

Over the past several months, Catholics across the globe have been discussing if and how we “journey together in faith”; how we share our experiences with each other, listen to and encourage one another, and work together to build God’s Kingdom. Here at Saint Joseph’s, we referred to this endeavor as **“In This Together”**, with communications about it in the bulletin, on our website (stjosephmech.org/in-this-together), and in our Friday email blasts.

- ✦ We held an in-person discussion session on March 26th, and also provided parishioners with a link to provide feedback online.
- ✦ We collected the opinions shared both in-person and online (see reverse side) and shared them with the diocese in May.
- ✦ In coming months, the US Bishops and our Pope will receive documents influenced by our voices.

By the time this global effort is complete in 2023, it is our hope that all Catholics will gain a broad sense of what it’s like to be part of the Universal Church today. In the meantime, our Parish Advisory Council is considering the input we received locally to help us understand what it’s like to be a part of our parish family here at Saint Joseph.

We’d like to thank those who participated by either attending our in-person discussion session or sharing their thoughts online. We had 15 in-person attendees, and 1 online commenter. With such a small sampling from a parish with close to 6000 adults, we cannot assume that the opinions offered are representative of the entire parish. However, we must and will listen to them carefully and be responsive. Following are the main topics we heard:

1. personal approach to faith companionship
2. support for families with kids with disabilities
3. outreach to the underrepresented or unheard
4. engaging in positive conversations about faith
5. support for youth and parents
6. understanding the Mass
7. asking people for input
8. understanding discipleship
9. church structure and decision making
10. diversity
11. understanding evangelization
12. reflecting God’s love; being positive & inviting
13. learn from other Christian denominations
14. help people discern strengths

The Parish Advisory Council looks forward to engaging with the parish on these topics in the months to come. We will share what we already have in place, and what we have accounted for in our parish’s 5-Year Plan (stjosephmech.org/5-year-plan). We will also look to see what new items are not yet accounted for, and determine an approach to address them.

And most importantly, we invite you to contribute to this discussion! Parishioners are welcome to attend council meetings and/or share their input in writing. If you’d like to do either, please contact us at pac@stjosephmech.org.

Thank you for keeping our parish family in your prayers, in particular asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If we are receptive to the promptings of the Spirit, we will discover new ways to draw closer to the Lord... together!

IN THIS TOGETHER - Synod Comments from Participants

CONTEXT: Saint Joseph is a parish of close to 6000 adult members. Besides our Parish Advisory Council members who facilitated our in-person session, we had 15 attendees. We also had 1 person submit input online.

The following opinions were collected from the 16 participants:

COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

1. In order to increase participation in our parish ministries and activities, we should subtly approach people and ask them to give of their talents (also noted in "Authority and Participation" topic)
2. We should reach out to people who sit next to us at Mass.
3. There is little to no support for families with kids with disabilities.

LISTENING

4. Who are "the fringes"? We should find the people on the margins and reach out to them to show that we are a caring community. We should identify the specific groups that we wish to reach and plan our actions accordingly.
5. We need to break down the barriers within our ministries and activities groups so we are more inviting.
6. We find it difficult to listen to God in a secular world.
7. Christianity is based upon relationship. We need to have a one-to-one conversation with people.

SPEAKING OUT

8. Catholic values are not popular in society (also noted in "Sharing Responsibility" topic)
9. We are not very good at speaking out. When we do, we are defensive and speak with anger. We need a humble approach so we can break down barriers.
10. Our parishioners are seeing more openness now than in the past. Our parish has many opportunities to get involved, but members of these ministries need to encourage and invite more participation.
11. Our Church needs to put more resources into youth activities and youth ministries, including young parents.
12. We appreciate when the pastor and the pastoral staff are engaged with parish activities. Seminaries should stress this important part of being a pastor.

CELEBRATION

13. Do people truly understand the Mass or do some just go through the motions? We need a way to educate people, possibly providing special instructions for visitors.

14. Greeters have had a positive effect on our parish.
15. People need a personal invitation to attend Mass. (also noted in "Authority and Participation" and "Discerning and Deciding" topics)
16. We should also be asking people what they need from the Church.

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

17. Discipleship must be verbalized to our parishioners, but additional education is also needed for understanding of our role and responsibilities as disciples. Discipleship is not on everyone's mind. We are caught up too much in our daily stuff.
18. The Church can be too much of a hierarchical structure.
19. We are not as diverse as we should be. The role of women should be expanded.
20. What does evangelization mean?
21. The Church reminds us of our sin but also needs to remind us more of God's love. Our Church needs to come across as more positive and inviting.

ECUMENISM

22. We need to look at our commonality, not the differences between us and other Christian Churches, and see what we can learn from them.
23. Some other denominations seem to be more youth and family oriented than our Church.
24. The family unit is most important. Community starts with family. The problem is that many families are not engaged.
25. How do we get people to know their strengths?

DISCERNING AND DECIDING

26. Those who walk together and are making decisions are the priests along with older groups of people. Daily Mass and often meetings are during the day when no working person or child can attend. Families, young people, teens, and college age kids are not represented.
27. What does consultation or discernment mean? We need to communicate these more effectively.