



ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF

SYNOD 2021-23

PARISH REPORT

The Parish of Our Lady of the Angels and St Davids; Cwmbran

To be submitted no later than **Monday 21st March 2022**

(extenuating circumstances and extension agreed with
Madeleine by R.Sadler – **Sunday 27th March 2022**)

Introduction

Parishes are invited to submit a Report based on discussions. The maximum size for the Report is 10 pages. You may be able to record your views in much less space.

Please use the structure suggested within this Template so that the Diocesan Synod Team [DST] are best-able to synthesise Reports from across the Archdiocese.

This Report will contribute to the Diocesan Report that + George Stack will submit on behalf of the Archdiocese.

Introduction: In this part of the Report, you might wish to record some of the special characteristics of your parish – urban or rural, special features [hospital/ school /prison /care homes in your parish boundaries]. Some reflection on the demographics of your parish. You might want to include details of any special ministry /service/project.

Methodology: In this section give a brief overview of the different ways in which you have engaged with parish members and those beyond the worshipping community. It might be useful to present this as a Timeline with a short comment for each month between the Training of Parish Representatives to the finalising of the Parish Report. Some reflection on the numbers of people attending / contributing to discussion would be helpful. Comments on special circumstances [e.g., telephone conversations with the housebound/ meetings with distinct groups / outreach activity] would be valuable.

Key Issues Raised: This will be the main part of your Report. You will be presenting a summary of the issues raised and the points made in your discussions/ interviews / submissions. We will be reporting across the three headings of Communion, Participation and Mission and suggest you might do likewise. Some issues may be recorded under more than one heading. There may be material to record that does not fit into these categories and space is provided for that. You may choose to summarise these in bullet points or in a few paragraphs. It is important that your summary reflects not only the responses of the majority but also some minority views.

Example: “Most respondents were of the opinion that XYZ. A minority, however, felt that ABC was more important “

Sign Off: The Report needs to be signed by the Parish Priest and the lead Parish Representative. Any Report submitted should have been made available to the community parish as a draft and should be formally considered by the Parish Advisory Council prior to submission.

Introduction – Special Characteristics of the Parish

Cwmbran is a new town, founded in the 1950's, with scope to provide housing and work opportunities in many different fields. These days Cwmbran continues to be a place where people are able to commute to work across the bridge into England with ease, along with providing many well kept amenities within the area. Finally a more recent addition to the community within the past 2 years was the creation of a new Hospital called "The Grange", further changing the dynamics of the parish.

The Parish of Cwmbran is a large parish stretching across two church sites. Once home to a Priest at each site, in more recent times both churches have been combined to form one parish of Our Lady and St David.

Fr Daniel Stanton splits his time between both St David's Church as well as Our Lady of the Angels Church, to offer both parts of Cwmbran equal opportunities for worship. Due to Covid restrictions, Mass successfully moved online, drawing a large number of viewers who would take part in Mass from the safety of their own homes. With easing restrictions, while many returned to physical attendance of Mass, the Parish continues to offer worship, prayer and community meetings via live stream from both church locations. The Parish runs a successful SVP group supporting those most in need within the local community, along with an RCIA program welcoming newcomers into the Church. The Parish also offers the elderly a weekly opportunity to socialize with others, as well as a weekly prayer group to which all are invited. Within Cwmbran there is also Llantarnam Abbey, providing a living link to the rich history of Cistercian Monks who used to inhabit many parts of Cwmbran.

Within the parish there are two Catholic Primary schools: Our Lady of the Angels Catholic Primary and St David's Catholic Primary. Both primary schools are feeder schools for St Albans Catholic High School located in Pontypool, which is the next town along from Cwmbran. Both primary schools are located close to the two church buildings within the parish, allowing for further opportunities of spiritual worship within the community, along with regular liturgies led by pupils from the schools.

Methodology

<u>Nov 2021</u>	<u>Action</u> Parish Representative Training	<u>Comment</u> Diocese training sessions attended by Parish Synod Representatives.
<u>Dec 2021</u>	<u>Action</u> Inform the congregation and community	<u>Comment</u> Synod part of the Parish website was put together, mainly to inform people regarding the Synod. This advertising of the Synod further extended into both churches, online social media and printed newsletters. At this stage focus was on informing people about the Synod and what will be taking place over the following months, along with the discussions that would continue to take

<p><u>Jan 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Launch of the Synod within the Parish</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>Talk delivered to a group of 10 parish members; talk was also live streamed to parishioners who could not make the evening, then went on to church YouTube channel to be watched at a later stage by many in congregation.</p> <p>Alongside this launch, the newsletter had 2 Synodal questions in it each week to encourage these conversations in the homes of parish members as well as the wider community.</p> <p>The church website launched an online version of the Synod questions, as at the time we still had ongoing restrictions and we wanted to reach as many people possible, targeting those in particular who log on each week to view Mass live streamed and are unable to physically attend Mass.</p>
<p><u>Feb 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>School involvement in the Synod</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>There has been much involvement with the schools and Fr Daniel has delivered sessions to staff and governors, as well as contacting parents to find out their views regarding the Church. This has successfully been done, as it was recognised early on that teachers and staff within primary schools are the ones in contact with parents and children on a daily basis, alongside providing spiritual development through both Catholic ethos</p>

<p><u>March 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Parish discussions within Churches</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>Parish discussions took several different formats. Regular attendance to coffee mornings held after main weekend Mass was attended by parish representative and opinions were gathered from those who attended.</p> <p>This was then carried out at several different Masses to reach as many people as possible and to engage parishioners in conversations but also the process. These discussions varied in numbers and meant that people who did not wish to put their thoughts and feelings down on paper were able to speak to the right people who would</p>
<p><u>April 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Report put together and shared with all those concerned.</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>Thanks issued to parishioners and community who took part in these vital discussions. Update the Parishioners on the continuation of these Synod discussions and why this is so important for our community</p>
<p><u>May 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Committees to be formed to begin action and make changes within Parish</p>	<p><u>Comment</u></p> <p>This action will very much be ongoing and will allow for any issues raised, in particular groups that people have requested, to be put into action and then reviewed at a later stage, in line with latest Covid restrictions. Synod talks to continue within Parish.</p>

Communion- How does our Church function in our local area?

The majority of responses acknowledged that:

The majority of responses acknowledged that:

1. The SVP group are working well to reach those in society who need help and support the most. Many commended the work that SVP does in particular the work of regular food banks that support people within the community. Many noted that regular meetings allowed for as many people on the peripheries to be reached and that many felt like they could approach the SVP for support when they needed it. Many recognised with the increase of living costs along with the emotional and mental effects of the pandemic that this group will continue to be fundamental in the years to come.
2. Alpha course and RCIA seen as really important in the community and members spoke about how pleased they were to see these courses taking place.
3. Engagement in schools and work with schools has been greatly improved with parishioners enjoying knowing what is happening in the Catholic Primary schools that are within our parish.
4. Many personally have found it easy to participate online and then enjoyed returning to Mass. Many missed attending Church and a lot of activities were stopped due to guidelines and they missed contact with people. One person in particular spoke about how wonderful it was to return to Mass after an 18 month break on Pentecost Sunday.
5. People are really encouraging and supportive. The parish is looking for new ideas to encourage participation, it is very proactive. Various groups have been set up within the parish to support the socializing element which helped those who felt isolated.
6. Visiting the sick many people felt was really well achieved within the parish. Many pointed out that this was easier due to the numerous ways they were able to contact the Parish office to arrange visits to loved ones.

A minority however felt that:

1. It was recognised that while there is a lot of successful Primary Church link activities taking place like the students from feeder primaries spending time together attending Mass and taking part in the liturgies. It was questioned if this strong link between the church and the secondary schools was also taking place. If so, perhaps this was not as well advertised within the Parish.
2. To build up on this point further, it was questioned what students learn in R.E in secondary schools and how different it was to the time in which they grew up in. This was interesting point to make, as it appears that the diluting down of R.E in non-faith schools (seen in the media), seems to have got people questioning if this was the case for Catholic schools as they were not aware of the sort of things taught at secondary.
3. Some were not aware of the formal mechanisms put in place to have their voices heard within the Parish, though recognised the importance of the Synod and this vehicle for opinion.
4. Some spoke about the difficulty surrounding volunteering to help other people. They spoke about volunteers being difficult to obtain so often so much is left to the few who regularly are relied upon. They mentioned the SVP has recently employed a development officer, maybe the church could consider a similar role. Parents want their children in our schools but take little or no part in parish life was the feeling shared by a couple of people. They felt that as many possible should be encouraged to take part in the various groups and ministries on the Diocesan level more inter-parish sharing of groups and ministries.

1. For many, it was reflected in their answer just how important Mass and the Church was to them in their daily life. Many expressed Holy Communion as being of sacramental importance to them with one parishioner describing it as their rock and meaning everything to them.
2. There was a large variety of Masses on offer over both church sites. Parishioners felt this was important as it gives people who lead busy lives with children and families the opportunity to be able to attend.
3. Increasing numbers attending Mass physically in Church was seen as a positive sign. Many people spoke of their experiences with during the pandemic and most missed the social element of coming to Mass.
4. New Priest appears to be inclusive and proactive which was seen as a great benefit to the Parish. Many people spoke of the hopefulness they have for the vision of the Catholic Church regarding the vision the Priest had for the Church and the Priest spending time to get everyone on board with this vision.
5. More social events needed. Parishioners recognised how nice it was for community to come together for Cannon John leaving social event and wished to see more events in the future that brought community back together especially after

Participation – How do we work with others in supporting our local area?

Mission: How do we take the Gospel message out from our parish community?

The majority of responses acknowledged that:

1. The Parish was successful at having parishioners' welcome people at the door, especially for those unfamiliar with attending Church. This was seen as a positive as was the Prayer before Mass that is spoken and said by all of the congregation to help unite them with those watching on live stream.
2. Somehow more people need to be brought back to the Church. On the back of this point, it was recognised that many faces were returning to Mass physically however that bereavement of family members many faced during the early stages of the pandemic meant that some elderly people may take longer to return to the Church and sense of being comfortable.
3. Prayer groups and daily rosary also recognised as being a positive for people in their own faith. Many recognised the importance of these opportunities and spoke about their sense of belonging and coming together through Prayer.
4. Family aspect needs rebuilding where we are able to pray together and how liturgies are their own families within the Church so when they come together it truly is as communion.
5. Many spoke about how they felt very welcomed in the Church along with feeling comfortable and a sense of belonging comparing this to family. Others mentioned that being in communion with each other, joyful, hymn singing and praising God has helped them to come out of the other side of the pandemic. Many people felt that it was important to try to attend many of the events and help out in the church by offering up their gifts and talents.
6. Many placed great emphasis upon the Sacraments. One person said "I see the sacraments as a kind of spiritual oasis whose influence spills over into the rest of my life". Many commented about how without the sacraments something will be missing in our lives. One person in particular said "I feel relief and comfort from receiving the sacraments. Confession lifts and guides and communion strengthens and lightens you."

A minority however felt that:

1. There has been a big change in attitude in society – shops are open on a Sunday along with other establishments, religion sadly seems to be at the bottom of the priority list for young people – this point was regarding the barriers stopping people from attending. Church needs to become the priority in people's lives.
2. It was felt that the Church had become more sacramentally based and less community based for people. People simply turn up once a week and go, without necessarily having an encounter with the Lord and how we need to bring it back to being a thriving community that some other Churches are doing so well. More focus on people encountering the Holy Spirit and the Prayer life of the community and how the Church must form intentional disciples.
3. One opinion was that some people think Sacraments are enough, however it is not and more is needed for people to experience deeper connections with God, therefore a change in community attitude needed.

Sign Off

This Report is submitted to the Diocesan Synodal Team on behalf of the Parish community of:

Our Lady of the Angels and St David; Parish of Cwmbran

It is an honest reflection of the work undertaken over the last six months and has been endorsed by the Parish Advisory Council

Signed: Fr Daniel Stanton (Parish Priest)

Signed: Mr Richard Sadler (Parish Representative)

Once complete please forward to:

madeleine.walters@rcadc.org

The Diocesan Synodal Team wishes to convey its appreciation for all the work undertaken in the preparation of this Report

