



NOTES FROM THE LISTENING SESSION AT ST. MARY

As you may remember, in March of this year we participated in the Synod on Synodality which the Holy Father began as a consultative process for every Catholic (and non-Catholic) in the world. Through in-person listening sessions we invited everyone in the parish to consider what issues the Roman Catholic Church in the world should be looking at, what direction it should consider for its future, and to share prayerful thoughts.

Out of all your responses, we as a parish were to provide a summary to the diocese. Our diocese, in turn, has summed up the reports from all the parishes of the diocese. The diocesan report will be sent to the Vatican. The Vatican will take the reports from every diocese in the world and put together a document scheduled to be completed in the Fall of 2023.

We are happy to share with you the report from our parish. We are confident that, overall, we captured in abstract form the essence of what was shared. Again, thank you for your participation and insight in the Synod.

Our report below is organized by question, as given to us by the Diocese.

WHERE AND HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE CHURCH TODAY?

Through daily Mass and the recitation of the rosary before Mass. Through volunteering - St. Vincent de Paul. At Mass on Sundays. In the buildings of St. Mary. I do experience at Mass but it has been hard - online is not the same. Covid broke things up. We had such a vibrant community - it doesn't seem to be getting back. Don't feel as welcomed. Church is very dear to me, since Covid and no live Mass, things feel different. Mass times have been taken away. Tremendous love for the church growing up, now the church feels socialist. Pushing us away. Visited other churches and different faith traditions during Covid. Through small prayer groups at St. Mary.

WHAT JOYS DO YOU EXPERIENCE?

Appreciate the short homilies. Love seeing the children return at the 9:00am Sunday Mass. Choir/music. Small Christian group meetings. Volunteering. Community. Different priests - sermons - homilies personally directed. Joy in nature - connection with God - "at one-ment".

WHAT DIFFICULTIES AND OBSTACLES HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED? WHAT INSIGHTS DO YOU HAVE?

Perceptions of the church as static, stagnant, out of touch, in need of renewal. Pope Francis: "Who am I to judge?" - more clergy needs to follow this. Church should move away from being "shame based". Why are there no women deacons and priests? Gays feel that there is no place for them in the Catholic church. Too ritualistic. Too clergy centered - not enough space for lay leadership. Church needs to be more ecumenical and forgiving. Church is not speaking to the people. Women have so much to offer yet there are many obstacles to having them serve. This generation does not have the sense of obligation to attend Mass as we did in our generation.

Disappointed that there aren't more people at Mass. Feel that the priests' homilies at St. Mary isn't "hitting it" for me. Complete turnover of staff within 6 months has been a challenge. Mass seems to have become transactional - no sense of community. Feel that there seems to be more "community" at other churches. Online Mass is not the same as experiencing Mass in person. Feel that the reverence is gone - too much chit chat after Mass. Don't feel the same "Catholicism" that he was raised with. Too much change too fast - new staff, new priests, new bishop - institutional knowledge seems to have been lost. Uncomfortable with changes in the middle of Covid - priests and staff. Why was the 11am Mass taken away? Think that the 11am Mass was removed due to bad information. Sound system. People do not understand the Eucharist - need catechesis from the pulpit. Need bible studies by experts. Do not see school parents at this session. Huge gulf between school and church. No youth program at present - all Catholic high schools have their own Confirmation programs leaving it difficult for the parish to have a youth program. Don't know the new pastor. Wish that Fr. Greg and Fr. Gabriel would talk to parishioners more and get more involved.

WHAT IS YOUR DREAM OR VISION FOR OUR CHURCH IN THE FUTURE?

Return of the 11am Mass. Greater engagement. Responsibility of the church has fallen short for the community in the last 15 years - need to be more inclusive. Mass needs updated rituals to be more interactive and updated to reflect current events. Perhaps each Mass could be different addressing the needs of specific audiences - youth/young adults, families with young children, older adults - we are not nourished by the same dynamics. Annulment process hinders people staying with the faith. Informal fireside chats events with the new priests to get to know them better and for them to know us. More social justice events / opportunities. Need to do more in community to help the elderly and poor. More engagement between school and parish - want more activities where both communities can come together and get involved. Women untapped resource that the church is not utilizing - more women recognized and included in leadership positions. Allow women to be priests & deacons. Allow priests to get married. More contemporary music. A program where older parishioners mentor youth and young adults?

ARE THERE ANY ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH'S EVANGELIZATION MISSION THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE?

Youth group - we need to meet the needs of the youth in our community. Address issues without being political. Good catechetical program. Parents need to be involved in their children's faith formation. More catechesis from the pulpit. More promotion / marketing of evangelization programs from the diocese. RCIA program needs to be more proactive rather than reactive. Encourage youth and young adults to join service missions - partner with the elderly to check in or reach out to them. Meet people where they are at - youth needs to be a top priority. Being non-judgemental of people's lifestyles / married priests / women priests / women deacons, etc.

HOW DO YOU VALUE THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL MISSION TO CARE FOR THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED, AS WELL AS ITS EFFORTS TO ADDRESS POVERTY AND SOCIAL CHANGE?

St. Vincent de Paul is very visible at St. Mary and they are doing a lot of good. There seems to be a disconnect between Catholic Charities and St. Mary - no visible push to help Ukraine for example. Only a handful of people seem to be involved - an "exclusive club". Need these organizations to be more inclusive in their promotions - lack of information. Need to know who are the parish/diocesan leaders for those providing care for the poor and marginalized. Replacing misconceptions of not welcoming the poor and marginalized in our community with actively welcoming people.

Biggest marginalized group in the church is women - the church needs to be more inclusive of women in leadership.



JANUARY Ecumenical & Inter-religious Understanding & Cooperation Respect for Life from Womb to Tomb Catholic School Families	FEBRUARY Married Couples as well as those divorced, separated, and widowed Racial Justice & Peace	MARCH Universal Synod Listening Sessions (nature of encounter & listening) Those Most Forgotten (seniors, homeless, immigrants & their families & victims)	APRIL Meditation on the Death & Resurrection of Jesus Christ Personal & Communal Encounter with Jesus Christ (understanding the word) (continued)
DECEMBER Listening to the Holy Spirit The Gift of Peace & Joy	YEAR OF PRAYER in preparation for the diocesan synod Monthly Prayer Intentions		MAY Intercession of the Virgin Mary & St. Joseph for our Diocese Vocations to Priesthood & Religious Life
NOVEMBER Communion with & Intercession of All the Saints For the Deceased			JUNE Openness to the Holy Spirit Appreciation of & Devotion to the Eucharist
OCTOBER The Gift of Discernment Praying the Rosary	SEPTEMBER Refugees & Migrants Care for Creation	AUGUST For our Clergy Children & Youth in Religious Programs	JULY Young Adults & Parents Grandparents & Elderly

MONTHLY PRAYER THEMES AND INTENTIONS

<https://www.dsj.org/year-of-prayer/>

PRAYER FOR THE SYNOD (ADSUMUS SANCTE SPIRITUS)

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together
to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.
Amen.

ST. MARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH

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