

**Sacred Heart Church, Leighton Buzzard, Diocese of Northampton**  
**Synodal Meetings January 2022 Responses**

**Introduction**

7 meetings were held and the attendance overall was about 50. Meetings were arranged to accommodate as many parishioners as possible, including weekday evenings and weekends. Facilitators and note takers took general notes and themes from each session with the same questions being put to each group who attended. Notes were then compiled and collated; the following (with the exception of question 4) presents common themes collected by the facilitators and note takers and also less common responses: the notes below are a summarised version of the extensive discussions that were held at each meeting.

**Q1. What is it like being a Catholic today?**

**Common responses:** brings structure to life, meaning to life, community, basis of all I do, values against which I act, making me other-centred, a way of seeing the world, way of meeting/speaking with God. Provides a support system, a social setting, a guide on life's pathway, a place for faith to flourish, a 'family' where I belong, an anchor in troubled times.

**Less common responses:** a privilege, a structure during lockdown – something to hold on to when all else was very different. I just love being a Catholic. Eucharistic – real presence – like a kiss from Jesus. Following Jesus along the road, participating in the new path of the Church. It is the church/faith that goes right back to the apostles.

**Q2. What are your experiences of the Church doing something well?**

**Common responses:** liturgy and celebrations, involvement, bringing families together, different groups with common aim/values supporting and building Church, supportive priest(s) who make a difference, constancy of the Sacraments, a place where we meet the Lord. Helping the poor, social action locally and world-wide, sense of mission. Welcoming and sociability – it is a very welcoming and supportive parish. We are very fortunate in our priest. Friendship. Children's liturgy.

**Less common responses:** powerful witness of those who give their lives for the faith, bringing people back to their faith, working with other denominations and faiths, tolerance/acceptance of difference, inclusive. Mass can be found world-wide and is always constant. Church 'holds on to the treasure'. Resilience in face of opposition/disregard.

**Q3. What are your experiences of (the Church) when things have not gone so well?**

**Common responses:** not bringing children to their faith, letting the faithful of all ages slip away. Preparing children for exit from church life. Being over institutional, clergy who are not inclusive, powerful, not person centred. Women undervalued in the Church, abuse and cover-up. Decline in numbers. General Absolution not offered, even at specific times of the year, such as at Easter.

**Less common responses:** the Church is too traditional, takes the safe option, bows to secular world. Bishops are remote from the parishioners. Being over institutional; clergy who are not inclusive, controlling – laity need to be more involved in the running of a parish. Needs to

work in partnership more with other Christians. We don't have/generate passion for our faith. Locally, no Catholic school. The Church and its values are an ideal that we cannot live up to.

**Q4. What are our dreams for the Church?**

**Responses:** a Church that is ever-more outgoing, enthusiastic, welcoming and inclusive. Less rigid, more honest and open to change. Inclusive of all, regardless of difference. Ecumenism made real. Like a family that grows and flourishes. Lots of young people and families – our future. Vocations to priesthood and religious life, including married men and women deacons and priests. Masses for children. Churches that are full of faithful, vigorous, enthusiastic believers who want to be there. Establishing faith groups in the parish.