

Catholic Parish of St Edward the Confessor, Romford



“This is the first step in order to grow in our journey of faith: **listening.** Before speaking, listen.”
Pope Francis

A request for your help

After the last two years, which have been a time of great turbulence for many, many people, **the Catholic Church is taking time to listen.** Even without the Pandemic, much has changed, in society and in the Church, and – guided by Pope Francis – **we are trying to understand how best to serve people, and how best to live the witness and love of Jesus Christ.**

This little letter is our parish, here in Romford, reaching out, as best we can, beyond those who come to Mass each week. It is trying to cover quite a lot, so it might not all apply to you! You might just come to Mass at Christmas and special occasions. You might have gradually drifted away from the Church some years ago. You might never have been inside a Catholic Church. I know that **there are many things, sometimes quite personal or complicated, which can affect our journey of faith.** I am also convinced that the only way we will best serve every person in our community is by listening to as many voices as possible – and especially listening to those who don’t often come to church, or who feel they would not be welcome in church.

If you can **take just a few minutes to answer the questions of the back of this letter, with absolute honesty,** it will be a great help. Some people reading this might have left the Church in circumstances which are very distressing for you. If that is the case for you, **I hope and pray that this request does not add to any distress.** If it ever helps to speak personally, or if you seek any extra help and support, please let me know.

You might also think that this would be a waste of time; the Church will not really listen to difficult truths, or certain points of view. Pope Francis set up this time of listening and discernment last year; the first months of 2022 are for every Catholic in the world to offer their voice, and the fruits of this will be brought together in Rome in the autumn, then considered by Bishops, Cardinals, and expert women and men from across the Church in a Synod (a gathering) in 2023. From that, the Church will learn, and this learning will shape how we live what it means to be Church in the next part of this century. It is a serious and significant moment for the Church across the world.

I would also encourage you with the certainty that **I will read every response, as will our two Stewards, Caroline Dixon and Joan Murphy.** Some of what you write might be immediately relevant here in Romford, and if and where we can immediately act, we will. Your responses will be sent on to our Diocesan Synod Team, to the Bishops in England and Wales, and on to Rome.

Thank you for any time you can give to this. Thank you for reading this far! Please know that **you are always absolutely welcome here in the parish in Romford. You are beloved by Christ, precious to God, and I pray our church is a place of hope, spiritual strength and Sacramental joy; a place where everyone is welcome.**

With many prayers and blessings
Fr Dominic

***Imagine that it is Pope Francis asking you these questions!
There are no wrong answers – just be absolutely honest.***

How would you best describe your situation (circle one or more, delete others):

- I have never been part of a Catholic parish
- I was baptised and went to church when I was young, but I don't go any more
- I come to church at Christmas, Easter, for weddings and funerals
- I try to come when I can, but I don't go very often
- I worship at a different Christian church
- Other _____

Is there anything that means you do not feel welcome in the Catholic Church?

What most inspires you about the Catholic Church?

What about St Edward the Confessor Parish? What do you most enjoy about the parish, and what would you most like to change?

What is the one thing that would encourage you to come to church more regularly?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Please continue on another sheet if you need more space.

Please post this sheet through the letterbox at 5 Park End Road, or send it as an email to frdominic@dioceseofbrentwood.org.

If you would like a conversation, please email Fr Dominic or phone 01708 740308

Again, thank you for the time that you have given to this.