

## Sacred Heart Pastoral Council Retreat

### Notes

October 7, 2023

Council members present: Alex Amado (by Zoom), Colleen Boone, Rob Cassleman, Trisha Doumit, Fr. Steve Dublinski, Robert Harris (chair), Rich Heath, Jim Lincoln, Judene McLane, and Charlotte Worthy. Also present, Mary Sutherland, parish secretary.

**Prayer** – Pope Francis to Synod: “The Holy Spirit guides us toward harmony and respectful listening.” – *Vatican News*. The council watched and prayed along with the video of the opening prayer of the *Synod on Synodality* in Rome. It was similar to a Liturgy of the Word.

Fr. Steve noted that Pope Francis and the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria spoke at the beginning of the Synod. He said it’s not good if everyone sings the same note. We need a harmony of truth.

#### 1) Being a Synodal Parish – What does it look like?

**(Sub topic: could there be an online version of the Parish Directory)**

In the Acts of the Apostles, when they were trying to decide whether to admit gentiles to the community, the first thing they did was listen to the gathered community. Then, they prayed, discussed, and decided. Pope Francis wants to model the Synod on the way the early Church listened to each other. There are a number of lay people, men and women, at this Synod. That hasn’t happened before. There was an online survey from the Vatican, to collect opinions directly from the laity, but the deadline for answering it has passed.

Synodality is about listening. Pastoral Councils developed because of Vatican II. Bishops were to decide whether to have them in their dioceses. Bishop Topel of Spokane mandated them, which is why we have one. The role of the pastoral council is to help parish leaders hear the People of God.

Example: At St. Mary’s in the Valley when Fr. Steve was there, they held listening sessions for the 1800 households in the parish. It was not always comfortable to hear what people had to say. They divided parishioners into groups, with a council member or the pastor listening to each group.

Sacred Heart Parish has had listening sessions during building meetings. We could do better, but it is not something to solve in one meeting. The Synod will meet again next year; they won’t finish this year.

We need to listen across generations, since each generation comes at problems differently.

Disciples in Dialogue is a way to listen.

Theology on Tap is a way to listen to the younger generation.

People with children are very busy; how can we hear them?

Some suggestions for becoming a better listening parish:

Have a sit down meeting.

Send out a simple survey, just two open-ended questions:

1) Why do you come to church?

2) If you do not come to church, why not?

Maybe that will help us find out what we are doing well and what we need to do better.

The council members noted that many people no longer attend because they are dissatisfied with the international Church – its policies about LGBTQI people, women in ministry, birth control, etc. We can’t change all that, but we can do some things on the local level.

We have had LGBTQI outreach for decades. That is unusual for Catholics, but supported by the Pope. He recently stated that “Everyone, everyone, everyone, everyone must be welcome in the Church.”

We could do better at including women in ministry.

How do we listen to teens? We confirm early, and attendance drops off after that.

How do we reach out to Catholics who are more traditional?

The pastoral council listened to Spanish-speaking people, and decided to start a Spanish Mass at Sacred Heart. Many can’t come to the 1 pm Mass, we need to discern with them how to solve that.

We are trying to listen to people from different cultures and countries. The Harvestfest was an attempt to embrace our diversity.

Studies show that the number one reason people attend church is for belonging. If they don't feel like they belong, they won't come. Many young people are interested in forming relationships more than anything else.

## **2) The Church exists to evangelize**

**Where do we need to expand our evangelization outreach?**

**- Alienated Catholics?**

**- Welcome Home Program?**

The council discussed the subtopic from the first half of the agenda: Could we have an online version of the parish directory? They realize that there can be cybersecurity problems, and we should not post addresses, phone numbers, etc. Could we have just the photos and names on our website so people can put names to faces using their electronic devices, not just a paper book? *Editor's note, we could have a password protected page on our website for the names and photos; it would make them less accessible.* How do we create soft connecting points to the parish? We need ways to connect with potential parishioners besides inviting them to Mass. It is hard to connect with people during Mass, and the service can be confusing.

Social media is a way to begin connecting. We now have over 2,000 followers on our Facebook page. We livestream the Mass on that page, and advertise church events. We sometimes post pictures of the events. We may be reaching people who don't go to church. Could we do a poll to find out if they have questions?

We are also on Instagram, which is more popular with young people than Facebook.

We could announce that we are on social media, which may be a way to connect with young people.

Text messages may be another way to reach young adults; St. Thomas More at WSU uses them.

Tiktok is very popular; maybe we could do one-minute homilies?

Youth enjoy seeing their own pictures on social media. We need volunteers to take pictures at social events so we can post them.

We could have weekly online theology-based quizzes.

One church connected with the public by printing yard signs with the church's name and "I am grateful for \_\_\_\_\_" on them. The parish households filled in the blanks, and put the signs in their front yards.

Connecting with the Spanish-speaking community. Alex has a Facebook message group, and also uses WhatsApp, to let people know when we will have Spanish Mass. The bilingual Masses are fine. Maybe more Spanish-speaking people will come to the services for Our Lady of Guadalupe if they are all in the morning. That is the traditional way, and that is what we are planning this year.

### More ways to create soft connections to the parish:

Catholic Questions (meetings at Rico's for people with questions about Catholicism).

Theology on Tap at Paradise Creek Brewery for young adults,

Social events at church: dinners, games nights, movies, etc.

Church booths at the Lentil Festival, Art Fest, etc.

Helping those in need through the St. Francis Guild, Family Promise, etc.

We are making progress.

If people would like to follow the Synod, try CRUX, a Catholic news source.

**Closing Prayer: Glory Be.**

**Submitted by Mary Sutherland**