**Listening Exercise**

13 November, Parish Hall

Group consisted of 6 parishioners with 3 PPC members incl. Chairperson. This is a summary of what was discussed. Not necessarily the view of the whole group.

Church’s Biggest Problem

Initial comment was that we are listening to the wrong people (church goers) and we need to listen to non-church goers. Also some criticism of our communications – we would only be communicating with already interested parishioners / regular attendees using parish website and also the Facebook notification slipped so far down on the page it was easily missed.

Communication was highlighted as a problem

* Suggestion that we use schools to get to those who don’t attend Mass.
* Suggestion that we need to bring the process out and not just rely on the views coming in to us.
* Discussed that Pope Francis is well received by young and we should use him to help communicate with younger parishioners.

Church Scandals

* What is being done to address crucial / sensitive issues
* Comments that some know others who are ashamed to admit they are Catholics

We seem to have “lost the joy of the gospel”

People take attending Mass for granted and don’t get involved in parish life

Feel “powerless in the church”

Experiencing more Christianity outside the church than within

Not heard, not listened to, disaffected

Excited by new initiatives but from experience they “fizzle out”

How to address?

* Listening to the correct people
* More joy
* Covid experience – ushering and welcoming has been a very positive experience
* People affect other people’s views. Experiences are key – how others behave can have big outcomes.

Listening to Women?

* Never felt devalued but recognise others have a different experience
* Deacons being all male is big mistake
* Full equity in non-priest roles should be applied
* Church missing contribution of 50% of population – empowerment can bring more joy to church
* Felt/experienced atrocious abuse from other parishioners
* Single women treated worse than married women in church

Listening to Young People?

* Pope a powerful tool
* No one aware of anyone listening to young people
* Chaplaincy suggested as great example – how do we create similar within our parish
* Listening is key

Laity?

* Pre Covid there were plenty of groups and opportunities to share / use skills
* Priest makes decisions and laity should be more relied on / involved in decision making
* Female Deacons would be a step in the right direction
* Church is patriarchal at every level – a woman’s interpretation of the gospel is never heard – woman could preach from the alter.