



Synod Reflections

Everybody came to Synod with a story; a journey to share and a hope for the future. The Holy Spirit was certainly at work. The group discussions were as diverse as the group members, yet there always seemed to be common threads.

Many people in the workshops were bearing their own crosses. There was comfort through talking about it and some recommendations fed directly into helping some of those people.

The emphasis in the opening sessions was on the mission of the whole church – of all the baptised; that we are not a clerical church. The last synod dealt with structures and now is the time to look outward and understand that ‘the only authority we have is that of service’.

Part of that service is to open our arms and hearts to the peripheries; whether they are geographical, emotional, financial, social or any other type we can think of. We are each called to follow Jesus and develop a spirituality of service looking for that lost or lone sheep who may be sitting right next to us.

On *The Peripheries*, we had many good ideas about making known all the opportunities for service that exist, but noting that many people feel unsure where to begin. The archdiocese can assist in making known what ministry is already available. There was discussion about making church premises more available for community needs. We thought that education on the Church’s social teaching was important, as was more visible advocacy around issues of social injustice.

On *Leaders* we heard some very useful insights from members with experience of leadership in the business environment – that everyone is a leader in their own way, and it is important to bring out that talent. This involves invitation and also encouragement. Some important points were made about the approaches in different cultural contexts.

On *Care of Creation*, we felt that there is much need to learn from the encyclical *Laudato Si*; that parishes need to reflect on the Pope’s teaching; and that these matters are urgent.

Yet it must be understood that many people in our communities – farmers, growers, those involved in aquaculture, and so on – have much practical wisdom and the way forward must include them.

As general reflections, we thought people were looking for better relationships between the parish and the archdiocese; for a sense of direction on many of the topics.

Nevertheless, we all have a personal responsibility to serve and cannot leave it to others.

The young and not so young need teaching . People want to learn and be more empowered with understanding. Formation through small groups or similar is a start. Catholic education could include more Christian education; be more spiritually based and less academic. There is a need to focus on the faith. High School Catholics are at a disadvantage because they do not know the basics of the faith.

There was a lot of comment from old and young that we do not consider young people and young workers enough. Some young people said that we do not take them seriously and we need to give them parish space and speaking opportunities. They would also like to contribute to important ethical issues, but we need to assist them. Meetings during school and business hours effectively exclude these groups.

We also heard that we need to break down society's preconceptions of leadership so that we have leaders from the whole spectrum of society. Furthermore we should focus on the priesthood and solo religious as important vocations.

Some would like more interactive and joyful services. There are other forms of service such as worship and testimony. Although Mass is vital, services need not celebrate the Eucharist. We noticed that other parishes use Te Reo far more than we do and we might like to consider increasing our use of Te Reo.

Last but not least, we thought that clear leadership is required on whether or not communion for certain groups is possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend a very energetic and empowering synod. It was an honour to be a part of redefining the priorities of the Catholic Church in Wellington; how to make it better in our contemporary world and how to reach out to form a stronger, more unified and connected community.

