

What is God asking us?

Context:

Vatican 2 spoke of the 'signs of the times' we noted

Falling Mass attendance

Attendees – often older people

Global Warming causing climate change and consequences of this

Refugee crisis and responses to this

We asked what as Catholics are we asked to do, religion is not just for Sundays it should affect the rest of our lives, we should be responsible global citizens making a humane response to the problems of our world. We stay in the Church asking what is working, what is not, what do we keep what discard. We want to be relevant and inclusive. We want to be responsive to our local setting. It was noted that at the same time as the Western Caucasian church is in decline, many Asian communities flourish.

In small groups we prayed and discerned- the following are notes of the types of things we considered and where we believe the Spirit is calling us as a Church:

Spirituality, liturgy, sacraments and faith:

- Evolve / nurture our faith
- Love, backed up with mercy and forgiveness. Mercy is gentle as silence
- The power of prayer, get back to our roots
- The Church was built on charity and that story has been forgotten
- Reconciliation and retreats (sacraments), spiritual direction (RCIA)
- To praise, worship God and know why
- To witness and spread the Good News
- The values of and teachings of Jesus are relevant today in our society
- Singing in the church makes the Holy Mass alive
- How do we celebrate our nature / planet new symbols in the Church i.e. nature and our environment in our Liturgy
- Liturgical prayer for the cosmos – How to take care of our planet
- Make the language relevant, simplify and modernise;
- allow participation in preparation of prayers, eg children to formulate Eucharistic prayer;
- General Absolution to be allowed.
- with regard to hymns it was suggested some pre Vatican 2 ones be banned

Priesthood and ordination

- Rules about marriage for Priests should change
- Allow priests to marry, who understand family and can relate
- Open leadership and priesthood in the church to women,
- make celibacy optional,
- welcome back former priests,
- rid the church of clericalism, close the divide between priests and people
- Inclusion such as women deacon

Inclusion:

- Need more women in positions
- More involved laity
- Acceptance of divorced, gay, loving acceptance of everyone. Non-judgmental
- Very male dominated
- Women involved in the ministry
- For the plenary council to consider inclusiveness, i.e. divorcee, members of LBTGBTIQ -including lay people (women specially) to attend the Plenary Council at the discernment process
- change the rules about who may not participate in communion – make all truly welcome- divorcees, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people, non-Catholics etc.

Governance:

- Need to move away from clericism and change the current hierarchy of the church
- Need more women in positions
- Decision-making bodies reflection of the Church at all levels
- When will the Catholic Church start to allow women to participate in the governance of the Church?
- For the Plenary Council to consider women as deacons / part of the governance of the church including as part of the central governance in Rome

Outreach and justice:

- Engaging with youth in their way
- To walk the talk, follow the teaching of Laudato Si
- Needs of our environment
- Working from conservatism into a new cosmological view of understanding that we are earth people, matters and spirit (all is sacred, all is Holy, all is one) – New consciousness is passing

Communication:

- Like to pass on faith, we need to be getting the story out, PR selling the message.
- Overhaul media, social media, connecting with Catholics
- We have to keep it relevant and support priests / clergy/ lay people by telling good stories.
- Updates on what is happening in parish, welcome packs
- The message we want to get out is love, mercy, forgiveness

Use of resources/stewardship

- Forging links / bridges with other parishes – interfaith as well. Sharing speakers, resources.
- Library where we can nurture our faith
- Participation in Leadership- Parish Councils
- To start a small group to contribute to nurture each other

Mindful of transient, and those who cannot drive at night
 They are already other groups unable to do a day activity
 Suggestion – Saturday; To have a get together to nurture each other

Direction:

- Let go of the past
- To see things differently and to rebuild our love for each other
- Create a new story in our faith journey
- Move beyond the abuse – reinvent ourselves, be clear about our vision and who we are
- How do we help the people who concentrate on looking at the past to look at what lies ahead- the future?
- Reassessing criteria of a healthy church, some markers out date e.g. church attendance, number of vocations, RCIA
- Rules are man-made and may be changed eg ordination of women and see above re rules for reception of Communion.
- Rules do not make sense to young people. They exclude people yet the message of Christ is inclusive – man made hypocrisy not Christ made.
- In keeping with our knowledge of evolution, that we are still in evolution, consider teaching on original sin, Adam and Eve story. Our liturgical prayers may need revision. RE teachers give students room to question and challenge Church rules. Our schools should also be inclusive of all.
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A diagram: Faith is at the Centre of it all.

