



DIOCESE OF SALFORD  
SYNOD 2023-2025

## Theme Summary Four: *Fostering Christ-like Care*

The Fourth Theme from the Diocesan Synod Big Listen report is 'Fostering Christ-like Care. This leaflet provides a summary of this theme and is designed to support your reflection both individually, and as a parish. However, we do encourage you to read the full report to understand the findings more deeply.

### What Happens Next?

1. You are invited to prayerfully discern and reflect on the findings presented in Theme Four: Fostering Christ-like Care.
2. Your parish Synod Member/s will provide you with information on when your parish will meet to reflect on the theme and decide on two proposals to submit for this theme.
3. Please note that all Theme Summaries are now available on the [Diocese of Salford's website](#).

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*'We need a Church unafraid of going forth into their night. We need a Church capable of meeting them on their way. We need a Church capable of entering into their conversation. We need a Church able to dialogue with those disciples who, having left Jerusalem behind, are wandering aimlessly, alone, with their own disappointment, disillusioned by a Christianity now considered barren, fruitless soil, incapable of generating meaning.'* -  
(Pope Francis Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil, 2013)

The theme of fostering Christ-like care brings in different elements of the other Big Listen themes. Wanting the Church to be Christ-like and lead by example means 'Recognising and protecting the dignity of all' because they are made in the image of God. This translates into the question of how the Church treats people, how it cares for them.

## Language and Unconscious Bias

Many responses refer to charity and the importance of helping 'the needy' or 'those in need.' This is seen as language bringing to light the unconscious bias that exists for many in the Church. This language is said to be responsible for the creation of hierarchy within the Church that positions the Church/parish as 'superior/benefactor' rather than 'serving' in the image of Christ.

This language and bias is embedded even within those who wish for a 'servant Church'. This is illustrated by reference to 'giving accommodation to the homeless' as 'cleaning the streets'. ([Big Listen 4.1 page 37](#))

## A Flexible Church

Being Christ-like means meeting people where they are. Following the example of Christ means physically going to where the people are and serving them. There is, therefore; a sense that God is asking the Church to have a bigger presence in everyday life of the community it supports.

Catholics in Salford desire to get to know, empathise and walk alongside people to support them. They do not want to keep people who are turning to the Church at arm's length. Empathy requires knowledge and understanding of a person's situation, not judgement from a distance.

The Church is being asked to listen and immerse itself into the realities of people's lives so it can have a better understanding of what is taking place.

Understanding the impossible choices teenagers and young people face in their decisions to come to Mass, provides the Church with a better way to care for children, young people and their families. Similarly, understanding peer pressure and acknowledging it as a huge barrier for children and young people to interact with the Church, will help the Church to better support the faith development of children and young people. ([Big Listen 4.2 page 37](#), [Big Listen 4.6 page 40](#) & [Big Listen 4.10 page 43](#)).

## Pastoral Care

While pastoral care involves helping people to have faith in difficult times, the Big Listen suggests more from the Church. Respondents look for a Church that is ‘a safe space and a refuge’ free from the ‘pressure and judgement’ that feels prevalent within the society outside Church. The creation of a Church that is safe extends to tackling the perception held by people on the Church’s stances on issues of abortion and LGBTQ+ people. ([Big Listen 4.3 pages 38 - 39](#))

## Dealing with Trauma

There is an acknowledgement that certain trauma can make engagement with the Church difficult. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is highlighted as an example where victims of abuse find it difficult to access. Respondents ask for better ways to enable people facing trauma to fully engage in the life of the Church.

There is strong feeling that clerical abuse remains a key issue for many. People acknowledge the effort made by the Church but ask for more to be done for forgiveness, peace and healing to fully materialise. ([Big Listen 4.4 page 39](#))

## Speaking Out and Challenging Injustice

People would like the Church to be ‘vocal’ and ‘loud’ in challenging injustice. They want the Church to have a position on war in order for it to advocate for peace. Respondents want the Church to ‘call out’ human rights violations. The Big listen asks the Church to ‘speak truth to power’ about persecuted Christians and to challenge injustice even in ‘prominently Catholic Countries’. ([Big Listen 4.7 pages 40-41](#)).

## Care for the Environment

A tension is observed when it comes to caring for the environment. While a minority deny the existence of climate change and believe that the Church has been deceived by inaccurate scientific information; a majority of respondents strongly believe that the Church should do more to help safeguard our common home.

In practice, the care for the environment, while high on children and young people’s agenda ([Big Listen 4.6](#)), falls low on the priorities of many especially those struggling financially. There is a strong view that fighting to safeguard the environment is only accessible to the wealthy who have less worry about their work and financial stability. ([Big Listen 4.8 page 41](#)).

# Questions

In the light of what has been raised specifically in the Big Listen, how can we foster Christ-like care here in the Diocese of Salford? Please note that the following questions are only designed to guide and prompt your reflection and do not seek in any way to limit your prayerful discernment.

- How can we better serve people experiencing suffering/hardship locally or globally while respecting their dignity as created in the image and likeness of God?
- How can we encourage this parish to become one that ‘serves’ and not one that ‘helps’ people in our community?
- Thinking about the circumstances of your parish, What realities are people facing in their everyday lives? How can we create ways to better know the realities being faced by parishioners? How can we bring ‘Christ’ to people in those real-life situations?
- How can the parish support people who have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse and other psychological trauma to fully participate in the life of the parish while respecting their dignity?
- How can the parish provide full access to the church building while maintaining safety to prevent people from ‘being shut out of church’ during times of personal crisis or difficulty?
- How should the Church in the Diocese of Salford challenge injustice locally and globally?
- How can the parish enable all people irrespective of wealth to fully participate in initiatives to ‘Care for the environment’? How can we make ‘Caring for Our Common Home’ affordable for all?
- How can the parish enhance community and connection between Catholic groups (children and young people, families, young parents, single Catholics, Catholic men, Catholic women, elderly people) to provide community and place the parish in the lives of people, their hope and aspirations?