

# **Our Lady of the Portal and St Piran Catholic Church, Truro**

## **Walking Together-Synodal Journey**

### **Listen**

**Summary notes from a zoom session on Tuesday evening, 30.11.21 and a Wednesday morning face-to-face session 01.12.2021**

**Participants: 30 and 2 facilitators.**

#### **How do I listen to God? How do I listen to others? How does our parish listen to God?**

In the light of the past 18 months and the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic:

There was a wide range of views with the majority of those attending describing how the lockdown had impacted the practice of their faith in a positive direction. The power of prayer was openly acknowledged. Many had developed their own routines to include prayers at regular points in the day, online Mass, and the use of a wide variety of virtual learning platforms to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Faith. It was strongly felt that new technologies had opened ways of listening to God and it was good to feel part of a universal Church. Many felt enriched by the experience of being able to attend liturgies in other on-line parishes but missed being able to fully participate. Some described how their sense of a Catholic identity was strengthened by joining in on a wider, international basis but missed the close contact. Many described how they felt blest to have a faith which sustained them. Individuals mentioned how they listened to God through a variety of means: prayer, sacraments, relationships with others, appreciating the natural world/special places, in small things and events, with family, engagements and encounters with others. It was strongly felt that we should be always listening to God, and we needed to be open and receptive.

Some described how the closure of the local church meant that they could no longer share in and with the community they treasured. This was often described as a tangible loss and was greatly missed. It was felt that the community aspect of Church mattered most to some people. The closure of the church had meant that some had no-one to listen to them and they had sought advice elsewhere. There was a strong voice saying that what mattered to them were the community networks and being able to touch the lives of others.

A few described how the lifting of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass meant that they took the opportunity to engage in more social activities with family and friends. New hobbies were sought to fill the time gained. They recognised that this was selfish, and habits had developed which would need to change once the obligation was re-introduced. In this much smaller grouping, it was admitted that faith had occupied less of a place in their lives during lockdown and that it would now be a challenge to get back to previous practice.

### **How does our parish listen to others? How do we as a Church listen to God?**

It was strongly felt that the parish needed to create opportunities for us to listen to each other and be able to share our faith openly. Doubts were expressed that the parish listens to others as well as it should or might. Some also felt that there should be more recognition of different perspectives. The opening of channels of communication would be greatly welcomed. A majority felt that the synodal pathway heralded a change in the way we listen to each other, and listening was recognised as being important. It was frequently said that people wanted to be heard, wanted to be able to share their faith and discuss the issues they faced on their journeys. It was acknowledged that the recently formed Parish Pastoral Council was a clear and strong step in the right direction. Some felt that a regular, open parish meeting would be warmly welcomed as a means of building up the parish and strengthening the sense of a community with a clear Catholic identity. In this regard, it was felt by some that we should have a greater presence in the ecumenical community of the city. It was recognised that several individuals were engaged with other churches through, for example, Street Pastors, Food Banks, St Petroc's, Women's World Day of Prayer, Healing Team, Chaplaincies, Christian Aid, Christmas Boxes. However, it was felt that this was more on an individual basis rather than as a parish-wide initiative. It was mentioned that we could learn much from engaging with other denominations and other faiths.

The need to reach out and listen to young people was a regular theme and there was a real fear that we were losing our young. It was felt that there was an urgent need to address this issue. There was a clear and strong feeling that more needed to be done to engage families with young children as they represented the future of the church. It was hoped that there could be more "Family Friendly" masses and that the Liturgy of the Word for Children could be reinstated as soon as was practically possible.

It was also recognised and acknowledged that the parish had made available a wide range of opportunities for us to listen to God, through the Mass, Homilies, on-line courses, emails, sacrament of reconciliation. The livestreaming of the parish mass was warmly welcomed, and it was hoped that this would continue after restrictions were lifted because of its value to the sick and housebound.

### **How do we as a Church listen to others? How do we as a Church listen to those outside the church?**

It was generally felt that there needed to be clearer channels of communication and that these needed to be two-way. The complexity of establishing this across a world-wide, multi-cultural, multi-lingual organisation was acknowledged. The Pope's initiative with this synodal pathway was welcomed and it was hoped that the process could be adopted as a future means of communication, at each level, across the universal Church. Some participants spoke of the need for the Church to listen to its people and for people to listen to what the Church taught. Listening didn't necessarily mean agreeing but it did give people

a voice to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas. It was recognised that we needed to do more to listen to the voice of the marginalised (particularly the Homeless). There was a feeling that the Church should look outward more and had been too inward looking.

It was mentioned that the laity could and should play a more significant role in the life of a catholic parish and share the workload of their priest. It was important that people felt that they were valued, needed, and wanted. Mention was made of groups such as The Legion of Mary, Catholic Women's League, St Vincent de Paul Society and CAFOD which provided opportunities for people to play a role in the mission of the Church. The value of lay ministries was also clearly and strongly acknowledged as being opportunities for people to be more closely involved in the sacramental life of the parish. It was hoped that all of these would be developed post-restrictions.

As regards the Church at the Universal level, it was hoped that this synodal process would go some way to reducing the gap between the people and the hierarchy. There seemed to be a strong perception that those leading the church were somewhat remote from the reality of daily life and perhaps didn't appreciate the struggles being endured by ordinary people. Bringing lay people and those ordained closer together would be welcomed. It was also clearly recognised that this was no easy undertaking. The extent to which the Church listened to those outside the church was difficult to ascertain. Some felt that, as they weren't doing this themselves, it was too much to expect the Church to be actively engaging with others outside the church. However, it was acknowledged that we should be evangelising as part of our Christian mission. In this respect, the importance of developing confidence, knowledge and understanding of our faith was clearly recognised.

It was noted that some people were outside the Church because of their marital or other relationship circumstances. This meant that they couldn't fully partake in the sacramental life of the parish and in some cases had drifted away. It was felt that they also needed to be included, welcomed, and supported.

The facilitators were thanked for arranging the meeting and participants said how much they had enjoyed the process. Some said that they hadn't expected it to be like it was and were looking forward to the next session.