

ST NINIAN'S RC CHURCH
Menziesshill, Dundee



***'There is no need to create a new Church
but to create a different Church.'***

Pope Francis



A Brief Summary
of the
Responses of the People of God
to the
Synodal Consultation
in the
Diocese of Dunkeld

This booklet represents more than 10,000 statements of the personal experiences expressed by lay people from parishes throughout the Dunkeld Diocese regarding their hopes, dreams and concerns for the future of the Catholic Church in their parish and beyond their parish.

1. Sense of Belonging

'The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.'

Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel

Most people wanted: a joyful community, reaching out, welcoming everyone: irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, practising or not.

Need for well trained welcoming groups. Importance of parish priest's welcome. A few felt no welcome at all.

A church that values all human beings, especially the poor, recognises and embraces talents and charisms

Many who preferred the Traditional Latin Mass were beginning to feel unwelcome.

A few had no need for welcome and came to worship.

Almost all felt voices missing: young people, families, divorced and re-married people, single parents, the disabled, elderly with no transport, housebound, people with past hurts, those upset by clerical abuse, other pursuits on Sundays, LGBTQ+.

2. Communication

'Freely giving some of our own time to listen to people is the first act of charity.'

Pope Francis: 56th WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Most felt joy in church community when they were valued, heard and not judged.

54% felt listened to by their Parish Priests but recognised constraints on some priests' time.

Fear of speaking out. They would be judged, ostracised or not heeded. Some have walked away.

Parish Pastoral Councils must be organised by both laity and parish priest with leadership roles for the laity.

A few went to church to celebrate the Eucharist and not for community.

3. Liturgy

'Christianity without a liturgy is a Christianity without Christ.'

Pope Francis: General Audience Feb 2021

Majority found joy in participating in the Mass, the sacraments, services of adoration, novenas and the rosary.

Confession clearly very important especially penitential services with general absolution.

Sense of loss felt by many during pandemic. Online Mass was a good alternative. Overwhelming joy when churches reopened.

Well prepared homilies very were important. Many were inspiring, thought provoking, explaining scripture clearly and relevant to modern life.

Others felt teaching and doctrines did not always reflect our changing world, services were long, often boring and had little appeal for the young.

Reluctance to attend where priest's delivery was difficult to understand
Church services with space and time for reflection + discussion welcomed by some.
More prominence given to the environment and climate change.

Importance of live music and use of technology to enhance experience.

Laity preparing and leading some church services welcomed by many.

Early Mass, keeping children quiet, work commitments, other pursuits keep people away.

Traditional Latin Mass was divisive and elitist for some, others felt the TLM best fulfilled their spiritual needs.

A number said people should not feel brow beaten into fulfilling their Sunday obligation

The importance of gender inclusive liturgy was mentioned by a few.

4. Clericalism

'It is imperative to overcome the clericalism that treats the Christifideles Laici (Christ's Faithful Laity) as children and impoverishes the identity of ordained ministers.'

Pope Francis: Meeting in Columbia 2017

Many said the implementation of the reforms of VATICAN II was well overdue.

Much concern over lack of vocations. Celibacy often cited as a discouragement to vocations to the priesthood. Many people were in favour of gay priests, women priests and married priests.

Many disagreed with the Church's insistence that celibacy is a requirement for priesthood. Married priests might have a deeper understanding of often messy lives of ordinary families.

Many spoke of hurt over clerical abuse. An unreserved apology and genuine support for survivors is long overdue.

Most people agreed that male dominance at every level in the Church needs to be addressed.

Many said the highest standards in safeguarding procedures are paramount.

Counselling and support is necessary for all priests. Some have a heavy workload, are prone to loneliness, need support when experiencing health issues, feel left out when retired or ostracised when they leave the priesthood.

Reform of Canon Law is needed so that the Church can align itself more fully to the Human Rights Act which it has endorsed.

Clergy need show more humility: they are there to serve, not as rulers and judges.

Need for greater participation of laity in all areas of Church governance to help build trust.

Some serious concerns about training in seminaries e.g. life experience in social situations is essential especially with the poor and marginalised

Fertility issues, contraception, abortion and euthanasia important life concerns that should be discussed more openly.

Some mentioned that no one should be refused Holy Communion.

A few felt no need for church as they live a good life and pray often.

5. Role of Women

‘The Church acknowledges the indispensable contribution which women make to society through the sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they, more than men, tend to possess.’

Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, 2013, 1

Much was said about the limited role for women in the Church.

They are the backbone of the Church with the same baptismal calling as men but with less recognition.

Equal status and equal voice for women is needed. They given mere servile roles and their talents and abilities are often ignored.

Many felt women should be ordained as deacons and priests.

Women are now transformed by educational and professional opportunities and their skills and strengths should be harnessed as in other Christian denominations.

6. Youth

‘They are the fertile and new soil that God gives to Christian communities.’

Pope Francis: World Youth Day, 2019

Almost all very concerned and sad about the absence of young people and families.

Perceived reasons: present day culture, style of worship, relevance in their lives, out of date language used in church services, equality /gender issues.

Need for: more participation, short, relevant and uplifting services, joyful music, more use of technological communications, social media, internet

Liturgical activities that connect with youth culture through drama, art, dance, more participation in the liturgy may be more attractive to them.

Some suggested priests working more closely with schools.

Opportunities to get together to talk about faith, social justice, global issues, the environment, climate change, world peace, ask questions, socialise, would help them connect.

Children’s Liturgy Group in parishes welcomed by many.

Most children felt welcomed in church or Catholic school- a respectful and caring community - a trusted person to talk to - good friends were very important to most.

Most said religious services were meaningful and joyful, others felt them long, boring or difficult to understand and little opportunity to be involved.

Many did not feel confident in speaking out about life issues that concern them. Some felt opinions given were ignored.

Less than half asked the Holy Spirit to guide them. Many said they asked for help during times of need.

A few said Holy Spirit had done nothing for them.

Some identified non-religious and church not relevant in their lives

7. Mission

'I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation'

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 27

a. Evangelisation

More publicity is needed for greater awareness of Catholic Social Teaching and positive messages about how Catholic Church promotes good in the world.

Need for clergy to get out of the building, work in partnership with laity to help meet the needs of those in difficulty, particularly the poor and marginalised.

Need to promote community projects: food banks, drop in cafés, cookery classes, thrift shops or a space to be listened to. More sharing creative community projects between churches in the diocese.

b. Catechesis

Many would welcome quality up to date catechesis and faith formation.

Most need help in understanding how the Holy Spirit impacts on their lives.

Many found it difficult to discern whether or not the Holy Spirit was guiding the Church.

A few felt that if we were truly open to the Holy Spirit, we would obey all the Laws of God and the Church without question.

c. Ecumenism

Ecumenism was mentioned a few times as a positive way to reach out to others and help build understanding.

Sadness at non-Catholic spouses being unable to receive Communion with their Catholic spouse.

We need to promote the Catholic Church in local areas and welcome other Christian and different faith communities.