God; it is another to accept it for the wound caused by others which is then left to fester.

Here are the voice from parishioners on this subject

It is painful that it is so difficult to share your faith with others (non-Catholics) | Source - Parental Sacramental

The way non-Catholics criticise the Church is painful | Source - Parental Sacramental

Among non-church friends, it is a conversation killer- mentioning you are a catholic. | Source - Facilitators

Synod gives an opportunity to have a better balance between the ideal of unity and to allow the Church to be more diverse instead of being so European centric | Source - Live streamers

What is the purpose of the parish in today's changing world. How do we encourage on-going faith development in this world. | Source - Open group

---

## Online and other views which drew out attention

*“... that you continue to acknowledge the presence of us online attendees during the Mass. This helps me to feel part of the congregation regardless of the mixed blessing of live streaming”*

St Nick's livestream service held much of the community together when lockdown prevented attendance at services. Gratitude for this was frequently expressed online. Streamers came from the parish - many of whom continue to watch on catch-up when working shifts prevent them from coming in person. The online community also expanded rapidly to include people from various parts of the UK, from the USA, Kenya, Malaysia, Netherlands, Zimbabwe and more. Some parishioners who have moved away are continuing to tune in - from Netherlands, Zimbabwe, Dominican Republic and New Zealand. It is particularly interesting to note that **online participation with St Nick's is also preferred by our Uni students, rather than attendance at local services.**

There was a **strengthening of some parish connections too - particularly through some of the Whatsapp groups.** It was particularly heartening to have the community come together online for prayer vigils, organised by lay parishioners, to support some parishioners who were facing the death of loved ones. People taking part in the first online services on Facebook naturally formed something of an online supportive presence when it was possible to share messages welcoming each other to the services, posting prayer requests - or just knowing who was also tuning in.

It is noticeable that St Nick's attracts a significant proportion of Catholics from outwith the parish boundary area who have come looking for a 'progressive' approach that reflects the sort of Church they believe Pope Francis is hoping to shape. Often they have come after not feeling welcomed or 'at home' in other churches. It seems that 'going online' for the pandemic has been a significant factor in accelerating change in the community. It has exposed some of our fault lines - we were conscious that it was difficult for some of our elderly or otherwise isolated parishioners to take part - bandwidth for streaming is not available to us all.

It has been helpful to have the submissions from our live-streamers as part of this process - they have submitted interesting reflections which have been wide-ranging and moving. It will be both a challenge and a pleasure to try to absorb and consider how to engage more deeply together in this very important sense of understanding how we have expanded as a community to include some who may never be physically with us in person to come to Mass. The submissions to the synod process feel like a very good way of getting more conversations going. The pressure, as with everything else that happens in the parish, will be on people's time.

## ONLINE

The pandemic has initiated wide-scale live-streaming of Mass and it has allowed Catholics to share their faith and their frustrations internationally. They are no longer content to put up with the parish they've been allocated. We would like live-streaming to continue so that if your parish is not sympathetic, you can search elsewhere for a community that will welcome you. | Source - Individual Parishioner

You could follow the liturgy of the Mass wherever you are in the world | Source - Caribbean

Whenever I join online Mass with St Nick's I am so glad this avenue still exists also that you continue to acknowledge the presence of us online attendees during the Mass. This helps me to feel part of the congregation regardless of the mixed blessing of live streaming | Source - Live streamer

### Other points

I think we should be bolder in pushing ahead to reunify with the Greeks. Invite Greek Orthodox faithful to use Catholic churches with parallel liturgies if they wish. | Source - Live streamer

Keep the churches open. Maybe use electronic individual keys with automatic video recording of who is entering and leaving. | Source - Live streamer

More education for pastors on neuropsychiatric issues. | Source - Live streamer

Bring in the Gospels of Thomas, Mary Magdalene and Philip - there is good scholarship now around these texts. | Source - Live streamer

Teaching of Christian wisdom practices - Meditation, Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, the Welcoming Practice, Purification of the Heart. Continuing engagement in dialogue and learning from other paths. | Source - Individual Parishioner.

---

## Appendix 1 - Thematic excerpts

The below lists select excerpts from the various facilitated notes (see Appendix 2) arranged by themes.

List of themes, arranged in alphabetical order is below:

1. A place of worship
2. Abuse
3. Be led by the Holy Spirit
4. Children crèche & participation [St. Nicks specific]
5. Climate change
6. Community
7. Enduring mechanism for feedback
8. Exclusion from communion
9. Hierarchical structure
10. Hospitality
11. Inclusion -> Accessibility
12. Inclusion -> Divorced & Re-married
13. Inclusion -> Inculturation & Diversity
14. Inclusion -> LGBT+
15. Inclusion -> Use of technology
16. Join the church v/s Join the parish [St. Nicks specific]
17. Laity volunteers
18. Live streaming
19. Living in a Pluralistic / Secular society
20. Love v/s Unfounded Teachings
21. Married priests
22. Music & choir participation [St. Nicks specific]
23. Need to involve young persons
24. Other denominations
25. Punctuality & Duration [St. Nicks specific]
26. Rigidity
27. Rituals
28. Sexual Ethics
29. Shortage of priests
30. Social Justice & Faith
31. The Eucharist
32. Training
33. Vocations
34. Women in Church hierarchy

---

## Theme - A place for worship

A place for worship | Source - Parental Sacramental

I would like to have all images being removed from church because in the Old Testament it was ordered by God through Moses that we should not adore images. | Source - Latin American

The space is beautiful (beautiful sculptures and objects, nice layout, lovely light building). The mix of people-it think it is rare to have a place in which people from so many different backgrounds, ages etc are all being together in a meaningful way. I also love the music. | Source - Women's group

It pains me that almost all Catholic churches are kept closed and locked almost all of the time | Source - Live streamers

Do not seem to control the children because they want to get a lot from the Mass. Also bringing in food with their children and the tidying up is the parents responsibility. | Source - Women's group

Very clear advertising in churches to show where Masses, meetings, help can be available. I am eager to attend a Mass at St. Nicks but as yet poorly advertised | Source - LGBT+

What is the purpose of the parish in today's changing world. How do we encourage on-going faith development in this world. | Source - Open group

---

## Theme - Abuse

failure to put survivors of clerical abuse before the 'good of the church.' As Cardinal Marx recently acknowledged this has been a crime. And it has been going on since the 4th Century. | Source - Individual Parishioner

The Church has been very poor in the way it has dealt with Child Abuse crisis and the cover-up subsequently - this has undermined its moral authority | Source - Parental Sacramental

excessive hierarchy where clergy regarded as gods ('adored') clergy more withdrawn and unapproachable, so much abuse and crimes that they get away with. Fear of priests, rigidity and outdated rules | Source - Facilitators

Issue of abuse which is so highlighted here which means it is more difficult to get the Church's message across. That noise is silencing the Gospel. | Source - Facilitators

I listened a priest saying that we should not abandon the Church (it was in relation with the sexual scandals). I asked a person that I knew in that church, "but was not the Church that abandoned us to be prey of sick individuals?"  
Accountability | Source - Live streamers

As catholics we tend to shy away from are denomination membership because of all the cruelty and abuse that has been exposed nationally and world wide over the last two hundred year | Source - Live streamers

[Dislike] Clergy abuse and its cover up. | Source - Live streamer

Confession is then given to a man. Women can also do some damage but we do want to keep these things quiet so we keep the same behaviour practice, we will be suppressed or punished. | Source - Women's group

Sexual abuse from clergy is very much highlighted, and this creates a barrier to the reception of the church's Gospel message | Source - English speaking African

its continuing failure to respond adequately to the crisis of sex and other, abuses against minors and vulnerable adults. | Source - LGBT+

feel uncomfortable with being "Catholic" as the main associations are negative e.g. child abuse scandal, old school "Jacob Rees Mogg" traditionalism. | Source - LGBT+

Need for the Church to both apologise more fully for abuse and also to change structures that enable abuse to happen - changing of attitudes. | Source - Open Group

The devastating impact of Child sexual abuse and other forms of clerical and religious abuse and the Church's history of cover-up - not looking at the systemic causes, including the power model of priesthood and episcopacy. | Source - Fr. Richard McKay

---

## **Theme - Be led by the Holy Spirit**

The Church loses members to Pentecostal and Apostolic sects where people go and seek spiritual healing in such sects. | Source - Zimbabwean community

It is built on a strong foundation - the Sacraments, the Eucharist, the Teachings | Source - Parental Sacramental

Clericalism and clerical power, the power of the clergy is insidious and discreet - if the priest decides he does not like what you are saying you are excluded. | Source - Facilitators

We value the opportunity to learn more about Jesus and his teaching. | Source - Latin American

We all should be less selfish and share more with those in need. | Source - Latin American

What is good is firstly that the Holy Spirit is still present in the Church, despite our inconsistencies and mistakes | Source - Live streamers

Yes the Holy Spirit has been continuously at work in the Church, so we should listen to that tradition, but the Spirit is still at work in us, and we should follow the Spirit, not just hang onto our own past (Galatians 5:25) | Source - Live streamers

At St Nick's there is a bit of hope that there is a way that I can hold onto my faith | Source - Women's group

The church is almost too timid to take leadership on certain social/moral issues. The church is almost too careful – and therefore does not always provide clear leadership | Source - English speaking African

I value the opportunity to worship the Holy Trinity and succour guidance of the Word. | Source - LGBT+

it brings people together, uniting them in prayer, praise, worship and being as one in faith. Revelling through the scriptures the Trinity and salvation. Giving us a firm foundation to build our lives upon. | Source - LGBT+

I need to know that this faith is for everyone; I need to know how everyone can receive glory in the eyes of God | Source - LGBT+

Stop looking at tensions in the Church as something negative - can be healthy and creative. | Source - Open Group

---

## **Theme - Climate change**

Also encouraged by Church's stance of Climate Change | Source - Journey of Faith

I think the Catholic Church could be a powerful force for good in confronting our greatest crisis - Climate Change - but we urgently need to be able to speak with a credibility we currently lack. | Source - LGBT+

---

## Theme - Community

I value about our church is the platform it gives for social gathering, communities getting together to help those in need | Source - East African

Group of people to go and see people who are sick and can't make it to Mass | Source - East African

So many people have stopped going to church once they hit university because building a community like what we know is so hard. There's nothing more that's keeping people around | Source - Young persons

missed coffee mornings elders gathering together, hunger lunch during LENT. | Source - Elderly

Sense of community - Baptism, Holy Communion celebrations, New year's eve celebrations as a parish | Source - Zimbabwean community

it can be flexible - open to change (eg increased acceptance of all people ... LGBTQ+ community etc). Moving towards being more welcoming, non-judgemental (who can throw the first stone??). Called to embrace and show love | Source - Parental Sacramental

the Church is embedded in and builder of local community. | Source - Parental Sacramental

In the past everyone went to church - now many not going (especially young people). Leads to a loss of community and faith becomes a private personal thing, not at the centre of and gathering community. | Source - Parental Sacramental

Togetherness/community particularly in the celebration of mass together | Source - Parental Sacramental

The elderly who were the cornerstone of the Church keeping us all together - they are the foundation that enabled me to grow and learn what church is all about | Source - Facilitators

pastors as crushers of the community not growers of community | Source - Facilitators

The Church is intertwined with the local community. ESP in rural areas, gather in the community where there is nothing else | Source - Facilitators

I would like the church to organise more activities during the weekends for us to share with our brothers and sisters. Some activities to raise funding for our church and community. | Source - Latin American

I always sought to be near my roots and faith community. This gives me a sense of belonging and how to see my life as framed by a grand narrative that includes others. And I think that it is a very important message that "people of God" can offer to the world. We don't live without connections | Source - Live streamers

After the solemn mass, I used to follow people to have a coffee, tea, talk, and laugh. Charity is also to offer a big hug | Source - Live streamers

We used to have lovely social meals and parties which was something that really drew us all together-singing and generosity. Different foods and the learning about different nationalities | Source - Women's group

I would like to see the connections with community increase, maybe through a regular social event or another type of faith sharing group that is outside of the mass (appreciate that there is Journey of Faith, but that is for new people joining | Source - Women's group

There are many groups that are formed within the church (e.g. Catholic Women's Association, Cadets/Legion of Mary, etc.) that ensure that there is active participation in church activities amongst almost all age groups | Source - English-speaking African

I value the sense of community and the different communalities within the church | Source - LGBTQ+

---

## Theme - Enduring mechanism for feedback

Law changes in society as society grows and develops in understanding and values (eg Human Rights) - and it requires broad assent as to what is 'reasonable'. Why is it so difficult for the Church to develop in the same way?' The speaker emphasised the Church's need for the people's broad assent. | Source - Journey of Faith

Young people are adapting to new ways of worship and most of them are leaving for Protestant churches | Source - Young persons

learning what is fundamental to the church compensating for the raft of rubbish we have to cope with in the Church. | Source - Facilitators

More information about the Parish Council -how does it operate and how do we get feedback from this group | Source - Women's group

Would like us to be saying that we want women to go to the next level of the hierarchy. We need women Deacon's, Priests as part of other groups where we can be given an equal voice. Those people who take a different view, it would be great to have this conversation, even with those who do not agree with you. | Source - Women's group

I feel desperate for a deep change of culture - where parishioners are not infantilised and patronised and senior figures in leadership still all too often feel unable to speak out on significant issues like LGBT+ and women when they might privately support change. | Source - LGBT+

---

## Theme - Exclusion from communion

It's wrong that divorced people who have re-married are excluded officially from the Eucharist | Source - Individual Parishioner

It is not up to the Church to judge who may not receive Jesus via the Eucharist | Source - Individual Parishioner

Everyone should be given the right to have communion as long as they have been baptised within a Christian church. | Source - Young persons

There are many churches that stop people from receiving communion if you're not dressed right or aren't covering your hair and it's not right. | Source - Young persons

There's also places that won't allow Christians of other denominations to receive communion because they're not catholic | Source - Young persons

The Catholic church allowing eligible people from other churches to receive the Holy Communion in the full spirit of Ecumenism | Source - Zimbabwean community

In many places unmarried parents refused baptism for their children. | Source - Parental Sacramental

Who comes to the Table - need to change rules that bar people from receiving Holy Communion | Source - Parental Sacramental

Clericalism and clerical power, the power of the clergy is insidious and discreet - if the priest decides he does not like what you are saying you are excluded. | Source - Facilitators

Priests wield too much power - act as though the people not really part of the church. Eg divorced. | Source - Facilitators

Connectedness does not match with exclusion. And the Church excludes massively. Small gestures of exclusions cause a big impact | Source - Live streamer



The rigid rules on who can and cannot receive communion at mass or other times. | Source - Live streamer

The church needs to be clearer on abortion, and reception of sacraments by unmarried pregnant women and divorcees | Source - English speaking African

---

## Theme - Hierarchical structure

All the things that need change in the Church are rooted in a false clinging to power | Source - Individual Parishioner

As much as it is nice for there to be a hierarchy in the Church (it's needed) it's become suffocating. Many have seen from their own parents that if it's not the priest's word it's not gospel | Source - Young persons

Hierarchy of the church always for more money a lot wasting on thousand dollar dinners not relief of poverty and education. | Source - Elderly

Parishioners are given opportunity to air their views during open parish discussions. | Source - Zimbabwean community

Rich parishes can do what they want but poor parishes cannot because they do not have the money. Greater sharing and sustaining of poorer communities is necessary. | Source - Facilitators

Clericalism and clerical power, the power of the clergy is insidious and discreet - if the priest decides he does not like what you are saying you are excluded. | Source - Facilitators

valued the life of each individual parish I have been part of; but so disconnected from each other and the institutional lumbering and so slow and then not reflective of the parish's opinions and also of modern issues. | Source - Facilitators

excessive hierarchy where clergy regarded as gods ('adored') clergy more withdrawn and unapproachable, so much abuse and crimes that they get away with. Fear of priests, rigidity and outdated rules | Source - Facilitators

We need to listen to others, listen to the ground rather than the top! | Source - Facilitators

This environment of impunity should end at once. | Source - Live streamers

Priests should adapt and accept change to what they thought was or is their role in the local community and not be a dominant cleric who refuses to listen to the parish needs and wants. The priest should involve him or herself into the life of his parishioners gaining an insight into its strengths and maybe any weaknesses. | Source - Live streamers

too much focus on money within the church, often in unhealthy and exploitative ways. | Source - English speaking African

Hierarchical structure - how can lay and ordained ministries co-exist and work together - often does not. | Source - Open group

---

## Theme - Hospitality

the welcome and hospitality was well received not just in the local church but was reflected right across the universal church | Source - Caribbean

Spirit of diversity and inclusion - Welcoming atmosphere for foreign nationals | Source - Zimbabwean community

We value being united with other brothers and sisters and feeling each other's company and support; we feel part of the community and feel comfortable, welcome and supported at church, not just us from Latin America but all members from lots of diverse backgrounds and cultures. | Source - Latin American

Everyone speaks and says hello and the rush at the start which is welcoming ... The welcoming, everyone is given an opportunity to speak-people who are outside of our parish are welcome-they join us and have the opportunity to pray with us | Source - Women's Group

When people do not attend church, they do not hear from anyone-it feels like being abandoned. | Source - Women's group

---

## **Theme - Inclusion -> Accessibility**

Celebrating mass in sign language. Deaf people are important and valued. Train priests to sign the mass. Prayer meeting for deaf people across diocese. Use of technology to have screen with subtitles / text for text in the mass. | Source - Deaf community

When you're a student, from 15 there's so much you have to do with exams and commitments that coming to church isn't feasible at times but there's shame you feel when you don't come and you get ostracised within communities. People need to unlearn this behaviour because it does more harm than good. | Source - Young persons

Disabled people not to be looked at needing a miracle or with sympathy, but valued as they are. | Source - Facilitators  
disability and sin are associated, which is very damaging to the disabled person | Source - Facilitators

We value when parts of mass are translated in our language since we can follow and understand what is happening. We recognise it is our responsibility to learn more English and we value the effort is being done to translate some special readings and messages in Spanish. | Source - Latin American

We have difficulties to fully understand the mass since we do not speak and understand English very well. | Source - Latin American

I would like to receive the homily printed out in Spanish so I can understand what Father Richard is preaching. I would also like to have a translated version of mass being projected in a screen so I can follow and understand all mass, including the songs. | Source - Latin American

It pains me that almost all Catholic churches are kept closed and locked almost all of the time | Source - Live streamers

If there is too much gold tinsel in churches to keep them open for their essential purpose, get rid of the gold tinsel, sell it and give the money to the poor or to efforts to assist the poor. God's glory is not so much reflected in gold tinsel as in the shimmering light on the willow leaves. If there is a risk of sacrilege, use modern technology more intelligently to protect the churches' sanctity. | Source - Live streamers

Community that recognises everyone-housebound, deaf and those who don't have a place to go. | Source - Women's group

I would like to see more representation of other minority groups in the Church, especially in the language used which should be more inclusive in church texts e.g removing gendered pronouns in Mass and using "family" instead of "brothers and sisters" | Source - LGBT+

---

## **Theme - Inclusion -> Divorced & Re-Married**

It's wrong that divorced people who have re-married are excluded officially from the Eucharist | Source - Individual Parishioner

Divorce: If you get married again it shouldn't count. They feel as if they're committing a sin . They should be able to marry in Church again even if they are divorced. More priests need to give marriage. | Source - East African

Church needs to be more open, more accepting of people as they are (eg unmarried, divorced and re-married LBGTQ+ etc) | Source - Parental Sacramental

Priests wield too much power - act as though the people not really part of the church. Eg divorced. Process of annulment so arduous that it leads to sense of exclusion. | Source - Facilitators

The divorced men and women who remarry without an annulment are treated unfairly by the church especially if they aren't the guilty party and the other person will not go through the annulment process. And a lady was told pretend your marriage never happened | Source - Live streamers

---

## **Theme - Inculturation & Diversity**

mention the diversity of the church specially celebration of feast days and seeing the priest wearing vestments of that particular community or country | Source - Caribbean

liturgy should be balance across the communities and not just focus on the African community in the Parish. | Source - Caribbean

Spirit of diversity and inclusion - Welcoming atmosphere for foreign nationals | Source - Zimbabwean community

Universally I would like to see changes in Inculturation. As a church we have been allowed to celebrate Mass in our native languages. However, we need to be able to identify with Christ, Mary and all the figures we believe in as Catholics. No-one has actual pictures Jesus, Mary, Joseph etc, so why are there always portrayed as White skinned | Source - Zimbabwean community

The parish is very inclusive of all people from different backgrounds | Source - Zimbabwean community

Our diversity really matters - all the nationalities gathered. St Nicks gathering in the wider world. | Source - Facilitators

Inculturation is so important, how differently celebrated, | Source - Facilitators

Openness to diverse cultures. | Source - Facilitators

We value being united with other brothers and sisters and feeling each other's company and support; we feel part of the community and feel comfortable, welcome and supported at church, not just us from Latin America but all members from lots of diverse backgrounds and cultures. | Source - Latin American

We value when parts of mass are translated in our language since we can follow and understand what is happening. We recognise it is our responsibility to learn more English and we value the effort is being done to translate some special readings and messages in Spanish. | Source - Latin American

Synod gives an opportunity to have a better balance between the ideal of unity and to allow the Church to be more diverse instead of being so European centric | Source - Live streamers

everyone is different, all kinds of races, and we all get on. | Source - Women's group

The singing in lots of different languages-links to the idea of universal church and the worship is in a language that is for them | Source - Women's group

Church allows inculturation – integration of African culture in the liturgy. This greatly enriches the liturgy, especially through music | Source - English speaking African

---

## **Theme - Inclusion -> LGBT+**

And the hypocrisy that accompanies these abuses of power- the many examples of public condemnation of homosexuality by clergy who are themselves homosexual | Source - Individual Parishioner

And it's a great sadness that single-sex couples are not welcomed unreservedly in all parishes. | Source - Individual Parishioner

LGBTQ+ issues need to be addressed | Source - Young persons

it can be flexible - open to change (eg increased acceptance of all people ... LGBTQ+ community etc). Moving towards being more welcoming, non-judgemental (who can throw the first stone??). Called to embrace and show love | Source - Parental Sacramental

Church needs to be more open, more accepting of people as they are (eg unmarried, divorced and re-married LGBTQ+ etc) | Source - Parental Sacramental

Like a child that is treated differently in a family because was an orphan and adopted. "I will not leave you orphans", He promised. The Church treats many of us as "inferior orphans" | Source - Live streamers

Need more understanding of the Scriptures around LGBTQ+ issues and about inclusion | Source - Parental Sacramental

Huge problem of attitude to LGBTQ+ in Africa. Actively preaching it is evil and in many countries is illegal. | Source - Facilitators

All should be welcomed - whether divorced, unwed parents, LGBTQ+ - Catholics but so often they do not feel a part of the church. | Source - Facilitators

There are some Catholic clergy and lay (political) leaders who use incitement of discrimination or acts of hatred against LGBTI | Source - Live streamers

The parish shows the good the Church can be because of the effort to be inclusive, to support the LGBT community, to try to increase the profile of women, to support people seen as unacceptable. ....would like to see intercommunion as the norm. LGBT people have to be a normal, ordinary, accepted part of the church. | Source - Live streamers

LGBT is a lovely thing to do as it shows inclusion | Source - Women's Group

we have active harm that is done to LGBT community, especially by other Bishops | Source - Women's Group

The Christian Church as well as other religions generally do not accept same sex relations and can be very homophobic, to the extreme of life, death, and eternal damnation. | Source - LGBTQ+

feel furiously angry, ashamed, and have felt powerless within the Church, because of its deeply imbedded misogynistic structures and ethos - its shameful treatment of LGBT + people | Source - LGBTQ+

I need to know that this faith is for everyone; I need to know how everyone can receive glory in the eyes of God | Source - LGBTQ+

It [LGBT+ ministry] is important because it formally acknowledges that there is no contradiction between sexual identities and being practicing Catholics | Source - LGBTQ+

---

## Theme - Inclusion -> Use of technology

Young people are adapting to new ways of worship and most of them are leaving for Protestant churches | Source - Young persons

We value when parts of mass are translated in our language since we can follow and understand what is happening. We recognise it is our responsibility to learn more English and we value the effort is being done to translate some special readings and messages in Spanish. | Source - Latin American

I would like to receive the homily printed out in Spanish so I can understand what Father Richard is preaching. I would also like to have a translated version of mass being projected in a screen so I can follow and understand all mass, including the songs. | Source - Latin American

If there is too much gold tinsel in churches to keep them open for their essential purpose, get rid of the gold tinsel, sell it and give the money to the poor or to efforts to assist the poor. God's glory is not so much reflected in gold tinsel as in the shimmering light on the willow leaves. If there is a risk of sacrilege, use modern technology more intelligently to protect the churches' sanctity. | Source- Live streamers

---

## Theme - Join the church v/s join the parish

he saw a Church that was putting faith into action of caring, relating faith to the real world and its problems. | Source - Journey of Faith

Parishioners are given opportunity to air their views during open parish discussions. | Source - Zimbabwean community

St Nicks is a model parish which other parishes can emulate | Source - Zimbabwean community

The institutional Church is so different from St Nicks | Source - Facilitators

Big problem that so many people do not feel accepted and welcomed in the wider church | Source - Facilitators

enormous difference between the Church as the global institution and the church as my parish community

... value *my* church more than I value *the* Church, despite the humanistic, social and spiritual values that I attribute to the Catholic Church impact on my church | Source - LGBT+

I have not been part of a Catholic church before. Although I love St Nick's, I don't feel confident that the rest of the Church shares the same values. I would be concerned about inclusivity and this would make me nervous about whether my family would be welcome in the broader Church. | Source - LGBT+

A recognition that what we celebrate and do at St Nicks is not representative of most of the Church/diocese | Source - Open group

---

## Theme - Laity Volunteers

Why are we ignoring so many liturgical gifts of lay people? | Source - Individual Parishioner

Group of people to go and see people who are sick and can't make it to Mass | Source - East African

searching for a place to express her gifts and her calling | Source - Journey of Faith

More people to participate in the day to day running of the Parish, set rota and allocate task instead of asking people to volunteer and are afraid to say yes because once you say yes you feel guilty giving up. | Source - Caribbean

Parishioners reluctance to participate or take active roles in decisions relating to the future of the parish | Source - Zimbabwean community

more focus on development of laity, encouraging their ministries | Source - Facilitators

Lay led services need to be encouraged. | Source - Facilitators

Allowing more participants to minister in the liturgy | Source - Live streamers

The scripture groups are great. | Source - Women's group

A few people do so many of the jobs-no new people are coming forward to take up the next stage ... lots of voluntary jobs and you find the same people doing them. | Source - Women's group

It is incredibly important to have a female delivering the homily for the women in the group.

We have to make this happen-in South Africa women were leading and we need to step up | Source - Women's group

Recognition and development of laity is encouraged – understanding scripture, taking up ministries within the church | Source - English speaking African

Shortage of priests is a concern. How this is tackled should involve both development of laity to take on more ministries + looking at ways to attract more priests. | Source - English speaking African

In the history of the Church lay-led movements were more flexible and adapted and adaptable to people's time-constrained (eg ordained ministry for life - lay ministry for a period). | Source - Open Group

---

## **Theme - Live streaming**

Many people are seeking communities online where they can be the Church they wish to see/be. | Source - Individual Parishioner

The pandemic has initiated wide-scale live-streaming of Mass and it has allowed Catholics to share their faith and their frustrations internationally. They are no longer content to put up with the parish they've been allocated.

We would like live-streaming of Mass to continue so that if your parish is not sympathetic, you can search elsewhere for a community that will welcome you | Source - Individual Parishioner

you could follow the liturgy of the mass wherever you are in the world | Source - Caribbean

Whenever I join online mass with St Nick I am so glad this avenue still exists also that you continue to acknowledge the presence of us online users/attendees during the mass. This helps me to feel part of the congregation regardless of the mixed blessing of live streaming | Source - Live streamers

---

## **Theme - Living in a Pluralistic / Secular society**

It is painful that it is so difficult to share your faith with others (non-Catholics) | Source - Parental Sacramental

The way non-Catholics criticise the Church is painful | Source - Parental Sacramental

there's issues of indoctrination when young people now want to leave those places and are being hounded, they have no one to turn to because they feel like they have no one to turn to because their own church undervalues their presence | Source - Young persons

Among non-church friends, it is a conversation killer- mentioning you are a catholic. | Source - Facilitators

Synod gives an opportunity to have a better balance between the ideal of unity and to allow the Church to be more diverse instead of being so European centric | Source - Live streamers

---

## **Theme - Love v/s Unfounded Teachings**

it can be flexible - open to change (eg increased acceptance of all people ... LGBTQ+ community etc). Moving towards being more welcoming, non-judgemental (who can throw the first stone??). Called to embrace and show love | Source - Parental Sacramental

learning what is fundamental to the church compensating for the raft of rubbish we have to cope with in the Church. | Source - Facilitators

valued the life of each individual parish I have been part of; but so disconnected from each other and the institutional lumbering and so slow and then not reflective of the parish's opinions and also of modern issues. | Source - Facilitators

Problem with very conservative wing of the Catholic Church which seems so voluble in UK - makes me hide my Catholicism publicly. I cannot live their Catholicism - I want my faith expressed in a loving open affirming way - not condemning and rigid. | Source - Facilitators

What really unites us? What are our values what do we really believe? It is about living the Gospel and being coherent as a church. We need to listen to others, listen to the ground rather than the top! | Source - Facilitators

disability and sin are associated, which is very damaging to the disabled person | Source - Facilitators

We all should be less selfish and share more with those in need. | Source - Latin American

Tradition means roots in a journey. The Church discriminates so much based on their own rules established when the faithful lived in different historical and cultural contexts, and the rules are taken as the roots and ultimately become prisons | Source - Live streamer

Just as our ancestors' let go of the blood sacrifices and rituals of the Temple, drawn from pagan traditions, when they gradually understood more clearly God's purposes, we should let go of our idolatrous grasp of patriarchy and paternalism. Early Hebrew religious practises took forms of liturgy from pagan assumptions and norms, but later relinquished those, in accordance with prophetic ministry that God desires justice and mercy, not the blood of pigeons and bulls or grandiose noisy ceremonies | Source - Live streamers

We really need a profound conversion of heart to see how to preserve what is true in Christian tradition and let go of what is merely traditional. | Source - Live streamers

Baptism time is so welcoming to all, regardless of whether they are regulars. Shows that God is love. | Source - Women's group

Some of the homilies ought to be about the people, not necessarily so political | Source - Women's group

it is through the Church that I came to know Christ and within the church that I try to know Christ more deeply. The Church has very significantly formed who I am as a human being, how I understand who I am in relationship to other people and to creation | Source - LGBT+

Her [Mother Mary] steadfastness and openness, that she is willing to listen and to abandon false or erroneous teachings | Source - LGBT+

I think that teaching in "absolutes" can be difficult. Its current teachings do not reflect modern life. | Source - LGBT+

It seems to me the real work of the Church is to preach love and strive for justice | Source - LGBT+

There is a lot of safety and security in hiding behind dicta and traditions, it becomes a challenge to developing community and to being progressive | Source - LGBT+

The church has grossly harmed and destroyed countless people's lives due to ignorance, prejudice and lack of love | Source - LGBT+

Meaningful liturgies and rituals; the love and the fact that it is spirit-led. | Source - Open group

Press for the abolition of the latest Missal translation and adopt the 1998 translation, and allow/encourage more flexible and imaginative liturgy. | Source - Fr. Richard McKay

---

## Theme - Married priests

Issue of priests not being allowed to marry. If this remains the case, I would hope that the church can open up a discussion around this. | Source - Individual Parishioner

The huge international married priests' movement made many overtures to the hierarchy, but while some individual Bishops were supportive, the Vatican maintained a massive silence.

Women who gave up their freedom to be faithful to someone who felt he could not give up the ministry. | Source - Individual Parishioner

Something done about shortages of priest also would like to see married and female priest as do not think God made the rules not to have them. | Source -Elderly

The Catholic church allowing priests to marry like the Anglicans | Source - Zimbabwean community

Priest should be allowed to marry and have families | Source - Parental Sacramental

Priests should be given the opportunity to marry if they so desire | Source - Live streamers

don't believe there is really any good reason for maintaining the Western practice of clerical celibacy for secular parish priests. I think we should go back to the practice of the early Church on this, like the Eastern churches still do, that parish priests normally are married with families, and monastic priests are monks and live in the community which they serve. I don't think we should have *only* monastic episcopacy, there should be a proportionate balance | Source - Live streamers

I want to see the requirement for mandatory celibacy for ordained ministry removed. | Source - LGBT+

---

## Theme - Music & Choir participation

More young people joining the choir - more people in general . One person can't sing for the whole congregation. | Source - East African

music that attracted her to church and her interest in the choir over the years | Source - Caribbean

They love the choir and that the liturgy of the word is what was being communicated in music at each service | Source - Caribbean

The singing in lots of different languages-links to the idea of universal church and the worship is in a language that is for them | Source - Women's group

I also like the heartfelt and joyful worship in music and singing from different cultures | Source - Women's group

---

## Theme - Need to involve young persons

Young people not coming back after communion and confirmation | Source - East African

Catholicism pushes some young people away because of education, social media. Like homosexuality, marriage etc. | Source - East African

Young people are enthusiastic but but this enthusiasm can be stifled and they become alienated. | Source - Journey of Faith

When these other churches come to you to recruit you there's a big sense of being wanted and that there's place for you to develop your passions and could lead to your vocation | Source - Young persons

Once you're too old for children liturgy groups you become an alter server and when you don't you wait until you can become a lay minister or a reader. There's no intermittent group where you belong. | Source - Young persons

Encouragement of children and youth to participate in liturgy, Mass savers, Sunday school for the little ones. | Source - Zimbabwean community



Availability of resources / information regarding the various vocations ( single life, married life,, religious life or priesthood) in the Catholic Church and their importance and the necessary guidance to the youth/young adults to discern their right path to follow. | Source - Zimbabwean community

Nothing directly for young people, even if they are welcome to 'slot in' (serving, choir, reading etc). |Source - Facilitators

they can also be part of the community and participate. | Source - Latin American

I would like the church to organise sessions for our youth so they can receive more support and guidance. | Source - Latin American

Future proofing is about encouraging or mentoring the young people. Could perhaps have a once a fortnight or once a month group that would help with bible studies and encourage others. | Source - Women's group

We need to come back-what do we do with the older children? Could we build greater links with secondary and sixth forms to help support the building of this group. Skills development. Could we start the Youth Faith in Action group for leadership? | Source - Women's group

There is a lack of youth involvement in church activities | Source - English speaking African

Moreover, the Church sometimes seems uninterested in listening to people who are "seekers" and younger Catholics in general | Source - LGBT+

Need to use the gifts of the whole community. Listen to the voice of younger members. | Source - Open group

More valuing of, support for and involvement of our young people. Urgent need to resource with among and with our young people. | Source - Fr. Richard McKay

---

## Theme - Other denominations

Need to put more effort and time into work for Ecumenical and inter-faith Unity | Source - Journey of Faith

Young people are adapting to new ways of worship and most of them are leaving for Protestant churches | Source - Young persons

To see the Catholic church being a full member of the World Council of Churches | Source - Zimbabwean community

The Catholic church allowing eligible people from other churches to receive the Holy Communion in the full spirit of Ecumenism | Source - Zimbabwean community

A sense of judgement from conservative elements against the open, welcoming, affirming Church | Source - Facilitators

I think we should be bolder in pushing ahead to reunify with the Greeks | Source - Live streamers

It pains me that almost all Catholic churches are kept closed and locked almost all of the time | Source - Live streamers

causes for maintaining the remnants of the schism between Roman and Eastern Byzantine churches are pride and the idolatry of treating institutional structures as sacred | Source - Live streamers

To say it honestly and simply, I think the Greeks are right about the Roman papacy claiming too much 'sacred' authority, especially over the other four original patriarchates, because of politics | Source - Live streamers

Ecumenism (especially in St Nicks) is not just spoken about, but actively practised | Source - English speaking African

Need to develop more working with other Christian traditions - are we arrogant? not open to learning from others - think we have got it all. | Source - Open Group

Need to nurture more inter-faith dialogue. | Source - Open Group

---

## Theme - Punctuality & Duration

What I find difficult about our church is having only one Mass. Sometimes it is hard for due to work shifts for one to attend the early mass but if we had at least two masses on Sunday that could accommodate the working people so that we don't feel left out. | Source - East African

St Nick's parishioner should only adhere to the punctuality of the mass | Source - East African

Sunday mass not starting on time | Source - Zimbabwean community

In the past everyone went to church - now many not going (especially young people). Leads to a loss of community and faith becomes a private personal thing, not at the centre of and gathering community. | Source - Parental Sacramental

I wish there would be mass in the evenings since some times it is difficult to participate in the morning mass. | Source - Latin American

The masses are too long and during the COVID period, it is more difficult. When speaking to a lot of people who are leaving, it is because it is too long ... Mass starts late and homily is very long regardless of baptisms etc. | Source - Women's group

A consistent attitude to time would be appreciated. I am not sure what has happened, but in the past, I have not liked all the issues and debate about what time mass starts. I am fine with it starting at 10am or 10.05 but when it starts to drift later than planned, I start to arrive later as there seems no point. What I don't like is when someone suddenly says, "now everyone we have to be on time" and everyone who arrives at 10.02am is made to feel guilty at the door and is told off for not arriving on time, even though the previous mass started at 10.15am. I don't appreciate the lack of consistency. Just pick one way and stick to it-either be chilled and stop telling people off or let's start at 10am regardless -bouncing between mindsets every two months is not helpful. | Source - Women's group

---

## Theme - Rigidity

We can't keep to orthodox rules whilst in the 21st century | Source - Young persons

The Church can be hard and scares off young people. Rigid and focussed on rules | Source - Parental Sacramental

The Church is rigid, resistant to change | Source - Parental Sacramental

learning what is fundamental to the church compensating for the raft of rubbish we have to cope with in the Church. | Source - Facilitators

Problem with very conservative wing of the Catholic Church which seems so voluble in UK - makes me hide my Catholicism publicly. I cannot live their Catholicism - I want my faith expressed in a loving open affirming way - not condemning and rigid. | Source - Facilitators

excessive hierarchy where clergy regarded as gods ('adored') clergy more withdrawn and unapproachable, so much abuse and crimes that they get away with. Fear of priests, rigidity and outdated rules | Source - Facilitators

The rigidity of the leadership at local levels the priests have too much power imposed on them when those who have been running the different committees are being informed by canon law that their role is just advisory with the priest having the final say on parish finance's ect. | Source - Live streamers

There is a lot of rigidity and lack of Christian love and compassion in application of certain practices within the church: e.g. refusing communion to divorced or unmarried mothers, refusing to offer funeral mass because of absence of a baptism certificate for the deceased | Source - English speaking African

---

## Theme - Sexual ethics

practice of the early pre-schismatic Church on this is that clerical celibacy supports a traditional misinterpretation of Christian ethics that sexuality is sinful and holiness means asexuality or suppressing or denying personal will, rather than re-ordering it according to God's love | Source - Live streamers

Sexual ethics and catechism about life, love and sexual ethics are a major problem for the Church. Conserving the traditionalist status quo or conserving old hierarchies and binaries is not being faithful to the gospel. Neither would blindly thoughtlessly going along with the prevailing consumerist ideology applying to self-concept and ideas of relationship development | Source - Live streamers

---

## Theme - Shortage of priests

Once Father Richard leaves there'll be no more priests because there are little (few) priests here. | Source - East African

Church need more deacons in order to facilitate house prayer meeting and other groups and not solely depending on the Parish Priest. | Source - Elderly

Something done about shortages of priest also would like to see married and female priest as do not think God made the rules not to have them. | Source - Elderly

More Deacons to support Priest | Source - Caribbean

dearth of people wanting to join priesthood ad religious orders | Source - Facilitators

Shortage of priests is a concern. How this is tackled should involve both development of laity to take on more ministries + looking at ways to attract more priests. | Source - English speaking African

---

## Theme - Social Justice & Faith in Action

What I want to ask of the Church is that it not only listens but ACTS on what it hears | Source - Individual Parishioner

experienced the Church as encouraging, even life-saving during Civil War (priest rescued her and her mother and a new born baby in war zone and under gun fire). Valued prayer and worship (the Mass) - Church provided money and encouragement for education enabling her to get degree and come to UK for Masters | Source - Journey of Faith

he saw a Church that was putting faith into action of caring, relating faith to the real world and its problems. | Source - Journey of Faith

Need to put faith in to action - we must not be just 'Sunday Catholics | Source - Journey of Faith

Views on charity, ministry of the foodbank work of borderlands among refugees and asylum seekers | Source - Elderly

saint Nicholas church more than most are doing a lot of charitable work and mission among the poor | Source - Caribbean

Spirit of service to the poor - through meals, groceries etc which encourages all parishioners to practice the virtue of charity. | Source - Zimbabwean community

St Nicks is very inclusive but most importantly the charity work and feeding of homeless people. | Source - Zimbabwean community

Also feed not just spiritually but with excellent education and healthcare and poverty relief. | Source - Facilitators

Seeing faith in action - translating it into service | Source - Facilitators

We receive material, psychological, moral and spiritual support from church and we are aware the church is supporting many others as well | Source - Latin American

like the way that the parish supports causes such as the foodbank and refugees | Source - Women's group

I value Catholic teaching on social justice and peace and appreciate being challenged to try to live accordingly and join with others trying to do the same | Source - LGBT+

I believe this church really tries to live the Gospel message of reaching out to the poor and marginal in our communities. | Source - LGBT+

I feel the pomp can outweigh the social mission of the church. | Source - LGBT+

Social Justice is a given, not an 'add-on'; the Church has wider purpose, bigger than itself | Source - Open group

Need to understand that prayer and action, contemplation and action belong together - and we all need to grow in both areas. | Source - Open group

---

## Theme - The Eucharist

It is built on a strong foundation - the Sacraments, the Eucharist, the Teachings | Source - Parental Sacramental

Reverence is slipping away, especially for the Eucharist - the sense of adoration is diminished | Source - Parental Sacramental

I value we can receive the bread and wine in the communion as it was done in the times of Jesus. | Source - Latin American

Strength comes from community and Eucharist which enable us to go out into the world | Source - Open group

---

## Theme - Training

How we select and train people for ordained ministry needs to change...more reflective of and attuned to the community which is both male and female! | Source - Journey of Faith

Clericalism and clerical power, the power of the clergy is insidious and discreet - if the priest decides he does not like what you are saying you are excluded. | Source - Facilitators

To many priests give a homily short and sweets reflection on the readings maybe but nothing to take away with us, no motivation or encouragement or some fine words to think and ponder on. Where am I in this, what can I do, what should I do?? | Source - Live streamers

Perhaps a lot more training for people [volunteers] to build confidence. .... ... builds their confidence and mentored to do the roles. | Source - Women's group

Formation of priests should consider the world in which they are going to live and work – especially the temptations they are likely to face. In general, need to ensure that priestly formation is re-examined and if possible updated. | Source - English speaking African

Are our personnel suitable - well-trained enough for the task they are asked to do and how are they monitored? | Source - Open group

Role of Bishops: is there a minimum standard of what should be expected of priests and people. | Source - Open group

---

## Theme - Vocations

When these other churches come to you to recruit you there's a big sense of being wanted and that there's place for you to develop your passions and could lead to your vocation | Source - Young persons

Availability of resources / information regarding the various vocations ( single life, married life,, religious life or priesthood) in the Catholic Church and their importance and the necessary guidance to the youth/young adults to discern their right path to follow. | Source - Zimbabwean community

Some people see priesthood as a way out of poverty (provision of food and accommodation, and sometimes a car). This means that people might enter the priesthood without it being a true vocation | Source - English speaking African

---

## Theme - Women in Church Hierarchy

The issue of denying women the right to fully participate in the church's senior hierarchy.

We have experienced women in a lot of other high profile roles world over in all sorts of professions and it is at this point that I wonder whether the church has thought about the aftermath of denying women a chance to be involved | Source - Individual Parishioner

We would love to see women and married men ordained. | Source - Individual Parishioner

Women priests as well as men. | Source - East African

How we select and train people for ordained ministry needs to change...more reflective of and attuned to the community which is both male and female! | Source - Journey of Faith

Something done about shortages of priest also would like to see married and female priest as do not think God made the rules not to have them. | Source - Elderly

To see the ordination of women priests | Source - Zimbabwean community

The fact that women priests not allowed - the Church is not open to the gifts that women bring | Source - Parental Sacramental

position of women who have no rights, no voice, no ministry. | Source - Facilitators

woman allowed ordination many are called but are denied by the all male dominant priesthood. | Source - Live streamers

I support women's ordination and consecration. I find the excuses for not doing it already thoroughly unconvincing | Source - Live streamers

Not had a great experience of women priests-Church of England. | Source - Women's group

More people should be engaged in the delivering of the homily-especially not just one or two (especially women). If we are to really part of Priest, Prophet and King. | Source - Women's group

It would be nice to hear from Church of England female priests and their experiences-what are their experiences of speaking from Christ. Perhaps also speak to women from other Church structures to speak to us as a group | Source - Women's group

I now am not sure that it is right to bar 50% of mankind from the priesthood. There were women in the early church. | Source - LGBT+

Worry that the whole debate about Women in the Church and ordination - that ordained women could become another form of clericalism. If women and/or married men ordained - not a panacea for all ills, but will their own issues. Are we being realistic about the issues to be dealt with? |Source - Open Group

---

## Appendix 2 - Original facilitator submissions

### Post-It Notes

Person 1

Value:

Guidance, stability , reliability, community, identity

Difficulty :

pre-determined paths in religious society e.g. wife/mother or nun for women.

Changes:

More guidance/inspiration for all sorts of paths, callings, less expectations

ALSO Less focus on sin, More focus on developing our strengths and gifts (while of course also bettering ourselves)

---

Person 2

Value:

The sense of community created by the church within its parishes

Difficult :

I find the bible and religious texts can be hard to digest when trying to reconstruct our opinion on religion or when starting afresh.

I feel the church needs to modify some of its opinions such as contraception and women priests. It doesn't include everyone and can make people feel excluded from Christ.

---

Person 3

Value:

I value the unity.

Difficult:

(position on?) Divorce in the Catholic Church - Catholics should encourage ( Accept?) divorce as this creates a very big barrier in someone's life.

---

Person 4

Value:

Sense of community and belonging support and love of the parish towards those in need

Change:

More opportunities for younger people to help and be part of the parish in different ways.

---

---

Person 5

Change:

Female Priest in Catholic Church

---

Person 6

Value:

The diversity

Difficult:

I find some of the teachings difficult

Change:

I would like to change how some of the roles are in this Church (young people helping around more)

---

Person 7

Value:

Good words. Honesty and open up about what happen in the past and ask forgiveness

Changes:

Bring young people to understand God words. See everyone as yourself and love everyone as God love us

---

Person 8

Value:

I value the oneness in our Church

Difficult:

I dislike the class segregation and all forms of segregation in the Church

Change:

Looking forward to see a perfect church where love strives

---

Person 9

Value:

One thing I like about the Church is the community in it and I love how close parish is.

Change:

One thing I would like to change is the amount of people in the Choir I wish there were people in the choir I also wish there was a youth choir.

---

Person 10

I would like our Church - all our Catholic Churches to be more open to what is and has happened in the past.

Our St Nicholas parish is a good - very good example of caring ! May it continue forever . God Bless

---

-----  
Person 11

Change: What needs to Change. As a mother I am outraged that we use the term Holy Mother Church when as a church we refuse to feed so many of its children. Any mother in society who refused to feed her children would be the subject of investigation as to whether they were fit for the responsibility. Mothers feed their own children and leave space at the table for others who come to visit. Jesus invites all - we fail him in love when we do the opposite.

-----  
Person 12

Value:

I value diversity, inclusiveness and I would appreciate if everyone is carried along accordingly.

I would appreciate if the Church can do more for asylum seekers, like putting pressure on the government to hasten the lengthy time for asylum applications.

I would appreciate if the Church feels the need to go outside the Church building for homes.

-----  
Person 13

Value:

I value everything in the Church

I dislike nothing in the Church

I want the church to be happier

-----  
Person 14

Value:

In the Church we value the togetherness

We would love to see all people together as one and lets give the young ones time to speak and be listened!

-----  
Person 15

Value:

I love how the Church teaches us about God and brings us all together

-----  
Person 16

Value

I like how everyone is respectful and no one is rude

I love how we have a moment to pray

Change

I would like to change the fact that the children don't have their own room.

-----  
Person 17

We have to look or seek one another when someone is sick



There is those who need help at home due to health problem

-----  
Person 18

The Mass service too long!! Specially on special occasions where the Mass sometimes lasts 3-4 hours. It would be great to shorten them.

-----  
Person 19

The Church is pretty big and wonderful and the mass Service are great

-----  
Person 20

I find the Mass good because we become closer to God

-----  
Person 21

Very sad in 70 years none or few of Christian principles heard in any parish except St Nick's - shame.

Public prayer should include for forgiveness of evil doers

-----  
Person 22

Value

I like everything about the Church

I can't say I dislike this but I am just a bit unfamiliar with the really long parts of the Mass

-----  
Person 23

For the Church to continue and improve on being the true source of hope for the hopeless

-----  
Person 24

Value

Interacting as a community

Feeling at home — Feeling that I belong to the St Nick's family

-----  
Person 25

Value

Social Justice

Difficult

Bad Discriminating against women and LGBT+

Change

Ordination of Women

Open-mindedness about sex

---

Person 26

Value

The togetherness

The worship and celebration of the liturgy

---

Person 27

Value

I value the prayer and (being) together with brother and sister

I love the singing and it makes me happy

I will like the church to look (out) for their member(s) when they are sick.

---

Person 28

Value

I value the lovely community and God to be my friend. Life is painful by itself but that's the beauty of it.

Change

I don't know what needs to change, some things still the same in the time and others no, and that is good.

---

Person 29

Value

Community - all different being together

Commitment to justice on a big level

Engagement in wider world

Change

Equality of sexes

Reproductive rights

Gay marriage

---

Person 30

Value

Amazing diversity

A holy place

Lively

Change

(it's?) Cold

---

Person 31

I love how Church brings everyone together

---

Person 32

Value

Value the Eucharist

Healing for all who have been hurt in the Church

Participate more fully in the Church

---

Person 33

Value

Things I cherish in the Church — The fight against Racism The Unity and togetherness The zeal to do God's word.

Change

The Changes I pray for — That the priests be supported by having Assistant priest to help with the workload.

---

Person 34

Value

Place where we can meet or make - friend, brothers and sisters

---

Person 35

Value

Pray for the sick

Help the Poor

Support community

support the needy around the world.

---

Person 36

Value

like Joyful worship Helping people (food bank, refugees)

Difficult

don't like Long Sermons

Change

Faith sharing group or social to create better connections

---

Person 37

I will like the church to be more welcoming and tolerant, loving to children with disability, showing actual support to parents with these children means a lot to us.

---

Person 38

I value the sense of community and wish all parishes were as welcoming and celebratory as ours

---

Person 39

I think what is better for the Church — A place for children to understand GOD better. A children's bible — A play area for children to learn about God's creation

---

Person 40

I like the Church - 100 per cent it is Ok - Father Richard 100 per cent is ok. I don't want anything to change

---

Person 41

Value

Open the doors of the Church to all , care for the poor.

Change

Give power to the parish Priests to make decisions that concern the parish and reduce bottle-neck decision making

Funding: Let the Church help parishes that are in finance difficulties and not ask them to be paying for rentals for the church and write off any owings

---

Person 42

They can change the way they collect the money

---

Person 43

Make room for the people in wheel chairs

---

Person 44

To visit the poor and help them with their daily livings

---

Person 45

I find my spiritual life dying. I am not rest (?) with the scriptures and cannot even quote the scripture.

I will like more opportunities for sharing & preaching , studying the scriptures. Sometimes I don't know what is being preach because of the way father preaches. As an African it is difficult for me to follow the speed of tongue.

---

Person 46

Value

Being around the Church community

Change

Start Church Mass 10 am promptly

-----  
Person 47

Change

I would like to change the lateness in the Church so it doesn't end late because it has been going on long enough and if people do decide to altar serve they should come on time (name supplied!)

-----  
Person 48

Value

The respect for God and the saints . The belief in eternal life and hope for sinners .

Miracles

Honouring Our Lady.

One word for the wise ones to change \* Hymns He who's sings prays twice

-----  
Person 49

I think there should be a play-room for young kids to play in while Mass is going on

-----  
Person 50

What must change during the next, not wearing costume whilst singing in choir

Rehearsal time and date

Earlier start time, especially on a Sunday

-----  
Person 51

Young children at 8-9 10 - 11 to work for pastor

-----  
Person 52 Translated from Spanish:

I would like the church to have more programmes for young people

-----  
Person 53 ..... from Spanish

I am very satisfied with the human warmth of the Catholic Church

-----  
Person 54 ... from Spanish

The Church needs more programmes to support young people . Because they are very separated from the love of God. Get nearer to them, give them more support to get them away from the danger of the world. (from a Salvadorian - teenage boys are the targets for gang recruitment)

-----  
Person 55

change Open permission to photograph and video during ceremonies

---

## English-speaking African Group

### 1. Introduction

- Acknowledged that members of this group have experience of church both in Africa and Europe/UK.
- Responses will consider both experiences

### 2. Church in AFRICA: What do we like/value?

- Church is intertwined with the community, and is often at the centre of the community. In some cases the church is the only/main organisational entity in the community – not only for religious but also social life of the community
- There are many groups that are formed within the church (e.g. Catholic Women's Association, Cadets/ Legion of Mary, etc.) that ensure that there is active participation in church activities amongst almost all age groups. These groups also ensure that there is a connectedness and sense of community – ensuring that people are not isolated, visiting the sick, etc.
- Church has challenged some of the more inhumane aspects of some cultures, bringing an end to certain abhorrent practices
- Church allows inculturation – integration of African culture in the liturgy. This greatly enriches the liturgy, especially through music
- Church has been pivotal in providing health and education services in most parts of Africa. In some cases the church is the only provider of these services
- Some people quite like the fact that there is great respect for the authority and values of the church in Africa
- Some also enjoy the different variety of worship styles available, often in the same parish – from the very lively, to the more solemn styles.
- Some find the preaching during the mass services very relatable
- There's a camaraderie (kinship) amongst Catholics irrespective of where they are – you feel a real sense of brotherhood/sisterhood when you meet another Catholic, because you share the same values
- Each parish is empowered to act independently to meet the needs of the parishioners e.g. engaging in business ventures that raise funds to support the needs of the parishioners.

### 3. Church in AFRICA: What do we NOT like?

- There seems to be too much focus on money within the church, often in unhealthy and exploitative ways. This is manifested in so many different ways:
  - some mass services include multiple offertory collections, and people are made to feel guilty for not putting anything in the collection
  - some parishes will ask for money for prayers, to obtain sacramental certificates, etc.

- some parishes encourage competition amongst parishioners to see who can give the most money as offering to the church
- in some parishes, parishioners tend to be taxed specific amounts for projects, irrespective of their income.
- The clergy are almost worshipped. This comes from a culture of respect for the church which is taken to the extreme by the laity, and also from certain clergy who encourage and exploit this position of privilege. The consequences are that:
  - There is a clear sense of hierarchy (priest, bishop, arch-bishop, cardinal), and clergy are deemed unapproachable by some lay Christians especially further up the hierarchy
  - Some clergy exploit this to commit and get away with certain abuses (including sexual abuse), because the victims are too scared to speak – and probably are not believed when they do speak
  - The laity rely too much on the priests/clergy for the Gospel message, and will not challenge false teachings/theology
  - A lot of false teachings by some priests, purposefully to increase their hold of power over their congregation
  - Information from the wider church (e.g. messages from the Pope) can sometimes be filtered by the local priest/bishop before being delivered to the congregation.
- There is a lot of rigidity and lack of Christian love and compassion in application of certain practices within the church: e.g. refusing communion to divorced or unmarried mothers, refusing to offer funeral mass because of absence of a baptism certificate for the deceased
- Some people see priesthood as a way out of poverty (provision of food and accommodation, and sometimes a car). This means that people might enter the priesthood without it being a true vocation

#### 4. Church in Europe/UK: What do we like?

- Most of the experiences of church have been from St Nicks – very little experience of other parishes. This means responses might not reflect the church in UK/Europe
- A real sense of family, with real support from parishioners
- The priest is very approachable (again St Nicks experience)
- Church is non-judgemental – all are welcome
- Recognition and development of laity is encouraged – understanding scripture, taking up ministries within the church
- Sense of accountability
- Church encourages/embraces putting faith in practice – living-out our faith
- Church is involved in a lot of outreach work
- Ecumenism (especially in St Nicks) is not just spoken about, but actively practised
- A real sense of welcoming and acceptance (again at St Nicks) – for diverse communities

#### 5. Church in Europe/UK: What do we NOT like?

- Sexual abuse from clergy is very much highlighted, and this creates a barrier to the reception of the church's Gospel message
- Dwindling number of priests and low numbers answering call to priesthood
- There is a very 'clinical' church feel in some parishes – services are very business-like
- There is a lack of youth involvement in church activities
- The church is almost too timid to take leadership on certain social/moral issues. The church is almost too careful – and therefore does not always provide clear leadership

#### 6. What should change in the church?

- Shortage of priests is a concern. How this is tackled should involve both development of laity to take on more ministries + looking at ways to attract more priests.
- Should the church allow priests to marry (non-celibate)? There were voices on both sides of this: those who oppose this view feel that the ministry of priesthood is demanding enough and should not be coupled with that of being a husband and/or father; those in favour point to the fact that other denominations are able to make this work.
- Also discussion on ordination of women into priesthood – a lot of supportive views, but some dissenting views. Dissenters point to church tradition, but it was equally pointed out that there is a history of female clergy in the church.
- Formation of priests should consider the world in which they are going to live and work – especially the temptations they are likely to face. In general, need to ensure that priestly formation is re-examined and if possible updated.
- Need better accessibility to bishops
- The church needs to be clearer on abortion, and reception of sacraments by unmarried pregnant women and divorcees
- Church needs to help parishes in Africa with documentation and record-keeping.

## Young Persons

### Communion

Everyone should be given the right to have communion as long as they have been baptised within a Christian church. There are many churches that stop people from receiving communion if you're not dressed right or aren't covering your hair and it's not right. There's also places that won't allow Christians of other denominations to receive communion because they're not catholic. Just because they don't follow the exact actions and procedures as Catholics doesn't mean we can undermine their faith and refuse what is their right.

### The hierarchical structure

As much as it is nice for there to be a hierarchy in the Church (it's needed) it's become suffocating. Many have seen from their own parents that if it's not the priest's word it's not gospel. It's damaging when it comes to trying to change and educate people in these times where race relations are at an all-time high and LGBTQ+ issues need to be addressed. On that note too people have become reliant on what the priest word instead of studying and learning God



for ourselves. It is nice to have a hierarchy in the church but it is also essential that we hold our own faith. Let's not determine that priests have a higher place than the people that attend church. We are all one in worship. This is especially important with the shortages in priests.

## Leaving

Young people are adapting to new ways of worship and most of them are leaving for Protestant churches. This is because the Catholic Church isn't valuing them enough. We can't keep to orthodox rules whilst in the 21st century. The church needs to adapt. When these other churches come to you to recruit you there's a big sense of being wanted and that there's place for you to develop your passions and could lead to your vocation. That's how they get the young people but there's issues of indoctrination when young people now want to leave those places and are being hounded, they have no one to turn to because they feel like they have no one to turn to because their own church undervalues their presence (this point is complex and may need more elaboration). St Nicks is unfortunately one of the few churches who address certain current issues and it's pushing young people away. So many people have stopped going to church once they hit university because building a community like what we know is so hard. There's nothing more than keeping people around. Clergy aren't as interactive and it feels like they don't care to even learn your name, such a little thing goes so far when church is a big part of your life. However, even before that there lacks a space for young people. Once you're too old for children liturgy groups you become an altar server and when you don't you wait until you can become a lay minister or a reader. There's no intermittent group where you belong. Things like this would keep more young people around because there's also a decrease in people coming even earlier than university. There's also shaming that happens when you don't come to church every week. When you're a student, from 15 there's so much you have to do with exams and commitments that coming to church isn't feasible at times but there's shame you feel when you don't come and you get ostracised within communities. People need to unlearn this behaviour because it does more harm than good.

The main point people said is that Church is a big part of people's lives so making effort goes a long way! Bringing the community together, it's not hard to be a good church.

---

## Parental Sacramental Program

### GROUP A

#### WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT THE CHURCH?

It is built on a strong foundation - the Sacraments, the Eucharist, the Teachings. There is a consistency and continuity - we are on firm ground. This can limit misunderstandings. Also it can be flexible - open to change (eg increased acceptance of all people ... LGBTQ+ community etc). Moving towards being more welcoming, non-judgemental (who can throw the first stone??). Called to embrace and show love. (these comments found general agreement in the small group).

Church is very important - the ~African experience - the Church is embedded in and builder of local community.

#### WHAT IS DIFFICULT OR PAINFUL ABOUT THE CHURCH?

Reverence is slipping away, especially for the Eucharist - the sense of adoration is diminished. Churches are no longer full.

The Church can be hard and scares off young people. Rigid and focussed on rules. In many places unmarried parents refused baptism for their children. When young people are forced to go to church, they leave when of age.

In the past everyone went to church - now many not going (especially young people). Leads to a loss of community and faith becomes a private personal thing, not at the centre of and gathering community.

It is painful that it is so difficult to share your faith with others (non-Catholics)

#### WHAT IN THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE CHANGED AND WHY?

Church needs to be more open, more accepting of people as they are (eg unmarried, divorced and re-married LGBTQ+ etc)

Return of more reverence, especially for the Eucharist.

---

#### GROUP B

#### WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT THE CHURCH?

- A sense and place of belonging
- Togetherness/community particularly in the celebration of mass together
- A place for worship
- A sense of identity beyond gender, race, nationality, language etc
- The liturgy helps me learn more about Christ (the Liturgical Cycle)
- The Synod Process itself makes me feel valued, heard, listened to
- I feel I can both contribute and learn to understand the Bible better (referring to preaching and Scripture in the Mass)
- The way we honour Mary, the Mother of the Lord
- The Church has stability and continuity

#### WHAT IS DIFFICULT OR PAINFUL ABOUT THE CHURCH?

- The Church is rigid, resistant to change
- Would like more printed material or a projector at mass so we can follow and understand better (linked to a congregation of many languages)
- The Church has been very poor in the way it has dealt with Child Abuse crisis and the cover-up subsequently - this has undermined its moral authority
- The fact that women priests not allowed - the Church is not open to the gifts that women bring
- Priest should be allowed to marry and have families
- The way non-Catholics criticise the Church is painful

#### WHAT IN THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE CHANGED AND WHY?

- I find confession difficult and would like the practice to change - also about the way this and other things are taught - no more 'conditioning'
- Who comes to the Table - need to change rules that bar people from receiving Holy Communion

- Church should let priests marry - and ordain women
- Need more understanding of the Scriptures around LGBTQ+ issues and about inclusion

---

## Individual Parishioner

If there is any one thing that I have struggled with, is the issue of denying women the right to fully participate in the church's senior hierarchy. This is not because some other denominations have already effected those changes, but my main question remains : what is in a man that a woman cannot do?? We have experienced women in a lot of other high profile roles world over in all sorts of professions and it is at this point that I wonder whether the church has thought about the aftermath of denying women a chance to be involved. My second point rests around the issue of priests not being allowed to marry. If this remains the case, I would hope that the church can open up a discussion around this. This is particularly because, I have seen priests who have joined the Catholic Church from other denominations that allows them to marry join the church and with their wives and remain married. I don't mean that they should be forced to divorce, but how does that makes other single priests feel?? Lastly, I think the church needs to also be more inclusive from a wider and diverse selection settings.

---

I grew up in a committed, practising Catholic family where unusually for the time we were both encouraged to think and made aware of issues of social justice. A levels coincided with the end of Vatican II, so I was full of hope and optimism and a strong sense of commitment to the Church. *Humanae Vitae* knocked my faith since it clearly flew in the face of the beliefs and opinions of lay people and theologians. Nevertheless, I entered the religious life in the belief that its restricted practices would change in the light of Vatican II.

Leaving the religious life because I felt that the Church was better served (by me) as a lay person, I worked as a catechist in an inner city parish where I saw the Gospel and the teachings of Vatican II working in front of my eyes. An experience of joyful, committed, prayerful, messy, evangelical poverty and service. The change of parish priest was the start of my disillusion. The new PP's autocratic use of power brooked neither opposition nor mature appeal. Before our eyes he dismantled all the lay structures that the previous parish priest had created and allowed to function autonomously. Outspoken people were simply barred from participation or left of their own accord, feeling that one cannot use the Eucharist as a battle ground. Some left not only the parish but the Church.

Marrying a priest brought me into contact with many Catholic priests leaving the active ministry at that time. The majority of these departures were more due to the rejection of clericalism and the non-implementation of Vatican II rather than a rejection of compulsory celibacy, although some were certainly caused by that. The range of treatment of these men was dreadful. Some Bishops were humane and Christian and more importantly ignored the Vatican-imposed restrictions ("You may not preach.. give communion.. take a lead in a parish.. tell anyone you were a priest.." says the document giving permission for laicisation). But many of the hierarchy obeyed, and many thousands of trained, committed men with a deep love of the Church were driven by that Church either to give their life and service completely separated from it, or to become Anglican or other ministers. The huge international married priests' movement made many overtures to the hierarchy, but while some individual Bishops were supportive, the Vatican maintained a massive silence.

Through this organisation I came to know of the women involved with priests who did not choose to leave the ministry, and the children with "no fathers". Women who gave up their freedom to be faithful to someone who felt he could not give up the ministry. The hypocrisy of preaching fidelity to marriage while depriving someone of their freedom even to say that they loved.

These for me are all massive abuses of power. As far as I can see, all the things that need change in the Church are rooted in a false clinging to power: the subservient role of women, the abuse of women in hidden relationships, the dependence of parishes on the opinions of the PP and his willingness give power to lay people or even to let his power be shared, the refusal to admit that the practice of most of those still faithful often departs from the official teaching (eg

birth control), the judgemental attitude to peoples' marriages, the control over the Eucharist and who is permitted to receive, the refusal to recognise LGBT people's rights to be who they are within the Church.

And the hypocrisy that accompanies these abuses of power- the many examples of public condemnation of homosexuality by clergy who are themselves homosexual, the refusal to give communion to those who don't tick the boxes (sometimes by people who themselves visibly do not conform to aspects of the Gospel), the prayers for vocations that refuse to admit to the reasons why young people will not offer their lives in the service of such an institution, the refusal to recognise the calling of women to the ministry, the clergy demanding money for the beautifying of buildings while their streets are full of homeless..

These things fill me with fear for the Synod, especially after the results of the German and Amazon Synods. What I want to ask of the Church is that it not only listens but ACTS on what it hears. And for that it needs to dismantle some of the hierarchical structures and actually do what Pope Francis is saying. It is truly impossible for me to feel hope for the Synod when I look at these things, and that too is something I would like the Synod to know

---

## Introduction

Parishes that model a safe, welcoming, just Catholic Church are rare. Many people are seeking communities online where they can be the Church they wish to see/be.

## Views from outside the Church

Very few friends, family and work colleagues see the good in the Catholic Church. Many have left the Church because of the clerical sexual abuse, the misogyny and homophobia. Many of us see our family members living out the Christian values as atheists better than some Catholics. The young feel increasingly excluded from Catholicism, but approve of all attempts to make the church safe, welcoming and just – to combat misogyny and homophobia and those priests who still peddle 'fire and brimstone'. Hindu and Muslim colleagues are perhaps the most likely to understand our faith.

## The heart of what needs reforming

The Catholic Church has become a victim of the distinction between the ordained and the non-ordained. This is damaging to all concerned.

- Top of this list is the failure to put survivors of clerical abuse before the 'good of the church.' As Cardinal Marx recently acknowledged this has been a crime. And it has been going on since the 4th Century.
- Why are we ignoring so many liturgical gifts of lay people?
  - We would love to see training for people who feel they have a talent to deliver a homily.
  - We would love to see women and lay men reading the Gospel occasionally in all parishes. What is the Church afraid of?
  - We would love to see women and married men ordained.
- We need a safe, welcoming Church. Jesus never excluded anyone.
  - It's wrong that divorced people who have re-married are excluded officially from the Eucharist. Find a form of reconciliation so that they can repent of what's gone wrong in the previous marriage.
  - And it's a great sadness that single-sex couples are not welcomed unreservedly in all parishes.
  - It is not up to the Church to judge who may not receive Jesus via the Eucharist
- Clearly a large-scale reform of canon law is long-overdue.

## The effect of the pandemic

The pandemic has initiated wide-scale live-streaming of Mass and it has allowed Catholics to share their faith and their frustrations internationally. They are no longer content to put up with the parish they've been allocated.

We would like live-streaming of Mass to continue so that if your parish is not sympathetic, you can search elsewhere for a community that will welcome you. Many of us are happy in these less than ideal circumstances to take Communion in our own home, celebrating the Eucharist with simple bread and wine/water as the priest does. There is no reason under the sun to imagine that the Holy Spirit can't travel through Zoom.

Our duty to developing countries

The best way to help those who suffer in developing countries is for the Catholic Church to model equality and justice. Women are usually at the heart of the family and if the Church gave them equality it would benefit poor families in developing countries hugely. It would also allow us to get rid of the arcane teachings on birth control etc and follow the advice of Vatican 2.

---

## **Elderly community**

WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

There were several comments views on charity, ministry of the foodbank work of borderlands among refugees and asylum seekers but also people missed coffee mornings elders gathering together, hunger lunch during LENT.

Also people like the fabric of the church building what they grew up with gave them a sense of church.

Persons commented that the church need more deacons in order to facilitate house prayer meeting and other groups and not solely depending on the Parish Priest.

At mass does not always understand what is said need some to explain more ??

WHAT FOUND DIFFICULT

Hierarchy of the church always for more money a lot wasting on thousand dollar dinners not relief of poverty and education.

WHAT CHANGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE

Something done about shortages of priest also would like to see married and female priest as do not think God made the rules not to have them.

---

## **Caribbean community**

WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

There were several comments views on charity, ministry of the foodbank work of borderlands among refugees and asylum seekers but also people missed coffee mornings elders gathering together, hunger lunch during LENT.

Also people like the fabric of the church building what they grew up with gave them a sense of church.

Persons commented that the church need more deacons in order to facilitate house prayer meeting and other groups and not solely depending on the Parish Priest.

At mass does not always understand what is said need some to explain more?

WHAT FOUND DIFFICULT

Hierarchy of the church always for more money a lot wasting on thousand dollar dinners not relief of poverty and education.

#### WHAT CHANGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE

Something done about shortages of priest also would like to see married and female priest as do not think God made the rules not to have them.

---

## Zimbabwean community

Person 1

Valued

- 1) Spirit of service to the poor - through meals, groceries etc which encourages all parishioners to practice the virtue of charity.
- 2) Sense of community - Baptism, Holy Communion celebrations, New year's eve celebrations as a parish
- 3) Encouragement of children and youth to participate in liturgy, Mass savers, Sunday school for the little ones.
- 4) Spirit of diversity and inclusion - Welcoming atmosphere for foreign nationals

Challenges

- 1) Parishioners reluctance to participate or take active roles in decisions relating to the future of the parish

Changes I would like to see

- 1) Availability of resources / information regarding the various vocations ( single life, married life,, religious life or priesthood) in the Catholic Church and their importance and the necessary guidance to the youth/young adults to discern their right path to follow.
  - 2) Guidance on the formation of smaller Christian communities/groups and their importance.
  - 3) Support to younger families on how to raise their families in Christ
- .....

Person 2

Valued

- 1) St Nicks is very inclusive but most importantly the charity work and feeding of homeless people.
- 2) I love St Nicks Parish, the images in there are neutral, they don't portray "Whiteness" Africans all world wear garments with a white Jesus and Mary and yet I have never seen a white person wearing those garments. Change is required . Thank you for bringing it up.

Challenges

Haven't experienced challenges

Changes I would like to see

- 1) Universally I would like to see changes in Inculturation. As a church we have been allowed to celebrate Mass in our native languages. However, we need to be able to identify with Christ, Mary and all the figures we believe in as Catholics. No-one has actual pictures Jesus, Mary, Joseph etc, so why are there always portrayed as White skinned,

blued eyed and rosy cheeks? How and why do weas Africans especially in rural areas, we design our fabrics (Mazambia) and then search high and low to find a suitable "white" picture to potray Jesus or Mary. I personally feel that the fabrics should have African Figures on them. I have seen priests' garments with white skinned (Jesus). This should change to cover all races. I don't think Jesus will be offended to be portrayed as Indian or African. I hope am making sense.

2)I would like to change the time slot for Mass on the 3rd Saturday of the month to end at midday. This would enable the Zimbabwean Community enough time to prepare for Mass without interrupting ( English Mass) which currently ends at 13:00 hrs and the Zimbabwean Mass starting at 13:30hrs.

.....

Person 3

Valued

1) While the Catholic church is surely universal liturgically, sacraments, priesthood in works of charity, etc but I think there is a vast difference in detail among countries, regions of the world and even sometimes among dioceses even within the same country. I appreciate these differences as they bring out individuality as well as diversity.

Changes I would like to see

- 1) To see the ordination of women priests
  - 2) To see the Catholic church being a full member of the World Council of Churches
  - 3) The Catholic church allowing priests to marry like the Anglicans 4) The Catholic church allowing eligible people from other churches to receive the Holy Communion in the full spirit of Ecumenism
  - 5) The Catholic church to promote exorcism ... in Africa, the Church loses members to Pentecostal and Apostolic sects where people go and seek spiritual healing in such sects.
- .....

Person 4

Valued

- 1) My parish (St Nicks) is very welcoming and the parish priest takes it upon to know the congregates
- 2) The parish is very inclusive of all people from different backgrounds
- 3) Parishioners are given opportunity to air their views during open parish discussions.

Challenges

- 1) Sunday mass not starting on time
- .....

Person 5

Valued

- 1) St Nicks is a model parish which other parishes can emulate

---

## Open Group

### WHAT IS VALUED:

Universality, breadth and depth of spirituality and theology, centrality of the Eucharist, Social Justice is a given, not an 'add-on'; the Church has wider purpose, bigger than itself; community.

Meaningful liturgies and rituals; the love and the fact that it is spirit-led. Strength comes from community and Eucharist which enable us to go out into the world. Also the physicality of Catholic worship can speak beyond words.

Pope Francis leadership and 'Laudato si' - signs of changes already happening in the Church.

As a convert I ask have I joined St Nicks or the Universal Church? A recognition that what we celebrate and do at St Nicks is not representative of most of the Church/diocese.

### WHAT ARE DIFFICULTIES:

Hierarchical structure - how can lay and ordained ministries co-exist and work together - often does not.

Worry that the whole debate about Women in the Church and ordination - that ordained women could become another form of clericalism. If women and/or married men ordained - not a panacea for all ills, but will their own issues. Are we being realistic about the issues to be dealt with?

Worry and concern - mental health issues among clergy (not just Catholic clergy).

Fear that the Church will be led in the near future by JP II trained priests. It is critical who the next Pope is in order to secure the reform the Church

### WHAT NEEDS CHANGING:

The need to move from 'doing for' to 'doing with' - the need for all of us to learn together, work together, decide together , listening to everyone.

Social mobility, work patterns, family patterns, transport etc very different from the past - so the parish is very different. Do we need to re-envisage the Church? What is the purpose of the parish in today's changing world. How do we encourage on-going faith development in this world.

In the history of the Church lay-led movements were more flexible and adapted and adaptable to people's time-constrained (eg ordained ministry for life - lay ministry for a period).

Stop looking at tensions in the Church as something negative - can be healthy and creative.

Are our personnel suitable - well-trained enough for the task they are asked to do and how are they monitored?

Need to use the gifts of the whole community. Listen to the voice of younger members.

Need for the Church to both apologise more fully for abuse and also to change structures that enable abuse to happen - changing of attitudes.

Need to understand that prayer and action, contemplation and action belong together - and we all need to grow in both areas.

Role of Bishops: is there a minimum standard of what should be expected of priests and people.

Need to develop more working with other Christian traditions - are we arrogant? not open to learning from others - think we have got it all.

Need to nurture more inter-faith dialogue.



---

## Deaf community

What do you value about the church?

- It is welcoming and kind.
- The priest is very caring and values my involvement
- My faith grows every time I go to church and understand what is going on
- My faith keeps me strong and lifts me up when I am low
- We can be together in the same space and understand each other
- It is still here. I was at this church as a child and it is still celebrated in sign language
- Deaf people are important and we are valued
- It's good to see people and have tea and chat afterwards

What do you find difficult about the church?

- Communication with everyone is an issue
- My english is not great but their sign language is not great either
- It's sad for me when communication is lacking on both sides
- I can often be confused and isolated
- Mass is limited to once a month for us
- It would be good if there were a group of signers just in case one could not make it
- There should be more priests who can sign the mass
- There should be more integration with mainstream mass and activities
- Screens with words ie subtitles or captions would help Deaf people in mass
- There could be prayer meetings for deaf people
- The church should reach out to deaf people from all over the diocese

What would you like to change about the church and why?

- I'd like to see more young deaf people at mass
- I'd like to see deaf people sign the gospel and be more involved if they were confident enough
- I'd love to see deaf priests using sign language?
- Where are the catholic deaf children and their parents and families? They could come to our special mass

---

## Women's Group

### 1. What do you like about Church (wider concept and parish)

What I like is that everyone is different, all kinds of races, and we all get on. The mix of people who do the Word and Communion and the variety of the place. Everyone speaks and says hello and the rush at the start which is welcoming. When we say Our Father in our own languages, it is so interesting to hear the other voices. LGBT is a lovely thing to do as it shows inclusion. The hope would be that it will spread across to other parishes-could influence young priests. Do people have the confidence to then move forward.

The welcoming, everyone is given an opportunity to speak-people who are outside of our parish is welcome-they join us and have the opportunity to pray with us. The singing in lots of different languages-links to the idea of universal church and the worship is in a language that is for them. We want to engage in partnership with our other local churches. The sharing of the Ash Wednesday. Baptism time is so welcoming to all, regardless of whether they are regulars. Shows that God is love. There is no time when you are denied support or a time when people are not there for you. It is the idea of family, and this has been a great support for us-this is beautiful, especially when you have come from another country. Community that recognises everyone-housebound, deaf and those who don't have a place to go.

Coming since 8 years of age and then stopped during raising of children. Came back -it was the concept of family that drew me back-Irish, Italian's and Caribbean, English-the other church helped me learn more about the bible and singing. Quoted from the same book, and then drawn in by the homilies. Noticed more people were leaving the church. Love the fellowship of the church-the community has changed a lot and I have come with a lot of people. I was also part of the welcoming committee and was part of introducing the coffee mornings. Everyone is accepted as equal. Fellowship and openness to ideas at the time-all nationalities including LGBT -it represents being the body of Christ. We used to have lovely social meals and parties which was something that really drew us all together-singing and generosity. Different foods and the learning about different nationalities. Didn't realise there were so many South Asian Catholics and their dedication to Christianity. The scripture groups are great.

Variety of community here is what drew me to come to St Nick's -as a cradle Catholic it is difficult to acknowledge my Catholic as it is problem to compromise my values. At St Nick's there is a bit of hope that there is a way that I can hold onto my faith. Ethos of being open to critical challenge to improve ourselves-encouraging that we are having these conversations and engage with each other as equals. It would be nice if we could have one Mass, rather than a different kind of Mass-perhaps this could be a model. It is a starting point- nationally, there is no pro-active position and the priest's that are open to change.

The space is beautiful (beautiful sculptures and objects, nice layout, lovely light building). The mix of people-it think it is rare to have a place in which people from so many different backgrounds, ages etc are all being together in a meaningful way. I also love the music.

St Nick's is very helpful and kind to everyone. Very friendly and the church has always been there to offer advice and help to anyone who needs it.

I like the way that the parish supports causes such as the foodbank and refugees. I also like the heartfelt and joyful worship in music and singing from different cultures. So happy that I decided to return as this is home. The friendly community aspect, although this seems to have decreased a lot from my perspective because of the pandemic which makes me sad. It is harder now to connect with people than it was 2 years ago.

The welcoming of everyone regardless of religion or colour. All are welcomed at the beginning of mass and new people are spoken to-this does not happen in lots of places which is sad.

### 2. What do you dislike or wish to change about Church (wider and parish)

Some parents cannot control their children-some things were taken from the stalls, toilet blocked and problems with bubble-gum on the chairs. People who don't take care of the parish. A few people do so many of the jobs-no new people are coming forward to take up the next stage. Volunteering is difficult because we ...would like to come to the scripture groups but the time is difficult with working. Sometimes when going to other churches in the Parish, the Mass is short and still gets the same message. Not had a great experience of women priests-Church of England.

Lack of responsibility from the parents-there are certain tasks in the church that goes to just a few and it is someone else's responsibility. Lots of voluntary jobs and you find the same people doing them. It would be great for the younger people to take part in those tasks. Worries about Fr. Richard running around and taking a burden of care. For people who are coming in from other countries, they get the welcoming but do not give back to the life of the church. Do not seem to control the children because they want to get a lot from the Mass. Also bringing in food with their children and the tidying up is the parents responsibility. Not having a voice, making any decisions as a women-one of the issues is within our Catholic schools...it is a problem of bullying and if the parents are governor's or known to the school, then nothing is done. Schools tend to be closed to supporting anyone who is not in a cliché. For this to be happening in the Catholic schools, it is not acceptable because we think our children will be protected. As women, we tend to not believe in ourselves. When we have expectations and people let you down. You expect them to be better-as a refugee you need the support. In the African community, when you try, and challenge-it is blamed on cultural things but that is not true.

Sometimes the lack of patience for the children, you then get to see them grow up-it does become a problem with the distractions. The role of the shepherd is to educate and guide the sheep-sometimes it should be dressed appropriately in the house of God. In Taize you have to have your shoulders covered up-young parents need guidance and discipline in how you behave -even non-Christians should be given a clear way of behaving. You knew what the boundaries are, and we now live in the age where you need that guidance-we are lost, and we need that have a code of conduct. It is too long for the children and too long for the adults. How can the parents focus when the children are moving around? Some of the homilies ought to be about the people, not necessarily so political. More people should be engaged in the delivering of the homily-especially not just one or two (especially women). If we are to really part of Priest, Prophet and King. The masses are too long and during the COVID period, it is more difficult. When speaking to a lot of people who are leaving, it is because it is too long-it is different in Africa. People have jobs and this does cause a problem. Love the choir when it works properly. Lots of difficulties-if you are considered to be okay, you do not the help that you need. There could be a team of people, who could work on topics, issues and not just one person or two people who are carrying all the load. Future proofing is about encouraging or mentoring the young people. Could perhaps have a once a fortnight or once a month group that would help with bible studies and encourage others. We need to bring our faith back to what Christ -we are embarrassed to talk about our faith. We send our children to Catholic schools so they should do the job. Abuse in the church has been male dominated and this is the same thing happening in schools. We should have a very strong code of practice in a Catholic school, even if I am not a Catholic. Confession is then given to a man. Women can also do some damage but we do want to keep these things quiet so we keep the same behaviour practice, we will be suppressed or punished. The system is wrong, it is up to us as lay people-there is good and bad in all and that is why Christ held up the power of women. We have to see ourselves as equal as men-we need to not feel indoctrinated. Can we be brave and have a voice?

Find Church challenging because of the male domination-what Jesus wanted to give me is presented to me because of the Catholic inheritance is so male dominated. I experience that every time I come into Mass, but I still think it is a big thing. Other women, find it scary or inappropriate that I would have these conversations. There has been a pushback from other women. It is very disheartening to experience this. It is also a challenge to be part of a worldwide church that we have active harm that is done to LGBT community, especially by other Bishops. If I am the Church, then I have a responsibility to speak but as a woman, I am excluded from having this voice. Women are not in positions of authority -we are not operating safe systems in our church. Own experience of Catholic education led to me not wanting to send children to Catholic schools. Reports of the Church abuse-we need to be more supportive about the issues of abuse and how we support them. We are very keen to sweep under the carpet when it is happening in our own community and what control are we taking in changing this...are we saying this is up to the bishops? They have been educated and trained the same way.

There is nothing I dislike. The post covid changes have been hard on me as a parent (no room to breastfeed, not many children around) but I appreciate why they must be there.

The length of the ordinary Sunday mass is too long. It can be nice to have something a bit longer for special occasions, but if it is a Sunday, I find my attention drifting. I also worry that this puts off newcomers. I think that mass can be just as beautiful and spiritually meaningful when shorter, perhaps even more so.

Mass starts late and homily is very long regardless of baptisms etc. Could make better use of lay preachers as a rule, not just when the priest is away. When people do not attend church, they do not hear from anyone-it feels like being abandoned.

3.

Youth education group would be great-we don't build the interest of the young people. COVID shut a lot down but for our young people, don't always go through our Catholic schools so we need to make sure we have a lot to do as an organisation. What are the values we are trying to share with the young people? Young people have their individuality taken away from them, so it is our role to then build this up again. Need to teach our children to listen-so why don't they listen in Church. We need to come back-what do we do with the older children? Could we build greater links with secondary and sixth forms to help support the building of this group. Skills development. Could we start the Youth Faith in Action group for leadership?

More information about the Parish Council -how does it operate and how do we get feedback from this group. What is the balance between the role of the Priest? How does it help move ideas forward? How do they gather the voice of the groups in St Nick's?

Flowers were not done so we need back up from others. Perhaps a lot more training for people to build confidence.

More active women group but with a purpose so that women are being encouraged to be more active within the structure of the Church. Builds their confidence and mentored to do the roles. More women involved in the meetings and homilies. It needs to come from a diverse group, women with children, body of Christ. Setting something up which is presented on an equal term with the hierarchy of men on an equal. We do not have the access to the church in the same way as men. Was part of a women's group and through the discussions, I learned a lot about the way that women are barred, but we have to start the conversation somewhere. Through this grass roots that women can start to really make a difference-within that we can empower the women to go to the different levels of meetings. There may be other groups of women that we can carry with us to feel confident and to not feel we are not equal. It would be nice to hear from Church of England female priests and their experiences-what are their experiences of speaking from Christ. Perhaps also speak to women from other Church structures to speak to us as a group. Home groups where people would do bible studies. We have to be uncomfortable. How many women were Apostle's? We do not get told about the women and this should be part of the narrative. As women get older, women have wonderful gifts to offer to support such as pastoral care and guidance. Once their families are raised, they do have a lot to offer. What are the teachings of Christ? Whose values are we living.

Would like us to be saying that we want women to go to the next level of the hierarchy. We need women Deacon's, Priests as part of other groups where we can be given an equal voice. Those people who take a different view, it would be great to have this conversation, even with those who do not agree with you. When do we have the time to have these options? Appointments to have the difficult conversations with each other, safely. There is a respect the women will disagree that there are an essential role of women and what God intends for them. Saying that it won't be in our lifetime is an unhelpful thing to say. It is incredibly important to have a female delivering the homily for the women in the group.

We have to make this happen-in South Africa women were leading and we need to step up. We could start from coffee mornings and encouraging each other so that women could take part.

The preparations for Baptism do not seem to get the message across about the way to be appropriate dress. It can be embarrassing for the parishioner's so there needs to be rules.

It would be good if people could come on time as this is important to the whole congregation, not just for the individual.

I would like to see the connections with community increase, maybe through a regular social event or another type of faith sharing group that is outside of the mass (appreciate that there is Journey of Faith, but that is for new people joining). A consistent attitude to time would be appreciated. I am not sure what has happened, but in the past, I have not liked all the issues and debate about what time mass starts. I am fine with it starting at 10am or 10.05 but when it starts to drift later than planned, I start to arrive later as there seems no point. What I don't like is when someone suddenly says, "now everyone we have to be on time" and everyone who arrives at 10.02am is made to feel guilty at the door and is told off for not arriving on time, even though the previous mass started at 10.15am. I don't appreciate

the lack of consistency. Just pick one way and stick to it-either be chilled and stop telling people off or let's start at 10am regardless -bouncing between mindsets every two months is not helpful.

---

## Live Streamers

Contributor 1

My feeling is that the Synod gives an opportunity to have a better balance between the ideal of unity and to allow the Church to be more diverse instead of being so European centric.

Connectedness. Although I feel myself sometimes as an outcast because of my life journey, I always sought to be near my roots and faith community. This gives me a sense of belonging and how to see my life as framed by a grand narrative that includes others. And I think that it is a very important message that "people of God" can offer to the world. We don't live without connections. Once a beggar in London said to me at the Parliament square, full with people, "I am invisible". For many people, they live as if their lives were in a self with a label describing the price, amount of money in their pockets or as a unit of production. When I arrived in London, I myself felt loneliness several times, and used to go to the mass at Westminster Cathedral instead of a local church, because I was surrounded by many people. And this is a necessity, gap, and opportunity to evangelise. After the solemn mass, I used to follow people to have a coffee, tea, talk, and laugh. Charity is also to offer a big hug. I was deeply moved when the Pope said "the Church should be a hospital of campaign". As someone I saw once at Trafalgar square with a plaque saying "I offer a hug and a smile free of charge". I went to receive my hug! Or as two strangers who were looking at each other with suspicion, and in a couple of minutes they start to smile at each other and one of them said "Hi!". And now, with this pandemic, this is urgently needed. Spaces and moments just to meet others.

Once I went to an Anglican service and I saw when people were receiving the communion. I don't know if this was the same as in the Catholic Church, but I had a strong desire and asked an old black lady who was organising the queue what were the criteria, and she asked me "do you believe in Jesus as your saviour?" I joined the queue immediately! And cried of happiness. Pope Francis said that he never refused to give the communion to anyone because it was like a medication to the sick, not like a medal to the winner. Once I said to a priest that I would not confess because I know he would not pardon me, and he said "come, open your heart, I will listen to you, I will pray for you". Once I met a sister (nun) that said that she listened to the homily of a priest that made her so sad and irritated that she preferred to kneel and pray alone instead of following the rites. Connectedness does not match with exclusion. And the Church excludes massively. Small gestures of exclusions cause a big impact. Like a child that is treated differently in a family because was an orphan and adopted. "I will not leave you orphans", He promised. The Church treats many of us as "inferior orphans". I know that this is a polemic issue, but I think that local churches and communities should be allowed more freely to decide by themselves whether or not to relax some of the rules taking into consideration the feelings of the communities. The rules are not part of the faith. Tradition means roots in a journey. The Church discriminates so much based on their own rules established when the faithful lived in different historical and cultural contexts, and the rules are taken as the roots and ultimately become prisons. There is a huge gap between the "holy" clerics and the ordinary people that does not allow connectedness.

Once here in the UK I listened a priest saying that we should not abandon the Church (it was in relation with the sexual scandals). I asked a person that I knew in that church, "but was not the Church that abandoned us to be prey of sick individuals?" Accountability. Someone cannot approach another person without being aware whether or not this connection can cause any damage, and do everything possible to mitigate this risk. The Church should say as Pope Francis said about himself, and we repeat in our "ato de penitencia", "I am a sinner". This environment of impunity should end at once.

---

Contributor 2

#### What I like about the Catholic Church

The togetherness, that we are one United by our faith and are able to worship our God together where ever we are. The same liturgy but different by culture and our abilities in understanding the true word and teaching of Jesus. We must be aware of wolfs dressed in sheep's clothing. To many priests give a homily short and sweets reflection on the readings maybe but nothing to take away with us, no motivation or encouragement or some fine words to think and ponder on. Where am I in this, what can I do, what should I do??

#### What I don't like about the Catholic Church.

The church is made up of a male dominant group who think and believe that this the way Jesus wanted or wished his church to be built when he told St Peter built my church. Jesus didn't take Peter aside and stipulated it was to be an all maledominant leadership hierarchy. Just because at that moment in time and history women where not highly thought of it I am sure Jesus wish and intention to involve both men and women in building his church and having a shared ministry of men and women. Who stayed when the going got tuff, who wherethe first to know of Jesus's resurrection, who ministered to them on their travel's. Woman, who make up over half of the parishioners through the world. A mission priest told the listening congregation you are the church not me the Pope or Bishops. No you the people in the pews you keep us employed as it where. Without you we are nothing.

The rigidity of the leadership at local levels the priests have to much power imposed on them when those who have been running the different committees are being informed by cannon law that their roles is just advisory with the priest having the final say on parish finance's ect. Priest need more awareness of day to day living and be advised by their parish community who are the fund raisers and donators.

Priests should adapt and accept change to what they thought was or is their role in the local community and not be a dominant cleric who refuses to listen to the parish needs and wants. The priest should involve him or herself into the life of his parishioners gaining an insight into its strengths and maybe any weaknesses.

The rigid rules on who can and cannot receive communion at mass or other times. Often at weddings and funeral the priest will make a point of stating unless you are a catholic you can't receive communion but you can receive a blessing. Jesus said feed my sheep, what right has the church to deny or stop people receiving communion if they firmly believe that they are receiving the body of Christ. Many would be grateful for the opportunity to receive communion especially at a funeral mass. But no they can't we go up giving those who can't the thought that we are better than you feeling but in reality where not. The divorced men and women who remarry without an annulment are treated unfairly by the church especially if they aren't the guilty party and the other person will not go through the annulment process. And a lady was told pretend your marriage never happened. The reply to the priest I have two teenagers from the relationship I can't pretend they don't exist. The same with same sex relationships if they are in a long term relationship and committed then the the church should off a blessing on their unity. It not a marriage service just a blessing for a long and lasting relationship. Priests should be given the opportunity to marry if they so desire and woman allowed ordination many are called but are denied by the all male dominant priesthood.

#### What needs to be reformed or changed

The reforms of Vatican 2 should be implemented as soon as possible,we know the church moves slowly but the reforms have been hindered and delayed by Pope John Paul 2 and Pope Benedict who would prefer a revival of the Latin rite if the truth be known. The clergy should celebrate the Sunday mass as an inclusive service not an event to show off his singing talents and skills it's not a show. Allowing more participants to minister in the liturgy and not an I am dominant role as per the Roman Missal.

We are all anointed with the sacred oils at our baptisms and confirmations, priests by this alone called to spread the good news proclaim the Gospel minister to one another.

We mustn't lock God up in our churches we must hold our heads high and accept the past that wasn't of our making or doing and not be ashamed or embarrassed of our affiliation to the Catholic Church, to talk openly and honestly about our beliefs or unbeliefs we all have doubts.

As Catholics we tend to shy away from any denomination membership because of all the cruelty and abuse that has been exposed nationally and world wide over the last two hundred years. All done in the name of religion, God and the good name of the church hiding our wrongs denying it ever happened. But the compensation claims laid against the church because of the male dominant leadership afraid to take action and by doing so prolonged the abuse being committed by clergy and religious organisations around the world. Action needs to be taken and a dismantling of the male dominant leadership which has shown to be unfit for purpose.

-----

Contributor 3

What is good is firstly that the Holy Spirit is still present in the Church, despite our inconsistencies and mistakes. I wholeheartedly feel that Pope Francis is leading the Church of the Roman patriarchate the right way, although there are still many accretions and entanglements to clear out, not least the habit of legalistic thinking about sacramental theology.

The impulse to update by deepening and to simplify accretions to a common authentic basis is good. For example, Taizé's way of practice. I think we should be bolder in pushing ahead to reunify with the Greeks. For example, allow for all parish churches to be Simultaneums, and invite Greek Orthodox faithful to use Catholic churches, with parallel liturgies if they wish. Recommend to Catholic faithful to go and participate as much as allowed in Orthodox liturgies. Begin reintegrating the lectionaries and incorporating more of early Greek patristic theology.

What is missing?

It pains me that almost all Catholic churches are kept closed and locked almost all of the time. The usual excuses for this are that there are stealable valuables in them, or people might commit sacrilege against the Blessed Sacrament, but really it shows a lack of appreciation for personal spirituality and of sacramental theology, because the Spirit speaks and works in each person's heart, and it is *essential and vital* for churches to be kept open as much as possible.

If there is too much gold tinsel in churches to keep them open for their essential purpose, get rid of the gold tinsel, sell it and give the money to the poor or to efforts to assist the poor. God's glory is not so much reflected in gold tinsel as in the shimmering light on the willow leaves. If there is a risk of sacrilege, use modern technology more intelligently to protect the churches' sanctity. If there is a lack of volunteers from the parish community to watch and take care of the church while it's open - this is a circular problem - because the churches are kept closed and locked almost all the time, except for communal liturgies, the Church becomes too much like an old people's club, so younger people who have genuine personal spirituality don't feel included, and hence you lack enough volunteers to keep the church open, and so the negative spiral continues. Start by daring to trust more and keep the churches open. (And maybe use electronic individual keys with automatic video monitoring of who is entering and leaving at what times.)

As I see it, the causes for maintaining the remnants of the schism between Roman and Eastern Byzantine churches are pride and the idolatry of treating institutional structures as sacred. Wherever there's a difference between Western and Eastern practice, if there's no really good reason for maintaining something more authentic or progressively according to the Spirit in Western or Roman practice, let us follow the Presupposition in the Spiritual Exercises and yield to the Orthodox practice, or at least integrate and reincorporate and simplify to a common basis. To say it honestly and simply, I think the Greeks are right about the Roman papacy claiming too much 'sacred' authority, especially over the other four original patriarchates, because of politics. Pope Francis has begun reversing that, but it's going to need more than one papacy to change.

I don't believe there is really any good reason for maintaining the Western practice of clerical celibacy for secular parish priests. I think we should go back to the practice of the early Church on this, like the Eastern churches still do, that parish priests normally are married with families, and monastic priests are monks and live in the community which they serve. I don't think we should have *only* monastic episcopacy, there should be a proportionate balance. The most

serious reason for returning to the practice of the early pre-schismatic Church on this is that clerical celibacy supports a traditional misinterpretation of Christian ethics that sexuality is sinful and holiness means asexuality or suppressing or denying personal will, rather than re-ordering it according to God's love. It implies a sort of Manichaeism, against *restoring* the Likeness of God, against the primordial goodness of Creation, as if human natural passions are essentially evil. I honestly think that the traditional misinterpretation and emphasis on holiness = asexuality and excluding the personal will and natural human sexual inclinations to erotic union are partly responsible for the prevalence of the clerical sexual abuse and institutional cover up crisis.

I support women's ordination and consecration. I find the excuses for not doing it already thoroughly unconvincing. Just as our ancestors' let go of the blood sacrifices and rituals of the Temple, drawn from pagan traditions, when they gradually understood more clearly God's purposes, we should let go of our idolatrous grasp of patriarchy and paternalism. Early Hebrew religious practises took forms of liturgy from pagan assumptions and norms, but later relinquished those, in accordance with prophetic ministry that God desires justice and mercy, not the blood of pigeons and bulls or grandiose noisy ceremonies. I would refer you to the Women's Ordination Conference's educational content on this issue. Let go of ancient mistakes. Who kept the faith completely during Jesus' Passion? The women. Not Peter and not Saul. Against whom did the Gates of Hell not prevail during the incredibly corrupt papacies of the Middle Ages, I would look among poor grannies, who have always been the heart of the Church.

Sexual ethics and catechism about life, love and sexual ethics are a major problem for the Church. Conserving the traditionalist status quo or conserving old hierarchies and binaries is not being faithful to the gospel. Neither would blindly thoughtlessly going along with the prevailing consumerist ideology applying to self-concept and ideas of relationship development. But neither did the conventional morals of previous generations and the cultural forms which emerged from political-economic relationship dynamics then really come from the gospel. And neither would a committee-edited compromise be satisfying or resolve the sincere disagreement. We really need a profound conversion of heart to see how to preserve what is true in Christian tradition and let go of what is merely traditional. Yes the Holy Spirit has been continuously at work in the Church, so we should listen to that tradition, but the Spirit is still at work in us, and we should follow the Spirit, not just hang onto our own past (Galatians 5:25). Maraget Farley's book *Just Love* is a much better starting point than the official catechism.

It is really essential for inviting young people who have a genuine Christian spirituality but feel alienated by the Church becoming, at least in some areas, like an exclusive old people's club, celebrating their nostalgia about their generation's cultural identity, to search for an authentic ethos of love. It's not really convincing that the current norms have always been consistently so or are authentic. The Church has accepted many different marital arrangements over millennia which honestly had nothing to do with Christian ethics, which treated women as men's property not equally as persons, and did not consist of understanding and consent to the true meaning of the sacrament. Changing circumstances rightly change ethical considerations. Preventative contraception really changes the ethical risks and benefits of pre-marital sexual activity - sex is a kind of communication, one of the most intimate ways of communicating our personalities, so people do it to find out whether they are a good match for a longer relationship. Longer lifespans change the ethical balance between faithfulness to loving commitments promised vs. chronic stress of living in relationships which have become unbearably unhealthy. Conserving societal hierarchies and binaries and calling it "morals" is no longer considered ethical (cf. James 2:1-12). We always should have been listening to the people in a less powerful position more.

I fully support the New Ways Ministry [statement](#). There are some Catholic clergy and lay (political) leaders who use incitement of discrimination or acts of hatred against LGBTI to advertise their identification with Catholicism, and just use their 'religion' as a 'sacred' (uncriticisable) stick just to harass and abuse other people with. Usually such people call themselves conservatives or traditionalists, but they only know the tradition superficially and only conserve accretions from the last few hundred years. It makes it more difficult for educated, caring and conscientious people to even be open-minded to Christianity or genuine Christians.

I also wish more pastors had more basic education about neuropsychiatric issues which can get involved in people's lives psychologically and spiritually, beyond just sympathy. I have bipolar, my mum and grandmother also had it. It's 80-90% genetic, primarily a neurological disease, secondarily with psychological symptoms. I only ever had relatively moderate symptoms, but it was a factor in me dropping out of postgrad uni before, and I wasted a lot of life not applying my talents purposefully and happily. We have thankfully moved on from the stage when people with psychotic illnesses were chained up in caves (Mark 5:1-20), but there's still a way to go. A good source to get the basic



necessary information from is Prof. Kay Jamison, who both suffered from bipolar disease herself and is a professor of psychiatry and researcher on it. As she says, it's crucial that people who have been successfully treated and recovered say so, so that everyone gains confidence that it is treatable, and the discrimination continues decreasing. For example, I emailed a priest asking to go for confession, and mentioned that I have bipolar type 2, so it was partly unclear to me then how much that had influenced me when I did some of the things I did, and I was looking for support to reflect and clarify that myself. I got a dismissal along the lines that I probably wasn't capable of being morally responsible *for anything*, which means he doesn't know what bipolar "type 2" means and assumed I'd been psychotic. Probably he meant to be sympathetic, but what it came across as was just dismissive and alienating.

It's difficult to know how to round this up because I long for a Church which is more fully genuine, and I can see the Church is growing that way, slowly, but I still feel on the periphery. I regret that my spiritual life is so separate and individual, but it's hard to find a community which is really practically a community, not just liturgically, or a church which is actually open.

---

Live stream contributor 4

(These are essential points written as she talked to me MU)

What I like:

- Despite problems the Church has throughout my life been a comfort and a solace.
- The parish shows the good the Church can be because of the effort to be inclusive, to support the LGBT community, to try to increase the profile of women, to support people seen as unacceptable.

What I dislike:

- The appalling treatment of LGBT people especially gay men. The alienation of the "other" who do not fit in. The way those who don't fit are driven away from the Church.
- The effects of compulsory celibacy – the distance and lack of understanding of many clergy.
- Clergy abuse and its cover up.
- The immovable solidity of the institution.

What I would like to change:

- I would like to see ministry open to women and celibacy to be optional.
  - I want action on abuse complaints.
  - I would like to see intercommunion as the norm. LGBT people have to be a normal, ordinary, accepted part of the church.
  - I want to feel the Church is trying to act on the words of Christ, as I feel the parish is trying to do the best it can within its limits.
- 

Contributor 5

Whenever I join online mass with St Nick I am so glad this avenue still exists also that you continue to acknowledge the presence of us online users/attendees during the mass. This helps me to feel part of the congregation regardless of the mixed blessing of live streaming. Though my anxiety levels are heightened especially around people I do aim to get to mass, to be in a congregation.

Curious if there are any groups within the church that offer an opportunity for childless single persons and or childless married couples (who are no longer pursuing any child avenues) to share/support each during the disenfranchised grief also the silence challenges experienced around faith and in being able to attend services.

Alas, I am not healed enough to be able to manage attending Mothering Sunday, Father's day service also Christmas services without great internal pain as it's the ongoing work which I ask our Lord for help with. For me, it seems there is a lack of considered inclusivity also an unintentional insensitivity toward childlessness in general also I don't recognise a space or activities for me/others to share (mum/parents/families activities seem to be the standard) or much representation that isn't possibly stereotypical. I belong to Gateway for Women for Childless Not by Choice which supports and gives a space to start to come to terms with what this really means to live in this world of ours but never fitting in with the social norms. Many within Gateway global community who have faith or trying to reengage in their faith experience being the least consulted or seen or embraced or understood or having appropriate activities within the church/faith. The Childless Not By Choice/Childlessness seems potentially one of the last taboos to be bravely explored within churches, within society itself. Apologies for being inflammatory as I could be wrong about many aspects of this topic as it's not easy to explain what I mean as I am not anti kids/families/parents.

.....

Contributor 6

- The Church needs married priests: St Peter certainly and other apostles probably were married. If it was good enough for Jesus, why not for us. Moreover, the acceptance of married Anglican priests into the priestly ministry is hypocritical if others called to that double ministry can't exercise it.
- The Church needs women priests: if one half of the population can carry out a ministry, why not the other half. It is only prejudice against women that stops their ordination, there are no valid reasons against it.
- The Church needs to fully accept LGBT people into all aspects of Church life: I have had to work through my own prejudices about this, but I concluded that if they are born that way, that is how God made them so why would he not love and accept them as they are? And why would the Church not do that if God does?The Church needs married priests: St Peter certainly and other apostles probably were married. If it was good enough for Jesus, why not for us. Moreover, the acceptance of married Anglican priests into the priestly ministry is hypocritical if others called to that double ministry can't exercise it.
- The Church needs women priests: if one half of the population can carry out a ministry, why not the other half. It is only prejudice against women that stops their ordination, there are no valid reasons against it.
- The Church needs to fully accept LGBT people into all aspects of Church life: I have had to work through my own prejudices about this, but I concluded that if they are born that way, that is how God made them so why would he not love and accept them as they are? And why would the Church not do that if God does?

---

## East Africa

Speaker 1 (All about St N's Parish)

VALUE

Some of the things I value about our church is the platform it gives for social gathering, communities getting together to help those in need. Its ability to not only accept but also accommodate diversity as many parishioners comes from different part of the world and St Nicks has helped us settle down as one as we listen to the word of God and live it.

DIFFICULTIES

What I find difficult about our church is having only one Mass. Sometimes it is hard for due to work shifts for one to attend the early mass but if we had at least two masses on Sunday that could accommodate the working people so that we don't feel left out.

CHANGE

A Change is always good and I would recommend if St Nick's parishioner should only adhere to the punctuality of the mass. This would give the priest ample time to conduct the mass timely and effective and as well allocate time for the next Mass.

---

Speaker 2

Once Father Richard leaves there'll be no more priests because there are little (few) priests here.

Women priests as well as men.

Priests from many countries.

Mass in people's homes.

---

Speaker 3

Group of people to go and see people who are sick and can't make it to Mass

---

Speaker 4

VALUE

The appreciation of the Catholic teachings and the living experiences

Difficulties

About the teachings about some things like contraception and a lot of talk about politics. Churches covering a lot of things such as not helping others as much as they say. Expensive decor that isn't needed. Young people not coming back after communion and confirmation. Decline in Church attendance.

CHANGE

Everyone especially young people to take more responsibility and get more involved.

Catholicism pushes some young people away because of education, social media. Like homosexuality, marriage etc.

Divorce: If you get married again it shouldn't count. They feel as if they're committing a sin. They should be able to marry in Church again even if they are divorced. More priests need to give marriage.

More young people joining the choir - more people in general. One person can't sing for the whole congregation.

---

## Facilitators

FACILITATORS SYNOD MEETING

[1]

**Valued:** The elderly who were the cornerstone of the Church keeping us all together - they are the foundation that enabled me to grow and learn what church is all about. Our diversity really matters - all the nationalities gathered. St Nicks gathering in the wider world.

**Difficulties:** lack of financial equality and sharing in the diocese. Rich parishes can do what they want but poor parishes cannot because they do not have the money. Greater sharing and sustaining of poorer communities is necessary.

[2]

**Valued:** The institutional Church is so different from St Nicks. I value the unity of the church, the sense of history rooted right back to the beginnings. Inculturation is so important, how differently celebrated, learning what is fundamental to the church compensating for the raft of rubbish we have to cope with in the Church.

**Difficulties** Clericalism and clerical power, the power of the clergy is insidious and discreet - if the priest decides he does not like what you are saying you are excluded. Must create a church less dependent on clergy. Also scandal that we have wasted so many excellent priests who have left, not only over celibacy but because of clericalism and a church that does not live the Gospel. Such a huge waste - pastors as crushers of the community not growers of community. Deacons have been clericalised terribly. Fear if the the power remains in the hands of the clergy to allow or prohibit lay involvement. It is the abuse of clerical power. Also position of women who have no rights, no voice, no ministry.

[3]

I have always valued the life of each individual parish I have been part of; but so disconnected from each other and the institutional lumbering and so slow and then not reflective of the parish's opinions and also of modern issues.

Problem with very conservative wing of the Catholic Church which seems so voluble in UK - makes me hide my Catholicism publicly. I cannot live their Catholicism - I want my faith expressed in a loving open affirming way - not condemning and rigid.

[4]

**Valued:** I have two very different experiences of Church -

**In Africa.** The Church is intertwined with the local community. ESP in rural areas, gather in the community where there is nothing else. Also feed not just spiritually but with excellent education and healthcare and poverty relief. Has helped to 'water down' some of the damaging aspects of African culture.

**Difficult** - excessive hierarchy where clergy regarded as gods ('adored') clergy more withdrawn and unapproachable, so much abuse and crimes that they get away with. Fear of priests, rigidity and outdated rules. Huge problem of attitude toLGBTQ+ in Africa. Actively preaching it is evil and in many countries is illegal. No mention of the synod in Cameroon churches

In England-

**Valued** more focus on development of laity, encouraging their ministries. Seeing faith in action - translating it into service. Church leaders are more approachable (whether they take on board what is said is another matter).

**Difficult:** dearth of people wanting to join priesthood ad religious orders. Issue of abuse which is so highlighted here which means it is more difficult to get the Church's message across. That noise is silencing the Gospel.

[5]

**Valued** St Nicks is the closest experience of the Church in Latin America when we were younger. So much opposition to Liberation Theology now in LA; first experience of Church in UK was unwelcoming and closed to other cultures and influence of LT - refreshing that such a warm welcome of LA people in St Nicks. Openness to diverse cultures.

**Difficulties:** difficult to come closer to the human realities of each other - breaking out of small communities. Universal Church - concerned about so many contradictions - oppressors in the place where we should love and care. What really unites us? What are our values what do we really believe?It is about living the Gospel and being coherent as a church. We need to listen to others, listen to the ground rather than the top! We need Local people building the church, gathered into the decision-making processes. In the light of the Reducing number of priests - grow more involvement of lay people in ministry and building community

[6]

Losing the Youth, such a big part of the church yet Church does not echo their values and views - need for greater inclusivity - not welcome, no place in other Catholic Churches. Experience of young people. I feel like a spectator

rather than a part of something outside of St Nicks. Nothing directly for young people, even if they are welcome to 'slot in' (serving, choir, reading etc).

[7]

A sense of judgement from conservative elements against the open, welcoming, affirming Church - I do not feel safe this when outside our St Nick's community. Among non-church friends, it is a conversation killer- mentioning you are a catholic.

[8]

Big problem that so many people do not feel accepted and welcomed in the wider church. Priests wield too much power - act as though the people not really part of the church. Eg divorced. Process of annulment so arduous that it leads to sense of exclusion. All should be welcomed - whether divorced, unwed parents, LBGTQ+ - Catholics but so often they do not feel a part of the church. Some priests seem to adopt politicians (corrupt) model and act that way. Lay led services need to be encouraged.

[9]

Disabled people not to be looked at needing a miracle or with sympathy, but valued as they are. ESP in Africa - disability and sin are associated, which is very damaging to the disabled person.

---

## **Journey of Faith group**

SESSION ONE: What do we value about the Church?

- Black African female experienced the Church as encouraging, even life-saving during Civil War (priest rescued her and her mother and a new born baby in war zone and under gun fire). Valued prayer and worship (the Mass) - Church provided money and encouragement for education enabling her to get degree and come to UK for Masters. Also added that during the Civil War churches were full to overflowing, but after war ended, many no longer went.
- White African female was drawn to the Church because it connected her to a long tradition of faith going back to Christ; was clear in teaching and moral guidance, and valuing prayer and the Mass.
- White male drawn to the Church despite colleagues seeing faith and the Church in very critical light, seeing no value, thinking he was mad to get involved. But he saw a Church that was putting faith into action of caring, relating faith to the real world and its problems.
- White female drawn to the Church by experience of being listened to, a safe space to speak.
- White female having been disillusioned with the Church for a long time, finding her need for a spiritual anchor, need for community and so drawn back. Struck that on her first visit many welcomed her and on return people remembered her name! Also encouraged by Church's stance of Climate Change.
- White female was searching for a place to express her gifts and her calling. Felt this parish was community where she could tell her story and find acceptance and value, having experienced the (Catholic and Anglican) Church elsewhere the opposite.

---

SESSIONS TWO & THREE - What hurts and what needs to change in Church

- Attitudes to the Ordination of Women - 'What is the problem?'
- Need to put more effort and time into work for Ecumenical and inter-faith Unity
- Need to put faith in to action - we must not be just 'Sunday Catholics'

- Church's 'public relations' (communication & witness?) , could be better despite the good job Pope Francis is doing.
- Mary of Nazareth 'set out quickly...': there is an urgency for change and 2000 years history can be a block to such change and sense of urgency. - In a world that changes so quickly, 'The Church needs to speed up'.
- Young people are enthusiastic but but this enthusiasm can be stifled and they become alienated. We know much more about brain development in young people, so our Catechesis needs to understand this and so change the way we each/communicate with young people. 'The Church needs its teaching to be interpreted in a way that young people can understand. Some aspects of Church are utterly incomprehensible ... The challenge is how to provide secure structures ' which enable young people to live through the chaos of their development - a structure that does in imprison them'. 'Conversations about faith can appear to be irrelevant to the world of young people'. Why is 'relativism' so attractive to young people.
- 'What is Truth? Objective realities have been taught in rigid ways that lack 'fluidity' and understanding of personal development' Also 'scientific evidence needs to feed our understanding and teaching of ethics'.
- Law changes in society as society grows and develops in understanding and values (eg Human Rights) - and it requires broad assent as to what is 'reasonable'. Why is it so difficult for the Church to develop in the same way?' The speaker emphasised the Church's need for the people's broad assent.
- How we select and train people for ordained ministry needs to change...more reflective of and attuned to the community which is both male and female!

---

## Latin American Community

Consultation to individual members of our Latin American community on Parish Synod Questions

Methodology and participants

Latin American/Spanish speaking members of our Parishn Community in St Nicks are around 20 families that have arrived in the UK in the last four years. Given the limitations to communicate in the English language, our parish decided to conduct a consultation process for our parish synod in their native language: Spanish.

This document summarises the input of seven members of our community.

We conducted individual conversations and ask them to answer three questions:

- a) What do you value about the church?
- b) What do you find difficult about the church?
- c) What do you want to change about the church and why?

We aim to continue our dialogue next Sunday January 30th in a meeting by Zoom.

What do you value about the church?

- We value being united with other brothers and sisters and feeling each other's company and support; we feel part of the community and feel comfortable, welcome and supported at church, not just us from Latin America but all members from lots of diverse backgrounds and cultures.

- We value how the church supports us in our problems and supports others in need. We receive material, psychological, moral and spiritual support from church and we are aware the church is supporting many others as well.
- We value when parts of mass are translated in our language since we can follow and understand what is happening. We recognise it is our responsibility to learn more English and we value the effort is being done to translate some special readings and messages in Spanish.
- We value the guidance and support our children get in church and the guidance and advice we receive when we are experience some difficulties with them, that they can also be part of the community and participate.
- We value the opportunity to learn more about Jesus and his teaching.
- I value we can receive the bread and wine in the communion as it was done in the times of Jesus.

What do you find difficult about the church?

- We do not find anything difficult at church, everything is fine.
- We have difficulties to fully understand the mass since we do not speak and understand English very well.
- We find it difficult to participate every weekend because we work or are very tired for working hard during the whole week.

What do you want to change about church and why?

- I wish there would be mass in the evenings since some times it is difficult to participate in the morning mass.
- I would like the church to organise more activities during the weekends for us to share with our brothers and sisters. Some activities to raise funding for our church and community.
- I would like the church to organise sessions for our youth so they can receive more support and guidance.
- We all should be less selfish and share more with those in need.
- I would like to receive the homily printed out in Spanish so I can understand what Father Richard is preaching. I would also like to have a translated version of mass being projected in a screen so I can follow and understand all mass, including the songs.
- I would like to have all images being removed from church because in the Old Testament it was ordered by God through Moses that we should not adore images.

---

## LGBT+

1. What do you value about the church?

*Themes:*

*Separating parish from organisation of the Church.*

*A way of knowing Christ; a spiritual home.*

*Appreciating teaching of the Church on peace, social justice.*

For me there is an enormous difference between the Church as the global institution and the church as my parish community and sometimes I feel there are enormous contradictions between the two; I have no doubt that I value **my** church more than I value **the** Church, despite the humanistic, social and spiritual values that I attribute to the Catholic Church impact on my church. What I value about my church is that is

truly universal, nobody is excluded as it works towards building and maintaining a heterogeneous community. It also keeps my hope alive and reminds me of the necessity of both inner and political change.

I value the Church because, despite some deeply negative formative experiences within it - it seems part of my DNA and, whatever I think of its chequered history and continuing deep flaws - it is through the Church that I came to know Christ and within the church that I try to know Christ more deeply. The Church has very significantly formed who I am as a human being, how I understand who I am in relationship to other people and to creation. I value Catholic teaching on social justice and peace and appreciate being challenged to try to live accordingly and join with others trying to do the same. It is within the Church that I was able to develop a conscience which informs my criticism of it.

I value the opportunity to worship the Holy Trinity and succour guidance of the Word.

What I value most about the Church is simple: I consider it my spiritual home. Even though I do not go to church every Sunday, I value and appreciate the richness of Catholic spirituality, devotions to Mary and to the Saints and the Mass is a big gift for me.

Her steadfastness and openness, that she is willing to listen and to abandon false or erroneous teachings

I value the community aspect of the church. I believe this church really tries to live the Gospel message of reaching out to the poor and marginal in our communities.

I value the sense of community and the different communalities within the church. It can be difficult to separate my parish experience from the wider church. The Church provides a consistency between parishes; it feels good to be part of something bigger and reassuring to be listening to the same Gospel no matter where you are.

I value the church because it brings people together, uniting them in prayer, praise, worship and being as one in faith. Revelling through the scriptures the Trinity and salvation. Giving us a firm foundation to build our lives upon.

I value the teachings I received as a young child from the men of the discalced Carmelite order. As a student of history throughout my life I value the continuity of the church despite many attacks and the suffering in penal times. I value the universality of the church and its impressive ability to embrace very many peoples, languages, life styles and ages.

Specifically about St Nick's:

The incredible teachings of Father Richard. Focus on justice and dignity for all.

The welcoming community. All are welcome.

The progressive thinking and open minds of the parish council.

Dedication to the community and the support offered to the community. Real, tangible help.

The different cultures and the energy of the congregation.

The music.

The Church is giving my life meaning; I find great satisfaction in going to Mass and trying, however weakly, to centre my life around God.

## 2. What do you find difficult about the church?

Themes:

Not accepting LGBT relationships as valid.



Failure to respond to crises within it.

Discrimination of women and LGBT+ people, which is at odds with teaching of Christ

No interest in listening to youth

Overly powerful hierarchy

Pomp and tradition valued over social mission

The Christian Church as well as other religions generally do not accept same sex relations and can be very homophobic, to the extreme of life, death, and eternal damnation.

I find it very difficult to feel at ease within the Church, in fact I feel furiously angry, ashamed, and have felt powerless within the Church, because of its deeply imbedded misogynistic structures and ethos - its shameful treatment of LGBT + people and its continuing failure to respond adequately to the crisis of sex and other, abuses against minors and vulnerable adults. I feel desperate for a deep change of culture - where parishioners are not infantilised and patronised and senior figures in leadership still all too often feel unable to speak out on significant issues like LGBT+ and women when they might privately support change. I feel my integrity is compromised when I am part of an institution which I believe causes significant damage to our formation as human beings ( when it issues statements like the last one from the CDF on LGBT+ people - when it excludes women from ministries and from authority within the Church) . I find it desperately sad to see and know clergy - priests and deacons concealing their sexual orientation because they are afraid to be 'out' ; it's not just sad for them, it's desperately sad and damaging for everyone, whatever our sexual orientation or identity that we are not able to have people living freely and openly as the Children of God created as our Creator marvellously made us and freely able to offer each other the particular gifts that arise from our wonderfully unique identities - including our sexuality.

The most difficult thing for me is how women and LGBT people are discriminated in the Church; for me there is an enormous contradiction between this and the teachings of Christ, and I am ashamed of being part of a Church that carries out such blatant discrimination; I had left the Church for this reason before, and I have only rejoined because of the church I found in my vicinity...and ultimately if all people who fight for women and LGBT rights left, we would leave the Church only in the hands of bigots

It is difficult at times to live up to the very high moral standards imposed by the Church.

I find it very burdensome that - since I would like to form a loving, faithful relationship with another man - I would have to refrain from nearly all display of affection to him, in order to remain "Catholic in good standing". Moreover, the Church sometimes seems uninterested in listening to people who are "seekers" and younger Catholics in general, as well as the fact that it diminishes the number of parishes and Churches with regular Masses, especially in certain regions of Europe.

That a sizeable minority seem to hold sway over the church at Parish level and pronounce on false teachings

What I find difficult is the controlling aspect of the hierarchy in the church.

I value being Catholic and the ability to practice my faith as I choose and I feel accepted by my fellow parishioners and by the churches teachings. What I find difficult about the church is that this sense of acceptance does not appear to be widely extended to anyone who isn't leading a stereotypically 'standard' life i.e. those who are anything other than heterosexual.

I feel the pomp can outweigh the social mission of the church. As a body, it can come across as too academic. I think that teaching in "absolutes" can be difficult. Its current teachings do not reflect modern

life. The church is in a position to offer guidance on the value of life, but its teaching should allow for greyness as issues such as abortion, euthanasia are not clear cut.

Sometimes I feel uncomfortable with being “Catholic” as the main associations are negative e.g. child abuse scandal, old school “Jacob Rees Mogg” traditionalism.

The action and ethos of a parish is all too easily dictated by a priest. If a priest pronounces that being gay is not right, it gets interpreted as teaching rather than some man’s opinion.

Within the Mass itself, some aspects can seem outdated, far removed from day to day challenges of parishioners.

The difficulty with the church is it's unwillingness to love and except others differences. Jesus did and He expects us to but because of man made rules and prejudices the church has failed.

So many bad things have come to light in more recent times and centuries ago e.g. the inquisition, crusades, mother and baby homes, selling of orphans and no least clerical abuse. Different lifestyles and kind of sexuality largely ignored and almost no help given to people with these issues even though it is well known that very may clergy face the same problems. I now am not sure that it is right to bar 50% of mankind from the priesthood. There were women in the early church. A large number of popes through history led far from Godly lives.

I have not been part of a Catholic church before. Although I love St Nick’s, I don’t feel confident that the rest of the Church shares the same values. I would be concerned about inclusivity and this would make me nervous about whether my family would be welcome in the broader Church. It seems to me the real work of the Church is to preach love and strive for justice. It would be good if this focus was always felt and that people knew that’s what the Church stood for.

I am 37 years old. I was raised a Catholic, but fell away from the Church in my early adulthood because of my feelings about the abuse scandal, about the treatment of gay people, because I was confused about spiritual matters in general. I still have great misgivings about the Church’s stance on gay sex. Personally, my sexual orientation is straight, but two of my best friends are gay (not religious), so I have indirect experience of the particular trouble that gay people have suffered, due in part to the Church, even if they themselves are not Catholic. I am aware, as a newly returning Catholic, that I may not fully understand the reasoning for the Church's stance; on the other hand, I believe I do understand the essential argument. Whatever the theological and moral problems, however, what I think is lacking from the Church is a positive and fully formed message for gay people, in the same way that it has a positive and fully formed message for those who have a vocation as parents (like me) or those who take orders. I can listen to theologians evangelise, and be roused, by the glory of being a parent or taking orders. How should I similarly evangelise to my gay friends? I have only sins to label, no glory to speak of; I don’t know how to evangelise on this matter. Worse, I don’t know if I can ever truly call myself a Catholic if I cannot do this—for what is the meaning of the word Catholic otherwise? I need to know that this faith is for everyone; I need to know how everyone can receive glory in the eyes of God.”

### 3. What would you want to change about the church and why?

Themes:

Inclusion and acceptance of LGBTQ+

Recognise equality of all

Protect the vulnerable over protecting reputation

More ways of representing laity views on issues

Promotion of social change with the Gospel at its heart.

I believe the Roman Catholic is already dynamic and during my lifetime I have seen changes both in the way we worship, as well as efforts made for a more inclusive Church which are commendable. Unfortunately inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals is different between individuals and each Diocese, and is likely to remain that way. The Roman Catholic Church unfortunately played a major role in the enslavement and colonisation of people around the World. This is a part of history that is stain on the Church. Moreover racism, modern day slavery, and slavery related practices abound with increasing racial inequality. The Church has a role to play in ensuring that evil does NOT result in further abuse of human rights and genocidal practices of the World Wars which took place in the 20th Century.

I want the Church to credibly recognise the equality of all human beings by not excluding any of them from ministries. I want the Church to be a properly synodal body - walking and working together on developing new more accountable structures for governance. I want the Church to radically overhaul its selection and formation processes for ordained ministries. I want to see the requirement for mandatory celibacy for ordained ministry removed. I want the Church to put the protection of children and vulnerable adults above the protection of reputation. I want the changes because of the damage I believe the Church currently causes in so many people's lives, both within the Church and in the wider world when it represses LGBT people, and women - and fails to provide justice for those who have been abused by people within the Church environment. I think the Catholic Church could be a powerful force for good in confronting our greatest crisis - Climate Change - but we urgently need to be able to speak with a credibility we currently lack.

The Church should listen, as I have written above, to the so-called "seekers" and try to understand them. The LGBT people, of course, should be valued and welcomed in the Church. The reason why is obvious: if the Church wants to remain a place of worship for the current generations, it should make efforts to (sensitively) evangelize those who feel alienated from it. Otherwise, the number of believers will continue to sink and the Church will lose its "missionary spirit". Additionally, some Church leaders (bishops...) should, at least partially, refrain from commenting on distant socio-political issues (which only lead to polarisation) and should offer an outgoing, prayerful, more positive face of the Church which is centred on Christ.

I would wish the church to pay attention not so much to what she teaches but what she fails to teach, especially the spiritual rights of Lgbt members who feel excluded by her reliance on individual parishioners busking her teaching

The change I would like to see is to have direct access to being heard and getting feedback on how and what changes are being implemented in the church. I would also like to see more lay members involved in the church Services.

I would like to see the Church as an organisation which promotes social change with the gospel at its heart, and to make this a more overt message. the church should be leading action in the local community.

Why is the reception of communion an exclusive thing?

There is a lot of safety and security in hiding behind dicta and traditions, it becomes a challenge to developing community and to being progressive. Currently of 2000 years. I feel the church is too focused on tradition rather than living the message of the Gospel. Church communities should be led by people involved, this way the priorities of a community are better served. I would like to see priests acting as spiritual guides, facilitators, enablers; a priest as someone who has the ability to contextualise the Gospel. I would like to see priests permitting alternative views in parishes, rather than one loud voice drowning out others.

There should be more upward communication in the structure of the church, with priests representing parish views upwardly. If it is acknowledged that priests guide communities with the help of the Holy Spirit, why can't it be seen that the Holy Spirit works through the faithful to guide their priest? With this spirit, there should more more lay-led prayer and action.

I would like to see more representation of other minority groups in the Church, especially in the language used which should be more inclusive in church texts e.g removing gendered pronouns in Mass and using "family" instead of "brothers and sisters"

The church needs to change its attitude towards minorities, go back to basics and ask ' What would Jesus do? John 21v 15-17. Jesus asked Peter ' Do you love me? Feed my lambs. Take care of my lambs. Feed my sheep. Is today's church doing as Jesus asks?

Very clear advertising in churches to show where Masses, meetings, help can be available. I am eager to attend a Mass at St. Nicks but as yet poorly advertised. I have heard some brave priests refer to the issues we are thinking about. Some years ago when I made my sexuality known to the parish priest, the result was horrendous. He has long retired. Where a parish has religious sisters, it would be good to see them take a much bigger part in the liturgy.

I would love the Church as a whole to reflect the values of St Nick's. That God is love. And all are welcome. We must seek justice for all.

#### 4. Why do you feel the Clifton LGBT+ Ministry is important?

I think the ministry of LGBTQ+ individuals in the Church recognises our changing World, but importantly acknowledges us as members of the Body of Christ.

I'm not a member of the LGBT community - but I've found that the ministry within the Clifton Diocese has given me hope and inspired and strengthened me in faith in a way I hadn't anticipated. When I first attended LGBT Masses it was because I wanted to express welcome, and show solidarity. What I hadn't appreciated was how the experience of being physically together with people coming to those Masses - coming together as members of the body of Christ - hearing people's voices and being present with them — hearing some people's dreadful experiences of exclusion and shameful treatment within the church - would give me the impetus to be infinitely more vocal than I had been in speaking up, actively seeking opportunities to initiate conversations and looking to combine with others to challenge the Church hierarchy on LGBT issues. I'm even more appalled at attitudes within so much of the Church on LGBT + but the Clifton Diocese Ministry at least offers a safe space and a public acknowledgement of the need for such a ministry. When someone at a diocesan synod meeting told me recently that her adult transgender child, a practising Catholic, had appeared to be the focus of remarks from their parish priest that 'evil is walking in this parish' - I was at least able to check that she was aware of the LGBT Ministry offered through St Nick's. I'm aware, through conversations with some members of the general parish community at St Nick's that the presence of the LGBT+ Ministry has provoked conversations and some very positive experiences of people's personal journeys, from ingrained anti- LGBT+ attitudes they had learnt through Catholic communities, to acceptance and positive affirmation. I believe those changes of personal conviction were accelerated by the presence of the Ministry at St Nick's. I will be so pleased when members of the LGBT + community are welcomed to openly express their witness to the gospel in other Catholic settings, and I hope including in ordained ministry - you're much needed.

It is important because it formally acknowledges that there is no contradiction between sexual identities and being practicing Catholics

As I have written, I do not know the ministry from a personal perspective. Yet, it is very important, and very laudable, too, that it exists. In my country, there is no LGBT-friendly Catholic ministry, only an ecumenical initiative. I feel glad that you provide a much needed ministry to LGBT+ people, since they very often feel distant from the Church. Well done and may God bless you in your efforts.

The Clifton diocese LGBT ministry is important because it is a voice for many of us who have felt excluded in the past, even now she is being ignored by many parishes and needs to speak up and make a noise

I believe the LGBT+ is important because we are all part of the 'body of Christ' and as such one family. All family members and friends have to feel included and valued. We all have different gifts given by the Spirit.

A member of my family is gay and left the church because he feels rejected by Catholic teaching on the subject. The very fact that there is now a diocesan LGBTQ+ ministry has made him think again about the rejection he feels. I have shared with him details about the LGBT+ ministry and he is reassured to know that there are more Catholics (other than our immediate family) who therefore clearly do not vilify him. For me, just knowing that there is an active ministry within our church where he might be accepted for the man he is, brings me enormous solace. With it comes hope that with more acts of inclusion there might come a day when my brother and other disenfranchised people like him might feel more widely welcome in all our churches and be open to the knowledge that he is loved by God, just as he is.

The LGBT+ Clifton Ministry is a visible representation of queer Catholics. It's important that it's acknowledged that we exist. The existence of this as a ministry makes the existence of queer Catholics tangible. It is an inclusive, open table and I don't feel that there is any judgement or apology associated with it.

I feel that sometimes the premise of this ministry is that it is based on an apology i.e. 'we must do better for a group which have been sidelined and oppressed within the Church', this can act as a barrier to prevent full engagement if this is the message transmitted as there are perhaps younger Catholics who will not have had experience of being taught that their existence is "wrong" because they are Catholics. Therefore portraying a positive message for the ministry is important. There can be too much of a focus on reparation- sometimes this is necessary but it shouldn't be all that there is. It is good that the ministry is willing to change to respond to the needs of its community and to embrace progression.

Matthew 11v 28. Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Yet only one church in Bristol uk has listened and obeyed The Lord's request and opened it's arms to the LGBT community. Romans 3v 23-27 For ALL have sinned and fall short... There's not one person throughout the whole history of mankind been able to choose the colour of their own eyes, skin colour, hair, stature or indeed their sexual orientation. We all have a thorn in our side and yet the church deems itself better than God by excluding the Lgbt+ community and making them feel less than human, through no fault of their own! Is this what Jesus intended when asking Peter to care for His lambs?

The church has grossly harmed and destroyed countless people's lives due to ignorance, prejudice and lack of love. It is now vitally important that the Clifton diocese LGBT+ ministry be supported and other dioceses open their doors and make amends for it's lack of Jesus' love.

Because, like other people, we have our special needs too, in some large parishes, too much can be made of the family Mass, excluding others. These matters have largely been ignored by the church. It is well known no small number of the saints were such. About 1 in 10 deserve the full mission of the church. More priests, bishops etc. need to be more honest, some are. I don't want to change our church too much.

It's deeply problematic if LGBTQ+ people are not welcome in the Church. The ministry is incredibly powerful in redressing past wrongs. It shows that all really are welcome. That the words of the Church are not empty. The have integrity.

---

## Fr. Richard McKay

VALUED:

[1] The Church is the body of Christ - my love for Jesus Christ and my love for the Church are inextricably intertwined. The Church connects me in an unbreakable historical as well as spiritual connection with Jesus and the Apostolic Proclamation of the Gospel: it is the same Church however differently it has developed.

[2] It is truly Universal - global in reach, calling us to a deeper loyalty than to our nation, race, tribe or class - loyalty to all humanity. This is worth suffering its defects for. Also its breadth of 'humanity' (eg Gaudium et Spes - sharing the joys and hopes, the anguish and pain of the world - 'every human finds an echo in the Christian heart').

[3] Its mission and presence - in the world of science and astronomy, in the intellectual and artistic world, the richness of our musical heritage past and present; health-care and education (esp in developing world); Liberation Theology; so many aspects of witness to the more profound values.

[4] The Sacramental life, above all the Eucharist - gather us all as equals around the table of Word and Sacrament; where the liturgy is celebrated prayerfully, imaginatively and builds an authentic community and mission. Its contemplative tradition experiencing a renewal at this time.

[5] Its ability to renew and reform itself and turn away from corruptions of its true nature in Christ - Vat II, John XXIII, Pope Francis and many other courageous prophets of reform etc. That the Church is the People in/and Jesus Christ - so much more than the institution.

[6] The Communion of Saints - starting with Mary up to today (Romero, de Foucauld, Dorothy Day, Jean Donovan etc), this golden thread of holiness that inspires and encourages.

[7] The freedom I have experienced to build real communities of mission in parishes.

#### CHALLENGED:

[1] Throughout history the Church has sunk into corruption and failed too often to live up its calling as 'One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic'. Since Constantine (before?) clericalism has be-devilled the Church, limiting the 'freedom of the children of God'. The Church still too often seeks power rather than the poor and marginalised, failing its prophetic witness in the world. Often the worst of the world has become the leaven in the Church rather than the Church-lived Gospel become leaven in the world.

[2] Centralised power (corrupts!) - I prefer Assisi to Rome! The papacy as Absolute Monarch rather than Universal Pastor and 'servant of the servants of God' (thank God for Francis!). The painfully slow pace of change and the many judgemental traditionalist voices that want to pull us back into the 19th century. The hypocrisy of a Eucharistic Church preferring its rules to solving the Eucharistic Famine (Law and Grace in Paul). The refusal to share Eucharist with so many categories of people - sinful!

[3] In UK why have we not grown more BAME leadership (including in the ordained ministries)? Why is St Nicks seen as exceptional when it should be the unremarked norm? We are not a Church of mission or courage, not a leading voice for change in UK (exception: the Scottish bishops stand on Nuclear weapons).

[4] The devastating impact of Child sexual abuse and other forms of clerical and religious abuse and the Church's history of cover-up - not looking at the systemic causes, including the power model of priesthood and episcopacy.

[5] Does not live the Gospel imperative of 'Option for the Poor' and marginalised - we read the gospel, we preach it, but do not live its 'Option' as a Church. Rejection of LGBTQ+ community and denial of women's rights & vocations especially in developing world. Little resource of Youth Ministry.

#### CHANGE:

[1] Do not allow the Synodal Process to fail to change the top-down, pyramidal pattern of authority (that infantilises God's people), into authentic circles of communion where all are teachers and all are learners, all speakers and all listeners, all share decision-making. Radical change of governance to something more than democracy - not less! Synodal governance is being true to the New Testament and to Vat II. Let us see it in parishes, dioceses as well as Universal Church (ie in Clifton Diocese).

[2] Urgent need to re-model understanding of and praxis of ordained ministries - to include community grown 'ordained elders' in wider eldership teams, to include married people, men and women. End the Eucharistic famine caused by who we are not prepared to ordain! Make real the Priesthood of All Believers, transforming ordained-lay relationship and mutual collaboration in ministry and mission. In the meantime, more accountability for existing clergy to the reforms needed - accountability to the people as well as to the bishop.

[3] Rethink sexual ethics especially but not exclusively in regard to LGBTQ+ issues. Stop barring people from the Eucharist (Bread of Life for all!)

[4] Embrace Option for the Poor and renew the Church through Catholic Social Teaching and adventuring with the Holy Spirit.

[5] Press for the abolition of the latest Missal translation and adopt the 1998 translation, and allow/encourage more flexible and imaginative liturgy.

[6] More valuing of, support for and involvement of our young people. Urgent need to resource with among and with our young people.

[7] Universal commitment to openness, transparency and decisive action to deal with all forms of abuse in the church. This must include higher priority for the healing and support of victims/survivors of abuse.

---

## **Appendix 3 - Specific Recommendations for St. Nicholas of Tolentino RC Church**

*To follow in Version 2*