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SYNOD 2021-2023 DISCERNMENT  
OUTCOMES  
TE WHETU O TE MOANA,  
STAR OF THE SEA, MARLBOROUGH

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April 2022



Synod  
2021  
2023

For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

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Tēnā koutou katoa

On behalf of the Parish Pastoral Council of Te Whetu o te Moana, Star of the Sea, Marlborough, it is with pleasure that I deliver to you the Synod 2021-2023 discernment outcomes from 14 of our parish's groups. A total of 70-95 people were involved.

These groups represent a diverse range of people, ages and cultures from the communities of the Marlborough Sounds, the Wairau Plains and Kaikoura.

Due to the ongoing threats of COVID-19 it was not possible to provide training for all the group facilitators. However, the synod process was still able to be followed by all the groups thanks to the documents provided by the Archdiocese of Wellington. Meetings were held both in person and via Zoom.

The Holy Spirit has guided us all in this journey of discernment for the communion, participation and mission of our Church. The fruits of the Holy Spirit's work have been captured in the following pages. Not only have main themes been developed and reported on but other points have been recorded as well as some key phrases shared by members of some groups as they were beautifully inspired words.

Ngā mihi maioha,

Victoria Raw



## Theme 1. OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

*Jesus wants us to walk together, side by side.*

- a) How do you feel we as Catholics are doing at walking side-by-side?
- b) Who do you feel is included / welcome on the church's local journey?
- c) Who is not included or welcomed?

### St. Mary's Youth: Blenheim

How do you feel we as Catholics are doing at walking side by side?

- 70% - good, 25% - not so good, 5% - ok

2. Who do you feel is included/ welcome on the church's local journey?

- Everybody
- most people
- everyone who is respectful

3. Who is not included or welcomed?

- no-one
- Satan
- LGBT people

## Theme 3. OUR SPEAKING UP

*Everyone is invited to speak boldly and courageously in freedom, truth, and love.*

- a) How good are we as Catholics at speaking out in public?
- b) How do we say what is important to us as Catholics?
- c) What helps or hinders our public visibility?

### Wairau Stewardship Group

Our Speaking Up:

A good many Catholics are not good at speaking up publicly. We tend to be mostly private in our faith, recognising that we are weak and sinful, and therefore don't tend to do things to stand out or appear above the parapet e.g. confronting people who blaspheme around us, or saying grace before eating when we are in public.

This is not true of all Catholics; upbringing and personality type plays a part as to how confident and vocal we are about our faith. However, our public visibility is somewhat hindered by the fact we tend to prefer to let our good deeds and attitude speak about our faith, rather than through speaking out for what we believe in.

## Theme 4. GATHERING

*For Catholics, 'togetherness' is based on gathering to explore the Gospel (Word) and to break bread (Eucharist).*

- a) Are our Catholic gatherings achieving their purpose for our people?
- b) How does our gathering for prayer (including Mass) meet people's needs?
- c) How do they fail to meet people's needs?

### Liturgy Committee, Kaikōura

#### **Are our Catholic gatherings achieving their purpose for our people?**

- The consensus is that our Word & Communion services are providing spiritual nourishment for our community. Because of our isolation, we do not have access to a priest to support us in spiritual direction.
- We have a strong traditional Catholic faith, which sustains our bond in our approach.
- We do take part in Meals on Wheels for March and July, a community activity as is our regular items for the Faith column in our local newspaper.
- Not enough input for different languages at school or church.

#### **How does our gathering for prayer (including Mass) meet people's needs?**

- Covid has turned everything into disarray – but our gatherings do achieve the purpose for our community.
- Singing and the absence of altar servers is a big loss. The school choir was wonderful and a chance for the older to meet the young.
- Our Rosary group, open to all, meets weekly to pray together.
- There is a bond between our School and Church community, non-Catholics included, all are treated with respect, altar servers are a tangible link with School and church.
- Home Communion, when Covid allows.
- Reactivate our Telephone tree.

#### **How do they fail to meet people's needs?**

- Only one priest, no support – children starved of spirituality because of our isolation.
- Not looking after the elderly as well as we could. We used to have regular healing Masses, followed by a gathering for a cup of tea.
- The needs of our youth are not met, this group needs a purpose/goal; we are restricted because of numbers in Kaikoura.
- Communication – a lack of at all levels. Covid aside we need to have opportunity for young and older people to meet together.
- Pot luck dinners, Reconciliation, follow through with the Sacramental programme (it is the beginning when you receive the sacraments not the end).
- Welcoming visitors.
- We could look to live streaming, using our technology, to our church community.

- Visits to the Marae for Mass or Word & Communion and social. More use of Te Reo.

Group of general parishioners that gathered one Sunday morning in April 2022

**Main theme: Creating community through inclusivity of all members of our parish whanau.**

- As a church we need to be aware of and meet the needs of all our different groups that form our community. These groups include our youth, ethnic and cultural groups as well as those from smaller communities and others on the fringes.
- We are a community of all ages and we must not forget any along the way.
- There are people who find that being in bigger parish environments difficult so will leave early or not engage. However when they are in smaller communities they feel more part of the group as they are more welcoming.
- Joining in can be especially hard for older people and single people – this is where smaller communities can be more welcoming as they notice newcomers more easily.
- The ability to gather after Mass for a time of fellowship over a cuppa is so important. This is an opportunity for sharing and finding out how people are. This could be run by different groups to foster community interaction.
- There is a need to provide more options and opportunities for people to gather – both spiritually (greater formation and catechesis) and socially (10-pin bowling, beach trips).
- There is a need to minister to each other so as to become interconnected to each other through God.
- There is a need to create a vibrant community as at times it can be lacklustre. A vibrant community leads to a welcoming one. It creates a sense of belonging and cohesion.
- Acknowledge the difficulty of keep things alive and active when faced with the challenges of COVID-19 as well as competing world issues.

Other themes:

- Liturgy:
  1. develop creative liturgies
  2. inclusive use of multicultural input into our liturgies
  3. support people / families in prayer for specific issues – so that there is spiritual encouragement
- Declining number of young people attending – how will the church keep going?
- There is a need to see greater laity involvement with more women in active roles in the church.

Key phrases shared by people:

- It is important to minister to small communities. They fulfil a function in the community
- Need to engage in a new way of ministry to those on the fringes and the youth
- Work to empower all communities
- Togetherness
- What are we doing to build our church between when we meet on a Sunday?
- Mass draws us out of our worldly culture and gives us a 'Slice of Heaven'
- We need to engage our hearts, minds and intellects
- Engaging in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a humbling experience
- To build our Catholic culture so as to be distinct from all that is around us
- Being interconnected through God
- God knows how to meet each of our needs
- Unity is not uniformity

### The Tongan Community of Star of the Sea Parish

Our overarching wish that came out of this discernment was culturally, it was also important for the church to meet the needs of the different ethnicities of its congregation. The different cultural needs must enter the 'Church's Conscience'. Our Tongan Community of Star of the Sea needs a Tongan Priest to hold a Tongan mass from time to time, for our Community.

Key phrases shared by people:

- Catholic togetherness and gathering embodies respect, forgiveness and sense of Community and Leadership, combining spiritual unity in our partaking in the Eucharist.
- Essence of mass, spirituality, brings us together as a Community.
- It is singing in church that evokes our spirituality and brings us closer spiritually. It makes us feel the Holy Spirit.
- Coming together as a Catholic Community embodies family. It makes me feel closer to Our Lord.
- By partaking in the Eucharist we all feel and remember the sacrifice Our Lord had made for us
- It has strengthened me and I have grown as a person in my spiritual life.
- Being part of our Catholic Tongan Community makes us whole as a people.
- Feeling of belonging and togetherness.
- No doubt the feeling of one Catholic people & Community is felt.
- I miss our Tongan Mass, the singing, worship and feasting after.
- Our Children are challenging us and our Catholic faith as they do not feel our "Church" is meeting their spiritual needs....they say it's boring.
- We are losing that generation.
- The Church needs to address the Youth Voice and hear them.

- We did our best for our children to remain interested in our faith. But I believe the seed has been planted.
- I remember growing up in Tonga, it was Sunday school that kept the faith alive in us as children. All we can do now is pray for our children and youth that they may return to the faith.
- Singing in church is an important ingredient to grow our faith and add to the experience in Church.
- **Bring back the singing in church.**
- We would like a Tongan Priest to come and lead the Tongan Mass.
- It is important for the Church to move with the Times. We too must move with the times.



## Theme 5. OUR MISSION

*Walking together enables us all to accept our mission to share the Good News.*

- a) Do we as Catholics take this mission seriously?
- b) How exactly do we as Church members spread the Good News of Jesus Christ?
- c) What stops us from being active in mission?

### Scripture prayer group in Blenheim

- Our mission is to be love for someone at times of crisis, sorrow, deep emotional experiences so that we can enable that person to get to a real point of encounter, to open the door for real dialogue and we need to be sensitive at such times to their needs.
- God uses us to reach out to others especially at moments of sorrow and crisis.
- It is at such times when people are most vulnerable that they can be open to God - example of ministry to families during funeral preparations for deceased Catholics. Often the family has had little to no contact with the Church, prayer, the Scriptures or hymns but this is a time for them to reconnect. This is an opportunity for us to speak freely of God.
- We need to be like Jesus - love conquers the heart.
- We should be loving even when it is hard - we need to be forgiving and to be humble to ask for pardon to those that we have hurt - this is a way to convey the Good News to others who don't believe. We need to be good Christians by living by example.
- Living the Faith by example by being joyful and open - this is attractive to others and this is what the Good News is and where you can connect with people at a spiritual level.
- We live in a very secular society and the workplace can be a very hard place to be. In an increasing secular society we are being told what to 'be' but deep down people have a desire to be in touch with spiritual things.

Key phrases shared by people:

- Sharing with those who do not believe in God is often not well accepted
- Us vs. Them (as in those who go to church / believe and those that don't)
- What stops us: there are too many voices and not all are on the same page
- Working people find it hard to be involved in things
- Actions speak louder than words, including by being silent
- How do we spread the Good News?
- New Zealand is very secular that it is hard to break through

## St. Joseph's, Picton Community

- a) We acknowledge we have a mission as Catholics to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, particularly with Church numbers declining and very few families/young people attending the Sacraments, however it was agreed that generally this responsibility was not taken seriously enough to be a high priority in the lives of most.
  
- b) As Church members, we spread the Good News:
  - More often by example/actions rather than through words. By charitable works we show the love of Jesus Christ and therefore live out our mission of spreading the Good News. (St Vincent de Paul Ministry a good example in the local community of faith in action through care of the needy).
  
  - By first being knowledgeable about our faith, we can then be confident to speak up about matters of faith when opportunities arise.
  
  - Through personal invitation to others who are not Catholic to attend Mass or faith sharing/scripture groups to find out more about Catholicism and to participate in the sacramental life of the faith community.
  
  - By each participating in the Sacraments (particularly in the Eucharist which is the true presence of Jesus Himself) and understanding the Sacraments more fully, our celebrations as a community are more enriched, creating a greater sense of the love and peace of Christ. This deep joy is what attracts others and shines as a beacon of hope. If our Church celebrations are more joy-filled, we are more joy-filled and the more others will be attracted to attend.
  
  - By seeking guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer in our daily lives, both as individuals and as a faith community, we are empowered to reach out in whatever way God calls us i.e. through charitable works (e.g. Mother Teresa was a prominent and recognisable face of the Catholic Church in our modern world and she was nourished by the Sacraments and found her strength through prayer and the Eucharist) or in witnessing to others in our daily work, or by actively supporting others who are in positions of responsibility in the community to speak out on behalf of Christians/Catholics. To encourage others to be voices for Jesus Christ in the world.
  
- c) Reasons that stop us from being active in Mission:
  - Not knowing how to take action – where to go or how to help others in immediate need.

- Physical barriers such as masks, social distancing and general separation through Covid restrictions. This has caused division and often prevented us from meeting together as a community and minimised opportunity for nourishment through the Sacraments.
- “Busy” lives – what we prioritise as important in our day to day living and looking after our own temporal or “earthly” needs often comes before our spiritual mission to spread the Good News. Not finding the time (or making time) to participate in spiritual growth opportunities such as faith sharing and prayer/spiritual formation groups or in reaching out to others through charitable works.
- Bad Press surrounding Catholicism with scandals etc. Often fear holds us back from being identified as Catholic because of the negative way the Church is portrayed through the media. The general feeling that the Church is out of date and there is no place for God in the world today. We don’t feel comfortable talking about eternal life and tend to just focus on the “here and now”.
- We admire those Christian denominations that have the courage to “preach” their faith in very direct ways, such as door knocking and inviting people to talk about faith or religion, but we as a group (and Catholics generally) are not good at “preaching” in case we offend others or encroach on their opinions and beliefs. We are not good at challenging others about what they believe or their religious opinions.
- Lack of education/understanding of our own faith and lack of spiritual formation/nourishment. Because we may not understand the language of the Mass, the relevance of the Scriptures, or how we as Catholics differ from other denominations (i.e. the Sacraments and sacred tradition), we find it hard to reach out to others. When we are challenged, we just don’t have the answers!

### Questions:

- Is just being a “good person” and kind to others, enough to actively fulfil our Mission to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ? Do we need to more directly link our good works with our Catholic/Christian faith and identify ourselves more as being motivated in our actions by the love that Jesus has for us and our desire to return that love through actions of love towards others?
- Does the language of the Mass need to be changed to make it more “modern” (and therefore easier to understand) and would that attract more people to attend - or do we need to learn more about the

language used - what it means, how it has been handed down to us through the tradition of the Church (which makes us unique) and to understand better the “sacredness” of sacramental language. Would changing it make it more understandable, or in fact less powerful, or is there a middle ground? (i.e. some language could be simplified but more spiritual formation provided by clergy or input from programmes/talks already available on internet etc. to promote understanding of Sacraments and language).

- Spreading the Good News is an individual responsibility, but also globally as a Church. Do we need to have a more prominent presence and voice through media (locally and globally) which promotes the Church in a positive light to counter the “bad press” and which actively advertises opportunities for people to ask questions and receive information about Catholicism or to share their faith journey.
- Do we need to be more “welcoming” as a Church community to those who are reaching out (perhaps lapsed or not regular practising) who want to return through the baptism of a child or to be married in the Church? The administration and form-filling required can be quite daunting and a barrier to return. Can alternative paths be found to help people return to the Church in a less “officious” way? Perhaps the clergy are not always the best people to make the initial contact?

## Theme 6. OUR CONVERSATION

*Genuine conversation requires perseverance and patience but leads to understanding.*

### Kaikōura Stewardship Group

#### **As Catholics, how good are we at conversation – both listening and sharing?**

- Here we try to listen and carry through what is asked of us on the Diocesan level, Parish level and local Church level.
- We do this through our different committees, which discuss topics and find ways to share with the wider Church.
- The results of all Questionnaires are shared.
- Minutes of Meetings are posted.
- The Pastoral Council consults experts when needed for help and advice such as environmental impact, demographics etc.
- We try to keep everyone informed through the Stewardship – Leadership,
- Notices in the Bulletin and Flyer, and in weekly Church notices.
- The weekly parish bulletin is our main channel of sharing news, our priest's reflection, timetables, changes, coming events in the parish and schools.

#### **Good conversation (dialogue) leads to collaboration – how and how well do we collaborate in our local community?**

- As a small rural area, it is easy to know and share with a lot of people and give them needed help and support because their situations are known. There is a wonderful collaboration in times of need, bereavement, celebrations, functions, disasters, helping those in need, supporting local businesses.
- In civil society we need to keep ourselves informed correctly and stand up for civil liberties, have a voice in concerns that affect our wider community.
- Educate ourselves better when it comes to knowing the platform of political candidates and exactly what stance their Party takes in moral issues and towards bettering the lives of the homeless, unemployed, poorly waged, cultural matters, and how they intend to make our country a more just and fairer society for all of its citizens.

## Theme 7. WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

*Walking with other Christians is essential to our mission to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

- a) How well do we as Catholics know our sisters and brothers in other churches?
- b) What do we share and how do we journey with Christians from other churches (denominations)?
- c) Why don't we do more together?

### Blenheim: Facilitators' Discernment Outcomes

- Going forward we have an opportunity as Catholics to take a more active leadership role in the collaboration with both Christians and non-Christians.
- We do not always 'know' our other fellow Christians all that well even though we might work alongside them.
- There are ecumenical programmes / events that exist (e.g. Good Friday Service and Christmas Carols in the park) that are well attended by many people from different local churches. There should be an opportunity for more of these gatherings to take place.
- As Catholics we are guilty of having an 'air of superiority' as we do things in certain ways which can exclude non-Catholics. These perceptions are 'road blocks' for further opportunities to work with other faith groups.
- Faith sharing is needed with our other faith communities (not just other Christians). A beautiful example of this was the memorial service that took place in Seymour Square, Blenheim on 20 March 2019, five days after the Christchurch Mosque shootings. This was initiated by Fr. John Pearce CP and together with Margaret Western and Zayd Ian Blissett they invited the Muslim community, other Christian denominations, local government officials and local Māori iwi to lead the Marlborough community to reflect, pray and sing for peace and reconciliation. Seymour Square was packed out.
- It was a time of crisis that brought the community together but we need to collaborate at other times too.
- There are many opportunities to be with others in our multi-cultural environments and we need to embrace both faith sharing occasions as well as cultural ones (such as Diwali with the Hindus).
- We live in a changing world and we need to be more encompassing of others, without losing sight of our faith.

**How well do we as Catholics know our sisters and brothers in other churches?**

- We are a small town and therefore we all pretty well know which church, if any, that others attend. It was felt that we knew them as friends but did not often speak of our different faiths, but when we do it is mostly interested questions about 'what the Catholics do' and the answers are accepted with interest.
- We have an example here of how well our sisters and brothers in the other Christian Churches know us; during the flood of 1993 and the Catholic Church was underwater... the Presbyterian Church offered their church for us to use for as long as we needed it AND they rearranged their service times to accommodate us. By this wonderful gesture, we came to know them so much better.

**What do we share and how do we journey with Christians from other churches (denominations)?**

- We all believe in the One God. We are a strong community secular and church. We have combined Christmas and Easter celebrations, all of the 5 churches share a weekly Faith column in our local newspaper, we all take part in Meals on Wheels on different months, we join in an Anglican initiative of monthly social meetings for afternoon tea with an invited speaker. Of course there are plenty of inter school sports and art activities.
- We have interdenominational Services attended by four of the five churches; we do not attend because of Communion and timing.
- We have monthly ministers meetings made up from the five Christian Churches where we all respectfully learn more about each other. What is obvious is that we all share the same or similar views.

**Why don't we do more together?**

- Communion came up here. Why we cannot receive at other churches or in turn, others receive at our Church? We as Catholics know the answers but it is hard for other Christians to fully understand - a symbol of the last supper v Transubstantiation, The real Presence.
- On the plus side, we ALL journey together in tough times and in helping others we get to know each other.
- Covid of course comes in here, there is so much we cannot do, services that we cannot have, people not able to attend mass/W&C because they are afraid.

## Theme 8. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY

*Our Church is all about participation and shared responsibility.*

- a) Catholics aim to balance authority and governance with teamwork and co-responsibility. How well do we achieve this?
- b) How could we balance these better?
- c) How do we encourage lay involvement, participation and leadership?

### St. Joseph's School, Kaikōura

- Shared responsibility - Board of Trustees, Friends of St Joseph's (fundraising), Parish involvement with Parish Priest, Sisters and the wider parish, parents and teachers work together with the parish.
- Church leaders are guides, we cooperate with the Diocese implement themes of encyclicals, scripture, Diocese plans, our ARCH values reflect the Gospel values:
  - Achievement / Mana
  - Respect / Awhina
  - Confidence / Kaha
  - Honesty / Oranga
- Working closely under the guidance of Catholic Education.
- We make sure everyone has an opportunity to be involved, have a liturgy leadership team at school who work with our DRS. All students are given the opportunity throughout the year to take an active role in liturgy or school mass. Pre Covid we had our Assembly/liturgies in the Church - all invited, we have a school choir who sing at Mass a couple of times a year. Sacramental programme is held after Mass to encourage participation.
- Teachers are involved in ministries at Church - rostered on.
- With children participating in Church Liturgy and Children's Liturgy and leading school services they grow up more confident and willing to take on services in the Church as adults.



## Theme 9. OUR DECISION-MAKING (PPC)

*Our aim is to make decisions by discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.*

- a) How well do you feel we do this?
- b) What methods or processes do Catholic communities use to include people in discernment and decision-making?
- c) What do you think we should do to improve our efforts in this?

### Kaikōura members of PPC's Discernment Outcomes

- Discernment for decision-making always begins with prayer at S.O.T.S.
- The material is sent out before-hand to give us time for reflection.
- The Chair always invites input from each area of the Parish.
- There is always consultation and when necessary, advice is sought from experts.
- We work closely with the parish priest and the Diocese and try to carefully follow directives when given.
- We try to get a consensus and when people find it hard to accept, they are given a visit from a couple of the Pastoral Council who listen and share how the decision was made.
- On the whole, we feel that our Parish Council does its best to find the best possible result in decision-making.

### **How we could improve?**

- Sometimes the loudest voice gets the longest air-time and the timid voices may get over-looked. Yet the Holy Spirit speaks through each member.
- The Sound System in Blenheim needs up-grading. Voices get muffled or cut out and seem to be too far from the microphone. (when on Zoom)

## Theme 10. LEARNING TO JOURNEY TOGETHER

*All of us need to be open to change and ongoing learning.*

- a) To what extent do you find Catholics are open to change and new learning?
- b) How do we as a Catholic community form our people to listen, participate and be open to change?
- c) Have you found Church leaders to be willing to listen, participate and remain open to new ways?

### Blenheim Facilitators' Discernment Outcomes

We need to work on building relationships within the Church so that the various groups can unite together in prayerful listening and build a more united Church family.

Key phrases shared by people:

- Pray together at specific times to listen to each other
- Recent (church) leaders have been open but the challenge is in our congregation
- As a leader of a community you cannot be dictatorial – but listen to the community
- Church is family
- The first step towards discipleship is about building relationships

### Blenheim – Barangay San Pedro Calungsod

This is the summary of 2 groups:

First Round:

1. **On the aspect of Liturgy** - Make mass accessible to the people/Church.  
Accessibility is in terms of:
  - a) time (eg mass online, afternoon mass on Sundays especially in Blenheim where a number of parishioners are nurses, caregivers or do other shift work)
  - b) language (eg regular Filipino mass, Gospel Reading translated in different languages or projected on the screen during mass or included in Newsletter).
2. **Journeying with the families and youth** - understanding the reality of the youth, to be listened and supported, as well as the openness without discrimination to those with different sexual orientation
3. **On listening** - judgments prohibits people to be open. There are barriers for communication.
4. **Sharing for the mission** - responsibility on the mission, that there is a dichotomy between faith and action which does not promote in making disciples.

Second Round:

1. Ecumenical mass and get together of different faith groups to help understand each other's beliefs and find common ground such as how we can all target non-believers to believe in God, and to make a bridge through communication with other denominations

2. Because of the increasing number of suicide among the youth, the church has to reach out to them
3. Reach out to the people in the periphery.

Third Round:

1. Envisions a church that is focused on the family where youth are taken care of, that communication is open without discrimination. The church actively search for them through house-to-house visit which is a proactive approach.
2. Home visitations, not only to the sick but to parishioners, to establish personal relationship with God and the Church.