

Diocese of Cork and Ross

Prayer, Listening and Discernment 2024–2025

This report is a thematic summary of the responses provided by parishioners and clergy at three gatherings with faith communities comprised of recent immigrants to Ireland. These are the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara communities (from India), the Polish community and the Brazilian community.

The three gathering were held in the Spring of 2025 in response to Bishop Fintan's Pastoral Message of September 2024. The Bishop called for prayer, listening and discernment centred on three topics:-

- **Question 1. How can we make baptism the gateway into life in our faith community?**
- **Question 2. How can priests, deacons and parishioners prepare for and celebrate the Sunday Eucharist so that we are nourished and strengthened to tell others about Christ?**
- **Question 3. How, through our Catholic community, can we help those to whom we minister to connect and engage with our parish and Family of Parishes?**

This report synthesizes the reflections of the Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Brazilian, and Polish Catholic communities on three foundational questions concerning baptism, the Sunday Eucharist, and parish engagement. Though culturally diverse, these communities express a shared commitment to deepening faith, strengthening communal bonds, and fostering active participation in Church life. Each brings distinct emphases rooted in their traditions.

1. Making Baptism the Gateway to Community Life

Common Themes:

- All communities view **baptism as a pivotal moment**, not only as a sacrament but as the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith.
- **Parental involvement** and **ongoing catechesis** are strongly emphasized.
- There is broad recognition of the need for the **faith community to welcome, support, and celebrate** baptism in a communal context.

Comparative Insights:

- The **Syro-Malabar community** and the **Polish community** stress structured **preparation for parents and godparents**, aiming for deeper understanding of the sacrament and its implications.
- The **Syro-Malankara community** focuses more spiritually on **the encounter with the Holy Spirit** and stresses the need for families to **model prayer and piety at home**.
- The **Brazilian community's** response highlights baptism as **a new journey and belonging**, encouraging vibrant community rituals and the importance of choosing godparents who are actively engaged in faith.

Contrast:

- While **the Syro-Malabar community** emphasizes systematic faith formation and lifelong catechesis, the **Brazilian** and **Polish** communities put more focus on **ritual celebration** and **community identity**.
- **The Syro-Malankara community** uniquely sees baptism more as **initiation into a mystical transformation**, stressing inward spiritual growth.

2. Preparing for and Celebrating the Sunday Eucharist**Common Themes:**

- All communities agree on the need for **spiritual preparation**, including **confession, reflection, and reverent participation**.
- **Lay participation** is encouraged, particularly in readings, music, and preparation of liturgies.
- The Eucharist is understood as both **source and summit**—a time to be spiritually nourished and to be sent out in mission.

Comparative Insights:

- **The Syro-Malabar community** places strong emphasis on **pre-Mass confession**, Scripture engagement, and **doctrinal understanding of the Real Presence**.
- **The Syro-Malankara community** mirrors this in tone, stressing **fasting, reverence, and instruction for children**, and encouraging deep personal devotion.
- **The Brazilian** community's responses bring in **Lectio Divina, hospitality, and community-building around Eucharist**, integrating formation and joy.
- **The Polish** community participants advocate for **Eucharistic adoration, scripture study**, and reverent liturgies that engage both mind and heart.

Contrast:

- The **Brazilian** community's approach integrates Eucharist with **social celebration and inclusion**, while **the Syro-Malabar community and the Syro-Malankara community** place heavier weight on **ritual discipline and personal piety**.
- **The Polish** community responses provide a balance between **personal devotion** and **communal participation**, with attention to bilingual liturgies for integration.

3. Fostering Engagement with Parish and Family of Parishes**Common Themes:**

- All communities prioritize **hospitality, shared responsibility, and pastoral outreach**, especially to the sick and marginalized.

- The **importance of youth involvement** and **lay ministries** recurs across responses.
- There is a shared desire for **unity in diversity**, with cultural integration being key in multicultural dioceses.

Comparative Insights:

- **The Syro-Malabar community** responses detail a wide range of integration strategies—from **carpooling and social events** to **lay leadership and ministry training**.
- **The Syro-Malankara community** emphasizes **monthly prayer meetings, personal recognition, and spiritual accompaniment**.
- The **Brazilian** community underlines **celebration, communal meals, and joyful welcome**, especially for new or struggling families.
- **The Polish** community responses highlight the need for **cultural sensitivity, multilingual Masses**, and creating spaces where faith and heritage are preserved and shared.

Contrast:

- The **Syro-Malankara community** model is more **intimate and contemplative**, with small group focus and spiritual depth.
- The **Brazilian** community's approach is markedly **expressive, celebratory, and inclusive**, focusing on shared meals and emotional support.
- **The Polish** community responses center around **structured gatherings and liturgical beauty**, with a growing openness to **digital and bilingual engagement**.

Notable Themes Across All Groups

- **Parental Formation:** Seen as essential across all groups for ensuring baptism leads to ongoing faith practice.
- **Youth Engagement:** All communities acknowledge the need to **actively include youth** through ministry, music, service, and catechesis.
- **Lay Involvement:** Recognized as a necessary response to priest shortages and essential for Church vitality.
- **Hospitality and Welcome:** Viewed not only as a pastoral need but as **an evangelizing act**.

Conclusion

This collective reflection reveals a Church that is richly diverse yet spiritually unified. Whether through reverent liturgies, catechetical formation, small-group prayer, or vibrant communal gatherings, each community brings unique gifts to the wider Church in Ireland. By **honouring each expression**, while **encouraging mutual learning**, these communities offer a vision of Church that is truly synodal—listening, discerning, and walking together.