

# A THOUSAND VOICES

THE VIEWS, HOPES AND FEARS OF THE LAY FAITHFUL  
IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH

SEPTEMBER 2021

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# CONTENTS

Foreword from Bishop Philip Egan.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Methodology.....	6
Participants.....	7
Church Attendance.....	10
The Local Church.....	13
Catechesis.....	24
Faith.....	28
Prayer.....	34
Mass and Sacraments.....	38
Mission and Evangelisation.....	49
Service.....	54
Coronavirus Pandemic.....	59
The Wider Church.....	69
General Questions.....	78
Appendix.....	85

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# FOREWORD

## BISHOP PHILIP EGAN

I want to express profound thanks to all those of you who took part in the online survey in our Diocese of Portsmouth from November 2020 to February 2021. We had a magnificent response with 1,775 respondents sharing over 40,000 comments and moments of personal insight. I also thank Professor Tim Cain, and the team who completed the analysis for the Herculean effort involved in pulling together the results of this survey and presenting them for us here.

Over the last eighteen months we have all been coping with the tragic effects of the COVID pandemic and also its impact on the life and mission of the Church. During this time, I have been inspired by the many acts of generosity, outreach and support by clergy and the lay faithful across our Diocese to those in our communities, especially to the isolated, lonely and the vulnerable.

Before the lockdown, I had been thinking about the long-term plans and priorities for our Diocese of Portsmouth. Our purpose is always *Bringing People Closer to Jesus Christ through His Church*. We want to hand on the legacy, with all the treasures of our faith to the future generations. Christ promised to remain with His disciples until the end of time and that His Church would never fail (cf. Mt 16: 18 and 28: 20). This is not to say, of course, that the Church will not 'fail' in a particular place unless there is spiritual renewal and reflection. This is why I have commissioned a two-year period of spiritual renewal, starting with the Year of the Word 2020-2021 and followed by the Year of the Eucharist 2021-2022.

I always value greatly hearing what the faithful and clergy of our Diocese think and hope for. I wanted this survey to take place in order to understand more about you, our parishioners. The answers provided will be a huge help to understanding what we are doing well and where we need to change and adapt for the future as part of this spiritual renewal. In 2015 we undertook an online survey of non-practising Catholics within the Diocese called *Sharing Your Story*. The results were published in a book edited by Stephen Bullivant, Catherine Knowles, Hannah Vaughan-Spruce and Bernadette Duran *Why Catholics Leave, What They Miss and How They Might Return* (New York, Paulist: 2019). Its aim was to invite Catholics who no longer regularly practice their faith to share their story and for these testimonies to be listened to seriously.

Surveys and feedback like this contribute vital data and information for the Diocese. They enable us to discern “what the Spirit is saying to the church” (Rev 3: 22). Now from all this data, we must carefully devise a mission strategy for the Diocese for the next ten years. As this survey indicates, there is a real need for all of us to undergo deep spiritual renewal, to grow in holiness, to rediscover what it means to be a Christian, to be re-formed in faith, to take on responsibility and to become daring enough to reach out in mission and service to others, especially to the poor and needy.

Reading the results of this survey is challenging. Surveys can reveal the state of play. Whenever we shift our focus from the Person of Christ to the messy day-to-day reality of the Church and the Christian life, whenever we shift our focus from looking outwards in mission and service to looking inwards, we inevitably see the mess, the disagreement, sometimes pain, even anger and disillusion, as well as worry about the future. Everyone rightly has a view and everyone, rightly or wrongly, believes they have the solution! As your Bishop, I am concerned of course that we maintain the health and unity of the Church: clergy with clergy and faithful, faithful with faithful and clergy, our Diocese with the wider Church and the Successor of Peter. This is a massive challenge today for a Bishop. We need real repentance and healing. We are all at different points along the journey. It is also about levels of faith, formation in faith, and depth of conversion.





We need to keep Jesus at the centre of all we do. We need to be open to the creative power of the Holy Spirit. We need to look forward with joy one day to being with God in heaven. I believe the Lord wants us to be a welcoming, vibrant, 'broad-tent' Church with something for everyone, united amidst our diversity, with different strands and approaches. We need to have not just one but many methods, as long as all flows within the riverbanks of true doctrine, life and worship. We need to be outwardly focused on service and mission, committed to the goal and mission of Bringing People closer to Jesus Christ through His Church. Indeed, the very diversity of the Catholic Church today – did you know, for instance, that besides the Extraordinary and Ordinary Forms of the

Roman Rite, there are over twenty other forms or rites of Mass? – can help enrich and support this mission to individuals and groups in today's fragmented society.

If we pray, if we lead by holy example, if we act wisely, enacting a thought-through mission strategy that seeks to bring people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church, then I am sure we can dare to hope that God will bless us and by 2030 put us in good shape. I am sure He will enable us to respond as best we can to our contemporary secular culture with its affluence and materialism, its crisis of faith and its many human and social problems. The need for Christ and His salvation will never go away. I believe that by God's grace the ship will turn, and many fruits will come. After all, the need for Christ and His salvation will never go away. And already there are signs in the Diocese of a new Springtime, a new energy, a new enthusiasm. Even now, the Holy Spirit is wooing people towards Christ and His Church. All we need do is respond to His grace and take up the Cross. The prayer need only be simple. It needs an act of faith. It's encapsulated in this prayer: Jesus I trust in you. And so with gratitude and with the assurance of my prayers and best wishes, I commend this document to you.

In Corde Iesu,

+ Philip

**BISHOP PHILIP EGAN**  
BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

4th July 2021  
*Memorial of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati,*  
patron of our diocesan youth.



# INTRODUCTION

The *Survey of the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth* was commissioned by Philip, Bishop of Portsmouth, and was designed by senior staff of the Diocesan Curia. It was to be completed online by Catholics or former Catholics, living within the Diocese of Portsmouth.



In his introductory message, the Bishop stated his intention: 'to help me understand more about you, our parishioners across the Diocese, and those of you who were baptised Catholic but who no longer regularly come to Church, if at all'. A secondary aim was to understand 'how the Coronavirus pandemic has affected you' and 'what else we might do to help you during this difficult time'. It was intended to inform 'the long term plans and priorities for our Diocese of Portsmouth' by increasing understanding of 'what we are doing well and where we need to change and adapt', with the purpose of 'Bringing People Closer to Jesus Christ through His Church' and handing on 'all the treasures of our faith to the future generations'.

# METHODOLOGY

The survey was designed to elicit both an overall understanding of people's perceptions, via 'multiple choice' questions which were analysed quantitatively, and an in-depth understanding of particular matters via free-text questions, analysed qualitatively. It was uploaded to the diocesan website using *Survey Monkey*. It was 'live' between 30.11.2020 and 20.02.2021, i.e. during England's second Covid-19 lockdown.

Quantitative answers were analysed by *Survey Monkey* which automatically provides, in tabular form, the numbers and percentages of each response. These figures are reproduced within this report, either in tabular form or, when the analysis is simple, in prose when, for ease of reading, they are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. Readers should bear in mind that the survey allowed individuals to skip questions, which they frequently did, and, because we cannot make assumptions about those who skipped the question, the percentages apply to those who answered each particular question.

Although the fact that some participants skipped a question often makes little difference to the interpretation of results, when questions are skipped by many people, the results give an increasingly unreliable portrayal of the respondents as a whole, so where more than 266 respondents (15%) skipped a question, the percentage that skipped is given in the text.

The 29 qualitative (free text) answers were coded inductively by the authors. The main points in each response were identified and grouped together within themes and, where appropriate, themes were further divided into sub-themes. Comments within each theme were counted, summarised and comments were selected that represented the views of several respondents. (Short quotations appear within quotation marks; longer quotations are indented.) To ensure that we did not give disproportionate value to particular comments (of which there were roughly 40,000), we have reported the percentages of comments within each theme and raw numbers within sub-themes, where numbers are low and percentages become progressively less meaningful.

# PARTICIPANTS

There were 1,775 participants

The majority were over 61 years old

88% were either white British, European,  
or of Indian origin

96% regarded themselves as Catholic



The Participants

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

1,775 people completed the questionnaire. 60% of these were female; 38% were male; 2% preferred not to disclose their gender. 67% were married; 14% single; 8% widowed; 5% were divorced and single, whilst 2% or fewer fell into each of the remaining categories (divorced and married/annulled/prefer not to say.) 4% of participants were registered as disabled. Participants’ ages are shown below. As can be seen, nearly 55% of participants were over 61 and only 3% were 18-30. 49% were retired; 44% were either in employment or self-employed, and 4% were unemployed.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ 71+	31.65%	521
▼ 61-70	22.54%	371
▼ 51-60	17.80%	293
▼ 41-50	15.80%	260
▼ 31-40	6.99%	115
▼ 18-30	3.22%	53
▼ Prefer not to say	2.00%	33
TOTAL		1,646



Ethnicity of participants appears below. 72% of participants described themselves as white British and fewer than 1% described themselves as black:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ White British	72.38%	1,187
▼ Asian (Indian origin)	7.80%	128
▼ European	7.44%	122
▼ White other	5.06%	83
▼ Mixed origin	2.07%	34
▼ Prefer not to say	1.95%	32
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 1.52%	25
▼ Asian (Other origin)	0.73%	12
▼ Black (African origin)	0.61%	10
▼ Asian (Chinese origin)	0.30%	5
▼ Black (Other origin)	0.06%	1
▼ Asian (Pakistani origin)	0.06%	1
▼ Black (Caribbean origin)	0.00%	0
▼ Asian (Bangladeshi origin)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		1,640

81% were raised as Catholics. 96% ‘regard themselves to be Catholic’. In answer to the question, ‘Would you say that you now regard yourself to be Catholic?’ 17 respondents provided a written answer. Eight described themselves as Christians. first and Catholics second. Three described themselves as essentially Catholics rather than Christian. Four stated that they were on the fringes of, or no longer belonged to, the Catholic Church.





# CHURCH ATTENDANCE

87% attended Mass at least once per week

86% identified one Catholic church  
as their main place of worship

For 63%, this church was less  
than 2 miles from home

Church Attendance

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Questions 11 and 36-41 asked about the participants' church attendance. Before the pandemic, 87% attended Mass at least once a week, and 13% attended less frequently:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ More than once a week	32.11%	518
▼ At least weekly	54.56%	880
▼ Less often but at least once in two weeks	5.33%	86
▼ Less often but at least once a month	3.22%	52
▼ Less often but at least twice a year	2.36%	38
▼ Less often at least once a year	0.43%	7
▼ Less often than once a year	0.43%	7
▼ Never or practically never	0.93%	15
▼ Varies too much to say	0.62%	10
TOTAL		1,613

86% identified one Catholic Church as their main place of worship. For 63% of these, that church was less than 2 miles from their home, and for a further 25%, the church was 3-5 miles away. Only 3% travelled more than ten miles from home. (19% skipped this question.) Of the 167 respondents who had more than one main place of worship, 6% had 2 main places of worship; 4% had 3 main places and 1% had four or more, whilst 2% did not call any Catholic Church their main place of worship.

Asked to explain why more than one church was attended, 56 people stated that they attended more than one Church because of convenience and especially the convenience of Mass times (e.g. 'We live in a town with two parishes and feel equally comfortable in both. It's also helpful to have different Mass times at the weekend'). A further 26 people stated that they travel to more than one church because of the style of the liturgy ('There is much that is good about my parish, but I find the liturgy more sacred in style and the sermons more inspiring in a neighbouring parish').

21 people provided a negative comment focussing on clergy as being the main factor ('Because I do not have any confidence in our current priest'). 13 stated that they attend more than one church due to their own situations (e.g. 'when I visit my parents we attend our hometown church'). Nine people travelled to other churches for reasons of community; six to attend various events; and six because they felt more welcome at their alternative church. Other reasons cited included homily (5), family (3) need for variety (3), Covid (3), spirituality (3).

Asked, 'How far would you be prepared to travel to go to Mass?' 37% stated 3-5 miles, 31% said 5-10 miles and 28% would travel more than ten miles; only 4% would be unable to travel. However, 22% of all respondents skipped this question, so there is reason to treat these numbers with some degree of caution. (Also, the survey provided nothing between 'unable to travel' and '3-5 miles'.)



# THE LOCAL CHURCH

Church was seen as a place to worship God within a supportive community

61% served 'in a designated ministry' within their church

54% would like to help and be involved in the life of their church

88% saw their church as 'very' or 'somewhat' welcoming

78% saw their church as 'very' or 'somewhat' friendly to young families and children although 26% also commented negatively, mostly mentioning cliques

Asked, 'What else could your Church do to be more responsive to the needs of young families and children?' 564 answered, of whom 504 suggested improvements



The Local Church

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Responses to the question, ‘What does your local parish Church mean to you? – Tick all that apply’ suggest that participants saw their church as a place for going to Mass. Beyond this, they saw it as primarily a place for encountering God and secondly for giving and receiving support in community:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ A place to gather for weekly Mass	83.80%	1,335
▼ A place to pray	73.01%	1,163
▼ A place to encounter Jesus Christ and to develop a relationship with Him	70.75%	1,127
▼ A community where I can give support to others	61.64%	982
▼ A community where I feel supported	58.57%	933
▼ A place to learn about my faith	49.78%	793
▼ A place to be sociable	45.57%	726
▼ Other (please comment)	<a href="#">Responses</a> 9.60%	153
▼ I don't attend Church	1.57%	25
Total Respondents: 1,593		

153 people gave written comments. 55 of these were about the church as a community; 22 of these described it in terms such as ‘community’ ‘family’ ‘friends’ or ‘home’ (for example, ‘My home, my family, my identity, solace, refuge, reality’). Some suggested that a sense of community was desirable but lacking (e.g. one person described the local church as, ‘a community where I feel ignored’; another wrote, ‘Unfortunately there is little community under the current PP’).

For those whom church is primarily a place of worship, 12 stated how important the Mass and the sacraments were to them (‘A place to receive Jesus physically, spiritually and sacramentally’ and ‘The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the centre of my life’).



Eight wrote of learning ('A place to learn about the scriptures and the Church'); four of the sense of peace found in church ('Churches should be oases of peace, always open to welcome everyone').

Nine statements combined community and religion (e.g. 'A place to sing and praise God in community') and five mentioned mission ('A focal point where I can bring the message of the Good News to our town'). Of those who had negative views of church as a community, eight expressed the idea that community had been lost ('It used to be a community where I felt supported'). Twelve who wrote about clergy, expressed negative perceptions ('I now no longer attend church due to disappointing and despondent priest'). In contrast, a positive comment said, 'the parish priest ... is brilliant and such a hard worker. A true disciple of Christ who practices what he preaches'. Of those who expressed negative perceptions generally, there was both anger and disappointment with their parish church ('I wish it were more'). Of the eleven people who practised their faith beyond their parish church, four found their spiritual home in a religious order, and the others practised their faith more generally in their lives ('It is not only at church that I feel able to encounter Jesus'). Five people stated that their church was also where they worked ('I help maintain the garden and clean the church').

Many respondents were actively involved in 'the life of the Church'. 80% contributed financially to their church; 61% were in a designated ministry (including 4% who were in paid roles), and 33% served in a formal group or committee. 12% stated that they wanted to be involved but were not, either through lack of opportunities or some other reason:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I made a regular financial donation	80.32% 1,200
I served in a designated ministry e.g. (Reader, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Safeguarding representative, Children's Liturgy)	56.89% 850
I was a member of a parish committee or other formal group please tell us	32.80% 490
Other (please specify)	Responses 28.31% 423
I wanted to be involved but there is a reason stopping me at the moment	6.83% 102
I was not involved in the life of the Church	6.63% 99
There were no opportunities for me to be involved in my Church although I would be happy to help	4.95% 74
I was employed in a paid diocesan or parish role	4.35% 65
Total Respondents: 1,494	

423 people gave written answers to this question (16% skipped it). Of these, 316 had been involved in the life of the Church; 66 had never been involved or were no longer involved and cited reasons for their lack of involvement; and 42 people gave other responses.

Of the 316 people who had been involved in the life of the Church, 56 had been involved in leadership or organisation of parish or Church life. 71 had been involved in the upkeep of the parish, this included a wide range of roles including cleaning, hospitality, flower-arranging, finances and grounds maintenance; one former church cleaner noted, 'Sometimes the church is very set in its ways especially by the people who run it and is not open to new ideas or adapting to change'. 37 respondents had been involved in outreach or social action activities. 19 had been in Ministry such as altar serving, although one former Altar Server noted 'As a young adult I feel opportunities are limited'. 30 respondents were involved in singing, one respondent stated, 'Singing is God's gift, I am but the vehicle in which He chooses to allow me to demonstrate what tiny bit of faith I have'. 17 people were involved in schools, mostly as governors. 15 respondents were involved in Sacramental preparation. Six commented on their financial contributions. 65 respondents were involved in various other ways, usually as members of groups, including prayer groups (8), music (5), Cafod or Fairtrade (5), Catechesis (5); bible study (4); Catenians (4). Many participants had multiple commitments:

— “ —

*... leading First Holy Communion Courses, Pre-marriage groups. I trained as a Catholic Marriage Counsellor and led Children's Liturgy on Sundays. I have also been a Governor of a Catholic Primary School.*

— ” —

66 respondents had never been involved in the life of the Church or were no longer involved and cited reasons for this. One respondent noted that they felt 'remote and disconnected to the Church so prefer to be a person in the pew'. 27 respondents cited personal circumstances for not being involved in the life of the Church, these included old-age, disability, illness, career-pressures, and priorities at home.

31 respondents were not involved in the life of the Church due to a grievance with the parish, clergy or Church; three mentioned a return to pre-Vatican 2 ('I have recently resigned my duties, as I do not feel able to go back to the pre-Vatican 2 ethos, practices, and rituals favoured by our PP'), two people mentioned sexual abuse scandals, and one respondent felt, 'As a woman who has held positions of responsibility throughout my life I have never felt included in the life of the church'; another noted, '[we] need a more stable community, one priest comes and builds things up, another then knocks everything down and then we get one who doesn't know where to start.'

24 stated that they had been involved in general ways ('I'm active') and 11 stated that they would like more involvement. Some dilemmas of lay involvement in parishes are captured in these quotations, the first from an enthusiastic lay person and the second, presumably from a priest or deacon:

— “ —

*I am strongly in favour of being involved in a Parish Committee (a Pastoral Team etc) but these have been disbanded. This is a terrible mistake by this diocese. Our priests have too much to cope with and need to delegate all they can to the people of the church. We possess expertise in numerous aspects that would help to run the parish. ... It's hopeless now. We cannot even run a good set of choirs for our two churches and all organisation falls on our excellent but grossly overloaded parish priest. This is not the case in neighbouring diocese.*

*I do too much - there is a reluctance amongst the laity to commit, and often when they do commit, they become unreliable, which is very sad.*

— ” —

897 people (66%) answered the invitation to ‘tell us ... about how you would like to help and be involved in the life of the Church’. 108 of these were already involved in the life of the church; 92 were no longer involved and gave reasons for them no longer participating such as, ‘At my age the time has come to let younger people become more involved. I believe this is important, so the same people do not “take over” and “dominate” areas of Church life’.

35 respondents gave negative statements about their Church or parish priest, explaining why they would not get involved until changes were made. Among these were 12 responses about priests, nine responses concerning the parish and 14 regarding the church. One respondent wrote,

— “ —

*I was the Chair of the Parish Council, but it was scrapped. I was a part of the marriage preparation team, but it was scrapped. I was a teacher of readers but it was scrapped. I was a steward but it was scrapped. I used to donate my tithe by standing order but as there is no accountability, I refuse to give any financial support to the church.*

— ” —

Eight respondents commented on inclusion being an issue of which five concerned gender bias; as one respondent commented ‘As a woman and lay person, I have felt ignored other than “turn up, pay up, put up” (shut up is the result.)’

297 people either didn’t know how they could help but were willing to help if they were asked, or gave general responses such as ‘would be happy to help’. 358 stated how they would like to become more involved in the life of the church. Of these, 126 want to be involved with Education and courses (59) or organising groups (57) or social activities (11) within the parish.

95 mentioned the liturgy: 50 were committed to reading in church; 21 respondents were interested in music, 18 wanted to become Eucharistic Ministers, and six wanted to be Altar Servers. A further 76 respondents wanted to be involved in some form of outreach, for example:

— “ —————

*I would really like to see a lay leadership team being set up in the parish. Our parish priest does an excellent job fulfilling his ordained role of administering the Sacraments, but the parish should be reaching out to the community around it, and this can only be done if the laity are called on to assist and at times lead.*

————— ” —

49 would like to be involved with the upkeep of the parish, this included a wide range of roles such as welcoming (20), finance (14), cleaning (6), flower-arranging (4), driving (3), and improving communication (2). 12 respondents wanted to become involved in other ways.

Asked, ‘How welcoming is the Church that you attend?’ 60% selected ‘very welcoming’; 28% ‘somewhat friendly’ and only 3% selected ‘Not at all welcoming’, although 21% skipped this question. Asked to explain their answers, 37% skipped the question. Of the 1,121 who answered it, 743 (66%) commented positively on the welcome that they receive. For example,



— “ —

*I am always welcomed with a smile as I enter Church. Our Priest is approachable, thoughtful and friendly. There are people I know as well as familiar faces. It is nice when out and about to get a smile or look of acknowledgement from a familiar face from the Parish. It all helps to make me feel like I am part of the Church community.*

— ” —

620 of those responses were non-specific or referred to those welcoming at the door. 73 specifically named the impact their priest and his leadership had on creating a welcoming parish:

— “ —

*[Parish] is led by an inspiring Spirit-filled Priest ... who welcomes everyone. Consequently, the whole atmosphere of our growing parish is friendly and welcoming. It has massively grown my faith.*

*Very good priest, excellent social environment, great communication lines (weekly letters, online Mass) and belonging feeling.*

— ” —

6% attributed their sense of welcome to the length of time they had been in the parish, and were not all sure that newer parishioners would share the same viewpoint. 26% of the respondents commented negatively about the welcome they received. 75% of these responses were not specific or said either that they were not welcomed, or that they felt excluded from the parish because it had cliques. For example,

— “ —

*There are people to welcome people with hymn books and newsletters etc and there is an air of friendliness, but it is directed to other parishioners. Few people make a point of introducing themselves to strangers or newcomers - and one tends to know only those who you already know.*

— ” —

A recurrent theme within this category was that welcoming did not always feel inclusive ('People have been friendly, but I don't have the opportunity to engage or talk with anyone. I can't say I know anyone's names or that they know mine') and one person suggested, 'You do need to become involved in activities if you are to get to know others'.

49 respondents (16%) referred to the negative impact a priest had on a community. This included reference to the impact of a change of priest, pre-Vatican 2 liturgy style, the difficulty understanding priests from other countries and lack of leadership and welcome. Of those who responded neither positively or negatively, 13 respondents did not value the place of welcome in a parish ('I'm not looking for a welcome. The fewer over-smiling 'welcomers'; the better. If I wanted that I'd go and join the protestants. Or the Jehovah's Witnesses.').

Asked specifically how friendly the Church is to young families and children, 52% selected 'Very friendly' and 26% 'Somewhat friendly'. Again, only 3% selected 'not at all friendly':

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very friendly	52.18%	730
Somewhat friendly	25.95%	363
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	8.86%	124
Not at all friendly to children	2.86%	40
Don't Know	9.72%	136
I don't attend a Church and would not know	0.43%	6
TOTAL		1,399

564 people (43%) answered the question, 'What else could your Church do to be more responsive to the needs of young families and children?' Of these, 29 felt that the parish did not need to do anything more to be more responsive to the needs of families and children. 25 of these felt that the existing provision was good or met the needs of the parish. One respondent noted, 'Our Parish is open to ideas and is incredibly friendly and welcoming to all. I wish I had had this when my 4 children were young'.



185 respondents felt there needed to be better provision in place to be more responsive to the needs of young families and children. Of these, 66 people felt that there needed to be more activities, groups, or events for children or families – some described occasional events; others described regular activities. Most commonly cited were youth groups (15 comments); social events (8); ‘mother and children’ groups (6) and ‘family groups’ (5), while 13 wanted more activities generally.

29 felt there needed to be more provision for Children’s Liturgy, and 27 felt the church should have a separate space for children; three of these mentioned a ‘crying room’ others a play area or crèche. 12 wanted to see better faith formation; nine wanted more resources in church (e.g. books or toys); six, more online provision, and four, better support for families.

124 respondents felt that a change in attitude was needed for the Church to be more responsive to the needs of young families and children. 54 people felt that the Church should be more welcoming and accepting of families with children. More tolerance of the noise generated by children was a recurring theme, one respondent noting, ‘if you don’t hear crying, your parish is dying’ another, ‘it’s very important that priests support parents with small children who make the effort to bring their children to mass’, another that ‘peoples’ comments about young children’s behaviour have stopped some people coming to the parish’. 29 respondents felt the Church needed to be more relevant, accessible or engaging for children or young people (‘Young people ... seem to struggle with the relevance of the church/services/structure to their own lives and society as it is today’). 30 respondents felt that children should be involved more in Mass or parish life; one noted that the Church should ‘Listen to what the young people have to say and what they can contribute’. Several people mentioned involving children in Mass and activities (‘Find them jobs, small responsibilities that make them feel a valued part of the community’).

38 people focused their response on Mass. Of these, 23 felt there should be provision for family-friendly Mass, and nine people felt that Mass times in their parish did not suit the needs of families with children. On the other hand, six people felt that Mass should not be adapted for children; two felt that children should have a separate experience and be taken out of Mass, and one felt that 'Family Mass excludes people'.

There were 189 'other' responses to this question. These responses were very varied, but a number of themes occurred. 21 mentioned the clergy ('Our priests have engaged very well with our young families' needs but it needs to be across the board as children like variety'). 17 did not know what the Church could do to be more responsive to the needs of young families and children and 17 respondents mentioned Catholic schools: ("We have no Catholic schools so there is no opportunity for parents and children to form a community"). Nine mentioned the need for better facilities; 15 noted that there were few young people in the parish, one of whom noted, "Chicken and egg situation. Need more children to come and join so more children can be encouraged to join."

Nine felt there needed to be a focus on teens and young adults generally and seven mentioned the need for volunteers; three people felt there should be less tolerance of children running around or being noisy in church, and two felt the Church should focus on environmental (ecological) issues.



# CATECHESIS

Over 50% had attended retreats, 40% pilgrimages, and 38% had attended *Alpha*

Many of those who had attended one event had attended several

86% had attended preparation courses for First Holy Communion and Confirmation;  
72% had attended preparation for marriage

Catechesis

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Questions 27-28, 30-31 and 34-35 asked about the participants' experience of catechesis. 79% of respondents stated that they had undertaken faith development at some point in their lives (16% skipped the question). When asked if they had attended specific examples of faith development, 39% skipped the question. Of those who answered, 50% had attended retreats, 40% had attended a parish pilgrimage and substantial numbers had attended *Alpha*, *Called and Gifted*, *CaFE* or a week of guided prayer (see below). Given these percentages, it is reasonable to assume that many of these had taken multiple opportunities to develop their faith.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Special retreats	50.09% 546
▼ Other (please specify) <span>Responses</span>	43.30% 472
▼ Parish pilgrimage	39.91% 435
▼ Alpha	37.89% 413
▼ Called and Gifted	28.90% 315
▼ CaFE	18.62% 203
▼ Week of Guided Prayer	18.26% 199
▼ Sycamore	3.76% 41
Total Respondents: 1,090	

472 people gave a written answer to this question, of whom 102 respondents had been on at least one retreat or pilgrimage. 21 of these had been to Lourdes and nine to the Holy Land. Most of those who attended retreats or pilgrimages had attended several: one person had been to Lourdes 'every year for the past 15' and several listed those they had attended ('Lourdes Pilgrimage, Aylesford Pilgrimages, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Miraculous Relic Image Pilgrimage to Cathedrals and Our Lady of Fatima Pilgrimage Statue to Cathedrals').

92 respondents had participated in courses, training or talks; 11 of these had been involved in catechist training; five in support or preparation for marriage; and 15 held a qualification related to their faith.





Of the 41 respondents who had been involved with a programme for entering the Catholic Church; 39 had been involved in the RCIA. Some were involved as participants, others as sponsors or leaders. One respondent noted 'I found leading the RCIA course was developmental' and another had taken part in *Journey into faith* '... and I converted'.

31 people had received catechesis through a religious community or movement; 27 listed various events they had attended; 24 listed Bible study or prayer groups; 19 had been involved through other Dioceses or Churches, of whom 5 specified ecumenical activities; 19 had participated online; seven mentioned parish mission; seven had participated in activities for Lent, Easter or Advent; six had been involved in youth activities, such as *World Youth Day* or *Youth 2000*; six had attended through their workplace; and four mentioned the role of these events when discerning their vocations.

There were 71 responses to this question which we categorised as 'Other'. Many of these appear to refer to the title of events (e.g. *Christianity explored*; *Conversation with God*; *Labourers in the vineyard*). Nine referred to discussion groups and four referred to reading as a substitute for events ('I've done it myself with reading over many years'). Additionally, there were six negative responses, expressing dissatisfaction with the events attended.

Asked if they had attended sacramental preparation programmes, 86% had attended preparation for First Holy Communion, 86% confirmation, 72% marriage, 57% baptism (presumably for their children). 38% had attended the RCIA programme and, notably, 78 people (13%) had undergone preparation for Holy Orders. When asked how these programmes had influenced their faith journey on a scale of 0-100, the mean was 65, suggesting a moderate positive effect overall although with very wide variation: 173 participants selected 100 and 43 selected zero, indicating that 16% had extremely strong positive or negative responses to these programmes.

236 respondents provided more detail (and 22% skipped the question). 80 stated the type of programme they had attended, including preparation to be Eucharistic ministers and readers. 29 stated that they had been prepared for the sacraments a long time ago or at school. 21 mentioned preparation for entry into the Catholic church, either through an RCIA programme or by individual priests; the *Alpha* programme was also mentioned. 20 had attended courses which were probably organised beyond parishes: Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans and Servites were specified, and five responses stated that their formation had come from within the Anglican church.

70 respondents stated that they had led or helped with sacramental preparation programmes (although some of the programmes mentioned were not sacramental preparation programmes as such) and a further nine had attended programmes with their children. Twenty stated that they had not attended any programmes, ten of these stated that they weren't available at the time when they first received the sacraments.

Participants with children aged up to 18 were asked about the influence of various programmes on their children. 295 respondents (16%) answered the question. Of these, 83% had attended a programme to prepare them for First Holy Communion and 57% for Confirmation. 39% had attended a youth club; 35% had attended youth retreats or pilgrimages and 29% had attended church holiday clubs. 78% had attended another church-based activity. Asked to rate how these programmes had influenced their faith journey on a scale of 0-100, the average was 62, again suggesting a moderately positive effect, again with a wide variation (26 people selected 100 and seven selected 0).

62 respondents gave a written answer. 18 stated that their children were too young to attend the programmes mentioned in the question, and 6 stated that their children undertook the programmes at their schools rather than in their parishes. 15 said that their children had attended events that were not mentioned in the question such as *Fanning The Flame*, *Ascent*, *Celebrate*, *New Dawn* and *Youth Alpha*. Five said that their children had attended faith events run by churches other than Catholic ones (Church of England and Methodist churches were mentioned.)



# FAITH

98% described their faith as 'very' or 'somewhat' important to them

Many stated that their faith influenced all aspects of their lives

Only 7% had stopped practising their faith

Participants selected the weekly homily as the best way to develop their faith

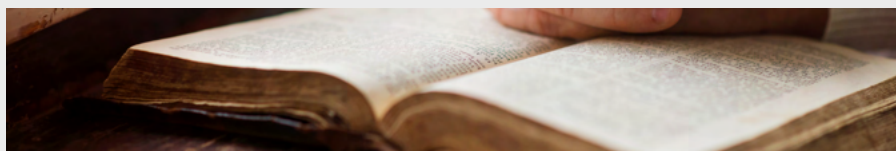
Priests were seen as both enablers and inhibitors to participants' faith development

## Faith

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Questions 12-13, 24 and 29 asked participants about their faith. 88% described their faith as 'very important' to them; 10% described it as 'somewhat important' and only 2% said it was either 'neutral' or 'not important'. Participants agreed that their faith influenced their choice of school for their child (83%); their involvement in their local community (76%); the way in which they spent their free time (75%); how they vote (68%); their friendship groups (59%) and their choice of job (45%). (17% skipped the question.)

Of the 538 participants who volunteered written responses, 216 (55%) felt that their faith influenced all aspects of their life ('My vocation as a married man, as a parent, the way I act in society ... what to/not watch on the media. It steers my day to day decisions'). 77 commented on the influence of faith on their marriage and family life, including their choice of partner and the way in which they raised their children. 46 said that faith motivated them to donate to charities or to volunteer ('The way I use my money and time, to help build up the Church'); 44 said that it influenced their choice of leisure activities, particularly their choice of television programmes or books. 35 respondents expressed the importance their faith had to them in times of difficulty, when sharing their faith or when participating in prayer or reading scripture.



Question 12 asked, 'If you have stopped practising your faith, please tell us in a few sentences what influenced your decision and what if anything would make you reconsider'. For 93% of respondents, this question was not applicable – i.e. they had not stopped practising their faith. Within the remaining 7%, the reasons cited were (in order of magnitude) clergy, aspects of doctrine, experience of Mass and personal issues.

For 42 respondents, the prime reason for leaving the church was to do with clergy. Twelve respondents cited abuse scandals; two of these reported some connection with abusive clergy. Some stated that abuse itself had prompted them to stop practising whilst others mentioned the church's response to abuse (e.g. 'To find that in the house of God you were housing and protecting individuals that hurt and destroyed the innocent is appalling'). Seven expressed negative feelings about communication with priests; four found their priest's religious or political views uncomfortable and three perceived priests as overly concerned with money.

Perceptions of priests also had a positive effect; one respondent stated a reason for returning to the church ('Inspired by father xxx's work with the homeless') and another described leaving, and returning to the church through perceptions of individual priests:

— “ —

*I had stopped because of an over zealous priest who was heavily into Latin Mass and his harsh, unyielding attitude to God and his view of appropriate witness turned me away. Then I met a wonderful priest who opened the door to light and tolerance and really showed the true Love of God and now I have returned to practising my faith and am proud to be a Catholic.*

— ” —

Ten respondents expressed negative perceptions of church leaders (as distinct from 'priests'); six specified 'bishop' or 'diocese'. 19 respondents had personal issues with attending church. Six had health problems, and/or fear of catching Covid-19; four had disabilities which made attendance problematic and others cited barriers of pregnancy, bereavement and other life issues.

14 respondents cited aspects of church doctrine as reasons for their leaving the church. Five cited their divorces, including one who had not divorced but who had married a divorced man. Four stated that their views were not in line with church teaching generally; others specified feeling excluded because of being gay, using IVF or using contraception. Eleven respondents expressed negative experience of attending Mass and nine stated that they practiced their spirituality in places other than their parish church, including other denominations, reading the bible and attending the Society of St. Pius X.

Participants were asked, ‘What do you think would help you and your family to develop your faith further?’ Of the given options, the homily at mass was by far the most frequently selected, followed by small group discussions and bible studies:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ The Homily at Mass	61.41%	891
▼ Small group discussions	38.25%	555
▼ Bible studies	37.63%	546
▼ Information in newsletters	36.25%	526
▼ Opportunities to worship outside of Mass – e.g. adoration, rosary.	32.25%	468
▼ Online courses	28.33%	411
▼ Church website resources	26.19%	380
▼ Written resources	23.02%	334
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses	20.26%
▼ Book club	12.54%	182
▼ I'm not interested in developing further	5.31%	77
Total Respondents: 1,451		

294 respondents gave written answers to this question (18% skipped the question). Of these, 55 provided negative comments about the clergy and/or the position of the Church on particular areas of teaching. For example,

— “ —  
*Our PP is a good man but not suitable to be a PP. He would be better in a religious community where he did not have to visit the sick/dying, remember peoples' names, be open to answering questions and generally communicate with people.*  
— ” —



27 respondents mentioned the weekly Homily. Most of those who mentioned the subject of the homily wanted homilies to link the readings of the day with their lives ('Our priest [Name] has a great gift for delivering beautiful sermons which relate to the Gospel reading and to our lives today'). One placed the focus elsewhere:

— “ —

*We need strong sermons again about e.g. the Four Last Things, Benediction, Gregorian Chant, Fatima ... the Anti Christ, How Jesus established here on Earth only one Church, the Catholic Church.*

— ” —

Seven wanted short homilies ('Homilies need to be sharper and shorter!') although one wanted longer ones ('A 7 minute homily is not sufficient to dig deeper'). Three wanted greater variety. This statement explained the importance of the weekly homily:

— “ —

*I think the homily is so important as, for many busy families, it is the only chance for them to stop for ten minutes and receive some sort of formation.*

— ” —



25 people suggested various faith-oriented activities (e.g. 'There are so many ways children [and] teens could be supported in our parish! Youth groups, visitors giving talks, worship events').

Many of the additional comments supported the earlier statistics. 18 people requested some form of direct teaching, and a further 18 wanted opportunities for pilgrimage and retreats. 16 people asked for group discussions including opportunities for speakers to deliver talks on aspects about the faith, whilst a further 16 people asked for the development of other group opportunities like *Alpha*. 13 saw an opportunity for faith development through attention to detail in the liturgy and through the sacraments ('Being allowed to attend a QUIET and meaningful Mass and given time to think and reflect') and 12 asked for more social events.

Other responses included comments about welcoming communities (12), Resources (11), the importance of prayer (10), focus on scripture (9), the need for mission-based activity (8), mixed marriage support (8), the importance of personal witness (6), Spiritual Direction (4), events, combining aspects both social and religious (4), support for the isolated (4), interfaith dialogue (3), a need for better buildings and facilities (2), new ministries (2) and processions (1). Finally, eight respondents felt that they had a self-blockage to developing their own faith and a further seven thought that there were already sufficient opportunities.





# PRAYER

66% prayed every day

Over 50% prayed the rosary; 44% used the bible

Participants' description of prayer ranged from 'chatting with God' to praying the Divine Office

Participants used a variety of online resources and apps

Only 3% were not interested in developing their prayer lives

Prayer

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Questions 16-18 asked about participants' perceptions of prayer. 66% of participants said that they pray every day and fewer than 4% pray less than once per week, although 22% would like to pray more often (The figures add up to more than 100% because the answers were not mutually exclusive):

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ It is essential to me and I make time each day for prayer	65.99%	1,046
▼ I pray at least 3 times per week	27.07%	429
▼ I would like to pray more often but I find it difficult to give enough time to prayer	22.33%	354
▼ I only pray at Mass	6.75%	107
▼ I would pray more often but I do not know how to pray	5.30%	84
▼ I only pray in times of crisis	5.17%	82
▼ I pray less than once a week	3.03%	48
▼ I never pray and it is not important to me.	0.57%	9
Total Respondents: 1,585		

Participants were invited to select (and, in a free text section, name) any devotions that were particularly important to them. 16% skipped the question; of those who answered, over 50% selected the Rosary, while bible reading, Adoration, Stations of the Cross and the Angelus were selected by over 20%:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Rosary	50.30%	753
▼ Bible reading	43.69%	654
▼ Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament – a holy hour	36.94%	553
▼ Stations of the Cross	36.47%	546
▼ Angelus	21.11%	316
▼ Other (please specify)	19.37%	290
▼ Daily office	18.90%	283
▼ Chaplet of Divine Mercy	17.17%	257
▼ N/A	14.23%	213
▼ Friday devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus	10.69%	160
▼ First Saturday devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary	9.49%	142
Total Respondents: 1,497		

Among the 290 written responses, 107 referred to private prayer and 26 to meditation or contemplation ('Meditation in the Ignatian way is also helpful - and has helped me develop a personal relationship with God.') Some described their prayer as spontaneous or informal ('My own personal conversations with God through the day'). Others described a more formal approach to prayer: In addition to the respondent who meditated 'in the Ignatian way', ten people mentioned *Lectio Divina* and two the *Examen*; others mentioned Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer, which probably refers, at least in some instances, to praying the Divine Office.

44 people mentioned using readings, mostly from the bible ('*Bible Alive* and other daily reflections'); eight of these stated that their daily readings were those specified for the Mass. Others referred to readings from other Christian sources ('Reading articles from Christian publications'); various authors were named, including Pope Francis, Francis Fernandez, Bishop Barron, John Maine, Richard Rohr and Daniel O' Leary. Nine people mentioned the use of apps or websites (e.g. *Pray as you go*; *Daily Shots*); it is worth noting that many of these print and online sources draw heavily on the bible.





15 respondents mentioned novenas; specific novenas were mentioned as well as a general love of novenas. 11 people referred to either 'praise and worship' or 'Taize', both of which suggest singing. Eight people stressed the centrality of the Mass ('Mass is by far [the] most important'). Five stated that they pray with their family and five others pray in prayer groups. Four people mentioned praying to (named) saints and three stated that they pray in tongues.

23 people wrote about having difficulties with devotions. 14 were critical of devotions ('I find most of these arcane'); nine located their difficulties within themselves ('Sorry, they all seem a bit over the top. Maybe I should be a Quaker').

Asked, 'Is there more the Church can do to help you to pray more often or deepen your prayer life? – tick all that apply' only 3% agreed with the statement 'I am not interested in developing my prayer life'. 18% skipped the question but the other statements were fairly evenly distributed with the exception of accompanied prayer, and even that was supported by 212 respondents:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Make more resources and ideas available through my parish	32.72%	479
▼ Make more resources available online	31.49%	461
▼ If Churches were open all day I would drop in to say a prayer	31.35%	459
▼ A structured course on prayer would be of benefit to me	26.09%	382
▼ Organised devotions could be more frequently provided in my parish	24.39%	357
▼ I do not need any help as I have all I need to help me to pray	21.45%	314
▼ Accompanied prayer (when someone prays with me) would be of interest to me	14.48%	212
▼ I am not interested in developing my prayer life	2.94%	43
Total Respondents: 1,464		

# MASS AND THE SACRAMENTS

22% of participants had not received  
Reconciliation for over a year

Inhibitors included bad experiences of  
Reconciliation and knowing the priest

87% received the Eucharist at least once per week

80% believed in the Real Presence of  
Jesus in the Eucharist

Asked about their preferred styles of Mass,  
45% selected Novus Ordo and 10% selected  
the Traditional Latin Mass

Some people in both these groups strongly  
disliked the other style

Mass and Sacraments

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

## Reconciliation

Participants were asked their perceptions of sacramental life. With regard to Reconciliation, few respondents regularly received the sacrament. At the time of the survey, 22% had not received the sacrament for more than a year and 8% believed that it is not essential to the practice of their faith, although 15% received it at least once per month and 14% received it several times each year:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I have not received the sacrament of reconciliation for more than a year	21.87%	337
I receive the sacrament at least twice a year, usually around Christmas and Easter	19.92%	307
Anything else you would like to add	Responses 18.36%	283
Essential and I receive the sacrament at least once a month if I can	15.44%	238
I receive the sacrament less than monthly but several times each year	14.21%	219
I do not think this sacrament is important to the practice of my faith	8.44%	130
N/A	1.75%	27
TOTAL		1,541

Asked, ‘What are your views on the Sacrament of Reconciliation?’ 283 respondents (18%) gave written answers, including 18 who stated the frequency with which they attended the sacrament (e.g. ‘once a year’). A large number (41 for Q19, 46 for Q20) commented positively on reconciliation services with general absolution:

— “ —

*I deeply regret the loss of the wonderful penitential services we used to have with a general absolution. They were far more meaningful and useful than sitting talking to a priest. I have seen people moved to tears by the beauty and community feel of them.*

— ” —



25 stated that they confess their sins directly to God ('I prefer to confess directly to Jesus. I don't want to bother priests with my stupid sins') six of these stated that they do so in the penitential rite at Mass. The reasons for preferring a different form of reconciliation (communal or individual) were both a) that individual confession with a priest was experienced as a formulaic ritual, and b) that it is embarrassing and tends to infantilise the penitent ('Groveling to clergy is a thing of the past. We are not children to be told to own up.')

Although one person admitted that laziness prevented him or her from receiving the sacrament, others presented personal experiences as reasons for their views:

— “ —

*If your prayer life is deep and you have that close relationship with God you do not need a priest's intervention. I have always found the sacrament of reconciliation awkward and unfulfilling.*

— ” —

27 respondents commented negatively about priests. 16 of these made general comments about priests (e.g. 'I find it difficult to confess to a parish priest who is not friendly and approachable'), and eleven reported having had bad personal experience of reconciliation. ('I had a very bad experience with my first confession when received as an adult and it has put me off for life'). Two mentioned several bad experiences; for the others, a single bad experience was sufficient for them to decide not to ask for reconciliation again. Four wrote that they could not trust priests (e.g. 'I'm sorry to say due to the actions of too many priests in the past I've lost confidence in their fidelity'). In contrast, four respondents commented positively about priests, e.g.

— “ —

*It is a wonderful Sacrament and brings me joy and peace. Priests need to be loving and understanding and I have been blessed because the various Priests who have been my Confessors have been very special.*

— ” —



18 mentioned the effect of familiarity ('I still find it difficult sharing such personal items with someone I meet each week'). 16 of these found it difficult to confess to a priest they know well and some stated that they travel to churches where they are not known, to confess. The other two stated a preference for confessing to a priest they know ('I prefer to sit face to face, informally, with a priest I can trust.')

45 stated either that they find the sacrament important or that they believe they should attend more frequently than they do:

— “ —

*... this last year 2020 was the first time in a long time I had been to confession and it was great. I felt freedom after I confessed. I will be going more often.*

” —

The 'formulaic' reason for some not attending was also a reason for attending less frequently ('I do believe we need confession. However I just seem to keep repeating the same few sins over and over'.) 22 of these cited Covid as a reason for not going to reconciliation ('Usually go once a year but have not been for over a year because of pandemic'). Three of these asked for reconciliation online.

21 stated that they would appreciate some form of guidance ('We need to be taught an adult understanding of sin and reconciliation), and some mentioned that their understanding of the sacrament had not evolved since childhood ('Guidance in making a good confession would be useful. I feel I am sometimes using a very childlike list'). 19 had logistical problems: times for confession were inconvenient or they had problems kneeling in the confessional. Eight gave doctrinal reasons for not attending; five of these felt excluded because they were divorced. Five asked for spiritual direction, for example:

— “ —

*I find confession difficult because I feel pressured about taking 'too long'. I was told that Reconciliation is not the same as 'spiritual direction'. But THAT is what I NEED.*

— ” —

Asked, 'Is there any help we can provide to make it easier for you to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation again or more regularly?' 18% skipped the question. Of those who answered, 63% selected positive suggestions:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Offer more frequent times for confession	21.38%	313
▼ If no, (please tell us why?)	Responses 21.38%	313
▼ Offer a guide on how to make a good confession online or in print	20.49%	300
▼ No	15.98%	234
▼ Offer a refresher on what the sacrament is why it is important and how to receive it	11.07%	162
▼ Offer more teaching in the homily at Mass	9.70%	142
TOTAL		1,464

313 gave written responses. Of these, 109 gave responses which indicated that they would be very unlikely to receive the sacrament again and a further 43 stated that the sacrament is readily available to them. Of those unlikely to receive the sacrament again, 30 stated that they confess directly to God and nine wrote that their 'reconciliation' occurs during the mass ('The prayers of confession at the beginning of Mass is my moment of reconciliation').

For 28, their unwillingness to receive reconciliation was linked to negative perceptions of priests, ranging from a general lack of trust to reasons connected to abuse:

— “ —

*It saddens me to think we believe ONLY a priest can give God's absolution. I wonder what God thinks of that? I once went to confession with a priest who was guilty of child abuse. Was he really in a position to offer God's absolution? I think not.*

— ” —

Five stated that priests should be better trained and nine called for a radical change in the nature of the sacrament (e.g. 'The practice is outmoded and needs urgent revision').

Most of the other respondents suggested that they might be willing to attend the sacrament again under certain circumstances. 44 proposed Reconciliation services with general absolution and some mentioned that individual reconciliation was sometimes available as part of these services ('I prefer penitential services as a community, with individual confession'; 'Choice of confessors is good; that is why I like the reconciliation services'.) 38 proposed practical solutions: ten mentioned confession via telephone or the internet; nine asked for timings to be different; four requested anonymity via a confessional box with a grill and four mentioned other solutions (e.g. making the sacrament easier for those with hearing difficulties). 13 suggested providing visiting priests ('I would feel more comfortable if the Priest did not know me personally, as will feel embarrassed meeting him afterwards'). Ten stated that some form of teaching would help although not necessarily for themselves ('I can generally get to confession whenever I want to. But that isn't the issue - people in general need catechesis on this matter, I feel').

**Eucharist**

87% of respondents received Holy Communion at least weekly; 5% received it occasionally; 4% received it less than once per week and the remaining 4% did not receive this sacrament. Asked, 'What are your views about Holy Communion?', 81% expressed belief in the real presence of Jesus and 19% expressed beliefs that are at variance with this – i.e. the third and fourth items in the table below:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ The Eucharist is Jesus Christ, His body and blood, soul and divinity, truly, really, and substantially present.	80.95% 1,241
▼ The Eucharist is a wonderful way for our Church family to gather and celebrate a meal	38.68% 593
▼ The Eucharist is a wonderful way to remember Christ's teaching, but the bread and wine, although blessed, still remain essentially bread and wine.	10.31% 158
▼ In the Eucharist Jesus is not literally present, but He is with us in spirit.	9.85% 151
▼ Other (Please specify)	Responses 9.07% 139
▼ I am not sure	4.04% 62
▼ N/A	0.98% 15
Total Respondents: 1,533	

(Percentages total more than 100 because participants were invited to tick multiple statements if more than one expressed their belief.)

139 respondents gave a written answer to this question. 47 commented on the real presence and, whilst 23 of these comments affirmed their belief in this ('Any other option isn't Catholic, it's heresy'), 16 expressed varying degrees of doubt (e.g. 'I have to admit to grave doubt and confusion on this matter, and I am almost shocked by my own inability to tick the second statement'). Three expressed disagreement with the church's doctrine of transubstantiation and seven expressed a struggle to articulate what they believed:

— “ —

*I'm torn ... it's more than a symbol but literal seems to be the wrong word, but He is definitely present in some form.*

— ” —

19 comments were about the Eucharist as essential ('The Eucharist is paramount in my life') although two expressed the view that it was not, in itself, sufficient. Four commented that people do not show sufficient respect for the Eucharist, and three expressed dismay that they had not been able to receive the Eucharist during the pandemic. 21 explained their views about Holy Communion in ways other than the options given, writing of the Eucharist as the unity with Christ and each other, of peace, thanksgiving and remembrance. For example:

— “ —

*We experience it as many different things at many different levels, all of which are true. It is a meal, a remembrance, a sacrifice, the presence of Christ, a thanksgiving; it is most of what all the other denominations deem it to be, and also the holy sacrifice of the Mass and so much more.*

— ” —

87% of respondents received Holy Communion at least weekly; 5% received it Ten respondents commented on the Eucharist as food – eight believed that 'food' is appropriate description and two that it is not ('The Eucharist is consecrated bread for the soul and not a Sunday dinner').

Nine participants felt they were excluded from the Eucharist either on the grounds of divorce, sexuality or another, unspecified reason. Five felt a need for more understanding and three expressed concerns about hygiene ('I'm not sure if I will ever take the wine because of hygiene reasons').

Style of Mass

Asked, 'Do you have a preference for a particular style of Mass and worship?' 45% registered a preference for Novus Ordo, 17% had no preference; 10% preferred a Traditional Latin Mass and 7% preferred a Charismatic renewal mass:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Novus Ordo which literally means the "new order of the Mass"	45.22%	709
▼ Please tell us your thoughts	Responses	20.66% 324
▼ No preference	16.52%	259
▼ Traditional Latin Mass	10.33%	162
▼ Charismatic renewal	7.27%	114
TOTAL		1,568

There were 324 written responses. 87 (the largest category) stated that they appreciate a variety of forms. In this category, we also placed comments which expressed the view that 'the mass is the mass', regardless of the form it takes (e.g. 'It doesn't matter as long as we are present to the Presence'). The second largest category (42) were negative comments about Mass in Latin and/or Ad Orientem. For example:

— “ —

*Traditional Latin mass has no place in our modern world. The congregation and in particular children need to take part, not merely spectate. I would not attend if this was my only choice of mass.*

— ” —

Reasons for disliking the Latin mass included lack of understanding, particularly among children and/or family visitors, a view of Latin as 'going backwards' and a personal feeling of being alienated. Some who expressed negative views of the Latin mass suggested that they personally understood it (including one who wrote, with perhaps unintentional irony, 'we moved on from that a long time ago, Deo Gratas.')



28 comments expressed a preference for Novus Ordo and/or mass in English:

— “ —————

*Happy with Mass in English with all kinds of music (or none).  
Mass is about worship, we are inspired by the Holy Spirit and  
pray as a community.*

————— ” —



The most commonly cited reasons were that English allows congregations to understand and participate in the Mass. Although some comments were categorically in favour of English (and sometimes against Latin), others recognised the value of Latin, for example:

— “ —

*I most sincerely believe that Mass in the vernacular is the only way we will be able to bring newcomers into the Church and for them to understand what is going on. I do appreciate the mysticism of the Latin Mass and that a dead language did its part in preserving the words of the Mass*

— ” —

In contrast to the above, 22 respondents were positive about Latin Mass:

— “ —

*I like Mass in Latin for aesthetic reasons and the music.*

*Mass in Extraordinary form gives me huge spiritual comfort; mass said Ad Orientem moves me tremendously*

— ” —

Reasons for preferring Latin included that it brought back memories from childhood, that it was a ‘universal’ form that was the same in other countries, and that it inspired greater reverence.



37 comments were about other aspects of the mass: inclusivity/informality (16), simplicity (12) and reverence (9). Those who preferred inclusivity, generally asked for more (e.g. 'Women must be given more roles in the Mass like reading the Gospel etc. as there were women deacons in the early Church'). Those who preferred simplicity asked for a Mass which is not 'about' the priest ('I don't go to Mass to be entertained. Happy with humour at end of Mass but don't like priest throwing in light hearted one liners in the middle of Mass). Those who preferred reverence, appreciated quiet (e.g. 'Prefer a traditional style reverential celebration of Mass with periods of silence for interior prayer').

37 comments were primarily about music – in a few cases it seems that 'style of mass' was equated with 'style of music'. 35 were positive about music in mass, and most of these stated a preference for a particular style of music – contemporary or traditional. (Two expressed a general dislike of music in the liturgy). The difficulty of pleasing all the people is captured in this response:

— “ —————

*I like music which engages and is thoughtful with meaningful words, not old hymns ... nor new praise and worship songs.*

————— ” —

17 respondents commented adversely (and one positively) on the 2011 translation, for example:

— “ —————

*I like a prayerful Mass which speaks to me and my non-Catholic companion of God's love for us both. It breaks my heart that the new translation made this more difficult than the previous one, I genuinely expected it to be better.*

————— ” —

14 comments critiqued the question and six requested a complete re-thinking of the Liturgy of the Mass. Five requested other vernacular liturgies - Malayalam and Syro Malabar were mentioned.

# MISSION AND EVANGELISATION

40% had asked friends and family to accompany them to Mass (although some of these might have been dependents such as young children)

The most commonly-mentioned inhibitor to evangelisation was the liturgy

78% were 'very' or 'somewhat' confident to share their faith with others

30% believed that the main route to better mission is reform of church and/or clergy

## Mission and Evangelisation

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Questions 23, 32 and 49 concerned aspects of mission. Question 23 read, 'If you go to Mass regularly would you invite a friend or family member who does not (currently) go to Mass to come with you (Tick all that apply)'. Quantitative answers were as follows:

ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼
▼ I have already asked friends and family to come to Mass with me	40.63% 605
▼ I would only ask family and friends if they showed some interest first	38.68% 576
▼ I have asked friends and family to come with me to Mass on special occasions, such as Christmas or Easter	35.73% 532
▼ If you said you would never ask anyone, please tell us in a few words why? <a href="#">Responses</a>	8.26% 123
▼ I might ask if there was an alternative to Mass, such as an Alpha course?	7.72% 115
▼ I would never ask anyone to come with me to Mass or any Church related activity	4.23% 63
▼ Not sure	4.23% 63
▼ I don't go to Mass and I would not like to go	0.54% 8
▼ I don't go to Mass but I would like for someone to invite me	0.20% 3
Total Respondents: 1,489	

At first glance it might appear that many respondents were enthusiastically inviting others to church: 40% had asked friends and family to accompany them to Mass and only 4% 'would never ask anyone to come with me to Mass or any Church related activity'. However there are reasons to treat these figures with caution. First, the sentence 'I have already asked friends and family to come to Mass with me' made no distinction between family members who are in no position to refuse such an invitation (e.g. dependent children) and others. Second, participants were able to tick more than one question (and answers totalled more than 100%) although the statements were mostly mutually incompatible; it is therefore impossible to tell which of two or more ticked statements was more accurate for any participant. Third, although only 63 respondents agreed that they 'would never ask anyone', 123 gave reasons why they 'would never ask anyone', casting doubt on the first of these figures, and finally, 16% skipped the question.



Among the 123 written responses, 30 gave reasons connected with the liturgy. 17 referenced boring services and the way the mass is celebrated ('Because I am ashamed of the appalling way Mass is celebrated') or a general concern that people may have a bad experience of liturgy. 13 referenced the complexity of the mass for the uninitiated ('Mass is complicated and not something open to visitors; how can they understand when most in attendance do not?'); one of these specifically referenced masses in Latin.

13 stated that their faith was personal ('Beliefs are a very personal matter') and 11 said that they did not wish to impose their own views on others ('I don't feel I am well placed to preach to others'.) Five people mentioned personal embarrassment ('Sadly, too embarrassed') and five cited embarrassment at what their friends and family might experience ('miserable people, a poor liturgy, dreadful singing and a rambling, pointless homily'). 14 people said they had no one they could ask (e.g. 'I don't know anyone close enough to ask'). Nine cited a general lack of welcome in their church ('don't feel that the church is a welcoming place. Better in other religions'), and one of these indicated concern that Christians of other denominations could not receive communion. Three people specifically said they were ashamed of the church more generally ('Right now I could not do this as I am ashamed of the behaviour of the church, and I do not feel that I could encourage others to take up a relationship with it') and three specifically qualified their answer by saying they would not ask because of their perception of the priest ('My Priest is very unfriendly; wouldn't encourage anyone until he leaves'). In contrast, nine indicated either that they had asked others to accompany them or would ask others, although three of these restricted this to family only.

Asked, 'How confident do you feel in being able to share your faith with others?' 78% selected 'very' or 'somewhat' confident and only 5% selected 'not at all confident' (17% skipped the question). Participants were not invited to provide written answers:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Very confident	37.27%	546
▼ Somewhat confident	40.61%	595
▼ Hesitant	16.38%	240
▼ Not at all confident	5.39%	79
▼ No faith to share	0.34%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,465</b>

Question 49 invited participants to provide up to five answers to the question, 'As Catholics, we believe that each person is called to bring people closer to Jesus through His Church. What, if anything, needs to change to realise that vision?' 59% provided at least one answer to this question; 49% gave at least two; 41% gave at least three; 32% gave at least four and 16% gave five answers. 41% skipped the question altogether.

318 respondents (30%) urged the need for clergy reform and/or for church reform regarding its approach to a series of aspects of Church teaching. For example,

— “ —

*The encouragement of the priest who should try to get to know his flock*

*Consider the plight of women in loveless marriages who divorce and cannot remarry in the Church*

— ” —

17 of those who mentioned clergy specified sexual abuse scandals ('A genuine realisation of just how much terrible damage has been done by the covering up of abuse cases').

82 respondents stated that personal witness was key to realise the vision and a further 74 respondents shared the need for our parishes to be welcoming, inclusive and to offer a sense of belonging. ('For everyone to have a role within the family of the church and feel valued').



58 respondents called for more catechesis and formation for the laity and 49 people wanted better experience of liturgy ('A need for more beauty and reverence in the liturgy'). Other themes included, Communication (39 comments, e.g. 'Better connection with people'); Investing in youth (24, e.g. 'Make it more relevant to the young'); Beauty of the sacraments and/or scripture (23, e.g. 'Encouraging more reading of the Bible'); Proclamation (22, e.g. 'We must be willing to speak about our faith'); and Personal encounter (20, e.g. 'The need to really develop a personal relationship with Jesus').

Other themes, each mentioned by fewer than 2% of respondents, included a need for guidance (12); to be educated (12); empowering the laity (11); engaging in ecumenism (11); initiatives (10); listening and consultation (5), the Homily (5); and greater visibility (4).

23 people stated either 'not sure' or 'I don't know'. A further 144 comments could not be categorised and covered a plethora of individual suggestions ranging from 'Genuine interest in the other person' to 'Changing people's world view'; from 'Reclaiming Catholic tradition' to 'Make it more fun so people want to join and then they will convert', and from 'Keep trying' to 'Don't try too hard'.

## SERVICE

69% thought that local foodbanks were among the most important opportunities for the church to support those in need

Over 80% had opportunities to support both foodbanks and overseas aid through their church

There was some mismatch between what people found important, and what they could support: e.g. 61% considered 'children living in poverty' important but only 32% had opportunities to support them through their church

Service

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Participants were asked to choose five ‘most important’ opportunities for the Church to service the poor and those in need. 20% skipped the question; of those who answered it, foodbanks, children, and poor people in the developing world were the most frequently selected:

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES
Foodbanks and support for local people living in poverty (Food banks)	68.92%	980
Children living in poverty	60.69%	863
Aid for poor in the developing world overseas (e.g. CAFOD, Mary's Meals, Aid to the Church in Need)	51.69%	735
Homelessness	49.09%	698
Protection for the unborn and care for mothers in need	46.41%	660
Social Isolation	44.59%	634
Support for children and families	40.23%	572
Environment and climate change	36.99%	526
Refugees	35.58%	506
Catholic homes caring for the elderly	30.10%	428
Mental ill health	29.68%	422
Aid for poor in the Diocese (e.g. CARITAS Portsmouth)	28.20%	401
Older people with dementia	26.37%	375
Other (please give a brief description)	Responses 10.62%	151
There are no opportunity at this present time	1.05%	15
Total Respondents: 1,422		

151 gave a written response. The largest number (34) stated that all the matters were important and/or it was difficult to choose only five ('5 choices are too few, all need support'). 31 comments indicated they would like the parish to meet local needs:







— “ —

*As a parish we hardly get involved or lead any charitable work in the local community or the old people's homes.*

*The Church should focus where there is a gap in provision, not replicate what is there ... We need to focus on the poor in the parishes, this is harder than giving money away to those we do not see.*

— ” —

20 of these comments concerned elderly and/or isolated people ('There is an epidemic of lonely people ... Most are older, unable to get out much and with very few friends or family locally'). Four specified the SVP. In contrast, nine comments were about overseas help: three mentioned seafarers; CAFOD, FairTrade, Bamenda and overseas missions were also named.

Nine comments expressed concern about the interface between the work of the church and politics. Four of these stated that they dislike supporting CAFOD because of its political stance; two stated that climate change should not be included in the question and two expressed caution about acts of charity generally ('Most people in trouble are so because of problems needing specialist help. We need to be careful we do not cause further harm by being enthusiastic amateurs!') Seven respondents urged the church to work with other denominations or Local Authorities ('There is so much need in our town; there are also great ecumenical opportunities') and two of these stated that help should be not only be available to Catholics. Six expressed the view that the church should focus entirely on spiritual matters ('The emphasis needs to be on our Immortal souls not concerns of this world!') and five commented on abortion, two of whom were firmly 'pro-life' whilst three expressed an opposing view ('Stop this fixation on abortion please').

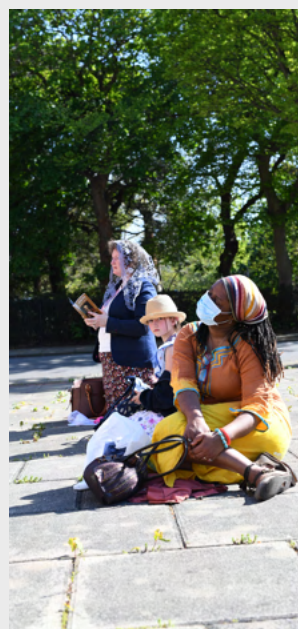
Five people wrote about support for those with physical needs or disabilities; four commented on people with mental health issues or learning difficulties and four wrote about marriage and family life. Three commented on prisoners or ex-offenders. There were also 25 comments that were impossible to categorise under the groupings mentioned; these ranged from animals to music, to social media. It is likely that some people take to their hearts, issues that have a particular appeal to them. For instance, one respondent wrote, 'I'm a nurse; anything related to health care'.

Asked to identify the opportunities to help 'through the Church you attend'; rounded percentage figures showed some mis-match between people's priorities (reproduced in Column 2 in the table below) and their opportunities to serve (Column 3). In particular, although 61% considered 'children living in poverty' important, only 32% had opportunities to support them through their church. To a lesser degree, the same is true for homelessness, the environment, and care for the elderly, those with dementia and those with other forms of mental ill health. In contrast, only 28% found 'Aid for poor in the Diocese; important but 48% had opportunities to support this cause through their church:

Column (1)	(2)	(3)
Foodbanks and support for local people living in poverty (Food banks)	69%	82%
Children living in poverty	61%	32%
Aid for poor in the developing world overseas (e.g. CAFOD, Marys Meals, Aid to the Church in Need)	52%	83%
Homelessness	49%	38%
Protection for the unborn and care for mothers in need	46%	37%
Socially isolated	45%	41%
Support for children and families	40%	40%
Environment and climate change	37%	20%
Refugees	36%	31%
Catholic homes caring for the elderly	30%	18%
Older people with dementia	26%	16%
Mental ill health	30%	13%
Aid for poor in the Diocese (eg. CARITAS Portsmouth)	28%	48%

123 respondents gave written answers; 23% skipped the question. 53 people stated that there were opportunities in their church, of which 40 named an activity: 17 mentioned the SVP, 3 mentioned Stella Maris, and other activities included care of immigrants; drug and alcohol rehabilitation; missions; street pastors; and visits to people in hospitals and prisons. 13 people stated that opportunities existed but they didn't know what ('I believe that there are Catholic parishioners who do involve themselves with most, if not all, of these causes').

In contrast, 29 stated that their church did little or nothing to help those in need ('Sadly our church does not appear very active'), although eight of these recognised the financial help provided by the church ('The only opportunities that exist are the opportunities to give money which obviously helps, but doesn't encourage a deeper commitment to fulfil our commitment to the poor') and a further eight qualified their response by stating that they were not aware of what their church does ('there may be some provision but I'm not aware of it'). Seven people expressed either a desire for their church to work with other churches, or a recognition that this occurs ('Some that I have ticked as YES are via *Christians Together* organisations'); six expressed the view that the church should not be involved in charitable work, of whom three objected specifically to the notion that the Church should be involved with the environment and climate change ('I regard this topic as highly political and speaking more to a pro-panththeistic view of the world and thus heretical'). Two suggested that those in need would be better supported by organisations outside the church.



# CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

At least 50% had 'attended' online services, either at their own church or another church

Many respondents appreciated their church being open for prayer and the efforts made by priests and parishioners to maintain contact

Others felt that their church had shut down during the pandemic; they wanted more communication and more provision of Mass

Some felt the church had been too cautious and should have kept churches open more; others that their church had not kept them sufficiently safe

Around 11% mentioned the importance of prayer and reflection during the pandemic and around half of these found their faith had become stronger

## Coronavirus Pandemic

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Questions 50-53 asked about the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on the ways in which participants practiced our faith. 62% had continued to support their church financially and around 50% had joined services online – either at their own church or another church – although it should be borne in mind that 24% skipped the question, and that the survey itself was completed online so there is no way of estimating how many Catholics were unable to access online events, e.g. through lacking confidence in digital technology. Encouragingly, only 3% had ‘no plans to return to Mass in the near future’:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I am still supporting my Church financially	61.91%	837
▼ I have joined services online from my local Church at least weekly	50.59%	684
▼ I have joined services online at least weekly from other Churches	49.11%	664
▼ I have returned to my local Church for Mass at least weekly	42.09%	569
▼ I will return to Mass once the restrictions have lifted	33.95%	459
▼ I have offered to help my Church with reopening arrangements	21.01%	284
▼ I have joined other activities organised by my parish online	17.46%	236
▼ I have joined services occasionally.	17.09%	231
▼ I have Socially got together with people	16.57%	224
▼ I have joined Prayer groups	15.16%	205
▼ I have joined Study groups	13.02%	176
▼ I have joined Discussion groups	10.65%	144
▼ I have joined Parish management meetings	9.17%	124
▼ I have not participated in any online activity	5.47%	74
▼ I have no plans to return to Mass in the near future	3.40%	46
▼ Faith is not important to me	0.67%	9
Total Respondents: 1,352		



Asked, 'What has my parish done well during this time?' 1054 people answered. Of these, 587 (53%) cited Mass being available via streaming or in person ('The online Masses and other prayer groups have been a Godsend'), along with the church being open for prayer ('Kept the church open and the sacraments available as much as possible. Communication has been good'). There was a sense of gratitude for the ways parishes developed their ability to 'stream' services in a short space of time. For example,

— “ —

*Established a live-streaming capability; made efforts to keep the parish connected. Set up parishioner virtual involvement on the live-streamed masses. Our parish priest has been amazing!*

— ” —

The online presence resulted in new ways of engagement evolving, which many hope will remain ('Streaming should stay, post pandemic, to bring mass to more'). It also resulted in some respondents changing the parish they engaged with ('I go online to another parish. The priest is so welcoming, inclusive, and has the gift of being able to make you feel present at mass').

134 respondents (12%) were appreciative of the measures taken by priests and parishioners to make contact with them. For example,

— “ —

*Online mass availability and morning and evening prayer is superb. Online chat rooms and meetings. Alpha series online and other bible study opportunities. ... Setting up a group to connect with older, isolated parishioners. Very obvious that an awful lot of hard work and care has gone into keeping the parish connected. Can't fault our parish priest on anything. The work behind the scenes has been immense.*

— ” —

Some reflected that this was easier in a small parish and others mentioned the need for an up to date parish database.

111 (10%) were grateful for the reassurance that was brought by the adherence to the Covid-19 health and safety regulations. 58 (5%) cited specific projects and support the parish had been involved in. These ranged from operating food banks to decorating a chapel; for example:

— “ —

*A small group of us, working in the church hall, have written cards, and delivered small packets to people, with maybe some flowers or chocolates or biscuits etc on a more or less monthly basis, on behalf of the parish priest and the parish itself.*

— ” —

Of the remaining 103 responses, 48 (41%) were general positive statements and 49 (47%) were negative. They highlighted the importance of the priest's leadership in the parish. Where this was strong or had enabled others to lead initiatives, comments were positive. For instance,

— “ —

*My parish has coped amazingly well, mainly because our priest has empowered lay people to organise and lead so many things: the H&S aspects of Covid-safe return to liturgies (including stewarding); introduction of streaming of masses; online PC meetings (weekly to begin with); organisation of ministry to the sick & housebound; online prayer services; introduction of lay-led liturgies for children and their families; taking on many of the administrative functions of furloughed staff by volunteers (eg production of the weekly newsletter).*

— ” —

Where leadership had not been shown, comments were more negative:

— “ —

*Our parish has completely shut down apart from online mass and a few daytime masses in the week. All the groups we used to have, have gone.*

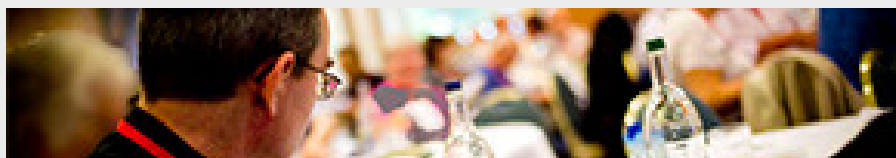
*Nothing! Relied on parishioners to find their own way online for information. A lot of people have felt very neglected.*

*Priest quite rightly locked the church but wouldn't even put up a poster I'd produced saying where people could get Mass online.*

— ” —

An observation was made that every parish had been left to its own devices and no direction had been given from the diocese to shape a response or learn from the best practice of others as it evolved ('someone from the diocese should come to their support to that no church, big or small, should feel left out').

Asked, 'What could my parish have done better? 984 (55% of all respondents) offered a written response. 344 respondents felt that their parish could do nothing further to support them or others, of whom 141 expressed positive views. They felt that their parish had either supported them well or to the best of its ability. For example, one person felt their parish was 'amazing', another that it had done 'a marvellous job', several people felt their parish 'couldn't do more'. 52 people did not know what their parish could have done to better support them and six people felt that their parish was unable to do more because of its limitations – one person mentioned facilities, one the aging parish population, and another a lack of organisation and parish council.







Of the 251 respondents who felt better communication was needed to support them or others in their parish, 89 people wanted to see more personal communication. For some this was 'closer contact, clergy to parishioner', for others it could have been through a 'telephone tree'. Regular contact with the elderly or vulnerable via telephone was a recurring theme. 17 respondents wanted to see more communication online through social media or the parish website. 37 respondents felt there needed to be more communication through other channels for people without online access or support for those who are not 'tech savvy'. One person was concerned, 'that through enthusiastic engagement with new technologies we exclude/marginalise some people'. 20 people wanted to see more information or consultation in the parish, for example:

— “ —

*Many changes were made without consultation with the community. We are the church too and many feel disenfranchised and unimportant.*

— ” —

Of the 153 respondents who wanted to see more provision in their parish, 64 wanted to see more Mass provision: 37 mentioned provision for online Mass and 27 wanted more provision for Mass generally (either online or in person). Some wanted Masses to have been kept to the usual timetable, a few people wanted to see “Open air” services or gatherings.

Eight people wanted to see more opportunities for confession, and another eight wanted more opportunities to receive Communion ('the Body of Christ should not have been withheld'), there was a suggestion that it could have been distributed outside. 19 people felt the parish should have provided support for vulnerable groups or the wider community; outreach was a recurring theme. 37 respondents wanted to see more online provision for parish groups and activities, such as online prayer groups. Several of the general responses to this question mentioned two or more of these headings, for example one person felt that there needed to be 'more times for confession; more masses to accommodate those who wish to go'.

Of the 49 respondents who wanted to see the church open more, 10 felt that it should have remained open despite government restrictions and guidelines ('the Church should be less influenced by politics and government decisions'; It's shameful for priests and the church to have closed the doors'). 9 people felt that the Church could have opened more, in line with the Government guidelines ('[Name] parish closed for attendance much more than necessary'). 30 people wanted to see the church open more but did not specifically mention government guidelines.

24 people thought that their priests could have done more, one felt 'very let down', another that 'the shepherd ignored the sheep'; some respondents thought their priests should have had more support ('We get the impression Father was overwhelmed and didn't know what to do'). Ten responses mentioned parish leadership or participation in the parish, and seven respondents wished to have seen a different approach in the parish; one person felt the parish could have been 'more courageous and innovative', two felt it could be 'more welcoming'. Six respondents wanted to see better adherence to Covid guidelines in their parish, one stated, 'Our priest has paid scant regard to Covid regulations', which has caused 'great divisions and great upset' in the parish. Two people felt the priest needed more support. In addition, 70 people did not feel the question was applicable to them.

An additional question asked respondents to 'share any reflections that they might have on the last six months during the Coronavirus pandemic', relating to their faith and Mass attendance. 1050 people (58% of all respondents) responded. Respondents in the most part offered detailed comments, of which could be categorised into 23 general themes.

229 respondents expressed how much they had missed the celebration of Mass in person and access to the sacraments:

— “ —

*I realise the importance of the Mass and the blessed sacrament in my life.*

*Prayer has been a stronghold.*

*Faith has sustained me personally but I have struggled with restricted access to Mass and the Eucharist due to being high risk. Personal prayer and study has taken a new dimension and has also forged some good links with others to meet online or outside for prayer and formation.*

— ” —

139 respondents wrote that they had experienced blessings from online offerings ('My faith has been sustained throughout this pandemic mainly through online contact – the Mass and Zoom Coffee after Mass chat rooms, on a Sunday') and 51 people enjoyed the variety on offer by visiting different parishes online.

120 respondents criticised the approach of the Church in its response to the COVID pandemic and a further 66 made direct comments about clergy. 28 of these were positive ('How hard working and dedicated the Priests are!') and 27 were negative ('The absence of spiritual leadership within our Parish has, I suspect, driven parishioners away from the Church or driven them to other parishes'); others mentioned priests from other churches.

From the other themes identified, ten respondents offered a thought for looking forward; for instance,

— “ —

*It is an opportunity to take stock, evaluate what works, and ditch aspects that don't. We may need to work harder to engage with parishioners and deepen individual relationships with Christ and his church.*

— ” —

43 people stated that they had been affected by isolation or had lost loved ones and had not been able to be with them:

— “ —

*I have found it a lonely time.*

*It's been tough for many. We have turned our houses into churches. We were still connected, online. I've worried about the isolation of older people particularly those who could not join online. 'Church' and my faith has helped me stay hopeful.*

— ” —

115 respondents cited the importance of prayer and reflection throughout the lockdown (e.g. 'It has been a good time to reflect and be quiet with The Lord rather than rushing about doing things all the time!'); ten people expressed the importance of outreach:

— “ —

*How very important it is to actively live our faith in society. To always use our votes and our voice to support the poor, to preserve the planet, and ... those who are suffering most.*

— ” —

21 respondents were generally thankful for their experiences, whilst ten people felt that online services were a poor substitute for the real thing, and five people commented on the importance of a good homily.

80 respondents shared that they missed the community of the parish throughout the lockdown:

— “ —

*The lockdown was very painful and it took a while to be able to adjust to Mass online. It has been good to be able to return to live worship but being unable to carry out any of our ministries (choir, reading, etc) is very difficult. Being unable to spend social time with our parish community, having coffee after Mass etc. is very hard.*

— ” —

21 people related the importance of a personal encounter with God to nourish them during this time. 27 people called for churches to be fully open but 12 felt that it was unsafe to attend church. 29 respondents were fearful that many people would not return following lockdown ('We need to work hard once the pandemic is over to get people back to church'), whilst 19 people shared other concerns and fears for the future ('The pandemic has made our frailty more obvious ... There is also a ticking timebomb of mental health issues'). Encouragingly, 59 people stated that their faith was stronger or that they had been sustained by a strong faith. For example,

— “ —

*I did not know HE was real until my child vision was realized in the depths of loss relatively recently. When this realisation happened, it was incredible, a paradise of all paradises ... now I'm armed with a share of an eternal truth, I can continue on a good path, and try to make it [the earth] a better place ... To top that, death has no fear to me.*

— ” —

In contrast, three found that the Coronavirus made them question their faith ('Being human, inevitably I wonder why God, who is omnipotent, has allowed the pandemic').

## ○ THE WIDER CHURCH

Clerical sexual abuse, cover up and inadequate apologies for abuse have led to a lack of trust in priests

Some people felt that the church does not recognise women's equality; some of these believed that women should be ordained as priests or deacons

Some stated that the church should be more accepting of different sexualities

Some thought that the church should be more accepting of divorced people

## The Wider Church

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

In various places in the survey, participants alluded to matters which go beyond the jurisdiction of any individual parish or diocese. The most frequently mentioned included clerical sexual abuse; the place of women in the church and the male-only priesthood; the church's teaching around sexuality; and its approach to divorced people. In all these matters, people's opinions were mixed with expressions of deep feelings of anger and hurt. Participants also wrote about children and young people as the future of the church.

## Clerical sexual abuse and cover-up

Between 3% and 5% of respondents referred to clerical sexual abuse at one or more points in the survey and for these people it was a major factor in their negativity towards the church. Respondents were concerned with three matters: that priests sexually abused children, that abuse was covered up, and that official apologies did not go far enough. A few respondents had personally experienced abuse ('As a child I was abused by a priest and that has left a strong negative impression on me'); others had not ('The terrible sex scandals made me lose trust in the leadership of the Church across the world'). In both cases, abuse had shaken their confidence in the church:

— “ —————

*I feel it is important for the church hierarchy to understand the pain felt regarding the abuse cases. If one is married to a non-Catholic, it makes it very much harder to defend one's faith in one's home.*

————— ” —

Some added that those in responsible positions had covered up abuse ('don't cover up child abuse') and were still doing so ('Church needs to stop protecting abusers within its ranks'). Some recognised that the church had made apologies ('Continually saying sorry is no longer working, how many times can you apologise?') but some felt that the church's attempts to apologise did not go far enough:

— “ —

*Do not underestimate the PROFOUND damage done by the sexual abuse of children by priests and the appalling way in which it was dealt with (or rather not dealt with) by church leaders. The most recent public inquiry report speaks for itself. I do not consider the response has been anything like adequate.*

— ” —

Participants called for a greater demonstration of repentance, in language that communicates an understanding, not only of the actual victims of abuse, but also of people more generally who had trusted abusive priests:

— “ —

*It is important that this matter is put to rest and that the Church is seen to call all those involved to account and to show true repentance.*

*[The church should] show its horror about the abuse scandal, not “regret inappropriate behaviour*

— ” —

### **The place of women in the church and the male priesthood**

Some participants perceived the church as structurally unequal in its treatment of women ('At present they are seen as lesser beings'). Some mentioned male dominance ('Jesus came to establish God's Kingdom on earth, but the Catholic Church has turned it into an exclusive Men's Club') and some contrasted this with church attendance ('count the congregation and the ratio of men to women is 25:75'). Some mentioned limitations of men ('honestly think the church is filled at times with men who have little experience of working with women') and many called for change:



— “ —

*I would like the Catholic Church to look seriously at itself and its culture. It is simply not sustainable in this day and age that the Church has such a limited and negative appreciation of women and their gifts.*

— ” —

Some participants specifically called for women to be ordained as priests and/or take up senior leadership roles, and some of these also called for women to be ordained as deacons ('It would be good to hear the wisdom of women from the pulpit'). A few people asked that the priesthood be open to married men ('I feel the Catholic Church would very much benefit if it allowed for Priests to marry and for women Priests in the Catholic Church'). Although one or two comments on this subject could be perceived as anti-men, e.g. describing the church as, 'too top down, clerically (and hence male) dominated', others were certainly not ('I think the main thing is contact with men and women who have a strong faith and a desire to communicate it').

## Sexuality

Most people who wrote about sexuality and the church, perceived the church as unwelcoming of people whose sexuality is not heterosexual. In many cases, this affected them personally:

— “ —

*I am a cradle Catholic and trusted the Catholic Church completely. I saw it as a place which stood for the highest moral principles and where the vulnerable were protected ... the faith of my birth had abandoned me, being gay and told by church faith/practice I was not welcome.*

*Catholic churches can be very unfriendly and often not at all welcoming to those who don't fit, the divorced, LGBT etc.*

— ” —

They asked for a more inclusive approach:

— “ —

*Bring homosexuals and trans. people into the fold*

*All people are welcomed to follow Jesus. This includes LGBT*

*There are many gay Catholics that go to Mass but feel unwelcome!*

— ” —

Although a few held a contradictory view:

— “ —

*Many sermons have become anodyne as priests are afraid to speak against modern norms in services for fear of "causing offence" to parishioners with progressive views (i.e. pro-abortion, pro-gay marriage)*

— ” —

There were also a few comments about the church's teaching of birth control ('Stopped due to birth control restrictions ... Once that no longer applied because of age, I returned to the sacraments') and one person mentioned In Vitro Fertilization ('the church's attitude to IVF. It's cruel and makes those who use it feel even worse than they already do').

## **Divorce**

As with the topic of sexuality, many people who wrote about the church's teaching about divorce were personally affected and felt hurt:

— “ —

*My first wife and I amicably divorced after 38 years of marriage and I have since then, now remarried, I cannot take communion in a Catholic church ... Why does the Catholic Church hate remarried divorcees?*

— ” —

Some felt that they were divorced through no fault of their own:

— “ —

*I fail to see why having been a practising catholic all my life, that the moment I married a divorced man (I was single, never having married before) I became a victim of church law.*

— ” —

And there was a suggestion that, in at least one case, divorce was precipitated by abuse ('Lack of understanding of the church around divorce and domestic abuse/violence'). Only one comment referred to annulment ('divorcees who cannot get, or go through, annulment are permanently left on the sidelines'). Almost all who wrote about divorce thought that the church should be more inclusive of divorcees ('More compassion shown to those who are divorced') although not everyone agreed ('The children of most single parent families do not reach their potential. This is why Jesus was so against divorce and adultery') and at least one person felt that divorcees were welcome in the local church ('There are lots of people who are divorced and the general tone is non-judgemental').

### Children and Young People

Children and young people were frequently mentioned, not only in response to the question about the needs of young families and children (Section 3, above), but also in response to other questions. Respondents wrote about the absence of young people in their church ('We are a small, ageing community and the young people have gone elsewhere') and many felt that their local church did little to attract or retain young people:



— “ —

*There is nothing for young children and it is mainly for older people in my view.*

*I think the Church should be doing much more to attract younger people to be involved. Other denominations seem to be much more successful than our Church.*

— ” —

As was reported previously, participants asked for more activities, groups, or events for children and families ('Family days, young and old, would be great. Renewal of Faith weekend. Create a Youth and Singles (30 – 49) Catholic Group by joining up, say, on Friday night'). Some activities or groups mentioned were primarily social, allowing Catholic children or young people to meet together:

— “ —

*I would like young people to have the opportunity to meet and connect with other young Catholics in the wider community and even from other countries.*

*Set up a messy church club and a youth club.*

*Playtime after mass, games after mass, yoga, Pilates for children.*

— ” —

And some were primarily religious:

— “ —

*I have young children and would welcome opportunities to embrace our faith in a fun and engaging way*

*Having more modern learning and activities in the schools to help young people develop their relationships with Jesus.*

*any way which would lead the younger members to realize the true value of their faith and a desire to deepen their understanding*

— ” —

Whilst some focused on the role of young people in serving the poor and needy:

— “ —

*Parish led/supported Services to the poor (inspire & engage young adults)*

*include them in sponsored walks for local charities or eco-friendly organisations. Involve them in SVP.*

— ” —

Some comments focused on children ('messy church'), some on teens ('camp for youth') and some on young adults ('Singles Catholic Group'). Some described their previous experience of young people's activities:

— “ —

*My husband used to have a young person's music group, I ran confirmation and youth group, we also ran prayer group & a house faith sharing group, amongst many other things. At Christmas we involved parish in Christingle services that were hugely popular, Youth Masses once a month & encouraged youth involvement in helping out in parish plus gardening. Etc!*

*Really good with the young children and choir. Everyone seems to help with the social activities. We have a wonderful Priest. Nothing too much trouble. He jokes with my children and they really like him.*

— ” —

A few comments asked that young people be listened to ('No-one ever seems to think to ask young people what they think') and suggested ways in which this might be done ('Have a youth council and more social events for the youth').



Some respondents emphasised the value of Catholic schools:

— “ —

*evangelisation takes place routinely, every day that the schools are open. It's also where the Church makes its most significant contribution to local communities and society in general ... If clergy and parish resources were applied consistently to supporting the mission of Catholic schools, then real progress could be made.*

— ” —

And some, remarking that (for example) ‘you see very few children at mass’, called for greater links between schools and church:

— “ —

*The children are the future of our parish and it is important that the priest has good links and a great presence at our local schools and also an active involvement in the parish's sacrament programmes for baptism, communion and confirmation.*

— ” —

Inevitably, some placed the responsibility for these links on the priest (‘Parish priest needs to work among youngsters to improve their faith’) although some suggested that responsibility might be shared by the parish (‘Each parish needs to have a strategy developed to target each age group. It needs to be delivered’) or diocese (‘Diocese should have some plan of action to attract children and youth to the church’) and at least one person mentioned professional help (‘PRINCIPALLY we need a paid youth worker with the skills and backing of the priest’). In all, most comments about children and young people could be summarised by the following statement:

— “ —

*When you see a church mostly empty of young people, children & families something is wrong.*

— ” —



# GENERAL QUESTIONS

Participants valued the church for the Eucharist, Holy Mass and Community

They also valued the church as the source of faith, its universal nature, the means for a relationship with Jesus and its moral authority and teaching

Asked if they would like to add anything to their responses, 14% mentioned priests; 7% young people; 6% Covid-19 and 6% women and married priests

## General Questions

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

There were 1,078 responses to the question, 'What do you value most about the Catholic Church?' (33% skipped the question.) Participants were invited to list up to 5 things and many gave more than one response, so total percentages add up to more than 100%.

The Eucharist, (20%) Holy Mass (18%) and Community (13%) were the top three most frequently cited as most valued aspects of the church. Participants valued, 'Receiving the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist' and 'The opportunity to receive Jesus and the strength that gives me'. Attending church meant, 'Keeping us in touch with God and each other, especially with Mass'; it provided 'a sense of belonging'; church was 'A place to share my faith with others and worship together'. For these participants and others, receiving Jesus was not only experienced as an individual matter but as part of a faith community; some of these described church as a family ('The feeling of being a part of Christ's big family' and 'It is my family').

Others emphasised the church as the source of their faith ('Deep rooted faith handed on by my parents'; and 'The Catholic Church & my faith are the most important things in my life'). One wrote, 'It's the fullness of faith handed down from the apostles' and another, 'It is the focus for my Faith and love of my God'. In a similar vein, 98 (9%) wrote of the Church as 'the one true church' (e.g. 'As the Creed says it is One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church').

63 people valued the 'universal' nature of the church, using terms such as global', 'worldwide' and 'widespread influence':

— “ —

*I believe in the universal standing of the Catholic Faith; the genuine (not sham) promotion of Gospel teaching of Jesus & values taught by Him.*

*Diversity yet a common faith, no matter where in the world you happen to be!*

— ” —



A similar number emphasised the value of the church as a means for their relationship with Jesus:

— “ —

*The reality of a personal relationship with God in the person of Jesus Christ*

*The sacramental life of the Church at its best can highlight /offer a path of discipleship in following Jesus Our Lord and brother.*

— ” —

Connected with this, 26 people mentioned their relationship or connectedness to God, without mentioning the person of Jesus ('It is where I go to worship and glorify God'; 'she [the church] guides us to God through her teaching, her laws and the sacraments').

The church's moral authority and/or teaching were mentioned by 56 people (5%). For them, the church 'proclaims a strong moral lead to the world'; it is 'Preaching the Gospel without compromise' and 'Providing a set of standards for us all to perform to'. Ten people specified its moral teaching; four its social teaching; and three specified theology or doctrine. 50 participants wrote of the church's tradition and its long history ('Built on apostolic tradition'; and 'The historical heritage of the Church'). For some, this meant their personal history ('My Catholic (Innocent) Upbringing esp. from My Mum') whilst others valued the church more because it is seen as 'unchanging' ('A clear doctrine that does not change with fashions').

38 people valued the church as a place to pray and worship ('A place for regular prayer, a weekly commitment'). For many of these, church is a place where they can visit on their own and pray silently and safely ('It is my "go to" place, even though I pray at least once an hour. It is the place where I believe I am at peace'). 32 people described the church as giving them values ('Gives meaning and direction to my life') or mentioning specific values ('honesty'; 'openness'; 'reverence').

Love of God and Love of others were the principal sentiments expressed by 28 people. One wrote, 'She [the church] proclaims Christ's love and embraces everybody'; another wrote, 'Two commandments: Love God and love thy neighbour and the rest will follow'. 27 valued the church as a provider of support, both social ('The preferential option for the poor'); and personal ('Help and support at times of difficulty'). 16 people said that they most valued the priest (e.g. 'Our wonderful clergy').

Three additional themes were mentioned, each attracting fewer than 2% of responses to this question: Salvation and forgiveness ('There is no salvation outside the church'); Pope Francis ('The present Pope and his teachings') and Catholic schools ('Looking after our children, they are the future of our church'). Three people said that they did not know what they valued about the church ('It's too difficult').

A final question invited people to identify anything that had not been covered in the survey. 669 people responded, although 108 of these stated that they had nothing further to add and 19 simply expressed thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the survey. Ten commented on the survey itself, mostly suggesting that it was too lengthy, and 27 comments were not categorised because they focused on very personal or very localised issues.

The remainder either felt that a topic of concern to them had not been covered, or that they wished to expand in more detail on an area of concern to them. Many of the respondents covered multiple topics and each one as far as it has been possible to do so has been identified under a separate category.

The impact of the clergy on the faithful and their relationship with the church drew comment by 95 people (14%). Many wanted to express their love, gratitude and care for our priests ('So grateful for our priests and we pray that they may be courageous, prayerful and not overburdened in these difficult times'). There was also genuine concern about their wellbeing ('I worry that our priest is struggling') and approximately 40% of these comments could be seen as negative ('Please encourage our priests to engage with their parishioners').

44 comments (7%) expressed concern about young people as the future of the church, for example,

— “ —

*I wonder why it is that so many of our young people fall away from their faith as soon as they have been confirmed or in their later teens, and how on earth can the church address this issue?*

— ” —

Participants offered some reasons for this ('a lot of young people have left the Church because they believe it does not treat everyone equally') and some offered solutions ('Let them do the readings, the music, let them interpret these as they see them') whilst many simply expressed deep concern about the future church and some frustration about what is being done to support young people in their faith journey ('I feel that our church will die out if more is not done to support our families').

39 respondents (6%) expressed concern about the impact of Covid-19 on our churches for the future and sadness that they had been closed:

— “ —

*There will clearly need to be a huge effort involving personal contact to restore the sense of a parish faith community when the pandemic is over.*

— ” —

A further 21 had concerns for the future of the church in general (e.g. 'How do we keep going?') One respondent offered a solution:

— “ —

*The phrase, "We need to up our game" comes to mind so every weekend counts, with beautiful liturgy and music, and a focus on community too. Jesus is worth more than we are collectively offering.*

— ” —

37 people (6%) commented on the role of women in the church and married priests in response to this question: 32 wanted women priests and leaders in the church and five asked that the church would be open to married priests. These matters are summarised above.

34 people (5%) commented on communications. The majority of these indicated that more needed to be done on communications between clergy and laity. For instance,

— “ —

*The church needs to listen and communicate better with the people of the parish. If changes need to be made, please consult instead of making sweeping changes, leaving people very upset and not feeling valued.*

— ” —

Five people mentioned e-news (‘Just to add that the Portsmouth Diocese e-News is amazing and very inspirational - thank you!)

33 respondents wanted to make the church more welcoming, both at a personal level (‘It was easy to make friends in the Protestant church. It is more or less impossible in the Catholic church I attend. This is a source of sadness’) and in the broader sense of being inclusive:

— “ —

*We should be the experts at relationship, the ones opening our doors, the ones seeing the stranger from wherever they come, whatever they believe as brother and sister to us.*

— ” —

In addition, 32 comments were made about what people saw as the inward-looking nature of the church. Six mentioned specific local parish concerns ('my parish seems to exist in a bubble all of its own; this needs to be changed but I don't know how'), and others felt the church in general was failing to reach out to the world:

— “ —————

*The Church has to change to suit the needs of a modern world. We are too complacent in that we have the deposit of faith and so do not have to make too much effort to change and adapt. New wine, fresh skins.*

*... it is clear that the church is in decline but its institutions are not responding - it looks backward and defensively.*

————— ” —

The Bishop was mentioned specifically by 28 respondents (4%). Many of these comments showed appreciation ('Thank you for all the love and care we received through the Bishop's letter') although some were critical ('Just wish the bishop would support his priests more'). Three of the critical comments were about leadership from bishops generally, in relation to management of the response to the pandemic. In addition, 18 comments referred to the diocese, with a similar mix of positive ('I am thankful for this diocese!!') and negative ('I find aspects of the leadership of the Diocese below standard in terms of caring for the clergy and acknowledging the burdens placed upon the laity').

Fourteen additional themes were identified, each of which attracted fewer than 4% of the comments. These included: Clerical abuse (24 comments, considered in the previous section); Online masses (18 comments); Financial Stewardship (18); Catechesis and Liturgy (13); Sexuality (10); Devotions (9); Latin mass (9); Ecumenism (8); Schools and links to parish life (6); Resources and buildings (5); Divorced and remarried (5); Role of laity (5); General Tolerance (3); Unity in the church (2).

**THIS CONCLUDES THE SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY. DATA WERE ANALYSED, AND THE REPORT WRITTEN, BY TIM CAIN (LEAD AUTHOR), HEATHER HAUSCHILD, ELEANOR BELTON, KARENA FULFORD, CATHERINE HOBBS AND CHRIS SMITH, FOR THE BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH. 22.06.2021.**

# Appendix: the questionnaire

## Please tell us a little about you

1. I agree to participate in this research

Yes

No

2. Please Confirm:

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

3. Please tick all that apply:

Married

Single

Divorced and Single

Divorced and Married

Annulment and Single

Annulment and Married

Widowed

Prefer not to say

4. Age Range - Please tick one of the following:

18-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-70

71+

Prefer not to say

5. What is the first part of your postcode?

6. Which of these groups best describes the way you think of yourself?

White British  
European  
White other  
Black (African origin)  
Black (Caribbean origin)  
Black (Other origin)  
Asian (Indian origin)  
Asian (Pakistani origin)  
Asian (Bangladeshi origin)  
Asian (Chinese origin)  
Asian (Other origin)  
Mixed origin  
Prefer not to say  
Other (please specify)

7. Please tell us about your employment situation:

In employment/Self employed  
Unemployed  
Retired  
Student  
Prefer not to say

8. Are you registered as disabled?

Yes  
No

**Being a Catholic or a member of a  
Catholic parish and what it means for you**

9. Were you raised as a Catholic?

Yes  
No

10. Would you say that you now regard yourself to be Catholic? (for example, when asked about your religious affiliation on forms or surveys)

Yes

No

Sometimes

Preparing to be received into the Catholic Church

Other (please comment)

11. Apart from special occasions such as weddings, funerals and baptisms, how often before covid restrictions came into place did you attend Mass?

More than once a week

At least weekly

Less often but at least once in two weeks

Less often but at least once a month

Less often but at least twice a year

Less often at least once a year

Less often than once a year

Never or practically never

Varies too much to say

12. If you have stopped practising your faith, please tell us in a few sentences what influenced your decision and what if anything would make you reconsider?

Not Applicable

Applicable (please give details)

13. How important would you say your faith is to you?

Very Important

Somewhat important

Neutral

Not important



14. What does your local parish Church mean to you? That is, your local parish Church, the Church you attend or another Church in a different area etc. (Tick all that apply)

A place to gather for weekly Mass

A place to pray

A place to encounter Jesus Christ and to develop a relationship with Him

A community where I feel supported

A community where I can give support to others

A place to be sociable

A place to learn about my faith

I don't attend Church

Other (please comment)

15. Do you have a preference for a particular style of Mass and worship?

Novus Ordo which literally means the "new order of the Mass"

Charismatic renewal

Traditional Latin Mass

No preference

Please tell us your thoughts

16. Please tell us a little about your thoughts on prayer (Tick all that apply)

It is essential to me and I make time each day for prayer

I pray at least 3 times per week

I only pray at Mass

I pray less than once a week

I only pray in times of crisis

I never pray and it is not important to me.

I would like to pray more often but I find it difficult to give enough time to prayer

I would pray more often but I do not know how to pray

17. Are there any devotions that are particularly important to you? (Tick all that apply) /

Rosary

Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament – a holy hour

Friday devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

First Saturday devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Stations of the Cross

Angelus

Daily office

Bible reading

N/A

Other (please specify)

18. Is there more the Church can do to help you to pray more often or deepen your prayer life? (Tick all that apply)

Make more resources available online

Make more resources and ideas available through my parish

Organised devotions could be more frequently provided in my parish

A structured course on prayer would be of benefit to me

Accompanied prayer (when someone prays with me) would be of interest to me

If Churches were open all day I would drop in to say a prayer

I do not need any help as I have all I need to help me to pray

I am not interested in developing my prayer life

19. Sacramental life: What are your views on the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession)?

Essential and I receive the sacrament at least once a month if I can

I receive the sacrament less than monthly but several times each year

I receive the sacrament at least twice a year, usually around Christmas and Easter

I have not received the sacrament of reconciliation for more than a year

I do not think this sacrament is important to the practice of my faith N/A

Anything else you would like to add

20. Is there any help we can provide to make it easier for you to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation again or more regularly?

Offer more frequent times for confession

Offer a refresher on what the sacrament is why it is important and how to receive it

Offer a guide on how to make a good confession online or in print

Offer more teaching in the homily at Mass

No

If no, please tell us why

21. What are your views about Holy Communion (the Eucharist)? Please tick those statements in this list which express what you believe:

The Eucharist is a wonderful way for our Church family to gather and celebrate a meal

The Eucharist is Jesus Christ, His body and blood, soul and divinity, truly, really, and substantially present.

The Eucharist is a wonderful way to remember Christ's teaching, but the bread and wine, although blessed, still remain essentially bread and wine.

In the Eucharist Jesus is not literally present, but He is with us in spirit.

I am not sure

N/A

Other (Please specify)

22. How often do you receive Holy Communion?

I receive Holy Communion at least weekly (every time I go to Mass)

I receive Holy Communion less than once a week

I only receive Holy Communion occasionally

I never receive Holy Communion

N/A

23. If you go to Mass regularly would you invite a friend or family member who does not (currently) go to Mass to come with you? (Tick all that apply)

I have already asked friends and family to come to Mass with me

I have asked friends and family to come with me to Mass on special occasions, such as Christmas or Easter

I would only ask family and friends if they showed some interest first

I might ask if there was an alternative to Mass, such as an Alpha course?

I would never ask anyone to come with me to Mass or any Church related activity

Not sure

I don't go to Mass but I would like for someone to invite me

I don't go to Mass and I would not like to go

If you said you would never ask anyone, please tell us in a few words why

24. Does your faith influence any of the following? (If you have no faith answer no to each)

The way you vote in local and general elections (Yes/No)

The choice of school for your child (Yes/No)

The way you spend your free time (Yes/No)

Your friendship groups (Yes/No)

Your choice of job (Yes/No)

Your involvement in your local community, for example volunteering (Yes/No)

Does your faith influence anything else that is important to you?

## **Involvement in the Life of the Church**

Please answer the following questions in relation to your involvement before the coronavirus pandemic.

25. How were you involved in the life of the Church? (Tick all which apply)

☐ I made a regular financial donation

☐ I served in a designated ministry e.g. (Reader, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Safeguarding representative, Children's Liturgy)

☐ I was a member of a parish committee or other formal group please tell us I was employed in a paid diocesan or parish role

☐ I was not involved in the life of the Church

☐ I wanted to be involved but there is a reason stopping me at the moment

☐ There were no opportunities for me to be involved in my Church although I would be happy to help

☐ Other (please specify)

26. Please tell us a little more about how you would like to help and be involved in the life of the Church

☐ I don't want to be involved

☐ I do want to be involved (please specify)

27. Have you undertaken any faith development at any point in your life

☐ Yes

☐ No

28. Have you attended any of the following? Tick all that apply

☐ Alpha

☐ Sycamore

☐ Called and Gifted

☐ Special retreats

☐ CaFE

☐ Parish pilgrimage

☐ Week of Guided Prayer

☐ Other (please specify)

29. What do you think would help you and your family to develop your faith further?

The Homily at Mass

Information in newsletters

Written resources

Book club

Small group discussions

Bible studies

Online courses

Opportunities to worship outside of Mass – e.g. adoration, rosary.

Church website resources

I'm not interested in developing further

Other (please specify)

30. Have you attended any of the following sacramental preparation programmes at any point in your life?

RCIA (Yes/No)

Marriage preparation (Yes/No)

Baptism preparation (Yes/No)

First Holy Communion preparation (Yes/No)

Confirmation preparation (Yes/No)

Preparation for Holy Orders (Yes/No)

Other (please specify)

31. In answering the last question, how would you say this has influenced your faith journey (on a scale of 0-100 where 0 means it had no impact at all to 100 strongly influenced my commitment to my faith).

32. How confident do you feel in being able to share your faith with others?

Very confident

Somewhat confident

Hesitant

Not at all confident

No faith to share

33. Do you have children aged up to 18?

Yes

No

34. Have your children attended:

First Communion programme (Yes/No)

Confirmation programme (Yes/No)

Other Church-based activity (Yes/No)

Church Holiday clubs (Yes/No)

Youth retreats or youth pilgrimages (Yes/No)

Youth clubs (Yes/No)

Other (please specify)

35. In answering the last question, how would you say this has influenced their attitude to their faith? (on a scale of 0-100).

36. Do you identify one Catholic Church as your main place of worship?

Yes

No

N/A

37. If no, how many do you identify as your main place of worship?

38. Please tell us why you attend more than one.

39. How far do you usually travel to the place you see as your parish?

0-2 miles

3-5 miles

5-10 miles

More than 10 miles

40. Please let us know the main reason for travel to a Catholic Church if you go more than 5 miles.

41. How far would you be prepared to travel to go the Mass?

3-5 miles

5-10 miles

More than 10 miles

I am unable / would not be prepared to travel to attend Mass

42. How welcoming is the Church that you attend?

Very welcoming

Somewhat friendly

Neither welcoming nor unwelcoming

Not at all welcoming

43. Please tell us about your answer.

44. How friendly is the Church you attend to young families and children?

Very friendly

Somewhat friendly

Neither friendly nor unfriendly

Not at all friendly to children

Don't Know

I don't attend a Church and would not know

45. What else could your Church do to be more responsive to the needs of young families and children?

N/A

Please give details



46. Thinking about the opportunities for the Church to service the poor and those in need. From the list below, choose 5 areas that are the most important to you.

- Environment and climate change
- Protection for the unborn and care for mothers in need
- Children living in poverty
- Refugees
- Foodbanks and support for local people living in poverty (Food banks)
- Social Isolation
- Catholic homes caring for the elderly
- Support for children and families
- Aid for poor in the developing world overseas  
(e.g. CAFOD, Mary's Meals, Aid to the Church in Need)
- Aid for poor in the Diocese (e.g. CARITAS Portsmouth)
- Homelessness
- Mental ill health
- Older people with dementia
- There are no opportunity at this present time
- Other (please give a brief description)

47. What opportunities are there now through the Church you attend?

Choose all that apply:

- Environment and climate change (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Protection for the unborn and care for mothers in need (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Children living in poverty (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Refugees (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Foodbanks and support for local people living in poverty (Food banks)  
(Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Socially isolated (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Catholic homes caring for the elderly (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Support for children and families (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Aid for poor in the developing world overseas (Yes/No/I don't Know)  
(e.g. CAFOD, Marys Meals, Aid to the Church in Need)
- Aid for poor in the Diocese (eg. CARITAS Portsmouth) (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Homelessness (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Mental ill health (Yes/No/I don't Know)
- Older people with dementia (Yes/No/I don't Know) Other (please specify)

48. What do you value most about the Catholic Church? (up to 5 most important aspects that you want to share)

49. As Catholics, we believe that each person is called to bring people closer to Jesus through His Church. What, if anything, needs to change to realise that vision?(up to 5 most important aspects that you want to share)

50. Since March 2020, as we have been working through the coronavirus pandemic, many aspects of life have changed including the way we practice our faith. Please tell us how this has affected you.

I have joined services online from my local Church at least weekly

I have joined services online at least weekly from other Churches

I have joined services occasionally

I have joined other activities organised by my parish online

I have joined Prayer groups

I have joined Discussion groups

I have joined Study groups

I have Socially got together with people

I have joined Parish management meetings

I have not participated in any online activity

I have returned to my local Church for Mass at least weekly

I will return to Mass once the restrictions have lifted

I have no plans to return to Mass in the near future

I am still supporting my Church financially

I have offered to help my Church with reopening arrangements

Faith is not important to me

Other (please specify)

51. What has my parish done well during this time?

52. What could my parish have done better to support me or others?

53. Please share any reflections that you have on the last six months during the Coronavirus pandemic as it relates to your faith and Mass attendance. These reflections may be very broad.

54. Please share with us any views or information that you feel we have not covered in the survey that you feel is important for us to know.

**Thank you for participating in this survey.**

