



INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH-SPEAKING
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
PARISH OF LUXEMBOURG NOTRE-DAME
www.catholic.lu



Contribution to the Synodal Process

“Take the Gospel message out to the people” (one message from the workshop)

The three-stage synodal process in our Community started with an **online consultation**, aimed as broadly as possible to include our whole community and those on the fringes – or even outside it. 153 people responded, including 36 senior European School pupils who answered a slightly modified questionnaire. The second stage was a series of **small discussion groups** (readers and Eucharistic ministers, music group, catechists, Diakonia and Christian Meditation) who met to examine the three themes of the Synod in light of the results of the online consultation. The final stage was an **open workshop**, attended by some 40 people, which focused on the key issues that had emerged from the preceding stages. All three stages were organised around the key Synod themes of Communion, Participation and Mission. More details can be found at www.catholic.lu/synod-2021-2023/.

The synodal process was seen as a most welcome way of being involved in our Church; it **should be repeated regularly**. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity of working together which, coming **after the period of pandemic-related restrictions**, was just what was needed to **kick-start our community back into life again**. On the other hand, only 4 of the 117 respondents to the online consultation were in the 18-31 age-group, which suggests that this method was not successful in reaching out to them. We should also bear in mind that the group of respondents may not represent equally all the national groupings in the English-speaking Community, for whom English is a *lingua franca* but not their mother tongue.

It should be noted that this contribution focuses on issues that were raised and reinforced during the three phases of the consultation process. A number of other valuable points were also raised, which are not included here; these will be communicated to the Pastoral Council and will also be published on our website.

What do the children say?

Our Children's Liturgy group also took part in the Synodal process. Find out more at: <https://youtu.be/gis7xmnylUc>

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A. Communion

At local level, a clear message is that the members of the English-speaking Community see it as a good example of a **living community, inclusive and diverse**. Among the ingredients they identify for this are the **welcome of children**, the **openness to visitors and new members**, the **role of music in the liturgy**, and the **style of preaching of successive pastors**.

But there is still room for improvement; we must not be content with being a “Sunday parish”. Most importantly, the need for **more activities (catechetical and social) for young people** was highlighted, as was the **urgent need for an appropriate place for these activities**. Children and young people are key to the Church community; if we invest in them, we open ourselves up and create a knock-on effect that benefits the whole community.

Some in our community felt that parents have difficulty in getting their teenage children to go to Mass; the Church needs to examine **alternative ways of celebrating the Eucharist** while retaining the traditional Mass. In particular there should be more **frequent celebration of the Eucharist outside church buildings** and perhaps around a local community meal in someone’s home, as Jesus did.

On the negative side, **the scandals, both sexual and financial, within the global Church have left deep scars**. Communion is impossible without mutual trust. The institutional Church must therefore be seen to reform and atone. Many respondents mentioned these scandals as one of the reasons for discouragement; they live in a society that is at best indifferent, and frequently hostile, to religion in general and the Church in particular. In this context they value the support they find in a faith community; they ask for more opportunities to deepen their faith and knowledge.

B. Participation

The opportunity to take part in this synodal process was universally welcomed by respondents who expressed **a clear desire for such consultation to be repeated regularly within our own community, within the diocese and in the global Church**. As one respondent compellingly put it:

“Please, bishops and clergy, listen to this consultation of the laity, do not try to water it down, ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and have the courage to take the decisions necessary to keep God’s words relevant to His people.”

If participation is to be fully realised, we must move **away from an over-centralised and over-clerical Church governance** such as the present Vatican Curia is perceived to be. With this in mind, **greater lay participation in decision-making**, recognising the equality of all the baptised, is necessary. A number of respondents expressly welcomed Pope Francis’ efforts to reform the institutional Church.

Participation and inclusivity go hand-in-hand; two-thirds of the respondents consider that **priestly ministry should be open to all**, regardless of gender or marital status. Equally, the **contribution of women in the Church needs to be properly recognised**. Moreover, and this was especially clear from the European School pupils’ responses, there is a need to move away from the judgmental approach to certain categories of people (same-sex orientation, divorced and remarried): **“what would Jesus do?” is the key question**. We urge that Church teaching on these matters be reconsidered to ensure its compatibility with our mission to reflect God’s love for all. We firmly believe that such discerning re-evaluation would not undermine the essence of the Church but confirm it as a living and vibrant institution (teaching has, after all, constantly evolved in a number of areas since the time of the early Church).

At local level, as a community almost entirely composed of **non-nationals**, it is in our nature to welcome strangers in our midst. We would like to be more active in **building bridges over cultural and linguistic barriers towards the local Luxembourg Church**. To that end, a number of suggestions were put forward for a better integration of our community and a greater participation by it in the life of the Church in Luxembourg: **joint activities with other parishes** where language barriers might not be so important (such as tree-planting, social outreach, etc.); **regular meetings with our bishop**; encouraging our members **to take part in diocesan activities**. However, there is also a need for more **communication from the diocese in English**, given the place that English has taken in the fabric of Luxembourg society today. The possibility of more Masses in English or French in other parishes was also raised.

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C. Mission

Jesus invites us to embrace the Gospel message in our daily lives. We are all called to this mission, and we believe that by projecting a positive view of our faith and the joy it brings, more people will follow as the first Christians followed Jesus. To achieve this, our community has identified priorities and suggestions for our Church.

1. Outreach to young people

Young people are the future of our Church. We encourage the creation of more opportunities for young people to discover and embrace the positive message of the Gospel. This could be achieved through the **organisation of activities at community and diocesan level** that are engaging for young people (e.g. music, sport, scout groups) and that at the same time convey the message in a simple and practical way. For this, **we need spaces to meet - and we think this should be a priority for our local Church.**

We also encourage a **positive catechesis**, centred on a loving rather than on a punitive God, shifting away from the mindset that sees participation in the life of the Church (e.g. attendance at Sunday Mass) **as an obligation** and towards one which sees that participation **as an opportunity of enriching experiences**. For instance, we should promote the value of attending international youth gatherings (e.g. World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon).

2. Faith in action

We should not just listen to the Gospel every Sunday; we should try to act out its message every day of the week. As a community we are engaged in initiatives to help the needy and marginalised – but we think that we and the Church in general should be doing more. The Church at all levels should actively help believers to **put their faith into action** through **volunteering, fundraising and awareness-raising**. Such initiatives are not only good in their own right, they are good for the life of the community.

3. Openness and flexibility

We welcome a Church that establishes a **more open dialogue with other churches and faiths and people of no faith, especially those who have lost their faith**. We should be willing to learn from others. This would necessarily require a flexible approach and experimenting in new initiatives with other communities. In pursuing this objective, the Church needs to be more engaged with and more **connected to the modern world**, by recognising the evolution of our society and by **communicating** in a way that reaches all levels of society and people of all ages. Use of social media in a structured way, with all the necessary safeguards, could be an effective way to communicate the positive message of the Gospel to those who live at the margins or who have left the Church.

4. Inclusion

We believe in a **Church that mirrors the love of God for all people**. Sadly, many have left the Church because they felt unwelcome, and there are many groups within the Church that do not feel fully included for different reasons. Finding ways to ensure that all God's children find their home in the Church should be a priority. In particular:

- Women play a central role in the life of the Church and its mission, yet they are excluded from ordained ministry. Many Catholics, including in our Community, think there should be **access to the ordained ministry for women and would like the Church to work towards this**.
- Everyone who seeks spiritual nourishment in the Eucharist should be welcomed, **whether single, married, divorced or remarried**. Each person and their situation is unique, and the sanctity of marriage will not be undermined by including divorced and remarried parishioners at the Lord's table.
- Each one of us is made in God's image, and **all of us – regardless of our sexual orientation – should feel welcome in the Church**.