

In attendance: Fr. Dan Riley, Deacon Bill Koffel, Lija Joseph, Kate Neal, Nick Frega, Monica Pacheco-Tougas, Peg Miller, Jim Allaire, Tom Morrison, Elizabeth Micci, Paul Hurney, Gina Chaimanis, Kristina Preman, Laura Shachmut

All members were provided with the following questions prior to the meeting:

Parish Synod Implementation Suggested Questions:

1. In our experience – within our parish or other community – who should have a voice? And who does in fact have a voice? How could we improve that? And how could the same thing happen in our Archdiocese and in the Church around the world?
 1. How can the common person in our communities be better heard?
 2. Who are the marginalized people in our communities, and how can they be better heard?
2. How well do we listen to people whose opinions are different from our own...
 1. ... in our conversations?
 2. ... in our families?
 3. ... in our parishes or other local communities?
 4. ... in our archdiocese?
 5. ... in the global Church?
 6. How could we do all of that better?
3. How does our prayer – both individual prayer and at Mass and other liturgical gatherings (communal liturgy) – impact our ability to listen?
4. How connected do you feel to the core mission of the Church – making disciples for Jesus? Do you feel like you have been chosen for mission, equipped for that mission, and sent specifically out on that mission? In the course of that mission, do you feel like you have a group of fellow missionary disciples with whom to share your experiences? How could we improve that kind of interaction in the Church?
5. How does the Church (local/diocesan/global) support those who take part in her mission within the society and culture (parents, grandparents, educators, scientists, lawmakers, writers, artists, social workers, those who work with the poor, those who seek to protect the environment)? And how does she listen to them?
6. Listening often involves listening across borders. How well do the parishes or other local communities in your area work together and listen to one another? What is the involvement of various communities of religious men and women in your parish? Is there a dialogue with other faith communities who are not Catholic?
7. How could the decision-making process within your local community be improved?
 1. Is there room for a broader process?
 2. How can transparency be improved?
 3. Is prayerful discernment a part of the process?

Instructions to the CPC prior to breaking into two discussion groups: As a general guideline, it should be noted that this synod is about synodality itself. **Its goal is not to discuss all of the issues in the Church, but rather to discuss how the Church listens to, and can listen better to, all her people and draws the voices of all into her prayer, her mission, and her decision-making process on every level.**

CPC was reminded that the statements made and ideas conveyed may be used in print, but all entries will be anonymous.

They were encouraged to think about what resonated with them as they read the questions. They were asked to question other parishioners.

The ultimate goal in this process is to, by looking at the greater Church and the smaller parish, ask the question: how can we listen and communicate better?

Within the two breakout groups, the following questions were posed:

1. Of all the questions posed, which question most resonated with you and why?
2. What is the biggest area where communication and the voices being included can be improved in our parish?
3. What is the biggest area where communication and the voices included can be improved in the Diocese?
4. How connected do you feel to the mission of the Church?

After the two groups reunited for a final discussion, the following themes and feelings emerged.

1. It is hard to hear voices when they are not present or participating.
 - a. We need to invite the periphery – people who have left the Church.
 - b. Where are the young adults?
2. Some expressed frustration at not being listened to when reaching out to the Church on issues.
 - a. With issues such as Bishop Gomez in LA and the Abuse crisis, there was a perceived lack of authenticity in the listening of the hierarchy
 - b. Building trust is easier on a community level...the higher you go in the organization, the more limited the trust.
 - c. We need to know that feedback given will be taken and ultimately a change will be seen based on the feedback.
 - d. At the diocesan level, there seems to be an invitation for feedback, but only on certain topics..."You can tell us about X, but don't talk about Y and Z"
 - e. It can feel like giving feedback is not worth the effort if there is no change.
 - f. How invested is the Church in teaching doctrine and challenging people's assumptions about Catholic doctrine...People may think that their beliefs are further away than the actual Church positions.
3. Ecumenical Issues
 - a. Emphasize a core mission in town for all faiths to come together over
 - i. Social justice (in small groups – people listen better in small groups)
 - ii. Racial Justice
 - iii. Concern for our children
 - iv. Issues of safety/Newton PD
 - b. Listen in settings such as the Interfaith Pastor's Council where all congregations can come together, much as Newton did with the Afghan refugees.
 - c. University interfaith groups may be a good model to listen and connect on an interreligious level – why reinvent the wheel?
4. Parish Communication:
 - a. Don't rely on the bulletin.
 - i. Flocknotes are good, but are people reading them?
 - ii. Internet is the new "front door" of the Church
 - iii. Evangelization – when people participate in a great liturgy, we hope they will then go out and talk about it...be the person people are listening to. (What would Jesus do?...He went to the marginalized)
 - iv. You have to be willing to make changes based on what you hear.
 - b. Making new invitations:
 - i. 1-on-1 communication – meet with a parish council member for coffee
 - ii. During Mass: invite new people in the parish stand up, acknowledge anniversaries and birthdays, give people a reason to come back.
 - iii. Mass is when most people come, so use the time before, during, and after to enhance connections and conversations.
 - iv. Coffee and donuts – valuable time that gets people to stop and talk, make connections, feel like they belong, learn the names of people in the pews.
 - v. Be welcoming to people on the periphery who come to bury their dead, baptize, marry – red tape does not convey a listening heart to people who have made the effort to reconnect with the Church

- c. At the Parish level: how are we hearing your voice (as we re-emerge from two years in a pandemic)
 - i. Consensus that the that phone calls and card outreach done at the beginning of the pandemic in our collaborative helped people have a voice - on a personal level
 - ii. Coffee hours must be considered crucial to the concept of outreach and listening.
 - iii. Someone expressed that they feel connected to the parish yet there is a disconnect with the archdiocese
 - iv. What is our Core Mission – “what involvement looks like was clear to me as a kid...now I am not so sure”

Jim Allaire updated the council on the Ad Hoc Group focusing on Archbishop Wester's Pastoral Letter on Nuclear Disarmaments and the Zoom presentation by Ira Helfand on Sunday May 15th at 7:30. This group will next meet at 1 pm on May 12th.

Next meeting Monday, June 13, 7:00 pm @ Sacred Heart (In person Meeting followed by refreshments)

Respectfully submitted,
Ginny Arpino