

## SYNOD SYNTHESIS, CHRIST THE KING PARISH, March 24, 2022

### General Questions

1. Christ the King Parish
2. 57 Participants
3. Ages: 30's – 8; 40's – 4; 50's – 5; 60's – 23; 70's – 14; 80's – 3; 90's – 1
4. Demographics: 37 women, 18 men

### ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What was particularly significant, surprising, or unexpected?

There was both challenge and critique of the bishops and the hierarchy in the Church. The Church hierarchy has to rebuild credibility in society and truth with the laity. Furthermore, hierarchical leadership is ONE person leading others – how is that “journeying together??”

At the same time, there was a clear demand to recognize and to call on the unique gifts of the laity to assist in ministry in the church and to serve others. “What is the Holy Spirit calling us to??” The Holy Spirit calls us to change. One participant expressed this as, “I want FIRE!”

“The Holy Spirit is inviting us into the sadness of empty churches.” Journeying together means all of us, sharing our gifts together, responding to the needs of others together. We are called to move beyond our limits. There is a need to change our moral compass, to live as Jesus did by reaching out to those who are and who feel excluded. We need to be more inviting to others.

2. What new perspectives or new horizons opened up?

“Have you ever heard a sermon on mental illness or autism? Our fight is for inclusiveness.” This participant’s cry captures the passion of others in calling for the inclusion of all members of society whom we neglect: unwed mothers, divorced men and women, persons with disabilities, the LGBTQ community. One participant went so far as to say that when they hear at Mass, “For us men and for our salvation...” they cringe and think, “who is left out???” Women and people on the margins.

In spite of the anger, frustration, and cynicism over being excluded were two very important insights. One, we, the excluded, are not alone in our struggles, even as church authority ignores us. Two, this process of synodality as listening to one another on the journey offers hope, namely that someone might want to listen to us.

Another new horizon offered was a call for more women leaders in the church and that these be more visible. Along with this was a specific call for women deacons. The 3

major themes of the Synod on Synodality are Community, Participation, and Mission – if these are taken seriously this means we CAN participate!

We are all members of the Body of Christ and have gifts to offer.

3. Which stories or personal experiences were especially moving and why?

Participant expressed frustration over not ever hearing his experience of autism as being included in a homily. As other participants echoed – our experiences should matter and can be used to help others.

Although not a specific story or experience there was again recognition of the value of more lay involvement on many levels in the church, especially as many priests reach retirement. Mention was made of a parish (not in our diocese) where the pastor involved laity at every level of the parish, which allowed him to focus more on the sacramental life of the church. Parishioners describe as “heaven on earth.”

A participant told of being attacked for being a Catholic. “I didn’t know how to respond.” We need more consistent education on our faith and what it means to be Catholic.

Another participant reflected how we “journey together” through the same Scriptures, Mass and Sacraments all over the world! An astonishing thought, filled with hope.

One participant expressed loss over what has happened to the church since Vatican II and wanted a return to the Latin Mass.

4. Which points of view seem to have strong resonance?

Two points of view were very strong.

- A. The inclusion of those who are on the margins of society and the church. These include: people with disabilities, unwed mothers, divorced women and men, the LGBTQ community, women, “our kids who have left the church.”
- B. A very clear cry and call for the gifts of lay people to be recognized and accepted in service to the church on many levels. This was recognized as coming from the Holy Spirit, but ignored by those in authority in the church.

A strong point of view was the lament over younger generations who have left the church because it seems meaningless and excludes so many, including the groups mentioned above.

Should not the church be a “No Judgement Zone”? Should the church not offer a safe place for those who are in need?

5. Which points of view were mentioned less but are noteworthy?

One group stated that political views should not be brought into the church. This comment seemed to run implicitly through other comments. To clarify: the current divisiveness in the political realm is a great obstacle if we are called “to journey together.”

The question of and call for women deacons arose more than once. In instance it was followed by the question: Why can't women be priests or deacons??

Worth mentioning again from this synod session is the cry for church leaders to truly, authentically LISTEN to the laity and to address people's pain, which meant even the pain of those who are outside church membership.