

MY REFLECTIONS ON THE PARKES SYNOD GATHERING

By Helen Smith

MY EXPECTATIONS OF THE MEETING

- A follow on from the previous sessions I had previously attended.
- An opportunity to reflect with others on the results of the recent survey.
- To share with those present ideas of ways forward to keep our faith communities going, not just going but growing and gaining in strength.
- To find out more about possibilities of how the Synod will progress.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE MEETING

- From the very beginning of the evening, the atmosphere was welcoming and all attending seemed eager for what the evening was to bring.
- The discussion group into which I was placed consisted of some people I knew but most were new to me. All were willing to respectfully express their views without hesitation. We were in agreement on some ideas expressed but not on all.
- It was interesting to hear what others had to say. I gained much food for thought — possibilities I had not thought of. This was extended during the next step when each group shared their responses.
- When we were asked to divide our responses into ideas for parish and for diocesan consideration. I did think that many of the ideas given as for diocesan consideration lay in the area of things for parishes to develop. Such ideas that could be worked on in parishes from the present time.



THE CHALLENGES PRESENTED AT THE MEETING

Despite the wonderful discussion that took place and the variety of ideas presented, the practicality of our problems remain...

HOW are we going to keep our parish faith communities and indeed the Diocese going, not just surviving but growing in our changing world - surviving financially and growing as faith communities; communities catering for members of all ages and at all stages of individual faith development?

I truly believe that our Church, our diocese, our faith communities can thrive but much will depend on the people working together, working with our priests to bring others, young and old, new and existing to be active members of our congregations, to learn and come to know what being a Catholic is all about. For that to happen, I feel there has to be flexibility in planning and a variance in ways of welcoming and introducing people and providing opportunity for people not just to be Catholics in name but to be active members of our church working together, learning together, supporting each other in prayer and practice.

This, to me, is the challenge that, despite all the discussion, still remained at the end of our meeting a challenge for all present and the challenge that faces the Synod ... How to further develop the ideas voiced at the Deanery Meetings to achieve a thriving Church open to all?