

Synodal Pathway Process - St. Patrick's parish

Good evening / morning

You may recall that earlier this year, Maria Murphy and I spoke at masses about the Synodal Pathway process announced by Pope Francis.

There were two parts to this process for all those participating. The first session was an opportunity to have our voices heard and gathered on the joys and sorrows in our experience of the Church to date. The second session was an opportunity to have our voices heard and gathered on our hopes and fears for the future of our Church.

The first event was held in March and the second event in early April. Both events were held in St. John the Evangelist National School, Adamstown.

My intention here today is to give you a flavour of how the process unfolded, and of the report itself which we submitted to the diocese.

The report itself will be published on the parish website this weekend, so you will have an opportunity to read it in full in your own time.

At the outset, I want to thank a number of people for all their work and assistance in the process.

Maria Murphy, who was my fellow animator for the process.

Fr. John - for the invitation to be an animator.

To Michael Foley and all members of the Parish Pastoral Council.

To St. John the Evangelist National School for the facilities and logistical support.

And to the 30 people who attended both sessions. Without their presence, their generosity of spirit, we simply would not have had a Synodal Pathway in our parish.

The events themselves were humbling and inspiring in equal measure. Parishioners came of a Saturday morning twice over to offer their voices in furtherance of our collective mission. Framed by material provided by the Diocese, adapted to our own parish context, they initially fed their views into a survey instrument called Mentimeter. This meant that they could provide their views anonymously only if they wished. They were invited to speak of their views in small groups as well - which everyone was more than happy to do. The mentimeter gave them all a clear view of the collective views of the group. Everyone's voice was distinct - but there was a bigger picture too. And this picture was visible to everyone present.

In terms of the joys, people spoke of the example and inspiration of individual leaders; the ecumenical movement; the joy of simply gathering, like here at Mass; education; music and song; a sense of place that the community built.

In terms of sorrows, people spoke of the child abuse scandals; the road yet to travel in terms of inclusion of various groups; the impact on church leaders of the scandals; and some spoke of a sense of how learning from these scandals seemed to have taken longer than expected.

In terms of fears, people spoke of how the role of women needs to change; fear of loss - of leadership, of sight of mission, of vocations, of a lost generation, of personal relationship with God, of the sense of sacraments; that leaders would fail to listen, include; of division;

In terms of hopes, people spoke again of the synodal process itself; of greater lay involvement and the use of digital; of groups in our parish such as the various choirs; of God's acceptance of us all, His unconditional love; of fortitude and encouragement.

When asked to reflect upon what the Holy Spirit might be indicating in all of this, we submitted the following in our report (which was noted and approved by the Parish Pastoral Council)

1. An inclusive and welcoming church
2. Awareness of the need for change
3. To hear God's voice in everyone we encounter
4. The need to nourish our faith
5. The need to practice justice, mercy and compassion as well as love
6. the need for humility
7. How we go forward will be as important as what we do
8. The need to continue the conversational process of the Synodal pathway
9. The two greatest commandments as stated by Jesus - you must love the Lord your God with all your strength, all your mind and all your heart and you must love your neighbour as yourself.
10. How exciting it was to reconnect with faith as an embodied experience after 2 years of the pandemic - and how we want to continue that process.

As I said earlier, the full report can be seen on the parish website.

Since the Synodal Pathway has concluded, the Archdiocese has launched a new process called Building Hope. The primary aim of this process is to consult with parishioners about the various ways in which we can sustain our parish communities into the future. To this end, we will be inviting you to complete a survey at next weekend's masses. The questions will be posted on the parish website over the coming week so that you will have a chance to read them and reflect upon them in advance. You will be invited to complete your answers online so please bring your smart phone or device with you. If for any reason you cannot complete the survey at mass, the survey should be open for a few days.

Many thanks for your time.