

ST ETHELDREDA'S, ELY

SYNOD MEETING 1, 19 FEBRUARY 2022: NOTES

Our second meeting was attended by 15 parishioners, including two facilitators and a notetaker, with a slightly different makeup from meeting 1. It considered questions 5-7.

The meeting opened with the Our Father, and the *Adsumus*. Participants (re)-introduced themselves.

Question 5: participating in the mission of the church

The group thought that this question linked with the previous week's discussion about the opportunities available to participate. It was noted that some past activities were still awaiting a restart after the pandemic, which left a feeling that one wasn't pulling one's weight. At the same time, it wasn't someone else's job to get involved: it was mine. Everyone had something to give and all were of value. Whatever we did we were never going to do as much as we should do.

Against that, it was felt that we should look at positives rather than feeling guilty. Since everyone had skills and talents, what could we do to involve more people? One participant said that getting on and doing something was more attractive than social events, especially if like him you were not brilliant at small talk. Everything witnesses in small ways: we often don't know the consequences of some action we have taken. A member of the group described their journey from other ecclesial communities to the Church; they had acquired theological training along the way and led a prayer group on zoom. They were finding their way to what God was calling them to do; the Church was their home. They were looking for all opportunities to offer something.

Confidence was important – what you don't have you can't give. Fitting prayer and Bible reading into a busy life required self-discipline. We should be willing to share our spiritual experiences with others. In the experience of one participant, members of other faiths, in particular Muslims, wanted Christians to show their faith. In Cambodia, mission meant going into a community, meeting its members where they were, identifying needs and meeting them in a way that radiated love.

The relatively small number of young people attending Mass was noted. What were we going to do about that? Young people were the future of the Church. Some of our young people were going to another parish for the sake of its youth group.

Suggestions for action made by the group included

- Setting up a Lent group to prepare for Easter, perhaps on an ecumenical basis
- Setting up a Bible study group [comment: also suggested last week].

Question 6. Engagement with the wider world

A member of the group felt that it was worth focussing on the different meanings of "the Church". To the extent it meant authority rather than community, that could put people off. Bad Catholic schools could have the same effect. In response, it was suggested that antipathy should be engaged with. Did we confirm people too young [comment: this questioner was recalling confirmations at 10 and younger in a different country]?

There were good examples locally of parishioners being a good witness, especially by participating in the life of the town. We shouldn't be ashamed of being identified as Catholic as we did that. It was worth taking stock of the scope of what parishioners did in local social action, and look for further opportunities to find things that needed to be done in the community. People want God and actions can preach. We shouldn't keep the faith to ourselves; where there is a need we are the eyes of God.

Church groups should be open to others, and we should pray for people in the wider community. Some people simply needed someone to talk to. The faith isn't rules and regulations but a verb.

Question 7. Our relationship with other Christian traditions

One member of the group's family were Anglican and Pentecostal. They prayed a lot but were not so interested in social action. Another group member felt that charismatic renewal was very joyful and strengthening. However, by concentrating on differences we could forget just how much we had in common with other Christians. We could be afraid of what we didn't know.

One person felt that other churches had more younger members because of music. Choirs and bands were a good way of involving younger people – and tapping into their talents. In Chicago, there was a ministry based on liturgy and preaching in Rap which reached out to a Latino population and drew in the community's skills.

Ely has a reputation as a very ecumenical city.

The issue of intercommunion was a "little dampener". One person asked why all baptised people shouldn't be admitted to communion – after all, many Catholics were uninstructed in the faith. Without digging deeper into this issue, it was agreed that the parish should seek to include people.

There were very many positives which had emerged in the discussion; we should emphasise them and build on them to go forward.

Suggestions for action made by the group included

- making recommendations, possibly via the parish website, for Christian reading and films.
- doing more with Ely's Churches Together group.

The meeting closed with the Hail Mary and Doxology.