



Synod 2021-2023

INTERNATIONAL SURVEY OF CATHOLIC WOMEN (ISCW) Synthesis



communion | participation | mission

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1. Executive Summary

The International Survey of Catholic Women (ISCW) was undertaken for the <u>Catholic Women</u> <u>Speak</u> network as a response to the call for members of the Catholic Church to participate in the process of Synod 2021-2023. It was devised and managed by researchers Drs Tracy McEwan and Kathleen McPhillips at the University of Newcastle, and Professor Tina Beattie, Professor Emeritus at the University of Roehampton, London. This report for submission to the Vatican is based on the survey findings, drawn from responses submitted by 17,200 women from 104 countries across the world. The survey was translated into eight languages – English, Spanish, German, Italian, French, Polish, Mandarin, and Portuguese – and made available online from Tuesday 8 March 2022 (International Women's Day) to Tuesday 26 April 2022. The Executive Summary provides the key points and recommendations of the submission.

The overall aim of the ISCW was to gather feedback for the Synod on the experiences and insights of Catholic women from around the world. Topics included Catholic identity, significant issues of concern and views on church reform, and the impact of COVID-19 on women's faith and practice. The large number of responses clearly indicates a desire by many women to share their hopes, aspirations, and frustrations, and to make their views known to the Synod with regard to the current situation of women in the Church.

The ISCW is a significant and unique resource for the Synod in its aim to listen to diverse voices to better discern what it means to "journey together" as the People of God in a Church of many cultures. It gathered quantitative data via "closed" questions where respondents were invited to choose from a set of responses, and qualitative data through "open" questions which asked respondents to comment and share insights. Demographic information regarding respondents' ages and regions of residence was also collected. The submission to the Synod includes quotations from the open responses which, alongside the statistical overview, reflect the diverse perspectives and concerns of Catholic women.

In preparing the report, the researchers have tried to reflect the diversity of responses as well as identifying common themes and shared concerns. The women who responded valued their Catholic identity very highly, most had significant concerns about some aspects of church practice and teaching, but they also varied widely in their priorities and perspectives, with age and regions of residence playing a significant role with regard to particular issues. An important insight to be drawn from the survey is that Catholic women do not constitute a homogenous group but reflect the many different cultural and communal contexts within which their faith is experienced and practised. It would be reductive to fail to represent this by privileging any one group along the broad spectrum of women's faith and practice. It is an area of concern to the researchers that this heterogeneity is rarely represented in official church documents, with the result that many women struggle to see the relevance of some church teachings to the complex realities of their lives.

The first major finding of the ISCW is that even when women have considerable struggles with Catholic institutions and structures, their Catholic identity is very important to them. Indeed, amidst the rich diversity of faith and practice expressed in open responses, Catholic identity was of great importance for nearly 90 per cent of respondents. Many who responded to the open questions highlighted the importance of their faith, the centrality of the Eucharist to their lives, and their active participation in parishes and church communities, while also expressing high levels of frustration or dissatisfaction relating to their experiences. Many also described social justice and care for the poor and vulnerable as vital to their understanding of what it means to be Catholic. Around two-thirds of respondents identified as ecumenical Christians.

A second major finding is that most Catholic women welcome reform in the Catholic Church. Indeed, a vast majority of those who responded supported some level of change in the Church, especially but not exclusively regarding the role and representation of women. Respondents highlighted the need to reform church teachings on issues of sexuality, including respect for freedom of conscience and the place of LGBTIQ persons within the Church; women's leadership roles in Catholic parishes and institutions; liturgical issues to do with inclusive language, women preaching, and for some, the ordination of women to the priesthood and/or diaconate, and remarriage after civil divorce. A minority of respondents rejected reform and instead expressed a preference for the Church to revert to a pre-conciliar model of authority, priesthood, and liturgy.

A third major finding is that respondents identified the sexual, physical, and emotional abuse of women, children, and other vulnerable people as a dominant issue. A substantial majority was concerned about the prevalence of abuse, racism, and sexism in church contexts. A small number shared personal experiences of sexual abuse, racism, and workplace harassment, while others expressed dismay at the lack of effective action to address the continuing scandal of abuse.

A final major finding is that Catholic women are deeply concerned about transparency and accountability in church leadership and governance. A substantial majority of respondents identified clericalism as having a negative impact on church life. There was also a high level of agreement that a less hierarchal and authoritarian model of Church was urgently needed, with greater collaboration and sharing of responsibility and authority between clergy and laity. Some respondents raised concerns regarding economic justice in church affairs, including the lack of adequate pay for female church workers, both lay and religious.

The ISCW constitutes one of the most extensive surveys of Catholic women ever undertaken. The substantial findings should thus inform lasting and genuine change in church institutions, structures, and practices, based on all the principles of synodality set out in the Preparatory Document.

2. Introduction

A synodal Church walks forward in communion to pursue a common mission through the participation of each and every one of her members. The objective of this Synodal Process is not to provide a temporary or one-time experience of synodality, but rather to provide an opportunity for the entire People of God to discern together how to move forward on the path towards being a more synodal Church in the long-term.¹

The following is a summary of the findings of an International Survey of Catholic Women (ISCW), an initiative of the Catholic Women Speak network, inspired by the Synod, which gathered the views and insights of 17,200 women from 104 countries across the world. The survey, which was available in English, Spanish, German, Italian, French, Polish, Mandarin, and Portuguese, opened online on Tuesday 8 March 2022 (International Women's Day), and closed on Tuesday 26 April 2022. (See Appendix A for a summary of the ISCW methodology). It was devised and managed by researchers Drs Tracy McEwan and Kathleen McPhillips at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and Professor Tina Beattie, Professor Emeritus at the University of Roehampton, London, and was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Newcastle (H-2021-0430) in February 2022.

The ISCW was designed to gather information on key issues related to women's faith and experience of what it means to be Catholic. It quickly garnered international interest. Invitations to participate were distributed by way of an information flyer on the webpages of Catholic Women Speak and the Catholic Women's Council, as well as through social media. It was further promoted in various countries by individuals, dioceses, parishes, media outlets, and Catholic women's groups. A link to the survey was made available on the <u>Vatican's Synod Resources webpage</u>.

The survey included "closed" questions in which respondents were invited to select an option from a set of responses, and "open" questions where they could record their own personal comments and insights. Topics included Catholic identity and sense of belonging, the need for Church reform on various issues, the impact of COVID-19 on women's faith and practice, and the gathering of demographic information about age and country of residence. Open response questions gave respondents the opportunity to contribute additional information and insights. The responses revealed demographic variations around some issues that could be related to both age and region of residence. We have included a statistical breakdown of percentages by age and region in the endnotes. (The survey questions are provided in Appendix B.)

It is impossible here to represent the rich diversity of women who responded from across the spectrum of Catholic faith and practice, or to do justice to the range of their hopes, visions, struggles, and frustrations. We have included many quotations from the open responses in order to reflect the diverse perspectives and concerns of respondents, as well as giving a statistical overview of our findings. All quotations note the age bracket and country of residence of the respondent. While the ISCW does not claim to be representative of all Catholic women, we believe that it is a significant resource for the Synod in its aim to listen to diverse voices in order to better discern what it means to "journey together" as the People of God in a Church of many cultures.

This summary, prepared as the Submission document for the Synod, will be followed by a more in-depth analysis and report early in 2023. We wish to thank all the women who so generously and trustingly gave of their time in responding, especially those who supplemented their responses with written comments and reflections. Our thanks also go to the many volunteers who helped with the translation and distribution of the survey.

¹ Italicised quotations at the beginning of each section are from the Preparatory Document, "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission" at <u>https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/210907a.html</u>.

3. Identifying as Catholic

A substantial majority (88 per cent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Catholic identity was important to them, with around 3 per cent identifying themselves in open responses as women religious.ⁱ Respondents varied from women who described themselves as "devout", "active", "practising", "committed", or "faithful" Catholics to those who used words such as "lapsed", "critical", and "cultural". While most respondents mentioned some form of involvement with the Catholic Church in their open responses, a small number wrote of either low levels of engagement or no involvement.

The survey was designed to reach women on the margins of the Church as well as those actively engaged in parishes and dioceses. We realize however that the nature of distribution means that the majority of respondents are likely to have been in some relationship with the institutional Church. This may explain why Catholic identity was so important, with many respondents highlighting the importance of the Eucharist and the Gospels in sustaining their faith, even though a substantial majority mentioned tensions or difficulties associated with their Catholic identity in their open responses. Respondents frequently used words like "frustrated", "hurt", "angry", "sidelined", "challenged", "difficult", and "conflicted" when describing their current relationship with the Church. Open responses included the following:

The Catholic church is my mother. She nurtured me from my childhood. Now she is sick, and I can't afford to leave her alone (56 to 70 years, India).

I see more and more of the negative sides and feel less and less the benefits of participating in the celebrations (18 to 25 years, Italy).

Difficult, great loss of trust in the institution. But since faith and the local church are important to me, one is often faced with a dichotomy (26 to 40 years, Germany).

4. Companions on the Journey

In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road. In our local Church, who are those who "walk together"? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

While the vast majority of responses referred to women's experiences of marginalization or exclusion in the Church, respondents also showed concern for the inclusion and support of all vulnerable people, including those who are poor, disabled, elderly, or mentally ill.

4.1. Women on the Margins

The full inclusion of women in parish life and wider church activities was a clear concern. It was relatively common for respondents to describe their struggles and difficulties as a result of feeling on the margins of the Church.

One young respondent explained:

The Church "loses ground" because she no longer sees ordinary people, she does not walk with them and above all she does not grow with them. I don't want to subvert the cornerstones of my Faith, but I don't want it to leave anyone behind. Christianity should be the Faith of love and second chances, should include everyone or make everyone feel important. Help everyone and make sure that everyone helps. Instead, taboo hierarchies and interests transform it into a monolithic old and male wall. Perhaps we should be less afraid of losing consensus and have more interest in being authentic (18 to 25 years, Italy).

Another wrote:

I cling on to the Church by my fingernails, because of the Eucharist and in spite of many of its clergy (41 to 55 years, United Kingdom).

Some described the pain of leaving the Church because they felt there was no longer a place for them:

I love the Catholic Church deeply. You must understand that I didn't want to leave. But I could no longer participate in a church that doesn't seem to care about the people it should be doing the most to advocate for and is more concerned about protecting its own power and interests (26 to 40 years, Canada).

I know I am not alone in feeling ill at ease with aligning my faith with an institution which seems to have lost sight of its originally intended purpose. If radical change comes, corruption addressed, and women have a driving seat - I may return. Until then I will continue to find my spiritual fulfillment elsewhere. And this makes me sad (26 to 40 years, United Kingdom).

A respondent who identified herself as a religious sister observed:

The Church needs to rethink the way she perceives women. I feel ashamed of my Church when I see only men in procession and celebrating the Eucharist as they exclude women (41 to 55 years, Belgium).

Further, many women religious said that they are often ignored or shunned by clergy in their parishes. One wrote that "As a consecrated woman I am committed to God", but added that she often finds herself "at odds with local clergy":

I no longer feel welcome in my own church and feel ostracized and increasingly distant from my faith community (56 to 70 years, Canada).

Some respondents made a connection between the limited roles available to women in church spaces and violence against women. One observed that:

Violence against women and girls continues to be naturalized today and the hierarchical superiority of boys in the daily relationships of the family continues to be highlighted, thus perpetuating the vulnerability and justifications for violence against women and girls (26 to 40 years, Colombia).

While a number of respondents identified as feminists, and some expressed a fervent hope that women might be ordained into the diaconate and/or priesthood, this was not the most common concern of those who sought greater inclusion of women in diocesan and parish life. The emphasis tended to be more on how to reconcile the tensions between being a modern woman and being a Catholic woman, with one respondent noting that:

We walk the line of being valuable members of society but voiceless in many elements of the church. I am trying to find the path of being a modern woman and someone who fits within the role available. I strongly believe that we should celebrate the difference between men and women ... but we need to recognize the role and value of women (26 to 40 years, Australia).

Among respondents who identified as single or unmarried, some noted how it was difficult to find community, a sense of belonging, and a space to grow spiritually in their parish. For example, one respondent claimed that single women are "invisible" (41 to 55 years, India). Another who described herself as a "Single lay woman, convert from Chinese background", wrote:

Tough finding real community in Catholic Church although have served as catechist, RCIA sponsor and church volunteer for many years. Spirit of encounter and friendship from established Catholics is hard to come by (56 to 70 years, Singapore).

A 40-year-old single woman described the calling to "live a life of chastity" as "a heavy cross to bear":

We need to do a better job of supporting those who through no fault of their own are facing a life of singleness. There are other ways to live an authentic human life without marriage and sex or a religious vocation (26 to 40 years, New Zealand).

A few respondents indicated that they felt strongly that women were already fully included and valued in church life. This group tended to have negative attitudes towards those campaigning for greater inclusion and representation for women, which they associated with feminism and campaigns for women's ordination. For example, one claimed:

Stop the madness about woman in the service of the Church. We have enough on our plates. In this modern world is it not enough that we have to work full time, be a wife and mother. Do not stray from the teachings of the bible. It will be the end of us all (41 to 55 years, Bosnia Herzegovina).

It is clear from responses such as these that Catholic women are diverse in their experiences and expectations. While some gladly conform to current teachings and practice, the vast majority see a need for reform (see below). These are the voices that are currently "left on the margins", for such diversity rarely finds expression in the feminine stereotypes promulgated in official church teachings.

4.2. Children, Young People and Families

The relationship between young people and the Church was a significant area of concern. Several respondents looked to the future and the Catholic Church that their children would belong to. For example, one wrote:

I wish for my daughter a living, free, equal, and open Catholic Church, that treats believers and employees of all kinds with appreciation (41 to 55 years, Germany).

Others expressed a need for "innovative", "child-centred", and "age-inclusive" plans to bring young people and families back into Church communities and schools. One wrote:

It's not right for priests to be pro-life in the pulpit and object to children being children in Mass (26 to 40 years, United Kingdom).

Another said that:

Children are often treated in an instrumental way in the Church, as pastoral examples on which the clergy project their ideas. Hardly anyone really wonders how to consider them in the context of religious, spiritual, offers of practices and activities within communities as active entities (26 to 40 years, Poland).

It is not surprising that a survey of Catholic women showed concern with children and young people, for women remain the primary carers in domestic contexts. It is also clear however that the respondents saw their Catholic faith in the context of much wider issues of social justice and inclusivity.

4.3. People with Disabilities

In their open responses, women highlighted the need for parish communities to fully include people with additional needs, including people with physical and mental disabilities. One young woman noted:

The church needs to help the needy ... I feel that's not being done. Every human being gay, lesbian, divorced, handicapped should be fully and open heartedly accepted by the church (26 to 40 years, United Arab Emirates).

Several mentioned that people were being denied the sacraments because of disability. One drew attention to the need to allow:

Those who are physically and mentally challenged to receive the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. In some places this is not happening (26 to 40 years, Nigeria).

Another wrote:

I have mental health problems that make it difficult to participate in parish life so sometimes I feel like the Church doesn't really want or have space for me. I particularly felt rejected when I was discerning a vocation to the religious life and was told I couldn't because of my mental health history. However, in the past faith, the sacraments and the liturgy have been a great source of strength (26 to 40 years, United Kingdom).

4.4. Divorce and Remarriage

Around 7 out of 10 (72 per cent) of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Remarriage after civil divorce should be allowed". Older respondents were more likely to strongly agree or agree with the statement than younger respondents. Indeed, almost 9 out of 10 of respondents aged 70 years or older strongly agreed or agreed with the statement compared with just over 4 out of 10 aged 25 years or younger. Differences that could be associated with region of residence were also observed.^a Open responses included the following:

I have not been very active lately but many reasons. Mainly, because I am divorced and felt that the discourse in my parish was not welcoming and accepting. Also, I identify myself as a Catholic feminist and that is not common nor accepted in my country (41 to 55 years, Guatemala).

While Church teachings on sexuality and marriage are quite clear, in practice many Catholics do not show themselves to love God and love neighbour in the ways in which they speak to and about LGBT+ folks or those who have experienced the pains of divorce (26 to 40 years, United Kingdom).

Some agreed but with conditions. A Spanish respondent called for "Openness and dialogue" about:

Including divorced Catholics with a stable partner who every Sunday participate in Sunday Eucharist without communion. They are believers who have suffered and suffer" (41 to 55 years, Spain).

Another from Botswana observed that:

Where there's evidence that the marriage was false pretence from one partner, one who's not at fault must be allowed to remarry in the church (56 to 70 years, Botswana).

4.5. Exclusion of LGBTIQ

The Preparatory Document makes no mention of listening to sexual minorities, but respondents who identified as LGBTIQ told stories of harm and exclusion that had deeply impacted their lives and faith. Here are some examples:

As part of the LGBTQ+ community, I just don't feel welcome – it's an entire culture and I'm too scared to be myself at church so I don't go (18 to 25 years, United Kingdom).

I am a theologian and an employee of the Catholic Church. It is a love that often hurts. At some points, church and I don't seem to fit at all (I'm a lesbian), at others we fit. I'm here. I'm church too! (26 to 40 years, Austria).

When describing their participation and identity, LGBTIQ Catholics used words like "distanced", "strained", "struggling", "hurt", and "excluded".

A substantial majority (82 per cent) of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "LGBTIQ persons must be fully included and respected in all church activities". Older respondents were more likely to be fully supportive of the respect and inclusion of LGBTIQ persons than younger respondents. In fact, 93 per cent of those aged over 70 strongly agreed or agreed with the statement about LGBTIQ inclusion compared with 65 per cent of respondents aged 18 to 25 years. Regional variations could reflect the influence of different cultural values on Catholic attitudes, though a majority supported inclusivity.ⁱⁱⁱ

Several respondents indicated that, while being aware of problems with the institution, they had chosen their particular faith community because it was a safe and inclusive space for LGBTIQ people. For example, one participant noted:

I am a student and currently active in the local liberal Catholic university community. I like to be Catholic there ... I don't know, what would be, if I didn't have this local church. Probably I would resign, because ... of unequal treatment of women and queer people etc. People keep me in the church ... it is part of my identity and my place, to live my faith. But the institution makes it very difficult for me (18 to 25 years, Germany).

Same sex marriage was identified as an important process of inclusion where just over half (53 per cent) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "The sacrament of marriage should be extended to same sex couples". Older respondents were more likely to strongly agree or agree with the statement about marriage for same sex couples than younger respondents, with again some variations that could be associated with region of residence.^{iv} A small minority said in their open responses that the inclusion and acceptance of LGBTIQ people in the Catholic Church should be conditional on their celibacy.

In summary, the majority of respondents demonstrated a strong sensitivity to people and groups on the margins of society and the Church and called for more inclusivity in Catholic communities. The most marked variations were around issues of LGBTIQ and same-sex marriage, where the demographics of age and region of residence had a significant influence.

5. Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission

Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptised from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting?

Most respondents saw some form of socio-political engagement rooted in Catholic social teaching as an essential aspect of their faith, with a small minority resisting what they perceive as the politicisation of faith. A substantial majority, when asked if there were any issues that church leadership needs to address, called for greater action and commitment regarding issues related to environmental justice and Catholic Social Teaching. More than 8 in 10 (83 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Catholic social teaching is a good resource for social justice action". Older respondents were more likely to strongly agree or agree with the statement than younger respondents, with some variations that could be associated with region of residence.^v

5.1. Social Justice Advocacy

Several respondents related their faith closely to ministry with the poor. Many mentioned a need for a Church *of* and *for* the poor. For example, one described her Catholic identity in terms of actively seeking "a more just, equitable, world where everyone, everyone has a place" (56 to 70 years, Chile). Those who expressed concern with humanitarian issues saw the Catholic Church as having an important and strategic role to play in global diplomatic relations, particularly related to human rights advocacy and situations of conflict such as the war in Ukraine. A respondent from Fiji highlighted issues of "Human dignity, safety of vulnerable refugees (especially women and children) who flee their country because of war", and she went on to say that:

Church leadership to work with government, NGOs, and other stakeholders to ensure protection from any form of exploitation or abuse, given their vulnerable state (41 to 55 years, Fiji).

Some young respondents said that a lack of social justice action by the Church was the reason for their lack of participation. Examples include:

I am no longer an actively practicing Catholic. This was a decision reached into my adulthood, following 12 years of Catholic Education, and being raised in an intensely longstanding Catholic family. The governing Body of the Catholic faith did not align to what I consider to be in essence the tenants of social justice, equality, and inclusion left by Christ. The creed no longer identified with my spirituality (18 to 25 years, Germany).

Priests and Bishops ... in general do not follow the Bible, are poorly theologically and generally educated, bigoted, proud, greedy and not in touch with the world. They tolerate, commit or hide rapes on children and at the same time fixated on sexuality and chastity. They attack LGBT people instead of helping those in need. They have no love and no mercy in them ... I do believe in God. I do want to be a part of the Church. But ... I do not believe in this Church anymore. It has to change drastically (18 to 25 years, Poland).

In contrast, a minority of respondents saw such concerns as a compromise with secularism. For some in this cohort, their resistance related to the need for the Church to maintain its Catholic identity and reject cultural trends. These responses tended to reject so-called "leftist" or "woke" agendas, including gender equality and climate action. For example:

We need to affirm our Catholic identity and stop trying to play nice with the culture. The culture we live in is a disgusting quagmire that is advancing the culture of death. We need to stop trying to play nice where we ultimately sell ourselves short (26 to 40 years, New Zealand).

A respondent from South Korea expressed concern about the need for evangelization:

May God give us more and more missionary impetus to reach the ninety-nine Catholics who today grew cold and are outside the Church instead of guarding and caring for the only Catholic who remained in the flock. The parable of the sheep today turned around (41 to 55 years, South Korea).

There was consistent criticism of priests engaging in bipartisan political promotion during the homily, while ignoring social justice issues such as poverty, racism, and violence against women and children. Some of these responses reflected the context of the respondent. Here are some examples:

Rising right-wing nationalism within the church and using the church and her symbols and culture to promote right-wing nationalism (26 to 40 years, Jordan).

Church leaders should be loyal to their ministry and fully dedicated to serving the church through their leadership. The political way of leading the Church will lead to destruction (41 to 55 years, Ukraine).

When the archbishop of my country expresses a personal opinion disguised as the word of God, it does a lot of harm to people and generates rejection of God and the Church (41 to 55 years, Uruguay).

In the Philippines, some members of the clergy have allowed the church to be used as a venue for political campaigning which is frankly clerical abuse (18 to 25 years, Philippines).

There should be NO place for any political statements from church leaders. No should priests be telling their congregation how to vote (56 to 70 years, Turkey).

In some situations, however, respondents called for greater action by the Church to challenge injustices in their regional contexts. For example, a Nigerian woman wrote:

I feel the Church should help the people in Nigeria for prayers, because genocide goes on each day in the country especially with the kidnapping and killing that has become a norm in the country and nobody seems to be doing anything about it (26 to 40 years, Nigeria).

5.2. Racism and Indigenous Peoples

Issues of racial diversity and multi-cultural inclusion were concerns across all regions. Several respondents called for the Church not just to be culturally inclusive but to take an active stance in opposing all forms of racism and nationalism. A respondent from North America noted:

Racism is contrary to inclusive community, it is prevalent and largely unaddressed among current white-church concerns (over 70 years, Canada).

Many others mentioned the need for local churches to speak out against discrimination against ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, and indigenous peoples. One participant raised the issue of "biases towards caste, language, place where you belong, racism" (26 to 40 years, India). Another drew attention to the needs of "Indigenous people and migrant women" (41 to 55 years, Democratic Republic of Congo).

There was a recognition among a large proportion of respondents of the harms of colonialism and the Church's role in the oppression of First Nations peoples and their cultures:

Church leadership needs to address the church's role in the genocide of Indigenous peoples in North America via residential schools. A meaningful apology, returning sacred objects currently being held at the Vatican, and action on the relevant calls from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would be positive steps forward (26 to 40 years, Canada).

For some respondents the harm of colonialisation was recognised as systematic racism:

Racism, especially where Settler churches have come in on top of Indigenous churches and overwhelmed them or pushed them aside ... and the culture, values and historical narratives of the Colonisers have been embedded in the church institutional life (over 70 years, New Zealand).

5.3. Addressing Environmental Challenges

Almost 8 in 10 (79 per cent) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Climate change is an urgent challenge that the whole church must address". Once again, findings suggest variations that could be associated with age, with those over 40 more likely to strongly agree or agree than those in younger age groupings.^{vi} Variations were also present that could be dependent on region of residence.

Some open responses highlighted the need for parishes and church organizations to give instruction on and practically address the teachings of *Laudato Si'*.

A small minority however rejected the idea that social action and environmental concerns should be addressed by the Catholic Church. For instance, one respondent noted:

The Church must be concerned above all with guiding the faithful towards salvation and proclaiming the Word of God. He should help the faithful to find the meaning of suffering in their lives, of carrying the cross with Christ ... It should not, however, deal with climate, ecology, equality, sustainable development, women's priesthood, vaccination. All these issues do not concern the mission of the Church in the world (41 to 55 years, Poland).

Respondents identified a number of other issues that are relevant to the questions, "What hinders the baptised from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting?"

5.4. Clericalism

The Preparatory Document refers to the need to "Overcome the scourge of clericalism". In open responses women identified clericalism as having a negative impact on church life. It was common for respondents to interpret their experiences of discrimination and sexism not as isolated incidents but as part of a systemic culture of clericalism and misogyny. One explained:

I belong to this community, but I live in disagreement with its power system, with its clericalism and with the consideration of NO equality for women (56 to 70 years, Spain).

Another referred to "a clericalist mentality" and called for a proper understanding of clericalism as "an all-encompassing ideology" that operates "at an almost unconscious level". She went on to say:

It is important to not lose sight of several problems that stemmed from deep seated mentalities throughout the Church that creates a vision of two classes in the church: priest and religious on one side and married laity in the other. A proper understanding of how that is the mentality that sustains and is sustained by clericalism will help understand the issues that need to be addressed: it goes beyond the ordination of women (26 to 40 years, United Kingdom).

A substantial majority (85 per cent) of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Clericalism (the misuse of authority and power by male clerics) is damaging the Catholic Church". Older respondents were more likely to strongly agree or agree with the statement than younger respondents, and as with other issues, differences that could be associated with region of residence were observed.^{vii} Overall, though, it is clear that most of those who responded agree with Pope Francis that clericalism is one of the major issues calling for reform in the Church.

5.5. Sexual, Physical, and Emotional Abuse

[T] he context [of the Synod] is also marked by the suffering experienced by minors and vulnerable people "due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power, and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons."

Some respondents made heartfelt responses to this topic in their open responses, and some took the opportunity to disclose situations of abuse. They reported sexual harassment and assault in Catholic workplaces and communities, including parishes. Many expressed dismay at the lack of concrete action on the part of the institutional Church regarding situations of sexual abuse. A victim/survivor wrote:

They have a LONG way to go in dealing with the scandal and cover up. I know this firsthand. I feel as betrayed by the institutional betrayal as I do by my abuser. The

institutional church is deeply flawed and very hypocritical. I have suffered great harm. If the church does not make amends for the harm caused, it will not survive. This is coming from a committed lifelong Catholic who has never left the church (41 to 55 years, Canada).

Some reported the effects of having been groomed and sexually, physically, and emotionally abused by clerical perpetrators. One respondent who disclosed sexual abuse wrote:

I am affected by sexual violence by a priest in the Catholic Church. But my God is fortunately not Catholic. I assume, that the Catholic Church is in the midst of the greatest upheaval, since it existed. When something new happens, I want to be there (41 to 55 years, Germany).

8 out of 10 (80 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Church leaders are not doing enough to address the perpetration and cover-up of sexual abuse". As with other questions, some variations in responses could be associated with age. Younger cohorts of respondents were somewhat less likely to strongly agree or agree with the statement than older respondents. Similarly, there were variations that could be associated with region of residence.^{viii}

The call for accountability was even greater when respondents were asked about other forms of abuse. Nearly 9 out of 10 (89 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Church leaders need to do more to address other forms of abuse, including abuses of power and spiritual harm", again with variations in responses that could be attributed to age, and some small differences that could be associated with region of residence.^{ix}

Respondents used terms such as "loss of trust", "crisis of faith", "shameful", "angry", and "frustrated" when discussing the crisis of abuse in the Church. A significant portion called for greater transparency and accountability. For example, one participant wrote of the need for:

Transparency and accountability [for] sexual abuse, financial abuse, leadership abuse. No cover up. No blaming and shaming the victims. Adhere to law and defrock priests, bishops, cardinals if guilty. Don't transfer abusers. Put in place accountability mechanisms to balance the unlimited power wielded by the clergy (56 to 70 years, India).

One young respondent observed that:

Abuse needs to be spoken about, and appropriately so. Safeguarding concerns should be raised with protection of individuals in mind, not just protecting the reputation of the church and being seen to do things (18 to 25 years, United Kingdom).

Another respondent wrote:

The church seeks to evade its responsibility for the abuses and seeks to silence everything that has to do with this endemic reality, there are priests imprisoned and the bishop defends them when the truth is very evident (56 to 70 years, Colombia).

Another said that:

Priestly order must be withdrawn from all those who have committed abuses, especially sexual abuses and handed over to civil justice (41 to 55 years, Ecuador).

In many cases, respondents said that they had begun to separate or distance themselves from the institutional Church because of the failure of church leaders to take effective action over managing and reporting clerical perpetrators to authorities. For instance, one respondent wrote:

I love the church defined as the people of God, but I no longer can follow blindly many of the clerical leaders who consider themselves above the laws of civil society. If crimes

have been committed, then these leaders who have done the crimes need to face the consequences of their criminal actions (56 to 70 years, Philippines).

Some noted that there was little trust in the capacity of church organizations to provide safe environments for them or their children:

I don't think I would want to expose my children, if I am lucky to have any, to the extreme risks involved in being Catholic. So much lip service is paid to improving things, but it never happens (26 to 40 years, United Kingdom).

While the majority of respondents who mentioned abuse referred to that perpetrated by clergy and church employees, some respondents referred to other forms of gendered violence they experienced in their parish or Catholic workplace. For example, a few respondents shared experiences of workplace harassment. One who had a Master of Theology degree wrote of being belittled and publicly corrected:

By the end I would feel physically ill entering our Cathedral. I would have sleepless nights; in the end I left my job and my career of 30+ years ... I know that there is no recourse for me in this band of brothers. I couldn't even participate in the synod in my diocese for fear of being recognized. Thank you for giving me this opportunity (56 to 70 years, New Zealand).

Another wrote of sexual harassment she experienced as a young teacher in a private Catholic school, saying that the verbal abuse she experienced "broke my spirit and I ended up ill and unemployed" (26 to 40 years, United Kingdom).

There was awareness among respondents that women religious were sometimes involved in facilitating networks of abuse, providing clerical perpetrators with access to children, as well as abusing children emotionally, physically, and sexually. One respondent claimed:

Having been educated in a Catholic convent I have no faith remaining and no wish to engage with any church ... the nuns who educated me were evil, self-serving, cruel and the least empathetic "Christian" people I have ever come across. They did untold mental harm to so many students (41 to 55 years, United Kingdom).

A former nun wrote of "bullying and psychological abuse" from her superior:

For a year I was unable to recover, let alone go to church – I denied my belief in the Catholic God and the institutions of the Catholic Church. Now, thanks to good people, I have managed to return to church (18 to 25 years, Poland).

Another cited the need to:

Address power abuses in women religious institutes in Africa. It is causing spiritual abuse (41-55 years, Kenya).

One said that:

The church must acknowledge and address serious abuses of the past - in particular unmarried mother homes and sexual assaults and rapes of minors to name but two. Nuns and clergy should be told to leave the church - surely only a place in hell awaits them. Too many times these shameful crimes are covered up and the perpetrators are still free and looked after by the church (56 to 70 years, Indonesia).

More respondents however raised the issue of the abuse *of* rather than *by* women religious, including nuns and sisters. For instance, one religious sister referred to:

Sexual abuse and rape of women religious by bishops, priests particularly in India, Africa, and Latin America. Silencing of catholic women theologians (56 to 70 years, Ireland).

Some were highly critical of the Vatican's response to the abuse of nuns. Here are two examples:

Abuse of religious sisters must be taken more seriously, also economic abuse and sisters' working conditions (56 to 70 years, Sweden).

I am appalled by the abuse of nuns worldwide with the knowledge of the Vatican, and the bishops. This is a serious reason for me to think about leaving (over 70 years, Germany).

It is clear that the scandal of various forms of abuse remains a festering wound that afflicts the lives of many Catholics and is a cause of alienation from the Church.

5.6. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Freedom of Conscience

Several respondents drew attention to potential harm caused by church teachings concerned with sexual and reproductive health. For example, two different Polish respondents made the following observations:

The social doctrine of sexuality is outdated and harmful. If it does not take into account scientific knowledge, the church will be more and more ridiculous, and the vulnerable individuals who swallow it will continue to suffer (41 to 55 years, Poland).

The Church's attitude towards contraception is completely unclear in the context of reallife situations. Teaching about its inadmissibility is inconsistent. Many myths have grown up around the Catholic vision of marriage ... I am constantly being convinced of a woman's vocation to motherhood. I can't have children myself, and I see how "spiritual motherhood" is treated as a surrogate theme or a consolation prize ... Why am I being forced into something, that is clearly not my calling? (26 to 40 years, Poland).

Other responses included:

The church must take note that "banning" premarital relationships ... over time, causes divorce and psychological harm (41 to 55 years, Italy).

Reform of the education system in catholic schools is needed to stop teaching about abstinence, start teaching about sexually transmitted disease, contraception, LGBT relationships, pleasure in sex, how to stay safe, consent etc. The lack of this is extremely damaging to young woman in particular (18 to 25 years, United Kingdom).

A Mexican respondent pointed to double standards when she wrote that:

In my parish group [there is a man who knows] that "I should not abort", but he does not know that he should not rape me. It is more, he does not even think about it ... Laymen harass the girls who come to the church, which makes us feel uncomfortable and unsafe in the sacred spaces (26 to 40 years, Mexico).

A Guatemalan woman expressed similar sentiments when she wrote of "a need to be more forgiving and objective in abortion related situations":

How is it that a rapist of a girl, for example, is less of a sinner than the girl that wants, and even more, needs the pregnancy to get interrupted? "Women's sins" are those that are against patriarchy not God (41 to 55 years, Guatemala).

When asked about freedom of conscience, almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Women need to have freedom of conscience with regard to their sexual and reproductive decisions". Agreement with the statement increased with age and showed some variations that could be associated with region of residence.^x We identify freedom of conscience in sexual and reproductive decisions as an issue that needs to be urgently addressed in order for women's concerns to be heard.

From the foregoing, it is clear that many Catholic women seek a faith that can realistically accommodate the complex challenges of their lives in many different contexts, while retaining a strong sense of social justice and concern for the most marginalised and for the environment, with only a small minority of respondents resisting this expansive view of what it means to be Catholic.

6. Ecumenism

What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together?

Most respondents identified as ecumenical Christians, with almost two-thirds (65 per cent) either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement "Thinking about your identity, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement "I identify as an ecumenical Christian". As with several other questions, there were variations in level of agreement that could be associated with age and region.^{xi} Younger respondents tended to be less likely to identify as ecumenical Christians. Around 8 out of 10 respondents from Central Europe, Southern Europe, and South America agreed or strongly agreed with the question, compared with just less than 6 in 10 respondents from Oceania and North America.

In the open responses several respondents mentioned a desire for Christian unity and proactive ecumenical engagement with other Christian churches. One respondent from Ireland wrote:

I want to shed my colourless Catholic coat and replace it with a colourful Christian coat where there is no discrimination in relation to "living life to the full" as Jesus intended – freedom to love and be loved (over 70 years, Ireland).

A religious sister from Philippines noted:

My hope is that this survey can contribute to our struggle for genuine Christian unity and inclusiveness, mirroring God's own compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and joyful love (over 70 years, Philippines).

Many respondents expressed a desire for acceptance and Eucharistic hospitality with other Christian groups. One called for:

The equal recognition of other Christian denominations as a church. With full recognition of sacraments (Communion, Baptism, Marriage) including Eucharistic hospitality (41 to 55 years, Switzerland).

There was some acknowledgement of the progress that other Christian denominations have made towards the full inclusion of women in ministry and decision-making, with a few respondents saying that they participated in non-Catholic Christian denominations because of their recognition of the equality of women in these areas. A very small number of open responses expressed a resistance to ecumenism, with one making the claim that it "watered down" Catholicism:

In the name of ecumenicalism, the true tenements of church are watered down and as such we lose the opportunity to convert and to keep the converted (18 to 25 years, United Kingdom)

While a small minority rejected the idea of ecumenism, the vast majority of respondents affirmed this as an important part of their journey of faith.

7. Dialogue: Listening and Speaking Out

The hope is that the experience of the Synodal Process will bring about a new springtime for listening, discernment, dialogue and decision-making, so that the whole People of God can better journey together with one another and the entire human family, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In his 2016 Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis explains that when engaging in dialogue we must appreciate and recognise each other's life experiences while acknowledging that the "unity that we seek is not uniformity, but a 'unity in diversity" (para. 139). Some respondents used the open response section to express the need for greater dialogue within and beyond the Church. One respondent reflected:

I believe in Catholic as it was intended to mean "Universal". I believe that the Church is the people of God – all God's creation ... I continue to question the exclusivist tone presented by some of the Church leaders (41 to 55 years, Ireland).

Respondents' desire for dialogue was often accompanied by a critique of authoritarian and patriarchal forms of leadership and governance in the Church and society. For instance, one respondent asserted:

The patriarchy of the Church has been able to thrive in India because it aligns well with the patriarchy inherent in the culture. I myself was able to see the patriarchy of the Church only after a Catholic priest pointed it out to me. On reflection, I realise how much patriarchy was instilled in me so much so that I could not accept it when lay people or those of other faiths confronted me about how wrong and unjust the Church was at the systemic level itself (26 to 40 years, India).

Responses that mentioned dialogue between the Catholic Church and broader society varied significantly. Several respondents emphasised the necessity for relationships between the Church and wider society and called for inter-religious dialogue and relationship building with governments.

7.1. Listening

Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people?

Respondents expressed a desire to be part of a process of genuine dialogue and listening. Many responses called for interactions and dialogue that involve mutuality, humility, and openness.

A large proportion of respondents said that they filled in the survey so that their voices might be heard. They expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity and a few respondents said it made them feel less isolated and alone. One respondent wrote:

I just want women to actually be heard and listened to in a radical way. We are suffering so much at the hands of the Church and so few of the men in positions of power care to hear us, much less ease our suffering (26 to 40 years, United States).

The inclusion and empowerment of women and other marginalised groups was typically associated with "acceptance", "visibility", "equality", "respect", and "being heard". One respondent declared:

Do not judge, do not condemn, listen, trust in people, forget so many canons, norms, and precepts, and return to the essence, to the message of Jesus (41 to 55 years, Spain).

Another wrote:

The church, or its leaders, should make a re-examination of the documents of the church ... and stop making women invisible. Concise phrases appear in each document that in the end say nothing. They do not respond to the challenges of the new realities that the world is going through. We don't need, as women, to be seen as the pets of the "house" that must be caressed with empty speeches, and then sent to sleep (26 to 40 years, Nicaragua).

Deep and genuine listening was consistently connected with the Christian faith and the Gospel message. Misogyny, clericalism, and stereotypes assigned to women and other marginalised groups were understood as barriers to listening and dialogue. Many noted that true inclusion involves genuine dialogue and engagement so that language and ritual contribute to a sense of belonging. Referring to the way marginalised people often struggle to be heard, one participant noted:

I don't like it when these struggles are ridiculed or [people] speak out of hatred or untransformed or healed pain (56 to 70 years, Chile).

Several women religious noted that in female religious congregations the vow of obedience can silence dialogue. For instance, one religious sister noted:

The Church is hierarchical. Congregations of religious women are also hierarchical ... Destructive, military discipline is demanded in the name of the vow of obedience. Dialogue is discarded ... The Church needs to STRESS dialogue. Higher authorities need to allow the people of God to have a say in all matters concerning governance (41 to 55 years, India).

Some who highlighted disability as a concern made similar appeals for genuine inclusion grounded in dialogue and listening:

Engage with persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples to find ways how the church can be a space where they sense belonging and inclusion. Listen to their voices and perspectives (41 to 55 years, Philippines).

The foregoing responses suggest some of the ways in which respondents perceived a lack of real listening and engagement with regard to women and others who feel marginalised or excluded. Pope Francis has emphasised the importance of dialogue in his quest for a more pastorally responsive and compassionate Church, but the foregoing suggests that for many women, such dialogue is an elusive hope in their relationship with the hierarchy and church authorities.

7.2. Speaking Out

All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth and charity. What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us?

In open responses, respondents spoke fervently of their love of community and a desire that all people might be supported to flourish in their journey of faith in the Catholic Church. Some respondents made explicit connections between creating opportunities for Christian flourishing and speaking out. One noted that she will:

Continue to speak about social justice ... Speak loudly about the fact that God understands every language and speaks to every heart ... Speak out in protection of gay people and people who are persecuted and denounce cruelty and injustice due to gender ... Speak of Jesus as the MODEL for nonviolent response to worldly authority and to systemic violence (56 to 70 years, United States).

Many respondents associated speaking out about justice and equality within the Church and society with the necessity for change in the Catholic Church. They ardently asserted the urgent need for reform. For example, one respondent wrote:

I love the Church where, as God's people, all people must have a place ... change is needed, we are at a point where it can no longer be avoided (41 to 55 years, Guatemala).

More than 8 out of 10 (84 per cent) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I support reform in the Catholic Church", with younger respondents significantly less likely to strongly agree or agree, and again with noticeable variations that could be associated with region of residence.^{xii}

One respondent who identified herself as a religious sister wrote:

I am a religious sister but am strongly committed to working to change a patriarchal Church. Frustration and disillusion are constant companions, but so is a deep belief in the power of Spirit to bring about change (70 years and over, Philippines).

Open responses expressed different ideas around what reform might mean in the Catholic Church. For a substantial majority who mentioned reform, necessary change entailed a return to Gospel values, driven by principles of love of God and neighbour, equality, and justice. One respondent noted the need to:

Move away from all positions of controlling power, right down to parish level, and focus on being a prophetic voice spreading the Good News in a world which so badly needs it (56 to 70 years, Ireland).

Another highlighted the need for:

A return to the Gospel itself and what is most important – love of neighbour. I don't hear it in churches or from priests. I don't see respect for every, absolutely every, person (26 to 40 years, Poland).

A minority of respondents who mentioned reform understood it to mean a rejection of change and a return to what they perceived as tradition. For example, one respondent stated:

The only reform the Catholic church needs is going back to its tradition, to its traditional teaching, to the Holy sacrifice of Mass of all ages (Tridentine mass) and of the saints. This is the reform young people need in the Church and want (26 to 40 years, Croatia).

Another noted the need to:

Revert back to the traditional forms of worship and the traditional teachings of the Church ... This synodal way is not what the Church needs. We need to ... go back to embracing Jesus's teaching without trying to update or change it to suit modern ways of life (41 to 55 years, Poland).

In contrast, most respondents used words like "major", "urgent", "thorough", "radical", and "fundamental" to describe the type of reform and change needed in the Catholic Church. Indeed, more than two-thirds (67 per cent) of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Radical reform is needed in the Catholic Church". Again, there were notable demographic variations in responses to this question that could be related to age and region. For instance, more than 80 per cent of respondents in some countries including Germany, Argentina, Ireland, and Switzerland signalled a desire for radical reform.^{xiii}

One woman wrote:

I filled this [survey] out as a Hail Mary to God, asking Him to fix things. I often wonder if this is the Church that God intended (26 to 40 years, United States).

About 3 in 10 (29 per cent) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Without reform there is no place for me in the Catholic Church", though here there were significant variations that could be associated with region of residence.^{xiv} One religious sister cautioned:

I am a religious missionary sister of 30 years. However, I have serious misgivings about the hierarchical structure and the role of women in the Church. I think the Catholic Church

will cease to have relevance to younger generations if radical reform doesn't happen soon (56 to 70 years, Guatemala).

This desire for reform relates to several key issues that were included in the survey.

8. Formation and Celebration

How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy?

A substantial majority of survey respondents described themselves as "active", "practising", or "faithful" Catholics. However, what that meant and how it translated into spiritual and liturgical practices varied significantly. When asked about their current relationship with the Catholic Church, a large portion wrote of regular private prayer and Mass attendance and some type of parish or local church involvement. Several mentioned their engagement in liturgical ministry roles such as reader, eucharistic minister, music ministry, and liturgy co-ordinator.

A large proportion of respondents wrote of a deep commitment to the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist. When describing their relationship with the Eucharist, they used terms like: "love", "source of grace", "central", and "anchor". For some, Mass attendance and participation in the sacraments occurs in spite of the institutional Church. For instance, one respondent who identified as a postulant wrote:

With the Church as an institution, I wrestle – the power relations, the hierarchy, aspects of doctrine and some representatives of the Church I reject, and I suffer from them. Nevertheless, I love the liturgy, tradition, and Communion (26 to 40 years, Switzerland).

Another asserted:

I love the Sacraments of Communion and Reconciliation and attending Mass. Faith in God comes first, but I'm often troubled by ultra-conservative patriarchal points of view, attitudes to LGBTQ+ and women clergy and denying Communion to individuals (56 to 70 years, United States).

Many respondents mentioned the need for improved preaching and used words such as "robust", "succinct", "relevant", and "engaging" when describing the type of improvements they sought. This respondent from Ireland called for not just inclusive liturgical language but also universal use of an inclusive lectionary:

We need an inclusive Lectionary and inclusive language to become absolutely normative throughout all our liturgies. Our Lectionary needs to include and foreground the many narratives detailing the faith lives and faithful lives of many women in our scriptures. The women followers of Jesus, need to be brought to the fore as we decentre the male disciples as exclusively normative. We must have women preachers! (41 to 55 years, Ireland).

Regarding the format and celebration of liturgy, two main perspectives emerged from open responses. On the one hand, there was a majority cohort that called for renewal of the liturgy, with greater involvement of the laity and inclusive, everyday language. This included comments such as:

I find the church and its rituals old and outdated (41 to 55 years, Mozambique).

The language of the missals is indigestible archaic and incomprehensible (41 to 55 years, Poland).

On the other hand, a smaller group of respondents called for a greater respect for tradition and showed a resistance to societal change and modernism. For example, when asked what other issues needed to be addressed some wrote:

I would like to see a return to more sacred traditional liturgies. The Holy Mass doesn't feel very reverent a lot of the time. I am a young adult and I often see parishes trying to make church feel "hip" by playing modern music etc. ... It's Mass – it should feel like Mass and be a holy space, not a performance or a place for liberal members of the church to insert political opinions (26 to 40 years, Canada).

I am happy with the traditional church structure. If you change the beauty of the Mass and tradition in order to pander to little groups, then you are diluting the most essential aspects of worship. Also, I feel that we need to go back to what works and return to the extraordinary rite (41 to 55 years, Croatia).

Communion on the hand, singing of Protestant songs during the liturgy, females wearing pants inside churches and chapels all need to be stopped (18 to 25 years, Philippines).

Bad irreverent Liturgy. Lack of access for the faithful to the Traditional Latin Mass and sacraments. Lack of Faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The ongoing problem of poor Catechesis. Priests lacking courage to stand up for the True Faith & Christ (26 to 40 years, Italy).

Overall, however, the call for reinvigoration of liturgy and sacramental life was stronger. Two thirds (66 per cent) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Language used in liturgy and church documents should be gender inclusive". As with several other questions, differences could be associated with age and region.^{xv} Indeed, younger cohorts were significantly less likely to strongly agree or agree with the use of inclusive language than older respondents. Age variations tended to be stronger in countries where respondents spoke English as the primary language.

Some respondents wrote of participating in women's movements and inclusive ecclesial communities as activist spaces and alternatives to parishes. For example, one explained:

I left the brick-and-mortar church during the pandemic but have more faith and connection due to virtual connections with a [feminist movement], a [intentional faith community], and various spirituality circles I frequent. I think I am a better Catholic now than I ever was going to traditional Mass every Sunday (41 to 55 years, Canada).

There was support among respondents for more opportunities for qualified lay people, especially women, to preach homilies during Mass. In fact, just over three quarters (78 per cent) of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Women preachers should be able to give the homily during Mass". Once again there were variations that could be attributed to respondents' age and region of residence.^{xvi}

Not surprisingly, these responses reflect some of the disagreements and tensions in the Church today between those nostalgic for a return to what they see as "tradition", and those impatient with the slow pace of change, particularly with regard to women. It is however clear that the vast majority of respondents supported some change in liturgy and sacramentality shaped by a desire for greater inclusivity and relevance.

9. Authority and participation

A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church?

A substantial majority of respondents raised concerns regarding methods of church leadership and governance. Unlike some other issues which showed significant demographic variations, responses were generally in agreement that power and authority must be shared between clergy and laity.

9.1. Clerical Leadership

The functions and methods of clerical leadership were key issues in open responses. A large majority criticised the hierarchical structure of the Church, using words like "authoritarian", "patriarchal", "clerical", "machismo", "undemocratic", and "top-down". For example, one respondent noted:

My parish of 43 years suffered under the leadership of a priest who recklessly spent the savings, ousted our position holders, and replaced them with his chosen followers from his previous congregation ... I am weary of coverups, which includes the Indigenous Residential School tragedies (56 to 70 years, Canada).

Respondents noted the impact of abuses of power and authority on individual communities and the Church more broadly, commenting on how harm and disillusionment are often the result of authoritarian leadership. For instance, one wrote:

They need to look out for the lost sheep and not to close doors on those who seek for their help. Some Church leaders are so hostile and biased. They're tribal and outrightly humiliate those they are supposed to guide. Vocations to religious life especially in Africa are suffering. Please there is a need to address power abuse in the church in Africa (41 to 55 years, Kenya).

A member of a religious missionary congregation noted:

I am discouraged by the ever more conservative and autocratic tendencies, especially of the younger clerics, by the widespread absence of linking faith with current issues of social justice and solidarity with the poor and marginalized, and by the poor quality of liturgies in most parishes (56 to 70 years, Brazil).

Some responses acknowledged the good work of priests, but the clergy's style of leadership, including deacons, priests, and bishops in parishes and dioceses, was consistently identified as highly problematic and in need of urgent reform. For instance:

I attend Mass almost daily; I am a reader and a Minister of the Eucharist. However, I do believe the Church needs much reform ... The clergy, in particular needs radical reforms and quickly before it is too late (over 70 years, Malta).

A loss of moral authority, excessive clerical control, misogyny, poor financial management, and corruption were some of the concerns raised. Further, many responses remarked on the lack of humility of some priests and bishops who were out of touch with the reality of everyday life for the average lay person. One respondent called for priests and bishops:

To start living in the community like everyone else, having to pay rents, get a salary and support their expenses (41 to 55 years, Argentina).

The distance of priests and bishops from the reality of ordinary people's lives was frequently attributed to their inability marry and the nature of compulsory celibacy. Several open responses simply stated, "end clergy celibacy", or "allow married priests". One respondent noted the need to:

End compulsory celibacy, because a decoupling of sexuality, power, and spirituality is necessary (26 to 40 years, Austria).

Other responses problematised celibacy and related it to inappropriate relationships, the lack of priestly vocations, and the crisis of sexual and spiritual abuse. For example:

The celibacy of the clergy must be voluntary. The double life of a part of the clergy who have clandestine "spouses" and children out of wedlock causes absurd suffering to all, especially to the women who love them (56 to 70 years, Portugal).

Celibacy should no longer restrict access to ordained ministry. Priesthood needs to be redefined, to prevent abuse (41 to 55 years, Austria).

Several respondents strongly asserted the need for better discernment of vocations and improved initial and ongoing training and supervision for ordained members of the Church. The necessity of reformed seminarian training, including the inclusion of women as teachers and students, was broached by many respondents. One stated:

The lack of intellectual and social training of young priests is alarming. I think the Church is desperately giving priority to numbers rather than genuine formation and vocation (26 to 40 years, Spain).

Another referred to:

Insufficient, formation in seminaries, which is not suitable for modern times, in particular psychological, pedagogical, musical, and artistic formation and care for the continuous spiritual formation of priests, procrastination, and putting arrangements or particular benefits before the good of the parish or diocesan community (41 to 55 years, Poland).

Supervision and oversight were understood as key aspects of priestly formation, credibility, and accountability. One respondent noted:

The faithful should be given the platform to meet their Parish Priest's superiors so as to discuss unbecoming lifestyles by priests. This will bring about prevention of the image of the Church being tarnished. "Touch not the anointed" is destroying the Church (41 to 55 years, Zimbabwe).

There was a consistent call for clerical leadership to practice a style of leadership that serves the Church and parish communities. Respondents used terms such as "leadership as service", "servant leadership", "sacrament of service", and "leadership at the service of communities". The practice of servant leadership was often linked with priests as pastors living and demonstrating the Gospel and love of God through Christ-like behaviour. For instance:

Church leaders need to grow in their own relationship with God. Many are strict and old fashioned and don't represent God very well as God is love (18 to 25 years, Ireland).

Congruency between the lifestyle of certain clerics and the teaching of Jesus. The need to respect the primacy of conscience for all the Christians in ethical matters. To speak more clearly against violence against women. To truly acknowledge past serious errors such as the cover ups of clerical sexual abuses (over 70 years, Mexico).

Some respondents cited concerns about the conflation of ordination with authority and management functions. Many said that clergy should primarily be pastors of the faithful rather than administrators and managers, and that administrative management should be based on competencies and qualifications rather than maleness and ordination. One respondent wrote:

The delivery of sacraments (the role of the priest) should be distinct from church leadership and management which should be open to all (41 to 55 years, United States).

Several respondents questioned the primacy of ordination and its elevation above a lay state. Here is one example:

The laity are not second-class Catholics, but even the code of canon law considers us as such. If a priest has committed a serious offence, he is "punished" by being "reduced" to the lay state. I wonder why the lay state is a reduction of the priesthood, it is something smaller or lesser? And if a layman commits an offence, will they punish him by ordaining him a priest? They should stop considering us as some lower-class Catholics (56 to 70 years, Argentina).

Many questioned the necessity of ordination and proposed greater recognition of the authority of Baptism. For instance:

Jesus did not institute the priesthood as it is today. Everyone is baptized as priest, prophet, and Leader, we have to encourage the priesthood of the people (over 70 years, India).

Is the ordained priesthood even needed? Instead of access to the ordained ministry for all, one could think about whether the common priesthood without a two-class society does not correspond more closely to the message of Jesus (41 to 55 years, Germany).

9.2. Women in Leadership

A substantial majority of respondents were supportive of expanding the role of women in church leadership and governance. Indeed, almost 8 in 10 (79 per cent) of all respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Women should be fully included at all levels of church leadership". Support for women in leadership increased with age and varied with region of residence, with a marked difference between, for example, the strong agreement from respondents in western Europe and considerably less agreement from those in eastern Europe.^{xvii} Nevertheless, overall, a majority of respondents agreed with the statement.

Most respondents drew attention to the limited roles allocated to women in the Church in comments such as:

Males are presented as those with authority, eligible to positions of importance, setting directions and teaching, while females are expected to be humble, obeying, serving, persuaded that their worth is only in being mothers ... with a consecrated life as an alternative, thus limiting women's opportunities and choices (26 to 40 years, Czech Republic).

Respondents highlighted the necessity for greater recognition of the role women already play in Church leadership. Some observed that the COVID-19 pandemic had given visibility to women's liturgical and pastoral leadership. One respondent wrote:

The pandemic gave us, in the community, greater visibility and leadership to women both socially and liturgically. That was a great learning (56 to 70 years, Chile).

It was common for women to make claims of being undervalued and overlooked in the Church in spite of their position of leadership. One consecrated woman observed:

I worked in leadership roles in the Church for over 50 years, but employment depended on priests and ended with a change of priest or when priest was charged with sexual abuse (over 70 years, Australia).

Some respondents highlighted the lack of recognition of women's labour and leadership more broadly. For example:

If every woman in every parish stopped cleaning, cooking, dusting, typing, directing, singing, working in the nursery, teaching classes, answering the phone, etc., for just ONE week, every parish would have to close. Yet, why do women have so little real power, i.e., financial, decision-making, leadership? (over 70 years, Germany).

Women are doing all the work but have very little voice or influence (41 to 55 years, New Zealand).

The need to acknowledge women's leadership and participation beyond voluntary, so-called "women's work" was consistently expressed. One respondent lamented that:

So very little has changed in terms of female involvement in parish life during my lifetime, which is so disappointing. Church hierarchy needs to stop seeing females as only being of use for tea making, cleaning and flower arranging (56 to 70 years, United Kingdom).

Another noted that the Church needed to:

Encourage women to be visible members of parish work and community life and pay them. Do not assume they should be volunteers without pay (56 to 70 years, United States).

There were a few responses that linked women's participation in Church ministry, leadership, and governance to the Gospels and the ministry of Jesus:

The church must turn its gaze to the true meaning that Jesus had, otherwise we are letting him down. Women were one of the choices of Jesus' kingdom ... From Panama a hug full of sisterhood (41 to 55 years, Panama).

In contrast, the denial of women's full participation in church ministry, leadership, and governance was understood as harmful, both to Church as the people of God and women more broadly:

I am convinced that in most of the spaces of the Catholic Church, the possibility of reflecting on, working on, and denouncing, the multiple forms of violence that women experience, be they believing women who experience family violence, at work, etc., or women who experience violence within Catholic spaces, is still not open. One of them, is the historically silenced violence: it is the denial of the vocation of authority (56 to 70 years, Bolivia).

A few respondents viewed the new opportunities for women to serve as acolytes, lectors, and catechists as a positive step forward. For some, however, this was not enough. There was passionate and consistent endorsement of women's inclusion in the diaconate, and for their ordination as priests. Almost 7 in 10 (68 per cent) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Women should be eligible for ordination to the priesthood". Support for women's ordination increased with age and there were variations that could be associated with region of residence.^{xviii}

For some, their support for women's ordination was associated with a sense of vocation. One spoke about the impact on her life through being unable to fulfil her vocation to the priesthood:

My life sometimes feels wasted because I felt a calling to be a priest and could not become one as a woman ... Living outside of priesthood feels as if I cannot be myself in this life (56 to 70 years, Netherlands).

Others mentioned a call to the diaconate. For example:

I feel called to minister as an ordained deacon and am connecting with other women who feel the same. It seems that the Holy Spirit is working to prepare people for the small change in canon law that would make this possible (26 to 40 years, Australia).

For those who expressed support for women in the diaconate and priesthood, this was often linked to baptism and the capacity to stand "in persona Christi". For example:

Women's access to all ministries of service in the Church should not be seen as a right but, yes, as a duty because, by Baptism we are all priests at the service of the Community (over 70 years, Portugal).

Please ordain women. I know the in-persona Christi argument, but it falls flat on its face when examined deeper and understanding Christ's divine nature ... I love this church more than anything ... I want to stay more than anything, but God has placed a vocation on my heart, so I need to follow that, even if the Catholic Church does not want me to (18 to 25 years, Canada).

Some respondents were however sceptical of or strongly opposed to women's inclusion in the diaconate and/or the sacramental priesthood. Some questioned the advisability of adding women to an already flawed clerical system. A respondent who identified as a consecrated lay Catholic missionary wrote:

I wish that women had more voice and that we were not abused by clericalism that excludes us and takes away our dignity. I don't think the priesthood for women is the best if there will always be a patriarchal mentality. We must be more respected, valued and cared for in the Church (56 to 70 years, Panama).

Another claimed:

No need to ordain women if it is to increase clericalism. Also, it may be very divisive. Better increase role of lay people and women everywhere in the Church, in the hierarchy, in the diocese, in the liturgy, in all decision making (56 to 70 years, France).

Others, however, objected on the grounds of doctrine. For example:

I do not believe that there are any scriptural or theological bases for female ordination, I do not see why there cannot be women cardinals, women as heads of dicastery, or women in other leadership roles (26 to 40 years, United Kingdom).

Women cannot be priests. That's not an opinion, that's the theological and Biblical reality. That doesn't demean women, it simply acknowledges differences between the sexes in their roles in the Church. Yes, there are certainly places for women to lead in our Faith, but not in Persona Christi ... We need to better educate the faithful ... we need to affirm women and their value, without trying to force women into places they are not meant to be. I'm a feminist, I'm not a "rad-trad", but I understand exegesis and our faith tradition (26 to 40 years, New Zealand).

9.3. Employment Reform

The lack of recognition and respect for women employed in church leadership positions was a significant concern. In addition to poor recognition of skills and talents, respondents repeatedly described experiences of exploitation, low pay, and poor working conditions. One respondent wrote:

I worked for free as a lay woman for the Church for over 30 years teaching classes to women and children ... one day the bishop of the Archdiocese called me to tell me that my feminist theology was not adequate and that I was suspended from all work for the Church. From that moment, I decided to distance myself from the Church and fight for another way of being Church (56 to 70 years, Mexico).

Another said:

I am very angry with the Church as I feel women have been ignored consistently, despite the potential for reform within the second Vatican Council. I now have a doctorate in theology but the only roles I can perform in liturgical worship are minor – men with considerably less knowledge and skills than me occupy any important roles within the church and I have been in this position for 30 years (41 to 55 years, United Kingdom). Open responses consistently referred to the urgent need for fair and equitable employment of lay and consecrated persons participating in leadership, ministry, and service positions in church organisations and parishes. Most respondents when discussing the need for employment reform used terms such as "urgent", "exploitation", "exclusion", "discrimination", and "inequality". One noted that:

The abuse and use of people in the Church structure without a fair wage needs addressing. There is an expectation that people should work for free (i.e., youth pastoral workers) or for very little even though some have families, which technically is not aligned with the Catholic Social Teachings. It's really an abuse (41 to 55 years, Malaysia).

Another called for "internal social justice":

Just involvement and remuneration of lay people and consecrated persons in stable service (in the same way as priests and bishops) (26 to 40 years, Italy).

Many other respondents also wrote about the lack of acknowledgement for their theological training and academic qualifications. For example:

Because I am a woman, I have to give proof of my studies or qualifications in order to be taken into account (56 to 70 years, Argentina).

Several respondents expressed concern about the exploitation of nuns in church workplaces. For instance:

Abuse of religious sisters must be taken more seriously, also economic abuse and sisters' working conditions (56 to 70 years, Sweden).

Education of religious women to take up leadership roles in Church. Proper remuneration to women religious engaged in ministry in the Church (56 to 70 years, India).

Indeed, many identified employment injustices perpetrated against women as a form of sex discrimination or inequality:

The Church should end discrimination against women immediately. Sex discrimination in employment is illegal in other contexts. Does a Church that claims to be inclusive really want to perpetuate this unlawful discriminatory model? (56 to 70 years, Switzerland).

9.4. Economic Management

Economic justice was a dominant theme across many responses. Respondents mentioned anger and disillusionment at the wealth and privilege displayed by many clerics. Exhibitions of power and wealth associated with clergy lifestyles, housing, luxurious cars, overseas trips, lavish liturgical vestments, and extravagant church buildings were condemned. One respondent highlighted such displays of affluence as "counter-witness for a church that wants to be close to the poor" (56 to 70 years, France). Another respondent noted:

The church needs to consider its approach to money. Bishops in palaces and other extravagances in 2022 when thousands of millions are starving, homeless, displaced and living in poverty or are without access to water, education or healthcare. It is a disgrace (41 to 55 years, Ireland).

Another respondent called for:

Better control systems and reviews of finances, so that it is not so easy in the future, that priests or bishops squander money. For example: gambling debts or a luxury bishop's seat (26 to 40 years, Germany).

One referred to "Poverty and obedience" and wrote:

In my country, some priests live a double-sided life. What's worse, they have inappropriate affairs with women (41 to 55 years, Taiwan).

Another noted:

There is abuse and mismanagement, many personal interests that do not favour the community (41 to 55 years, Dominican Republic).

Financial strength was understood as an importance resource for the Church's social mission. Several respondents, however, stressed the Church's duty to combat ongoing corruption and provide adequate economic management. Respondents cited the requirement for transparent oversight at a global and parish level. Comments included:

Increase transparency and proper use of financial resources. As well as the employment of professionals who can advise on the use of financial resources and redouble their impact on the people of the world and their innumerable needs (26 to 40 years, Mexico).

Financial affairs at parish level especially. I am a parishioner ... [and] a Chartered Accountant and have made attempts to get the parish to share with the community the financial status of the parish. All I have encountered is push back and basically been told that this cannot be done (41 to 55 years, South Africa).

As mentioned previously, the economic exploitation of lay workers and consecrated persons was mentioned in many responses:

Low wages and working conditions of lay staff; exploitation of nuns (who sometimes are treated like servants); the question of priests/bishop's wages and all the extra payments they earn (41 to 55 years, Portugal).

Our report so far reveals a very wide range of perspectives, insights, and concerns raised by respondents. We have discussed the need for dialogue – based on attentive listening and the courage to speak out, confident of being heard – but there remains the question of how to navigate a coherent path through this vast mass of qualitative and quantitative data. With this in mind, we turn now to the final issues we seek to address in the context of guidance given in the Preparatory Document.

10. Discerning and deciding

In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God?

The organisation and culture of decision-making in the Catholic Church was a key issue raised by respondents. Questions of abusive power relations, authoritarianism, and a lack of transparency and accountability featured repeatedly and have already been covered in some of the foregoing sections. These were all perceived to have a negative impact on the ability of "the whole community" to engage in and contribute to discernment and decision-making.

10.1. Misuse of Power

Some respondents shared experiences of being overlooked and marginalised as a result of autocratic clerical governance:

I would like very much to be more involved in life of parish and church but can do it because of the priest who is leading our parish. All can I do is sing, and that is too little for me. And I do not know to whom I should address this problem. I worry that our children

will not go in church anymore because there is not any community for them or for us as parents, as a couple (41 to 55 years, Slovenia).

One called for "a real application of the circular, non-pyramidal Church" that would "give active voice to the baptized laity engaged in parish activities". She wrote that the current bishop:

Has made wicked and imperious gestures that are irreparably damaging some parish communities. He is not willing to listen and makes unquestionable decisions worthy of the medieval church, not mother but stepmother, not refuge but fortress, not caress but a fist for the soul (41 to 55 years, Italy).

Most respondents who raised these issues referred to the negative impact on church attendance, either because people left in order to preserve their faith and mental health, and sometimes for their own safety, and at other times because they had been deliberately excluded. For example, a respondent explained:

I have been active in the congregation all my life: choir girl, group lesson leader, church choir, parish council, lector – Now I don't even go to the service anymore ... The priest divides the congregations by his behaviour (41 to 55 years, Germany).

Respondents often noted how women were completely excluded from the existing hierarchical-clerical model:

I feel utterly ignored as a woman and as a lay person ... I think a council of laity would help to build community and balance the perception of a strictly male misogynistic and hierarchical leadership (over 70 years, India).

A less top-down model, with shared leadership between clergy and laity was cited by many respondents as a step towards full equality for women in the Church:

Leadership must be horizontal, from the community. The church, plus the hierarchy, must adapt to the new times and accept full equality for women in the church (56 to 70 years, Grenada).

10.2. Transparency and Accountability

Respondents' comments regarding transparency and accountability varied widely yet frequently raised issues such as "management by competencies", "consequences", "transparency in governance", "oversight", "accountability of leadership", "restoration of trust", "power accountability", "integrity", "information sharing", and "justice". Comments came from respondents in all age groups and regions of the world.

Respondents clearly and consistently emphasised the necessity for church leadership to transform the culture and increase transparency and accountability in all matters including decision-making, at all levels of the Church: parish, diocese, and in the Holy See.

One respondent wrote that "A lot of work is needed to reform our culture" and made the following suggestions:

Genuine respect for the contributions of women now and in Church history; changes to how we communicate with people – genuine, open listening, speaking, with, not simply telling, seeking, and engaging with feedback (and making it safe for people to speak boldly), using language that is accessible and inclusive ... There also needs to be accountability of clergy and Church operations to the faithful – for example how does money spent support our Mission? (41 to 55 years, Australia).

Others called for:

Transparency in church governance in terms of finances and decision-making, and more importantly, the issue of gender violence and sexual abuse (56 to 70 years, Philippines).

Transparency in everything ... A parish must be heard and respected when complaining about priests or religious who mistreat or abuse power and money. Another way to maintain yourself other than sacraments that cost so much (over 70 years, Mexico).

10.3. Co-responsibility: The Role of Laity

As mentioned above, most respondents called for a greater role of the laity, especially women, in leadership, governance, and decision-making, and a considerable majority supported women holding leadership positions at all levels of the Church. For many respondents, however, women's inclusion in Church leadership and decision-making was not the whole answer. They used words like "co-responsibility", "synodal", "dialogue", and "collaboration" when describing the role lay people might play in decision-making processes. One respondent noted:

Much of the isolation of women in the Church is also experienced by men and by minority groups. Laypeople in general need more and better formation in faith and church ... We need a change of culture such that lay people are more respected, heard and empowered in decision making and ministry (56 to 70 years, Australia).

A few respondents strongly opposed the inclusion of lay men and women in decision-making processes. This small group was concerned with the preservation and renewal of the office of clergy, including a return to "tradition" and lay submission to clerical authority, which they suggested would eliminate issues related to mismanagement and corruption. These responses tended to appeal for a "return to tradition", "strong priestly male hierarchy", and the removal of "effeminate priests".

For most respondents the role of laity in decision-making processes was highly important not just for the Church but also for its role in broader society and culture. A key issue was to set an example by the inclusion of women, young people, and other groups marginalised or excluded from decision-making structures and processes in their communities and societies. Examples from open response include:

Let the young people to be part of leadership and church. Not encourage class/status among people who hold positions in church (26 to 40 years, Malaysia).

Women empowerment should actually be paved in the Catholic church. As Christians we are all equal in the eyes of God, then why not in the world. Everyone has the right to equality. The Catholic Church should strongly stand as an example for it (26 to 40 years, India).

Overall, the call for more inclusive, non-hierarchical leadership was impassioned and consistent. Several respondents referred to the need for the Church to be more democratic:

It is necessary to find ways of "democratic" participation in decisions on the life of communities, which are instead governed by priests (not chosen by the community) with absolute power, more or less enlightened and willing to be advised but who then in fact decide and respond personally to the choices they make (41 to 55 years, Italy).

As mentioned above, many respondents linked democratic processes at the parish level and more broadly with greater transparency and accountability:

There should be a more democratic process for the election of bishops and some recourse when a bishop abuses his power ... there should be oversight of the use of church finances and power of veto (56 to 70 years, Australia).

Many responses observed that a model of co-responsible leadership that utilised the gifts and skills of all people might support the Church's mission more effectively. For example:

The real participation of the laity both in volunteering and charitable mission and in responsibility and real leadership and that many positions that priests have can be passed on to more prepared people (41 to 55 years, South Korea).

11. Forming Ourselves in Synodality

Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation and on-going learning. How does our church community form people to be more capable of "walking together," listening to one another, participating in mission and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?

There was clear and consistent support for engagement in the synodal process, with some respondents describing high levels of engagement with synodal activities and processes. There was a sense of hope and excitement among those who were working and journeying together through synodality. One young respondent wrote:

I have great hope for this Synod! I really hope that my voice will be heard not only through this survey, but also through the synodality project, that I am running through my YouTube channel (18 to 25 years, Belarus).

Another respondent said:

The synod is a great way to include lay persons in church policies. May God guide this synod to be successful in formulating policies that will allow the church to grow with the times (41 to 55 years, India).

Some respondents wrote that all people must have a voice in the synodal process. They used terms like "urgent", "stop being afraid", and "fervent hope". One wrote:

I admire Pope Francis' approach to Synodality and feel that it is urgent that ALL have a voice. Had this been the case before, we would probably never have known such clerical abuse and cover-up in the Church (over 70 years, Israel).

Several noted that synodality in Church would not simply happen but must be learned and practised. When describing how synodality might work they used terms such as: "democratic", "circular", "collaborative", "productive", "equality", "prophetic", and "inclusion".

Many used open responses to highlight the importance of the ISCW survey in allowing women to practice synodality and express their ideas without prejudice or discrimination. For example:

I would like to add a big thank you for the questionnaire ... We hope it will be useful to really grow in synodality, in a journey in which women can be themselves to the end, without discrimination (41 to 55 years, Italy).

Yet even though many respondents expressed enthusiasm, there were also serious reservations raised about the synodal process. Several responses pondered the genuineness of the invitation to speak out:

I hope with all my heart that the synod in 2023 will take all this work into account, that I will see changes, and it will not be a politically correct way of making us think that we are listened to, and nothing happens (41 to 55 years, Chile).

Others cast doubt on the purpose of "journeying together" in synodality if there would be no impact or change:

These synodal processes are good for the church and the communities, because they give us the opportunity to express an opinion and to listen to other opinions and identify differences and points in common, but in one of the first meetings of the beginning of the synodal phase held in the parish that I attend a priest began by saying that synods are not made to produce changes ... What would be the point of asking questions, listening, to reflect on any mistakes if you are not willing to change or lose anything? ... Dialogue while being firmly planted on one's own convictions, without being willing to take a step towards the other does not serve much (26 to 40 years, Italy).

Several responses questioned whether the experience of synodality was functioning effectively to shift roles of responsibility and decision-making. The absence of women in decision-making, particularly in voting processes during synods, was viewed as a particular obstacle to effective synodality. One respondent noted:

Synodality that does not have 50 per cent of women at the final table will not be capable of holding its own authority or promise. It will become an information gathering and promulgating assembly, a lost opportunity (41 to 55 years, Ireland).

Others made a call for a vote for women in synods. For example:

Women must be able to participate in decision-making in synods/bishops' conferences (41 to 55 years, Switzerland).

Female vote, plus participation of the laity in the affairs of the Church. Promoting nonclericalism, people don't even know what it is. Gender education for seminarians. More inclusion of religious women in the decisions of the diocese (26 to 40 years, Mexico).

Pope Francis has spoken a lot about women being able to lead any organisation. But are they encouraging women's participation at all levels? Are women going to have voting rights? Or do we have to wait for another 100 years? (56 to 70 years, India).

12. Conclusions

The responses to the ISCW illustrate the rich diversity of Catholic women's concerns and insights from around the world as they share their joys, frustrations, fears, struggles, hopes, and dreams. We believe the main findings to be drawn from the survey on the basis of those who responded are as follows:

- Even when women have significant frustrations and struggles with Catholic institutions and structures, their Catholic identity is very important to them.
- Many respondents saw their Catholic identity as inseparable from social justice, concern for the poor and the marginalised, and care for the environment, often described in terms of Gospel values and the example of Jesus.
- The vast majority of those who responded support some level of reform in the Church, especially but not exclusively regarding the role and representation of women. A small minority would prefer that the Church revert to what we might refer to as a pre-conciliar model of authority, priesthood, and liturgy.
- Most respondents saw an urgent need for reform with regard to church teachings on issues of sexuality, including respect for freedom of conscience and the place of LGBTIQ persons within the Church. A majority agreed that reform was needed with regard to the ordination of women, inclusive language in liturgy, women preaching, and remarriage after civil divorce.
- A large majority of respondents were concerned about the prevalence of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, racism, and sexism in church contexts. Many respondents expressed disappointment at the lack of accountability and transparency apparent in the hierarchy's handling of abuse.
- A substantial majority of respondents raised concerns about transparency and accountability in church leadership and governance. A significant majority identified clericalism as having a

negative impact on church life. There was a high level of agreement that a less hierarchal and authoritarian model of Church was urgently needed, with greater collaboration and sharing of responsibility and authority between clergy and laity.

We believe that the challenge for the Synod is to show that these many different voices have been listened to with the kind of respectful attentiveness required if dialogue is to be authentic and effective. If that happens, we would expect church teaching to become far more attuned to the realities of women's lives in all their many different contexts and cultures, with all the struggles, frustrations, and hopes expressed by the respondents. While nearly 20,000 responses constitute only a very small minority of Catholic women around the world, we believe that this is the largest international survey of its kind ever undertaken, and it is a significant enough number to inform lasting and genuine change in church institutions, structures, and practices, based on all the principles of synodality set out in the Preparatory Document.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Please see Appendix A for details of the sample, including the number of respondents in each category.

"My Catholic identity is important to me"

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (85 per cent), 26 to 40 years (87 per cent), 41 to 55 years (89 per cent), 56 to 70 year (86 per cent), over 70 years (88 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (96 per cent), Eastern Europe (84 per cent), Western Europe (83 per cent), Southern Europe (88 per cent), Northern Europe (88 per cent), Central America (89 per cent), North America (87 per cent), South America (89 per cent), Oceania (89 per cent), Asia (92 per cent), Middle East (100 per cent).

ⁱⁱ "Remarriage after civil divorce should be allowed."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (43 per cent), 26 to 40 years (45 per cent), 41 to 55 years (63 per cent), 56 to 70 year (82 per cent), over 70 years (89 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (66 per cent), Eastern Europe (34 per cent), Western Europe (84 per cent), Southern Europe (75 per cent), Northern Europe (78 per cent), Central America (75 per cent), North America (70 per cent), South America (72 per cent), Oceania (64 per cent), Asia (65 per cent), Middle East (53 per cent).

" "LGBTIQ persons must be fully included and respected in all church activities."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (65 per cent), 26 to 40 years (64 per cent), 41 to 55 years (76 per cent), 56 to 70 year (88 per cent), over 70 years (93 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (68 per cent), Eastern Europe (70 per cent), Western Europe (89 per cent), Southern Europe (90 per cent), Northern Europe (87 per cent), Central America (85 per cent), North America (80 per cent), South America (86 per cent), Oceania (72 per cent), Asia (79 per cent), Middle East (67 per cent).

iv "The sacrament of marriage should be extended to same sex couples."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (41 per cent), 26 to 40 years (37 per cent), 41 to 55 years (47 per cent), 56 to 70 year (60 per cent), over 70 years (65 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (31 per cent), Eastern Europe (23 per cent), Western Europe (70 per cent), Southern Europe (55 per cent), Northern Europe (54 per cent), Central America (49 per cent), North America (56 per cent), South America (48 per cent), Oceania (46 per cent), Asia (31 per cent), Middle East (20 per cent).

v "Catholic social teaching is a good resource for social justice action."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (74 per cent), 26 to 40 years (76 per cent), 41 to 55 years (80 per cent), 56 to 70 year (84 per cent), over 70 years (89 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (88 per cent), Eastern Europe (69 per cent), Western Europe (80 per cent), Southern Europe (85 per cent), Northern Europe (84 per cent), Central America (88 per cent), North America (83 per cent), South America (87 per cent), Oceania (83 per cent), Asia (87 per cent), Middle East (73 per cent).

^{vi} "Climate change is an urgent challenge that the whole church must address."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (61 per cent), 26 to 40 years (60 per cent), 41 to 55 years (73 per cent), 56 to 70 year (85 per cent), over 70 years (92 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (83 per cent), Eastern Europe (70 per cent), Western Europe (88 per cent), Southern Europe (89 per cent), Northern Europe (87 per cent), Central America (88 per cent), North America (74 per cent), South America (86 per cent), Oceania (67 per cent), Asia (84 per cent), Middle East (87 per cent).

vii "Clericalism (the misuse of authority and power by male clerics) is damaging the Catholic Church."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (69 per cent), 26 to 40 years (71 per cent), 41 to 55 years (80 per cent), 56 to 70 year (90 per cent), over 70 years (94 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (77 per cent), Eastern Europe (88 per cent), Western Europe (93 per cent), Southern Europe (88 per cent), Northern Europe (87 per cent), Central America (87 per cent), North America (84 per cent), South America (85 per cent), Oceania (77 per cent), Asia (77 per cent), Middle East (60 per cent).

viii "Church leaders are not doing enough to address the perpetration and cover-up of sexual abuse"

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (69 per cent), 26 to 40 years (72 per cent), 41 to 55 years (76 per cent), 56 to 70 year (83 per cent), over 70 years (87 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (76 per cent), Eastern Europe (82 per cent), Western Europe (86 per cent), Southern Europe (77 per cent), Northern Europe (81 per cent), Central America (80 per cent), North America (83 per cent), South America (81 per cent), Oceania (69 per cent), Asia (80 per cent), Middle East (67 per cent).

^{ix} "Church leaders need to do more to address other forms of abuse, including abuses of power and spiritual harm."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (75 per cent), 26 to 40 years (79 per cent), 41 to 55 years (86 per cent), 56 to 70 year (93 per cent), over 70 years (96 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (91 per cent), Eastern Europe (90 per cent), Western Europe (94 per cent), Southern Europe (94 per cent), Northern Europe (90 per cent), Central America (93 per cent), North America (89 per cent), South America (95 per cent), Oceania (82 per cent), Asia (92 per cent), Middle East (100 per cent).

^x "Women need to have freedom of conscience with regard to their sexual and reproductive decisions"

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (50 per cent), 26 to 40 years (55 per cent), 41 to 55 years (68 per cent), 56 to 70 year (80 per cent), over 70 years (87 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (67 per cent), Eastern Europe (67 per cent), Western Europe (87 per cent), Southern Europe (83 per cent), Northern Europe (79 per cent), Central America (86 per cent), North America (68 per cent), South America (78 per cent), Oceania (67 per cent), Asia (78 per cent), Middle East (80 per cent).

^{xi} "Thinking about your identity, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement "I identify as an ecumenical Christian."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (36 per cent), 26 to 40 years (41 per cent), 41 to 55 years (59 per cent), 56 to 70 year (73 per cent), over 70 years (82 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (70 per cent), Eastern Europe (67 per cent), Western Europe (80 per cent), Southern Europe (80 per cent), Northern Europe (71 per cent), Central America (78 per cent), North America (55 per cent), South America (82 per cent), Oceania (57 per cent), Asia (73 per cent), Middle East (69 per cent).

xii "I support reform in the Catholic Church."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (66 per cent), 26 to 40 years (66 per cent), 41 to 55 years (80 per cent), 56 to 70 year (91 per cent), over 70 years (96 per cent).

In some countries more than 9 out of 10 respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement supporting reform, these included: Ireland (91 per cent), Italy (92 per cent), Spain (93 per cent), Taiwan (93 per cent), Germany (94 per cent) and Switzerland (97 per cent).

xiii "Radical reform is needed in the Catholic Church."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (45 per cent), 26 to 40 years (47 per cent), 41 to 55 years (62 per cent), 56 to 70 year (75 per cent), over 70 years (82 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (52 per cent), Eastern Europe (65 per cent), Western Europe (84 per cent), Southern Europe (74 per cent), Northern

Europe (72 per cent), Central America (72 per cent), North America (64 per cent), South America (71 per cent), Oceania (62 per cent), Asia (61 per cent), Middle East (43 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by country: Argentina (89 per cent), Germany (89 per cent), Ireland (84 per cent), and Switzerland (86 per cent).

xiv "Without reform there is no place for me in the Catholic Church."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (16 per cent), Eastern Europe (25 per cent), Western Europe (47 per cent), Southern Europe (28 per cent), Northern Europe (25 per cent), Central America (30 per cent), North America (28 per cent), South America (25 per cent), Oceania (27 per cent), Asia (21 per cent), Middle East (14 per cent).

^{xv} "Language used in liturgy and church documents should be gender inclusive."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (40 per cent), 26 to 40 years (42 per cent), 41 to 55 years (56 per cent), 56 to 70 year (73 per cent), over 70 years (87 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (67 per cent), Eastern Europe (44 per cent), Western Europe (66 per cent), Southern Europe (70 per cent), Northern Europe (72 per cent), Central America (67 per cent), North America (66 per cent), South America (60 per cent), Oceania (64 per cent), Asia (71 per cent), Middle East (53 per cent)

xvi "Women preachers should be able to give the homily during Mass."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (46 per cent), 26 to 40 years (50 per cent), 41 to 55 years (71 per cent), 56 to 70 year (87 per cent), over 70 years (95 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (69 per cent), Eastern Europe (59 per cent), Western Europe (92 per cent), Southern Europe (87 per cent), Northern Europe (85 per cent), Central America (82 per cent), North America (74 per cent), South America (84 per cent), Oceania (67 per cent), Asia (75 per cent), Middle East (87 per cent).

xvii "Women should be fully included at all levels of church leadership."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (50 per cent), 26 to 40 years (53 per cent), 41 to 55 years (59 per cent), 56 to 70 year (73 per cent), over 70 years (82 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (77 per cent), Eastern Europe (57 per cent), Western Europe (91 per cent), Southern Europe (89 per cent), Northern Europe (85 per cent), Central America (88 per cent), North America (75 per cent), South America (86 per cent), Oceania (68 per cent), Asia (79 per cent), Middle East (80 per cent).

^{xviii} "Women should be eligible for ordination to the priesthood."

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by age: 18 to 25 years (41 per cent), 26 to 40 years (42 per cent), 41 to 55 years (61 per cent), 56 to 70 year (78 per cent), over 70 years (85 per cent).

Proportion of respondents that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement by region of residence: Africa (47 per cent), Eastern Europe (38 per cent), Western Europe (85 per cent), Southern Europe (75 per cent), Northern Europe (74 per cent), Central America (68 per cent), North America (67 per cent), South America (70 per cent), Oceania (59 per cent), Asia (55 per cent), Middle East (60 per cent).

Appendices

Appendix A: ISCW Methodology - Summary

The International Survey of Catholic Women (ISCW) was a self-administered online survey that was designed to gather the views and insights of Catholic women from around the world. It had an upper limit of 30,000 respondents and was available in 8 languages: English, Spanish, German, Italian, French, Polish, Mandarin and Portuguese. The ISCW was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, at the University of Newcastle (H-2021-0430) in February 2022.

Respondents were recruited using purposive, non-random sampling through the Catholic Women Speak (CWS) and the Catholic Women's Council (CWC) networks. The survey was promoted via CWC and CWS social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) which directed interested parties to the CWS webpage. Research Flyers which invited women to respond to the survey, were published on the CWS webpage. Interested people could respond to the survey via a link on the Research Flyer. People who followed the link could read the Participant Information Statement and decide whether they wanted to participate. Screening questions confirmed that respondents self-identified as women and were current or previous members of the Catholic Church. They verified respondents were aged over 18 years of age and were aware that participating in the survey carried a small risk of harm, in that some of the questions deal with potentially sensitive issues related to Catholic teachings on the participation of women and LGBTQI groups and the sexual abuse crisis. All questions were optional, and respondents could skip a question if they felt distress.

The survey instrument used a mixed methods approach with open and closed questions. In the survey's closed questions respondents used a 5-point Likert Scale to measure their level of agreement with a statement. Likert Scales are a rating system, used in questionnaires, to measure a respondent's opinion, attitude, or perception. The options were: strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, strongly disagree. Even though statements in close questions were designed to be unambiguous, with complex terms defined where deemed necessary, definite, unequivocal meaning is rarely fully achieved. In Likert Scale questions there is little room for a nuanced response. While these aspects of the closed questions are limitations of the survey instrument it was envisioned that the open responses would allow for respondents to elaborate. In open responses, respondents are asked to provide answers, express opinions and give information based on their experience in their own words. Open responses were used in the survey instrument so that respondents could give information or elaborate on key concept areas.

There were 19,548 responses collected via Research Electronic Data Capture (<u>REDCap</u>) a secure, web-based software platform designed to support data capture for research studies. Qualitative data analysis was carried out using <u>SPSS</u>. To prepare the raw data set for quantitative analysis, the responses that were fully blank or had answered only identity questions (question 1) and/or demographic questions (questions 7 and/or 8) were eliminated. The screened data set contained 17200 responses with missing data rates on each of the closed questions of less than 5.5 per cent, with the exception of three questions: identification as an ecumenical Christian (6.7 per cent), no longer identifying as Catholic (10.3 per cent), age range (7.3 per cent), and geographic region (7.6 per cent). Univariate analysis – examination of the simple frequencies on individual survey items – was undertaken. The patterns in results across different items (e.g., various issues of reform in the Catholic Church) were explored by means of graphical displays. Bivariate analyses were

conducted to examine differences in the patterns of responses between geographic regions and age groups. Comparisons between age groups were also undertaken within individual countries.

There were 15650 open responses in the screened data set. Open responses were exported into Microsoft Excel and machine-translated to English, where necessary, using Translator for Microsoft Office. Once complete, machine-translated open responses were merged into the screened data set alongside untranslated open responses to allow for text comparison and correction where necessary. To ensure the open questions were analysed to their full potential a qualitative subsample was generated from the screened data set. A pragmatic sampling strategy for coding was implemented, which involved stratified random sampling from the full dataset to maximise diversity by country and by age. A new sample was taken for each open response question. This strategy yielded from 1,966 to 2,604 cases for analysis on the three open text questions. Using a modified grounded theory² approach, researchers thematically coded the subsample of open responses using NVivo. Even though the full subsample was coded to maximise demographic representation, data saturation (the point at which no new coded themes emerge) was achieved before all responses were analysed indicating that the size of the sub dataset was sufficient. During the coding process the research team regularly met to compare and explore connections and relations between thematic codes. Research notes documented emerging concepts, assumptions, and biases during the coding process.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 to 25 years	593	3.4	3.7	3.7
	26 to 40 years	2572	15.0	16.1	19.8
	41 to 55 years	3781	22.0	23.7	43.6
	56 to 70 years	4896	28.5	30.7	74.3
	over 70 years	4103	23.9	25.7	100.0
	Total	15945	92.7	100.0	
Missing		1255	7.3		
Total		17200	100.0		

Age Breakdown in Sample

Region Breakdown in Sample

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Africa	220	1.3	1.4	1.4
	Eastern Europe	318	1.8	2.0	3.4
	Western Europe	1767	10.3	11.1	14.5
	Southern Europe	1701	9.9	10.7	25.2
	Northern Europe	2312	13.4	14.6	39.8
	Central America	323	1.9	2.0	41.8
	North America	6400	37.2	40.3	82.1
	South America	465	2.7	2.9	85.0
	Oceania	1944	11.3	12.2	97.2
	Asia	423	2.5	2.7	99.9
	Middle East	15	0.1	0.1	100.0
	Total	15888	92.4	100.0	
Missing		1312	7.6		
Total		17200	100.0		

² Glaser Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research, Aldine Publishing, Chicago.

Appendix B: The Survey Instrument

Catholic Women Speak International Survey

To begin the survey, please answer the following screening questions:

Do you self-identify as a woman? (yes/no)

Do you currently self-identify or have you previously self-identified as Catholic? (yes/no)

Are you aged 18 years or over? (yes/no)

Some of the questions in this survey deal with potentially sensitive issues and there is a small risk of psychological harm. All questions are optional, and you can skip a question if it causes you distress. Do you still want to participate in this survey? (yes/no)

Section 1: Women and the Church

Question 1: Thinking about your identity, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My Catholic identity is important to me.					
I identify as an ecumenical Christian.					
I no longer identify as Catholic.					

Question 2: In a couple of sentences please describe your current relationship with the Catholic Church. (Open response)

Section 2: Women and the Church: Do we need change?

Question 3: Thinking about the possible need for reform in the Catholic Church, to what extent do you agree or disagree with following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I support reform in the Catholic Church.					
There is no need for any reform in the Catholic Church.					
Radical reform is needed in the Catholic Church.					
Without reform there is no place for me in the Catholic Church.					

Section 3: Women and the Church: What are the issues?

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Question 4. To what extent do you agree of disagree with the following statements:						
	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Women should be fully included at all levels of church leadership.						
Clericalism (the misuse of authority and power by male clerics) is damaging the Catholic Church.						
Catholic social teaching is a good resource for social justice action.						
Climate change is an urgent challenge that the whole church must address.						
Language used in liturgy and church documents should be gender inclusive.						
Women need to have freedom of conscience with regard to their sexual and reproductive decisions.						
LGBTIQ persons must be fully included and respected in all church activities.						
The sacrament of marriage should be extended to same sex couples.						
Remarriage after civil divorce should be allowed.						
Women preachers should be able to give the homily during Mass.						
Women should be eligible for ordination to the priesthood.						
Church leaders are not doing enough to address the perpetration and cover-up of sexual abuse.						
Church leaders need to address other forms of abuse, including abuse of power and spiritual harm.						

Question 5: Are there any other issues that church leadership needs to address? (Open response)

Section 4: Women and the Church: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Question 6: Thinking about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your participation in the Catholic Church, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I was affected by not being able to attend Mass in person during the pandemic.					
My personal faith was deepened during the pandemic.					
I discovered new ways of sharing my faith during the pandemic.					
I appreciated the opportunity to participate in worship online.					
I do not intend to return to regular Mass attendance.					
I found new ways to engage with my community during the pandemic.					

Section 5: Women and the Church: Please tell us a little about yourself

Question 7: What is your age range? (under 25 years, 26-40 years, 41-55 years, 56-70 years, over 70 years)

Question 8: What geographic region of the world are you currently residing in? (Countries in a drop-down box with a search function)

Afghanistan; Albania; Algeria; Andorra; Angola; Antigua & Deps; Argentina; Armenia; Australia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Bahamas; Bahrain; Bangladesh; Barbados; Belarus; Belgium; Belize; Benin; Bhutan; Bolivia; Bosnia Herzegovina; Botswana; Brazil; Brunei; Bulgaria; Burkina; Burundi; Cambodia; Cameroon; Canada; Cape Verde; Central African Rep; Chad; Chile; China; Colombia; Comoros; Congo; Democratic Republic of Congo; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cuba; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Djibouti; Dominica; Dominican Republic; East Timor; Ecuador; Egypt; El Salvador; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Estonia; Ethiopia; Fiji; Finland; France; Gabon; Gambia; Georgia; Germany; Ghana; Greece; Grenada; Guatemala; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Guyana; Haiti; Honduras; Hungary; Iceland; India; Indonesia; Iran; Iraq; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Ivory Coast; Jamaica; Japan; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kiribati; Korea North; Korea South; Kosovo; Kuwait; Kyrgyzstan; Laos; Latvia; Lebanon; Lesotho; Liberia; Libya; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Macedonia; Madagascar; Malawi; Malaysia; Maldives; Mali; Malta; Marshall Islands; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mexico; Micronesia; Moldova; Monaco; Mongolia; Montenegro; Morocco; Mozambique; Myanmar; Namibia; Nauru; Nepal; Netherlands; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; Norway; Oman; Pakistan; Palau; Palestine; Panama; Papua New Guinea; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Qatar; Romania; Russian Federation; Rwanda; St Kitts & Nevis; St Lucia; Saint Vincent & the Grenadines; Samoa; San Marino; Sao Tome & Principe; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Serbia; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Singapore; Slovakia; Slovenia; Solomon Islands; Somalia; South Africa; South Sudan; Spain; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Suriname; Swaziland; Sweden; Switzerland; Syria; Taiwan; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Thailand; Togo; Tonga; Trinidad & Tobago; Tunisia; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom; United States; Uruguay; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; Vatican City; Venezuela; Vietnam; Yemen; Zambia; Zimbabwe

Question 9: Is there anything else you would like to add? (Open response)