

FRAMEWORK FOR SYNOD PARISH/COMMUNITY/COMMISSION REPORTS

1 Introduction

The Church of God is convoked in Synod. The Synod conversations at parish level are part of a worldwide process by which the universal Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, is reaching out to the Church community and other interested members of the national community, to solicit their views on our Church as it exists today. The conversations focus on the activities and behaviors that strengthen or weaken the Church and ask respondents to indicate their thoughts on the preferred direction for a healthy Church of the future.

The purpose of this synthesis is to gather and express the fruits of the synodal process, indicating how the Holy Spirit is directing the church in the local context.

This Synod report represent contributions from the Malabar parish, the Valencia community, and some groups out of the parish of Santa Rosa. We received contributions from consultations and questionnaires.

It must be noted here that the Church of the Annunciation (a community in the parish of Malabar) operates jointly with the Anglican Community and the Anglicans also participated in the process. Contributions were from one consultation with Catholics and questionnaires from both Anglicans and Catholics. At the consultation some participants were hesitant, however some threads resonated in the process.

The process of getting contributions were affected by the pandemic environment where individuals were unwilling to come out from the comfort of their homes, and the church's policy of not encouraging gatherings. The use of the questionnaire online or hard copy became the preferred option the make contributions.

Many participants expressed the hope that some of the issues raised in the process would be resolved and changes implemented in the shortest possible time.

2 Listening and Discernment

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION 1: *How is this “journeying together” happening today in your Church/Parish/Community?*

1. The Mass is recognized as an important aspect of our Catholic identity, but it has become rote. It has held us together thus far but we need to see more active participation in the Mass.
2. People come to church because of habit and do not realize that people are the church.
 - a. They misinterpret their roles and use position of power to dominate others.
 - b. Some of us have to realize that we can seek our own salvation and not depend on our leaders to do it for us.
3. Parish priests have assisted in developing the faith of the church members but at times parishioners do not feel as though they are easily accessible to deal with pastoral issues.
4. Involvement in the various ministries in the Church has encouraged journeying together however we must be careful that we do not become exclusive in that ministries in the parish do not associate with each other and this defeats the purpose of an inclusive, universal Catholic Church.
 - a. Belonging to a group or Ministry helps the journeying together for networking and support.
 - b. Encourage involvement in Prayer Groups
5. Coming together for special projects encourages journeying together for example the Renovation Project being undertaken in the Valencia community has increased the bond between parishioners.
 - a. Growth as a whole in religious life with fellowship interactions with other parishes at Cluster celebrations events is needed.
6. Children feel welcome and happy to come to church as church is a place where they pray to God and offer up their sins.
7. Youth

- a. Children are eager to learn and participate in church activities, however when they are sent to main churches for Confirmation they do not return, leaving the church with few youths.
 - b. The young people's voices are not heard because they are missing
 - c. The elders have to encourage youth by giving them responsibilities, getting them involved and equipping them to serve.
8. Old and young have to integrate to share experiences and reflection
 9. Covid has encouraged us to think outside the box in order to reach our parishioners and technology has facilitated this. Through the work of the Santa Rosa Communications Team, Mass was streamed live during the lockdowns and inspirational messages and faith doctrine was shared. The Communications Team also manages the various social media pages of the cluster which provides important information on what is going on in the cluster.
 10. Togetherness exists with parishioners while they are in church. We become different when we leave church.
 - a. Some parishioners are left behind especially the elderly because of the Covid pandemic.
 - b. We do not reach out to people and step out of our comfort zones to find out their concerns and get them back in church.

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION 2: *What steps does the Spirit invite us to take for us to grow in our "journeying together"?*

1. Evangelization to the missing voices in the church namely youth, young adults, children, shut ins. We need to reach these voices to bring them back to church and maintain their interest. This outreach can be done via social media, letters, emails, phone calls, visitation etc. The steps to be taken per group are as follows:
 - a. Youth – They can be reached via the medium of having a vibrant music ministry with new genres of music that can reach them. They can also

be reached via the various social media platforms with content that is pertinent to their needs.

- b. Young adults - As a form of guidance, the young adults can act as “big brothers” and “big sisters” to the youth to help be role models for them to follow. They can also act as advocates on behalf of the youth.
 - c. Children – They appreciate the singing, music and praying when they come to church so we can ensure that the music appeals to them. The Legion of Mary of Mary can also encourage the school children who are Catholic to go with them when they visit the sick at home and hospitals.
 - d. Shut-Ins – they can be reached via house-to-house visitation from groups such as Legion of Mary as stated before.
2. Hospitality is needed to keep the people who we do have in church and to encourage others to return to church. It was felt to be important that we see the face of Christ in every person especially those you meet at the church doors to make you feel comfortable enough to enter the church. This hospitality will also engender increased involvement in church activities.
 3. More catechesis is needed to reach our youth and as refreshers for regular parishioners to get them grounded in their faith, and the history and traditions of the church.
 4. The Community Life in the church can be improved by
 - a. Having more faith-filled ministries at work in the parishes, recruiting members who are passionate for the ministries they are called to. Also, to encourage more active participation in the Mass, we can consider using projector screens in the mass with the lyrics of the songs being sung to encourage singing during the Mass.
 - b. Having more social gatherings where the Church comes together and not only on special occasions like Easter or Christmas in order to encourage parishioners to get to know each other.
 - c. Encouraging volunteers to offer themselves for service to the church.
 - d. Join with other lay communities to ensure success in any endeavour undertaken by the communities.

- e. Allow as many people who are willing to serve in the church to do so.
 - f. We have to be a more welcoming and accommodating church.
5. Prayer and worship are definitely needed to move our Church forward. Some options that could be utilized are:
- a. Saying the Rosary before the Mass to set the tone for the Mass.
 - b. Having a focus on the Holy Spirit therefore hosting Life in the Spirit seminars.
 - c. Reactivating the charismatic movement in the parish (Malabar).
 - d. Making adoration of the Blessed Sacrament more accessible to parishioners.
 - e. Having a prayer group in the parish with prayer partners who will look out for the other.
 - f. Having a vibrant music ministry which includes aspects of our culture such as the steel pan music in the Mass.
6. Social Justice concerns with respect to reaching out to victims of abuse, prisoners, poor and homeless should be addressed. Volunteers can offer to work with St. Vincent de Paul and the Family Life Unit to achieve these goals.
7. Visit Catholics in our communities
- a. Reinstate visits by the Legion of Mary Group to home
 - b. Create a database of persons desirous of receiving visits.
8. Technology - Modern technology is opening up the local church.
- a. Use social media platforms, WhatsApp and others to reach out to church and non-church members.
 - b. Offer training in the use of technology especially to the older members of our community.
 - c. Parents can use technology to help in growing children up in church.
 - d. Use technology to call people to spiritual life.
 - e. Start an online newsletter to share information on what is happening in the church
 - f. Share jokes, experiences to encourage growth of the church and involvement in church activities.

9. Youth.
 - a. Give the youth opportunities to grow by encouraging them to get involved
 - b. Allow the older one to provide supervision and guidance for growth if this is required.
10. We should give more generously so there will no need for harvest fund raisers.
 - a. People have mixed feelings about harvest, complained about sub-standard stalls and feel they are cheated and robbed.
11. We have to open our hearts to be caring and to love as Christ loves us:
 - a. Conduct programmes like bible study to better understand the living word and continuous teachings of our religion for everyone including the youth.
 - b. Sick visitation, feeding the poor, and helping the less fortunate.

Non-Catholic Responses- Anglicans

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION: *Tell us what you have experienced in your relationship with Catholics or the Catholic Church.*

1. What joys did they bring? How did the joys affect your view of the Catholic Church?
 - a. Having complete joy in fellowship with them.
 - b. Both Anglicans and Catholics coming together to celebrate our feast day, the feast of the Annunciation.
 - c. There can be harmony even though we do not agree at all times.
2. What difficulties and obstacles have you encountered? How did the difficulties affect your view of the Catholic Church?
 - a. None
 - b. Try to dominate because of being the larger group.
 - c. Stay focus to serve God.
3. Is there anything you like or admire about Catholics?

- a. Your liturgy is aligned to us
 - b. The Catholic, it is informative and interesting.
 - c. Devotion to the Virgin Mary
 - d. Prayer life, worship and devotion observing the seasons of the church
 - e. Music.
4. Is there anything you dislikes or troubles you about Catholics?
- a. None
 - b. Their inclination to dominate
 - c. Non-Catholics are not allowed to have Holy Communion
5. Do you view Catholics as same of different from other Christians? Why?
- a. Difference in name and nature of worship
 - b. Same, we all believe in the Lord Jesus Christ
 - c. No difference we serve the true and living God maybe in different ways
 - d. I like the order in the service.
6. How can we strengthen our similarities?
- a. More worship together
 - b. By giving each other a listening ear, not my way or your way, but listening to hear what both have to say.
7. How can we lessen our differences?
- a. Through the love for God and his Church. To God be the glory.
 - b. Through love and understanding for each other
 - c. Unity.

3 Conclusion

The Synod objective encourages us to listen so we could share ideas and, in the process, we learned from one another. It also encourages us to respect the views others and we should find a way for this process of listening to each other to continue.

4 Word of Gratitude

We would like to thank the entire cluster community of Santa Rosa/Malabar for providing us with the necessary support to complete this report. The support for the process shown in the responses was indeed heartening. We ask for God's richest blessings on them in their endeavours.

5 Appendix

Description of the Team's plan for conducting the conversations.

- Our Cluster Synod Team comprised of the following members: Mr. Trevor Matthew (Santa Rosa Heights community), Ms. Delora Reyes – Youth representative (Pinto Road community) representing the Malabar Parish; and Dr. Hilary Bernard (Santa Rosa), Mrs. Debra Meloney (Valencia community) representing the Santa Rosa Parish.
- The Cluster Team solicited responses to the Synod questions via consultations and questionnaire surveys (print and online). We targeted those in ministries in the church by contacting the leaders of the different ministries to conduct training sessions on how to conduct a Synod consultation and then we targeted the wider parish community via questionnaire surveys both print and online. The responses reflected here in this report were taken from the print survey and the consultation process.
- The Synod process was advertised on our Cluster Social Media pages, parish noticeboards and announcements as well as via personal WhatsApp messages and phone calls.
- Respondents were given the option to conduct their consultation either in person or online.