

For a Synodal Church

Synthesis of Our Listening Sessions



Celebrating

Liturgy is the source and summit of our Catholic lives, and our people believe it “must feed our souls” and support our Catholic identity. “What is missed is the transcendency and awe of Eucharist...which serves to draw everyone together”. Worship should draw us into the sacred and the community, with corporate and personal prayer and most of all joy. People yearn to see the participation of youth and children in our worship services again.

Many ask for more lay participation at worship and prayer, particularly in the homily/reflection.

Homilies are especially important to the parishioners. Some criticize homilies that are judgmental or political. Many enjoy diversity at Masses and other prayer services.

Dialoguing

Many parishioners are participating directly in community issues without Catholic Church involvement. Not long ago, the Catholic Church was at the forefront, in formation, justice, and supporting evangelization, and now seems behind. A first step to ecumenical collaborating with other Christians is for our pastors to team up, cooperate, and share resources to more effectively alleviate suffering allowing parishioners to serve the people of God. With that foundation, the Church can pursue more ecumenical opportunities. The Church needs to serve in a variety of functions such as, leadership, mentoring and heartfelt participation with other churches. “Jesus was a revolutionary, we need to be more like him.”

Ecumenical collaboration is simpler in homogenous communities. Where real diversity in faith, economics, race, and gender exists it is difficult to reach agreement of what is an issue much less what to do about it. The Church must represent itself by action.

Discerning & Deciding

The most frequent comments in these listening sessions are the most frequent ones heard internationally in public and private forums. What is the role and definition of the priesthood? An overwhelming number of participants would like to include more people into ordination, including women, both single and married, as well as married men. The participants also shared frustration with legalism for legalism’s sake, (the concern about the validity of baptism). Many would like to see a continuation of strong lay leadership roles such as Parish Life Directors.

When making judgements clerics and church leaders are to be led by the Spirit of God as voiced by Pope Francis.

Listening & Speaking

The Church must be equitable at each level (parish, diocese and global church) and in each apostolate. If we cannot show our equitability, we lose our reputation of being Christian and cannot lead the journey for a more equitable world. The Good News is clouded by sexual abuse scandals and mixed messaging by Church leadership. Perceived focus on legalism rather than the Spirit of God excludes many people from speaking, despite their gift of courage. Technology can expand learning and speaking but it can also be a barrier.

Going On Mission

We need a deeper connection with others. We need to be true evangelizers, meeting people where they are, and with the help of the Holy Spirit to call every baptized person to participate in the mission. The church needs to go out to where the people are and not expect them to come to the Church. We need to continue to support Bible study and charismatic catechesis with children, adults and youth.

Each one of us has unique gifts. Direct, understandable opportunities such as the Corporal Works of Mercy encourage people to use these gifts to reach out to the un-baptized and un-affiliated. In the past, being in a Catholic family, school or neighborhood was an effective evangelization process. Now the church will need multiple evangelization tools to invite and reinvite children and teens to the Church. The Church needs to continue to support Catholic families and Catholic schools.

Synodality

We need to strive for unity and recognize God’s unconditional love. We connect our ritual and history to share joy.

Can the church speak and share joy with our children, youth and adults? The Church should help us share the message that we are broken, blessed and beloved. The Church should not shame or judge.

The Holy Spirit has called Church members to support each other at hours of need. Sharing common goals bring people together in the Church. The large number of people in the Church can be intimidating and needs to be balanced with smaller groups like faith sharing groups.

The synod process itself informs parishioners about communion, participation and mission. This process invites people to journey together.