

## ST ETHELDREDA'S, ELY

### SYNOD MEETING 1, 5 FEBRUARY 2022: NOTES

Our first meeting was attended by 14 parishioners, including two facilitators and a notetaker; the group identified that it was unrepresentative of the parish in terms of age, although there was diversity in terms of ethnicity and gender. It considered questions 1-4 in the light of the theme of Participation.

The group generated a large number of practical suggestions as part of its response to the questions.

The meeting opened with the Our Father, the *Adsumus* and the Hail Mary.

#### Question 1: welcome

The group included a number of relatively recent arrivals in the parish. Only one reported an uncomfortable experience of welcome. The group considered that the pandemic measures such as the introduction of Mass stewards and booking places had led to some very positive experiences, resulting in more people knowing each other's names and a more definite welcome at the church door. The importance of talking to one's neighbour in the church benches, and of greeting people with a smile was noted. The informal Sign of Peace has meant that we have acknowledged people across the congregation rather than just immediate neighbours in the benches.

Several members of the group said it was difficult to know what parish groups existed, and how to put oneself forward to participate more actively in church groups. There was untapped willingness among parishioners to be more active.

Suggestions for new/different practice made in discussion included:

- Retaining welcomers at the church door
- Giving welcomers name badges (and the possibility of more general wearing of name badges was suggested)
- Using the newsletter, website and notice boards to raise awareness of groups and how to join them
- Establishing a more visible standing invitation to parishioners to volunteer for activities
- Posting on the notice boards/website names and photographs of contacts for groups, including a note of which of the three Sunday Masses the contacts were likely to be found at
- Putting up a poster/information drawing attention to everything the parish had done to make the church a safe place during the pandemic
- Setting up a Rosary group and a Divine Mercy group
- Making bilingual English/Polish missals available (the possibility of other languages was also suggested without specific examples)
- For services such as funerals, ensure service sheets gave fuller texts and rubrics to save marginal/lapsed/non-Catholics embarrassment
- House visiting for those who have ceased to attend Mass since the pandemic
- Mailing (or, to save cost, hand-delivering) newsletters to those not currently coming to Mass
- Restoring after-Mass coffee and fellowship.

#### Question 2: listening

The group considered whether we tended to come to Mass simply in order to relate to God, or whether we made it an occasion for speaking and listening to other, too. At the same time, the daily flow of news and business meant that prayer was an important way of making space for what we were really

here for. The Mass is an opportunity to hand the noise over to God and listen to Him. We should be praying for the intentions that the other people at Mass had brought with them.

Considering whether we felt listened to, the group considered whether English reticence was an obstacle to open exchanges. Was it obvious who among us was available to listen?

Suggestions for new/different practice made in discussion included:

- Should we specifically identify people willing to listen to others?
- Could we institute parish walks for conversation and fellowship?
- Readers would benefit from training in microphone technique
- Establishing a “listening and sharing” group focussed on Bible reading; perhaps studying each week’s Sunday Mass texts in advance.

### Question 3: communicating

The group agreed that communication required trust and familiarity. This was something we needed to make time for; it couldn’t be done without feeling closer to each other. Prayer groups provide a forum for that increased knowledge of each other. It was also important to be non-judgemental.

The issue of awareness of existing parish activity and groups arose again in this discussion. It was also noted that many parishioners were members of Ely’s rich infrastructure of groups carrying out social action in the wider community which were not organised under the auspices of the parish.

In considering social media, there was a consensus that the local social media culture was not positive and members of the group were reluctant to participate. Other cultures – our twinned parish in Cambodia was mentioned – used social media in a different a much more positive way to express solidarity. Social media did offer an opportunity to witness, for example by sharing content such as the Pope’s regular messages, or the hymn the Blessing.

### Question 3: Liturgy

The group agreed that the central element of the question was to understand what we took from the Liturgy into the wider world. One participant said that was something we tended only to realise in retrospect. There was agreement about how much the group valued the liturgy. Nothing about it particularly needed changing. Support was expressed for the current translations of the Mass and Lectionary. Music was an important enrichment of people’s experience of the liturgy.

There was a discussion about children at Mass. The balance of sentiment was that even if occasionally disruptive, they should be welcome. The model of a “crying room” was discussed and a range of views expressed. There was support for the view that parents should not be made to feel awkward or unwelcome because they had a fidgety child.

It was agreed to take away for personal reflection the element of the question relating to what we felt thankful for.

The meeting closed with the Doxology.