



SPX Small Groups

Life is Better Together

Reality Check – Week 4 – Jan. 30
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time



“Pope Francis Wants to Hear from You” – Small Group Listening Session

1. (a) Where have you experienced the church in general, or St. Pius in particular, discussing and reflecting together how and where the Holy Spirit is leading us?

(b) Whose voices were included and whose were excluded? What joys and difficulties were included?
2. At this moment, what is the Holy Spirit asking of us as individual Christians and as a parish community?
3. (a) If you have ever felt excluded, ignored, or undervalued by the church, what needs to be done differently to prevent that from happening again?

(b) What are you hearing from those on the peripheries that the church should be considering?
4. As a person in the pews, how are you called to proclaim the gospel, and do you feel equipped to do so?
5. How well does St. Pius use listening and speaking (i.e., consultation) to make decisions?

If you run short of time, or people would like to submit additional comments, they can do so at <https://forms.gle/pzKwcoEJ5cQDLsiv5>

A little background:

Every couple of years, the Pope asks people for advice on a particular topic. This is usually done in a meeting of bishops from around the world known as a Synod. In October 2021, Pope Francis chose the topic of listening to the Holy Spirit as his topic, and rather than just ask the bishops, he instead asked every parish in the world to gather together and give him advice on these issues. He is curious as to how we listen to each other and the Holy Spirit, how we make decisions, and how we reach out to those on the margins. The purpose of this evening is for all of us to experience and put into practice this reality of being part of a Church that dialogues and listens.

When you consider that this is happening at parishes all over the world, this is a *new way* for the church to listen to the Holy Spirit. The challenge for the church in every generation is to figure out how to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying. As Father Kennedy mentioned on Sunday, for many years the primary way this was done was by the Pope gathering input from the bishops. By instructing the bishops to gather information from the parish level, Pope Francis is saying that the Holy Spirit can and does speak to all of us, so all of us share in the responsibility of listening.

In fairness, we should mention that the Pope suggested 17 original questions. For time's sake, we whittled them down to about 5 that seem the most relevant to our parish. We also rewrote them in everyday language.

What's next? Each of the small groups will submit notes, which will be compiled along with the notes from the parish listening session and the written comments into a single report. At the parish level, Fr. Mike, the staff, and the parish council will discuss what we heard and learned through the process and how to act on it. But our report will also be submitted to the Archdiocese of Washington and ultimately to the Pope. Then over the course of the next two years, the bishops that meet with the pope will review the input from all over the world and make recommendations.

Opening Prayer

Together in faith, may we offer the Pope's prayer for God to guide us in this synodal journey:

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.