

What is your experience of the Catholic Church or any Christian Church?

- I was baptised in the Methodist church, and attended Sunday school for a few years. I no longer attend any church.

Where have your views about the Catholic Church come from?

- I have had conversations with friends who are Catholics.
- I have read in-depth articles in magazines/periodicals, and current affairs books.

What are the things which stop you from wanting to be a part of the Church?

- The focus on sexual morality. There are lots of nasty behaviours (such as bullying and psychological abuse, physical violence, greed, selfishness, racism), which are surely equally important factors in personal morality?
- The poor way historical scandals (e.g. financial and child abuse) have been dealt with (I acknowledge that efforts have been made to change things).

How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues?

- I don't know. My perception is of an institution which has moved from being a means to an end, to become an end in itself i.e. the top priority for `the Church` is to defend and protect `the Church`. This applies specifically to the senior hierarchy, and their defensiveness and failure to act on serious scandals, rather than individual Catholics.

What might the Church do to attract people who are not a part of the Church?

In what ways could the Church reach out more to the wider community, especially those who are marginalised in society, the poor, the ostracised and people of other faiths.

- This seems to me to be a question of priorities: is the Church going to prioritise personal morality or social justice? Is the aim in reaching out to the poor and marginalised to give them spiritual or practical help? I don't know the answer.

If you could describe your local Church fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like?

- I don't know.

- What is your experience of the Catholic Church or any Christian Church?

The Catholic church needs to be more welcoming and less insular. I play the organ in a Cathedral and there is no literature about the music there. My daughter went in and noticed signs like "do you want to be a priest?" "You are kidding" was her thought - "these people are out of touch with reality." Churches need not to be clubs for Catholics, or certain types of Catholics; they need to be engaged with their community. The Anglican church is only a little better at this. I offered for instance to load a piano to a Cathedral. This would bring in huge numbers of people – non-catholics – who would become engaged with the building with the ethos of the place. The answer was no – "it might get in the way" and other bogus excuses were given. Outside Cathedrals, music is often very poor – again, the Catholic church needs to team up with organisations (the Royal College of Organists for instance) and conservatoires to encourage good musicians. I am not a Catholic, but my gift to the church was rejected. Until the Catholic church needs to realise a more 'universal' mission.

- Where have your views about the Catholic Church come from?

From playing the organ and being such churches.

- What are the things which stop you from wanting to be a part of the Church?

Insularity, a sense that my kind of belief is not the right kind of belief.

- How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues?

In general, poorly – it is either a source of controversy or of ridicule.

- What might the Church do to attract people who are not a part of the Church?

It needs to become a community centre and accept people on their terms, and stop trying to impose its terms on them. You catch more flies with honey!

- If you could describe your local Church fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like?

It would be active, welcoming, inclusive, and it would have good music and support musicians properly in the church. The Catholic church currently does not adequately support the ministry of musicians through pay, development, experience, and vocation.

- In what ways could the Church reach out more to the wider community, especially those who are marginalised in society, the poor, the ostracised and people of other faiths.

It could become more of a community centre, become involved in food banks, soup kitchens, social work. Many of these things already happen, but they need to be more central. Too often self-interest, especially from priests who are too engaged with the trappings of Catholicism, get in the way.

- What is your experience of the Catholic Church or any Christian Church? **very little – a few friends are Catholic but that is all in terms of Catholic Church. I have been a Christian for over 35 years, mostly attending Anglican churches, on the ‘low’ end.**
- Where have your views about the Catholic Church come from? **Not sure I have ‘views’ as such**
- What are the things which stop you from wanting to be a part of the Church? **I am a member of a church**
- How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues? **Family are ok with it, brother is a vicar, friends are mostly from church and colleagues know I am a Christian and occasionally I manage to chat to them about it**
- What might the Church do to attract people who are not a part of the Church? **Be less stuffy and normal**
- If you could describe your local Church fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like? **Open to all, no one judging anyone else, poor and rich alike**
- In what ways could the Church reach out more to the wider community, especially those who are marginalised in society, the poor, the ostracised and people of other faiths. **Being open, being strong and not weakening its resolve/ watering down the Gospel. By being the source of harmony rather than at loggerheads. Being non judgemental and welcoming all**

- **What is your experience of the Catholic Church or any Christian Church?** I am a Christian and regularly attend a Charismatic Evangelical Anglican Church. I know very few Catholics but one of my neighbours are practising Catholic and they are compassionate, prayerful and Godly people.
- **Where have your views about the Catholic Church come from?** Apart from knowing my neighbours, my experience of the Catholic Church is very limited and based on books and the TV. The first school I worked in had strong links with a very high Anglo-Catholic Church so I experienced some of the more Catholic traditions there.
- **What are the things which stop you from wanting to be a part of the Church?** I think the main thing is (as I understand it ) the way the Priest is an intermediary between me and Jesus (in confession for example) and I believe we can have a direct relationship with God through Jesus.
- **How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues?** I think some feel it is outdated and no longer relevant whilst others have the view that it is a case of 'each to his own' Others see it as critical and discriminative.
- **What might the Church do to attract people who are not a part of the Church?** I think it is more about Individuals behaving in a Christlike way within their sphere of influence than 'programmes' organised by the church
- **If you could describe your local Church fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like?** It would be that when people encountered people from the church whether at church or elsewhere, they encountered Jesus
- **In what ways could the Church reach out more to the wider community, especially those who are marginalised in society, the poor, the ostracised and people of other faiths.** By getting involved, loving and accepting, helping in practical ways.

### **What is your experience of the Catholic Church or any Christian Church?**

I have been playing the organ in several French Catholic churches for 2 years. I have also been playing in Protestant churches in France and in a Danish Lutheran church.

My experience is tied to my music education (having lessons and practice sessions in churches, concerts, recording projects...) and to my activity as a church organist, mainly in Catholic churches.

### **Where have your views about the Catholic Church come from?**

Both from my family (non-believer) and catholic friends, and from my experience in the Catholic Church (as an organist).

### **What are the things which stop you from wanting to be a part of the Church?**

Firstly, the exclusion of women in the Church hierarchy, as well as the retrograde views on what men and women are supposed to be and do. The idea of a hierarchy defining what I should believe in and how I should act is already a problem for me.

I also find some of the Church's views irrelevant, too far from today's society.

Also, as a church musician, I very much value the quality of the liturgy.

In most Catholic churches where I have played, the music was appallingly bad (uninteresting melodies, harmonic mistakes, bad prosody, hollow words...). Very rarely will I see a hymn that has musical and spiritual qualities, and that was composed by a professional musician – i.e. someone who has followed a complete and intensive course in music and musicology, and not someone who has decided to “become” a musician on subjective grounds, using the church for fame and money-making (particularly in France). Most of my work consists in re-harmonizing hymns and trying to accompany the parishioner who has decided to serve as a choirmaster for the assembly that day (although he/she very often has no knowledge of music).

There seems to be no control from the priests on what is played, or how it is played (guitar, drums, or whatever other instrument can “do the job”). The only professional musician in the church is often the organist, and yet is hardly ever consulted.

I have also encountered a lot of priests who are unfamiliar with music, if not hostile to it, preferring a recording they can stop whenever they want (usually in the middle of a verse) than the presence of a professional musician. In those cases, there is no attention given to the instrument that actually lives in the church (the organ), and that sometimes is worth being taken care of. I often have the feeling that for some priests, music is just getting in the way and has no spiritual virtues. In all the Catholic churches where I have played, music is not taken seriously at all.

Those considerations about music are preventing me from joining the Catholic Church, both as a professional and a believer, and have made me leave France to find better conditions elsewhere.

In addition to this, I often find the place of sacraments to be too important in the Catholic Church – no questioning seems to be ever possible. For a lot of people I have met (although not everybody), being a Catholic seems to be more of an exclusive identity than a way of living their faith (and the baptism, passively received in infancy, a membership-card for their access to paradise). I know very few who have actually read the Bible.

### **How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues?**

My family is non-believer and does not have positive views on any church, particularly not on the Catholic Church, which is, according to them, too “sectarian” and does not encourage reflexion enough.

My catholic friends mostly see their church positively, except for those who are musicians like me, and who struggle every weekend trying to make the services a bit less poor.

### **What might the Church do to attract people who are not a part of the Church?**

I think we have to think what the Church must be and represent. The cultural heritage is enormous and worth being promoted much more. This applies for everything related to the arts (from paintings in churches to the music that is played) to architectural matters. The fact that most Catholic churches stay open during the day seems to me as a very good thing, since it encourages people from all backgrounds to discover this heritage and, perhaps, to become interested in the spiritual message behind. Organising exhibitions, concerts, visits is always a good idea. I think that more and more people are looking for beauty in their daily lives, and that the Catholic Church has a lot to offer.

In that perspective, the quality of the services is very poor from a musical point of view, and does not give justice to that particular heritage. For people from outside the Catholic Church, services can sometimes sound like a joke – this is not very encouraging to push the exploration further. I know a lot of people (especially young) who really don’t appreciate the music in most churches and would rather go to Latin Masses, where the liturgy is far more solemn and much more beautiful. I think we mustn’t underestimate the power of beauty and solemnity: in such services, people from all background could find something that is now rarer in our society.

Overall, I think one of the best ways to “attract” people is to rely on the believers themselves, their attitude and way of living being inspirational to others, who might then want to learn more about their faith.

### **If you could describe your local Church fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like?**

A church in which beauty has its entire place, which means services with the required solemnity and reflexion, beautiful music played by professionals, and with friendliness and helpfulness between the people.

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- 2 • Where have your views about the Catholic Church come from?
- 3 • What are the things which stop you from wanting to be a part of the Church?
- 4 • How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues?
- 5 • What might the Church do to attract people who are not a part of the Church?
- 6 • If you could describe your local Church fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like?
- 7 • In what ways could the Church reach out more to the wider community, especially those who are marginalised in society, the poor, the ostracised and people of other faiths.

1. I was born a Catholic, educated in Catholic schools, and have worked with many Anglicans.
2. My cultural attachments have been formed by the Church upbringing and education.
3. I have an aversion to clerical authority, especially concerning doctrine. Where love unites us, doctrine divides us, and interferes in the practice of Christianity. The ancient culture of the Church should not be abandoned, but embraced. If the best translation of the Psalms, which are not Christian, is by Coverdale, then we should use it. Is the Jerusalem Bible a better translation than the King James? I doubt it. The Church should be engaged in high culture as much as possible - to deny to be faithful the benefits of art, music and literature on the basis that it is too elitist is sinful snobbery.
4. In general, with great affection and respect. Some friends and colleagues have been alienated by the abuse scandals and a perception of hierarchical rigidity.
5. Do it through culture. The young, especially, know that God does not use management-speak, nor do they wish to use it to Him.
6. The local Church should be fully involved with the poor, and it should not be silent when faced with the erosion of the people's liberties by governments and corporations. I feel that the English Church lacks confidence.
7. They will know us by our deeds, not by our words. Political involvement.

- What is your experience of the Catholic Church or any Christian Church?

*I was raised as an Anglican, attended church infrequently as a child, recently married in a Anglican Church.*

- Where have your views about the Catholic Church come from?

*My husband who is catholic.*

- What are the things which stop you from wanting to be a part of the Church?

*I don't think I'm not part of the church.*

- How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues?

*Incredibly mixed views. Generally in a positive light, I have catholic, christian, atheist friends and family.*

- What might the Church do to attract people who are not a part of the Church?

*Go to people in community rather than wait for them to come to church. Show an understanding and support for community too.*

- If you could describe your local Church fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like?

*A big task! I love the sermons that my priest delivers, it makes me think about the difference that I can make, if we all think about being the best version of ourselves surely the whole community will benefit.*

- In what ways could the Church reach out more to the wider community, especially those who are marginalised in society, the poor, the ostracised and people of other faiths.

*I have experience of my church doing this well, it is a small village with local support and plenty of volunteers to help. I can see the challenges facing larger cities. I think the church needs more visibility outside of the church.*

Sent from my iPad



## Synodal Reflections from three Anglicans

### *What is your experience of the Catholic Church?*

- Two of the three participants were 'Anglo-Catholics' and as a result are quite familiar with the Catholic Church and its teaching. The third person was a former Catholic from Belfast who became an Anglican priest. Therefore, he too, was very familiar with the Catholic Church.
- All were very familiar with the Catholic liturgy, which is, in many ways how they also celebrate. For example, Latin is used extensively.
- The Pope is viewed by the Anglo-Catholics as the Patriarch of the Western Church.
- It was thought that the Catholic Church was more tolerant than previously.

### *Where do your views about the Catholic Church come from?*

- A shared vision of fellow Christians with no animosity.
- A life-long adherence to Anglo-Catholicism.
- One participant thought that the Church was seen as 'condemners' and deplored the sexual abuse scandals.

### *In what ways could the Church reach out more to the wider community, especially those who are marginalised in society, the poor, the ostracised and people of other faiths?*

- It was felt that we should all journey together as a means of Christian unity and combat the advance of secularism.
- Joining together for worship in the Cathedral was seen as hugely beneficial. The monthly ecumenical Rosary and Canon Michael's Mass were cited as two examples.
- One participant thought that the institution of the Ordinariate was a 'hiccup'.
- The hospitality of Catholics was noticeable. This was particularly appreciated during the pandemic when Anglican churches were closed, and yet the Catholic churches remained open. When all churches were closed, the daily Mass streaming via zoom from the altar, in a church, was also commended.