



## Parish Synod 2020/21 - A Short Summary

Literally the word „synod“ means to agree and walk one pathway together, talking to each other, advising, supporting and strengthening one another, and thus moving forward jointly.

In the year 2021 synodality was proclaimed by Pope Francis as an original but repressed principle of the Holy Church, the wandering people of God. Shortly thereafter, the Priest Order specifically formulated the task to shape the way of working in the order's leadership and pastoral work in a synodal manner. As early as autumn 2020, the parish of Maria Treu had set off on this common path starting the Parish Synod on behalf of Archbishop Christoph Schönborn and Father General Pedro Aguado under the spiritual guidance of Father Jean de Dieu Tagne.

The secretariat - seven representatives of the parish chaired by the pastor - has been working in weekly virtual meetings since Advent 2020 to define subject areas, recruit volunteers, decide on working methods and finally compile and document the results.

We are closing the Parish Synod with the parish mass on Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022. The complete results and documentation will be handed over to the newly elected Parish Council as their mandate for action by the community.

All documents of the Parish Synod will be handed over to the Parish Council. A comprehensive final report summarizes these results and will be presented to the archbishop and the general of the order. This **short summary** has been published in printed form to be available for everybody interested. Access to the extensive final report and the complete archive will be made available on request.

**Seven subject areas** listed below were discussed by **commissions**. Findings were sorted to the slogans **Start - Stop - Continue** to identify new initiatives to be developed, traditions that should be ended and valuable actions to be kept alive.

## Pastoral Care

The traditional term „pastoral care“ was criticized and substitution by the term „life support“ suggested instead. The inventory of the commission chaired by Hedi Ströher not only lists various parish groups but also special activities that invite to participation in the parish life throughout the cycle of a year.

**continue:** All existing activities and groups should definitely be continued.

**start:** The founding of a children's group (Jungschar) and additional offers for spiritual guidance were suggested. In addition, cooperation with the neighbouring parishes and civil society initiatives in the district is suggested.

The Commission has already made concrete efforts to systematically initiate contact with the families of newly baptized children and thus facilitate integration into the parish community.

## Liturgy

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The commission, chaired by Matthias (Hiasi) Ceipek, was able to discuss the liturgy in Maria Treu in a quite complex and detailed manner holding several meetings, some of which were personal others virtual.

**continue:** Many liturgical traditions are rated good and should be maintained. The children's word service and "Messe spezial" (Monthly Sunday service addressing youth, celebrated by various guest priests) were particularly mentioned.

**start:** It is suggested to sharpen the profile of the three different Sunday masses and to define possible target groups. Innovation in style and preparation of liturgical celebrations by lays or groups of lays helps to make this differentiation possible. For realization a better cooperation between lays and priests needs to be established.

**stop:** The setup of the sanctuary around the altar and various details of the liturgical ceremonies were criticized and the need for improvements is stated.

## Sacrament initiation

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... primarily dealt with the first communion and confirmation which are of high priority among the activities in a Piarist parish. On behalf of Saint Joseph Calasanz, the accompaniment and religious education of children and young people is of particular importance. Franziska (Fanny) Säckl and the members of the could build upon their experience in this pastoral field.

**continue:** Some special elements of the preparations identified are considered particularly successful.

**start:** The development of guide lines could provide more continuity in taking on the task and backup with security. The Commission recommends that a priest should always have coordination and ultimate responsibility. Support programmes offered by the Archdiocese to train and support potential employees should be used.

Systematically, the celebration of these sacraments should be addressed to the families in order to invite them to participate in the parish life. New ideas are required to ease the entry into parish groups and these opportunities must be more visible.

**stop:** The responsibility for the preparation of children for the sacraments burdens individual volunteers too heavily and sometimes their tasks are not clearly defined.

## Youth

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This commission was chaired by Eleonore (Elli) Proksch and Fabian Andre. The dialogue with the scout group 23 St. Calasanz was an essential element of the work.

**continue:** Current activities like group lessons are rated positively. The offers to participate in camps as well as special liturgy like "Messe spezial" are also welcomed. The

barbecue taverns at the Calasanz festival and the Epiphany campaign of the Catholic Youth (DKA) are mentioned as achievements of the youth.

**start:** Measures to improve cooperation between the groups are suggested. Good public relations work is necessary to make the groups attractive to new members.

**stop:** It was criticized that too few young people took on responsibility so and that the burden on individuals could become too big. The groupings appear to be too closed to the outside world and are also not visible enough. Again and again, ideas are not implemented because they do not fit traditional concepts.

## Charity

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Andreas Tiwald submitted the results of the commission “Caritas” which were elaborated by a small core team.

The Commission states that Caritas must be made more visible and awareness has to be raised by more public relations work inside the parish. Transparency about available funds, their origin and use is essential.

**continue:** The breakfast for homeless during winter, the contributions to the Epiphany campaign (DKA) and the participation in the Catholic Women’s Movements Lent action “Familienfasttag” are essential charity activities in Maria Treu.

**start:** An expansion of charity actions in the parish should be focused to fulfil the desires of people in need.

Charity activities are based on the capacity and potential of volunteers. Young parish members should be involved more. The commission points out that the recognition of charity activities in the catholic parish is high among church distant and a-religious groups. Involvement in these activities could be an entrance into the life of the parish community for some of them.

## Volunteering

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Bernhard Hinterwirth took the chair of this commission and soon realized that the “pivot” of the parish work was within this complex of topics.

**continue:** Cooperation and togetherness in the parish are experienced values. The cooperation of lay volunteers with the parish office is exemplary. The ability to quickly improvise spontaneous solutions has proven its worth, especially during the corona pandemic.

Many young people have gained valuable experience in organizing and taking on responsibility during their engagement in the parish.

**start:** Organizational improvements are possible in the area of communication and coordination (shared calendar and databases) and should enable everybody to find a contact person easily.

Cooperation can be facilitated through increased networking. Efforts should be made to distribute the workload well and to find new active volunteers.

**stop:** Several aspects were identified that unnecessarily complicate the work of lay volunteers. In particular, it was noted that in the past conflicting needs of school and parish were not discussed and coordinated. In particular, the premises for various activities of the parish, which have been severely restricted, are missing and a solution-oriented dialogue is required.

## Culture

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Otto Biba accepted to be chairman of this commission. As the starting point of the commission's work, he presents the long tradition of the Piarists as promoters and bearers of culture and art in Maria Treu and points out that according to the tradition "Pietati et Litteris" explicitly includes art as an educational content.

**continue:** A good church choir is important to Maria Treu and should be maintained and promoted in a targeted manner. Solemnly celebrated masses that emphasize the high festivals should further be maintained possible.

**start:** Initiatives lost during the recent decades should be examined and, if found valuable and possible, revived. Church tours and educational events can reach out to interested groups beyond the circle of religious people.

After the renovation of the Buckow organ, the potential of the church as a concert-venue should be realized in as many different ways as possible.

The core team of the cultural commission will stay available to the parish to examine and implement new ideas.

## General topics

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The cooperation with the neighbouring parishes has visibly flourished in the organization of the Corpus Christi festival throughout many years and should be extended. The active participation in the global network of Piarist parishes makes the parish of Maria Treu experience itself as part of the global church.

## Thanks and perspectives

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Despite the difficult framing conditions, the Parish Synod achieved a lot and during the co-operation we were able to experience how strongly the parish of Maria Treu is connected. Therefore, we do not only acknowledge those who worked in the secretariat and commissions, but all members of the parish who contributed and accompanied the Parish Synod with their prayers.

The experiences of the Parish Synod encourage to continue our shared pathway in Maria Treu with a synodal attitude and openness to innovation. We are looking forward to the start of implementing the many results with confidence and joy!

parish moderator Father Jean de Dieu Tagne SP  
and the secretariat of the Parish Synod