



Introduction

At WYD Poland Pope Francis talked about our broken world and how it was his hope that young people currently aged 16 to 29 would be the ones to fix our world. Our Synod Journey started with the announcement by Pope Francis of a Synod on Young People, The Faith and Discernment of Vocation in January 2017, Pope Francis asked Bishops to listen intently to young people. He asked young people to speak to their grandparents and other elders to hear what their dreams were for the Church and the World when they were young. He asked young people to DREAM BIG and assured us that there were **no topics off limits**. He encouraged those who were 30+ to accompany young people in their journey.

In April 2017 there was a Preparatory Synod Meeting in Rome attended by two kiwis – Isabella McCafferty from Wellington and Teresa McNamara from Auckland. Teresa came back very inspired by Pope Francis – the words that she came back with were **Be Courageous** and **Take a Risk** – these have become our motto throughout our Synod journey. When she arrived home she asked Bishop Pat how he would like to ‘listen intently’ to young people. This led to opportunities such as *Chill with Bishop* and the *Diocesan Youth Synod*. Other ways that Bishops heard from young people were via the national online survey in 2017 and the *Bishop Banter* and *Taking It Home* sessions at the Aotearoa Catholic Youth Festival.

Summary of who attended ..

On Sunday 22 April a Diocesan Youth Synod was held at St Peter’s College from 1-6pm. Our registrations indicated that there would be 210 participants representing 80 groups. On the day there was 198 participants who were there at the beginning and completed an individual response from 35 parishes, 10 colleges, 13 ethnic based chaplaincies/groups and 14 other groups (in total 72 groups). In addition more arrived during the afternoon so we believe there were just over 200 people there from about 80 groups. Not all people gave their age for registration and not everybody was there for the personal reflection towards the end. The age breakdown taken from the personal reflection towards the end of the Synod is shown in the adjacent table.

All regions were represented: Te Tai Tokerau Northland (young people from Panguru and Kaitaia), North Shore, City, Central, West, South and East.

Topics:

We discussed three topics (which came from a review of what Bishop Pat had previously heard):

1. The Catholic Faith Community and our place in the wider world

Journeying towards an inclusive church that values everybody and which isn’t afraid of talking about the ‘big’ issues. It is a community of hope concerned about both local and global issues.

Age	Number of representatives
13	2
14	8
15	5
16	22
17	40
18	12
19	13
20	15
21	10
22	6
23	11
24	9
25	8
26	8
27	4
28	4
29	2
	179
30+	13

2. Knowing our faith

Understanding and being able to discuss/debate/share about our faith with others (including those of other or no faith). What content do we want when it comes to church teaching and how and by whom should that be delivered? What are our most positive faith experiences and who should support us?

3. Gathering: Liturgical Celebrations, Festivals, Retreats and other times when we come together ...

What ways do we want to gather and what are the priorities for these gatherings?

Bishop Pat's Opening Address

At the beginning of the Synod, Bishop Pat spoke. Some of the key points that we took were:

- How the fastest growing faith group in Auckland is the SBNRs – spiritual but not religious.
- Pope Francis says: It's not an era of change, it's a change of era. It is a whole new ball game. It is a time of great challenge. Bishop Pat likened this to when the Israelites went into exile in Babylon. The Israelites were taken into slavery. They lost their temple. They lost Jerusalem. Many beautiful passages in the bible were written during an exile period. It is both a moment of change and opportunity.
- Pope Francis: "I dream of a church that is bruised and dirty because it has been out on the streets rather than a church that is nice and tidy and just focusing on its own survival". The Church is a bit messy – the doors are open and everyone is welcome.
- Pope Francis: The Eucharist is medicine for those who are sick.
- How do we apply these ideas to the church in Auckland?
- We have had structures and ways that have served us well for thousands of years. The church in NZ used to send missionaries overseas. Now we welcome missionaries to Auckland.
- Our churches are filled with migrants that have come from overseas. There is a change of era – a time when those who grew up in the church in New Zealand aren't there anymore. Something has changed.

Diversity of participants

As a way of explaining the diversity of participants we shared this information at the Synod:

Events that young people are most likely to attend:

In 2017 there were 1952 young people aged 16-29 who responded to a national online survey. One of the questions asked what events young people are most likely to attend in the Church context. The results are shown in the left column below. At ACYM we were very surprised to see Sunday Mass at #6 and Youth Masses and Church youth groups as #11 and #12 respectively. We looked at the raw data and found that 755 people from Auckland responded of which 558 were females and 188 males. Next we looked at the ethnic breakdown of those who responded. The largest groups were European (347), Asian (224), Pacifica (125) and Māori (47). This profile did not match the profile of young people who we see in our faith communities in the weekend or at large Diocesan gatherings like World Youth Day Auckland. Our interpretation of this is that those who are in Catholic Colleges and who are on the fringes of our faith communities see volunteering, community activities, fundraisers and competitions/challenges as the priority.



Photo of 1600 young people at WYD Auckland 2017

We asked exactly the same question of the young people who attended the Diocesan Synod Assemblies. We gave them only the categories of activities that had been included in the online survey and asked them to put them in order of most likely to attend to least likely to attend. These results are shown in the right

hand column below. You will see that Sunday Mass is ranked as #1 followed by church youth groups, retreats and youth masses.

What the national online survey said

What young people told us at the Synod Assemblies

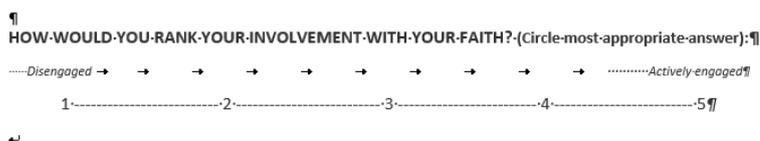
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Volunteering and Community activities | 1 Sunday Mass |
| 2 Fundraisers | 2 Church Youth Group |
| 3 Competitions or challenges | 3 Retreat |
| 4 Sports events | 4 Youth Masses |
| 5 Retreats | 5 Volunteering and community activities |
| 6 Sunday Mass | 6 Youth Conferences/Festivals |
| 7 Community leadership (training or service) | 7 Community leadership (training or service) |
| 8 Inspirational speakers and discussion initiatives | 8 Inspirational speakers and discussions |
| 9 Youth Conferences/Festivals | 9 World Youth Day Auckland |
| 10 World Youth Day | 10 Fundraisers |
| 11 Youth Masses | 11 Sports Events |
| 12 Church youth groups | 12 Competitions or challenges |

When we look at the national online survey result and break that down to see who responded from Auckland we find that 755 people respondents were from Auckland (out of a total of 1952). Of these 558 were female and 188 were male. The main ethnic groups to respond were: European/Pakeha (347), Asian (224), Pacifica (125), Māori (47). Our view of this is that many of those who responded to the online survey are not in our faith communities on a Sunday or if they are, they are more on the fringes rather than being actively engaged. You can see from the two lists that there are significant differences between what those who are actively engaged and those who are less engaged are asking for. This provides us with both opportunities and challenges in ministry in the future.

Faith engagement (1 = disengaged | 5 = actively engaged) – completed by Synod Assembly participants

At the Synod Assemblies we asked the question how engaged representatives were. The results were:

- 44 scored a 5 (actively engaged)
- 72 scored a 4 or 4.5
- 58 scored a 3 or 3.5
- 5 scored a 2 or 2.5
- 1 scored a 1 (Disengaged)



At the Diocesan Youth Synod 189 people responded to the same question. This was the result:

- 71 scored a 5 (actively engaged)
- 84 scored a 4 or 4.5 (engaged)
- 29 scored a 3 or 3.5 (lukewarm)
- 4 scored a 2 or 2.5 (disengaged)
- 1 scored a 1 (Disengaged)

We asked the question: “What are the faith experiences that have been most significant in building up your faith?”

For the purposes of identifying priorities the young people who entered the data grouped it by their definition of ‘similar activities’. Those faith experiences that were mentioned most frequently are listed below:

- Seminar/retreats/ camp/faith based programmes & festivals (153)
- Connecting with others from same faith (Parish priest, family, friends, people in community) (70)

- Community/youth/choir group (58)
- Prayers, praise & worship, adoration & devotions (58)
- Receiving Sacraments (46)
- Attending Mass (37)
- Catechism or biblical classes (36)
- Volunteering/community service (28)
- Participation @ Church (27)
- Praise and worship (20)
- Youth Synod (15)
- Mentoring/Leading (15)

What were some of the main responses from young people?

At the Synod young people worked in groups of six, with people their own age. We had many pages of data to type up and review. After entering and reviewing the responses we have identified a “top 9” list as follows:

- 1 More/better Catechesis (Theology of the Body, Walk through the Mass, Church teaching including the ‘why, Apologetics (being able to explain what it means to be Catholic)
- 1 Relevant preaching that speaks to the issues of the day and includes church teaching relevant to the scripture readings/issues
- 1 More camps, retreats and festivals (including praise and worship, inspirational speakers, catechesis) – need to be FUN and free or low cost
- 4 More **experiences** of faith in schools/colleges (RE is seen as a subject)
- 5 Welcoming and inclusive faith communities that provide good pastoral care, where young people can actively participate in the faith community (eg liturgy, parish committees etc) - not only in youth group
- 6 Inter-generational accompaniment (spiritual directors, mentors, counsellors, people to journey with the young people)
- 7 Young adults are asking for more availability of Sacraments (especially Mass and Reconciliation) to be available outside peak times eg evenings
- 8 More opportunities for community service (outreach)
- 9 The Catholic Church needs to be more proactive towards finding social justice solutions (less talk, more doing)
 - Local eg: supporting those with mental health issues, welcoming LGBT community, supporting broken families, helping those living in poverty or with inadequate housing
 - Global eg: climate change and supporting refugees

Let there be no mistake, the first three are all intentionally numbered 1. Many of the young people who have participated in the Synod journey so far have indicated that they see these three as being equally important and the highest priority. When we reported on this at the Bishop Pat’s Forums in May 2018 we likened this to making a ‘111’ call – we need to see an immediate response in these areas. The remaining six items on the ‘top 9’ are also very important. Some of our young people see all nine items as being equally important. It is also good for you to know that our young people came up with many other ideas. These will be released as we continue to move through our Synod Journey. The Auckland Diocesan Youth Synod was a **milestone** on the journey. We now turn from a

year of Bishop Pat listening to young people to a stage where we begin to consider what changes we might need to take in the Auckland Catholic Diocese.

At the Bishop's Forum, Bishop Pat invited faith communities to consider and discuss:

- What is your dream for the Church in 10 years?
- What steps can we take now?
- What steps can we take to nurture a new generation of DIOCESAN PRIESTS for our Diocese?

You might like to discuss these questions. Please feed back ideas to the Pastoral Team Leader: Mrs Pat Lythe (patl@cda.org.nz).

Listening Presence

During the Synod Assemblies Bishop Pat and Msgr Bernard sat in with small groups of six for about 10 minutes per group. This was very popular but with a bigger group we knew that we needed an extended group and chose to have people who would be easy for Bishop Pat to consult with the Group consisted of: Pat Lythe (Pastoral Team Leader), Lyndsay Freer (Diocesan Communications), Marianne Bray (St Mary's College DRS), Msgr Bernard Kiely (Vicar General) and Robb Donzè (Chair of Diocesan Pastoral Council). Listeners commented on the great variety of requests and suggestions they heard. Bishop Pat gave an immediate response to those gathered. We heard:

- That the church needs to be more engaged and speak more clearly in the public forum on issues of the day. We need to have the voice of the church heard more clearly.
- A lot of suggestions about a greater explanation of the Mass and finding out more about what it means to be Catholic.
- Your suggestions that priests receive instruction on keeping homilies brief and relevant.
- In some communities, ministers of word or ministers of holy communion have to be a certain age. Bishop talked about how he personally is encouraging parishes faith communities to involve those formed in Colleges in ministry roles.
- There are already a lot of opportunities for learning in the Diocese. We need to find ways to better connect the good speakers and make them available to speak on the topics young people are asking for.

Bishop also spoke about how in a sense it is all a little bit messy but to know that the Holy Spirit is at work through the mess. It gives us great comfort that Pope Francis has also talked about the Synod being 'messy'. We are taking one step at a time.

A Synod is a journey and this is a milestone on our journey. This is a moment of huge change but please God will be one that is rich with opportunity. We want to use your suggestions to renew the face of the Diocese in Auckland.

Next steps:

- The Youth Synod will be reported on at Bishop's Forums.
- Regional working groups of young people (Synod Squads) will review all that has been shared and will take this forward in their own area. Whilst the Synod Squads will be driven by young people there will need to be other people on this journey. We would hope that each regional working group would include some priests from that area, the Youth Advisory Council and Diocesan Pastoral Council reps, some teacher reps etc.
- Diocesan working groups will be formed comprising young people and those with a vested interest in the topic of that working group. These groups are likely to be formed around items

that can be progressed either solely at Diocesan level or both regionally and at a diocesan level
eg:

- Faith experience in schools (we have already heard that a discussion has started nationally about this item)
- Preaching
- Festivals
- Welcoming and inclusive communities
- Building up people as mentors and spiritual supervisors
- Working groups will collaborate with young people of the Diocese to share their vision of the Church of tomorrow at World Youth Day Auckland on 14 and 15 July.
- We anticipate that there will be a number of opportunities to gather regionally and as a Diocese whilst the International Synod is taking place in Rome from 3-28 October 2018.

We thank all those who have contributed to the listening process – those who attended Chill with Bishop, the Aotearoa Catholic Youth Festival, the Synod Assemblies and the Diocesan Youth Synod. We also thank all those who responded to the online survey. The Auckland Diocesan Youth Synod was a milestone in our journey. We now turn from *listening* to *action*.



Photo taken at the Auckland Diocesan Youth Synod on 22 April 2018. More photos available online at: https://www.facebook.com/pg/AKCYM/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1697363976966000. More information about the Synod Journey and our theme for 2018 *Young People You Are the Church of Today* online at: <http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/youth-young-adult-ministry/young-people-you-are-the-church/>.

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