



Submitted Synthesis from Deanery Meeting

Deanery: St Mary
(West Lothian)



Archdiocese
Of St Andrews
& Edinburgh

Synodal Deanery Meeting

West Lothian Deanery, 8 February 2022 at St Mary's, Bathgate

Compiled by Martin Cassels

The discussion group notes did not neatly deal with the individual questions asked, but rather dealt with them together across a variety of themes. The fact of there being good and bad in most areas was almost universally felt.

Significant numbers of the young and the old have not returned to Mass

A feeling that we should be looking back to the early church and an emphasis on living and witnessing the Christian life; but:

Generational gap: how many under fifty at the meeting? Technology has changed the world of the young so much from that with which "we" are familiar.

Universal appeal of music emphasised, although how best to make use of it?

Parish Churches

Prayer groups.

- Focus on Adoration (much emphasised), devotions and vocations

- Need for spiritual and social inclusion (make available online)

- Family element

Confession – important, but how to "bring it back" and, especially, get the young to engage with it?

Re-introduction of regular reciting of old prayers (eg Sacrament Most Holy)

Key importance of family

- Parents, children and grandchildren

- Too many children attend Mass until Holy Communion and stop soon thereafter

Parish structures and engagement

- Should be religious and social elements

- Volunteering – good means of engagement, but what is required must be defined and practical implications explained.

- People to welcome those arriving at Mass a good idea

- Parish / Deanery directory might be useful

Home visits, including saying of rosary

Catholic Schools

Good (Gospel values inculcated, including charitable works; sacramental programme sound), BUT

Primary schools better than secondary

Role of latter?

Need for secondary schools to better engage with pupils **and** families

Schools' apparent lack of confidence in teenagers. And vice versa.

Implications of teachers who do not practise their faith. Too many unbaptised children.

Bible and Catechism not well taught or known

Should be involved in the Synodal process

Generational gap to teachers felt to be even more prominent than it used to be

Covid

Mixed feelings as to whether the pandemic saw an increase in social cohesion (how do we maintain it?) or an increase in isolation - especially for the young and the old (how do we end it?). Continuing, real (albeit anecdotal) fear of the elderly.

(No agreement, or even majority in this area. Attitudes a function of personal experience and personality types?)

Technology

Everyone saw this as very important, both during the pandemic and looking forward

Allows the church to reach out to those who cannot or currently will not attend Mass

Live streaming of Mass should be continued, even extended

Social media presence should be significantly extended

Social media seen as an important tool in evangelisation, especially of the young

Small number strongly felt that this should be combined with "selling" the church which should "canvass like politicians". What can we learn from the Jehovah's Witnesses?

Evangelisation

Better use of social media and modern technology (see above)

More use of music with its wide appeal

The young (outside school)

Empower them and involve them in groups of and for the young

Social activism – work with the disadvantaged (see below) and, especially, engage with Green Issues

Mentoring

Youth carnival

Visiting hospitals and prisons

“Old” Church v “New” Church

A church of faith has become a church of fear, moving to indifference and even anger.

Reform away from Vatican influence needed (but Pope Francis admired)

Failure to convincingly apologise for abuse scandals (still seen as a *current* issue): safeguarding good (be *seen* to do the right thing), but a long way from regaining trust

Too many man-made rules

Church must be truly welcoming and less judgemental: loving, inclusive and diverse

Gay people not welcome on their terms

Divorced people not welcome on their terms

Inferior role of women in phallogocentric institutional structures (although little appetite expressed for women priests). Phallogocentric language, including in the liturgy, an issue.

The lapsed, broken and wounded not represented at the synod. “We” cannot speak for them, and they must be given a voice.

Priests

Importance of the *individual* priest (can be a strength; too often a weakness)

Not always sufficiently empathetic

Need for in-service training of priests in the community

Spread too thin.

The Good News

Must not give way to disillusion – focus on light, not darkness

“We” must believe in ourselves: we have the good news and must live and proclaim it!

Example is important; our joy in faith and enjoyment of Mass must be manifest

The necessary search for better ways to explain the faith in the culture

Need for unconditional love

“Hopefully our thoughts and ideas will be considered, not ignored as in former consultations.”

The last three topics engendered the greatest and most animated participation.

In subsequent discussion with Father William McQuillan, the partial knowledge of many of the participants clear. Some simple factual errors (eg Church attitudes to suicide and annulment), and attitudes/assumptions not necessarily reflective of the “current” Church – high average age of participants?