

LET'S TALK! LET'S LISTEN!

I heard, on TV, a young man who was referring to Gen-Z (pronounced Zee) and I asked my granddaughter what it meant. She told me it stood for Generation-Z who were born just before and after the millennium and are now in their twenties. I then asked her what my generation is called and was informed that it is known as the silent generation. I wondered why we would be called that. Do those who have categorised the generations think that those of us who are still living are too old to have an opinion and don't matter? If that is the case, they can think again for we have a wealth of knowledge and experience and should be listened to.

Perhaps we have been labelled as silent because we lived through and endured an era of deep depression and terrible conflict. We came to maturity experiencing shortage and rationing and anxiety. Many families had lost at least one parent during the war. It was a time of division and bias and naivety. Our society had problems such as racism, homophobia and sexual inequality which we didn't understand and many of us were not even aware of. We were struggling to recover from the war and rebuild our towns and cities.

The Christian church was also divided, mainly Catholic and Protestant. Catholics celebrated St. Patrick's Day while protestants celebrated King Billy's Day. Even in cities like Liverpool and Glasgow, rival football teams had a religious bias, one would be catholic and the other protestant. People in those days found it difficult to talk about their faith which was considered to be a personal and private matter. Vatican 2 came as a breath of fresh air. What a difference it made. Different denominations started talking and working together. The mass, which previously seemed like a weekly drama performed in a foreign language which many did not understand, became a beautiful and meaningful ceremony which we could all understand and participate in.

I admire my grandchildren and their generation for they seem to be aware of and understand the problems of the past, present and future and are trying hard to do something about them. They are certainly more aware than we were at that age and are not afraid to speak out. They should be encouraged for they are the ones who will make the decisions in the future. During this synodal journey in which Pope Francis has invited us to participate and walk together, we have a duty to listen and talk to one another. We, the silent generation, must talk to our children and grandchildren. We must try to draw them back to the church, to God's family. We have a lot to learn from them but we have a lot of experience and wisdom to contribute too. I do not find it easy to talk about my faith but I have always tried to play an active part in parish life. Unfortunately, I am no longer able to do many of the things I used to do and it is a sadness. A good friend advised me that growing old was not for the fainthearted and he was right but I think it gives us many opportunities to offer little sacrifices of thanksgiving to God. And I have found other ways of praising him. I am able to express my faith in writing and I've been told I have a nice voice so I can sing God's praise each week at mass

Let's pray! Let's listen! Let's talk!

Let us not allow ourselves to be categorised and manipulated. Let us listen with humble and contrite hearts to the word of God and ask Him to help us and watch over us as we walk together on this journey.

O Holy Spirit, open our minds and hearts and help us to reach out to all communities, young and old; rich and poor; the strong and the weak; those with faith and those with no faith; those with other faiths no matter what their colour or race or lifestyle; the hungry and the needy. Let us not judge but listen with an open mind and a humble heart to what they say.