

Casper Deanery
Phase I: In-reach Notes

St. Anthony-Casper

Sunday, December 5, 2021

There were 9 people in attendance, including Father Ray. We broke into two small groups, one of 5 and one of 4.

Comments:

1. Benefits of church are praying as a group rather than praying alone;
2. Encouragement by brothers and sisters in Christ to please the Lord;
3. Sometimes people are driven away from the Church by their own families;
4. There should be some reconciliation between pre and post Vatican II masses, so for example, more Latin, more traditional;
5. We need more teaching on how to incorporate our faith into our daily lives.

Some hinderances to us moving together as a synodal church are:

1. The lack of follow through if a need or problem is brought to the attention of the church. You never find out what, if anything, is going to be done;
2. Inconsistency of the Mass in music and announcements, etc.;
3. Hurt by broken friendships in the Church;
4. There are cliques and sometimes people feel left out when they volunteer for a ministry but are never called and the same people are called over and over. For example, funeral dinners;
5. A personal invitation to serve is important vs a broad appeal;
6. Sometimes people have a hard time discerning their place in the Church unless they are invited to serve in some capacity;
7. There is some cultural divisiveness between the Caucasian and Hispanic ministries;
8. We have difficulty resolving differences in an effective way and moving forward as a family; there is little solidarity;
9. COVID has socially isolated us and the relatively frequent change in pastors is difficult for people. We are also getting used to a new Pope and people are fatigued by all the changes in the church;
10. Do we know what it means to move together and what unity looks like? What does it mean to be a parish family and how do we get people to commit to THIS parish rather than hopping around?;
11. Need more catechesis for all ages.

Fruits of meeting:

- There is a problem with people being rigid;

- There is a problem with cliques in the church and people feeling like they're being left out;\
- COVID is a factor;
- Ageing is a factor;
- Learning how to effectively resolve conflict and criticize constructively;
- Personal invitation (a welcoming environment) is important;
- We need more adoration;
- We need more spiritual and social interaction;
- We need more catechesis for all ages.

Notes from Second Synod Meeting, Feb 3. Finance and Parish Councils

Remarks made about understanding the mission of the Church:

- Keeping us within the Church
- Praying for us to keep our faith
- An older person not knowing where she fits in the mission of the Church
- Helping us in our different stages of life

2. What hinders or helps your ability to participate in the life of the Church:

- Need more opportunities to pray the rosary together
- Misses the healing group we used to have
- Would like a seniors' Bible study
- Teens feel intimidated and like the adults don't listen to them when they propose an idea.
- We need more communication with the home bound to make them feel part of the Church community
- It's difficult when only one of a couple is Catholic
- The communication in the bulletin is lacking. We should list families new to the parish, marriages and baptisms.
- Changing priests frequently

3. How have you sought to take your place in the Church:

- More volunteering
- Youth group

Fruits of the Meeting:

How is this journeying together happening today in your parish:

- It's hard to tell because COVID has changed so many things.
- The Church should remain reverent and traditional, not move to evangelical performance
- We need more catechesis. We need to trust the Pope and keep ourselves informed about the universal Church. There should be transparency of this transformation
- Fellowship opportunities are missing
- We are lacking in knowing each other, especially families new to the parish

What do you think the Holy Spirit is calling us to do to journey together?

- Making sure that all are welcome in the parish and to be sensitive to and aware of people who are marginalized
- Being aware of supporting family life; how can we support our children?
- Learning how to discern spiritual direction. Becoming fluent in the language of the Holy Spirit to help us discern how to journey together
- More catechesis should be a priority
- Continue to offer opportunities for people to be heard.

NOTES FROM THE THIRD SYNOD MEETING FEB 3, 2022-Finance and Parish Councils

Remarks made about understanding of the mission of the church and our participation in it.

- Education, evangelize, lead the youth to an accurate understanding of the Church.
- Offer mass and sacraments. Pray for the world, praise God.
- Volunteer for parish ministries. Being willing to talk about faith/God when given opportunities.

Remarks regarding the synodal church being a participatory and co-responsible church and how the responsibilities of lay people promoted at St. Anthony's.

- The message of full, active, conscious participation has been mentioned by Fr. Ray at mass and in committee discussions.
- Participation and co-responsibility being promoted within some families. More and continuing catechesis is needed.

Remarks regarding how we have sought to take our place in the Church.

- Volunteering for ministries and committees. These are opportunities to get to know others.
- Discussion around why some hear a call and increase participation and others do not; praying and discerning. Shared conversion and faith journeys.

FRUITS OF THE MEETING – LARGE GROUP

1. How is this journeying together happening today in our Parish?

- Communication and IT needs to be improved so better awareness of happenings and events.
- More catechesis is needed.
- More inviting to ministries and mass; individual invitations more powerful.
- Need to be more in touch with Holy Spirit direction as parish community.

2. What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take together?

- Improve adult catechesis and formation.
- Find ways to help people feel invited.
- Improve lack of knowledge and explore lack of heart.

- Formation to parents to be catechists to accurately teach/model faith to kids so kids can be better prepared to make faith decisions as they get older.
- Need more space for parishioners to gather and visit after mass.
- Social opportunities should be more consistent and predictable.
- Improve promotion of lay ministries and opportunities.
- Continue pre-mass tutorials as benefit for all ages.
- Formation regarding prayer and discernment – setting our egos aside and growing in the Holy Spirit and His direction in our lives.
- Some need help with electronic proficiency being introduced and used at Parish.
- More clarity/formation regarding ministry terms and meanings, i.e. “extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.”
- More education or awareness regarding the historical aspects of Catholicism at St. Anthony’s and awareness of our place in that history – 100 years of masses, sacraments, prayers, ceremonies, rites, peoples’ lives.
- Importance of passing down our faith and transmitting it accurately – vital especially in times of distress. [Can’t operate on an 8th grade level of faith in tough times.]

The Synod is providing a good opportunity for us to listen to each other. It’s one thing to participate in mass together but another to listen and get to know each other personally. We need long-term nurturing of our community relationships to journey well together and set aside divisiveness.

With a goal of leading our community more deeply into the mass and seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit, St. Anthony’s is praying and discerning together in the Liturgy Committee. In addition, the formation and catechesis regarding the ministry of Adoration and the liturgical rite of Eucharistic Exposition has begun.

St. James, Douglas, December 5

First meeting

How are we companions on the journey?

- We attend and participate in mass
- It is a universal church. No matter where we go in the world we know the order of mass and feel comfortable even in a foreign language.
- There is the power of confession which gives us sanctifying grace.
- There are so many miracles of our church. How important to study and know them.
- Various groups are formed to stimulate companionship like: Knights of Columbus, Council of Catholic Women, Moms Group, bible studies, prayer groups
- Youth involvement and community outreach

- Involved with other churches, ecumenical, such as: Marathon Bible Reading, food collections, Helping Hands Thrift Store
- Greet and reach out to new people at Mass
- Adoration is accessible to everyone
- We reach out to those in need, like the poor.
- Each one of us is a missionary.
- The Eucharist: the actual presence of Christ
- We encourage people's gifts and talents.
- Adult formations and trainings

We can improve by having more training and outreach, have game nights, encourage more talents and gifts, encouraging others to "Come with me...."

2nd Meeting: Dec. 18

What is the sharing of our faith through mission, celebration, and dialogue?

A concern of the majority of people who attended this synodal meeting was the lack of participation of young people in our church. Few children attend church. Even those who attend CCD only 1/2 go to mass.

What can we do as a church to improve this?

Parents are the number one influence in the family. Maybe the church family needs to reach out. There needs to be an open dialogue to involve parents to make them feel welcomed and a part of our church family especially those who are absent from mass.

In the past kids have been invited to fun activities like skiing, bowling, and movie night through St. James. Statewide retreats were attended. These extra activities enhanced friendships within our church. Also, kids felt a closeness with their church when the priest welcomed them at the door of the parish hall when going to class.

The friendliness of parishioners, staff, and priests makes a difference in involvement. Each of us needs to reach out and speak to those sitting around us. The priest needs to acknowledge those entering the sanctuary. These kindnesses make a difference and are the Christian thing to do.

Encouraging and acknowledging all people in our parish is a gift we can give to one another. Let us be accessible to one another.

Synodal Meeting: Jan. 16 Meeting 3

How does our church identify goals, the way to reach them, and the steps to take?

Our Parish Council is responsible for decisions of our church along with the priest. Yet our congregation seldom hears of the work they do. The congregation needs to be informed of both the Parish Council and the Finance Council.

There needs to be a directory of contact people for the various ministries. Continuity is lost when a new priest arrives. How can we maintain what we have until it can be dealt with later?

A few creative ideas to reach out to parishioners are:

Ministry Fair: Have “booths” set up for each of the ministries. The leaders of these will inform people of what is done and how it benefits our church. If a person is interested in helping with that ministry they can sign up.

Welcome Bags: Welcome kits are made and distributed to new families in our parish. Items which may be included are a rosary and guide, wooden cross, prayer card, and list of ministries. A welcome letter may also be written and included.

Greeting before Mass: This was done years ago. The spokesman for the choir will announce to greet the ones near you before the first song. (Since our meeting this has been implemented.)

Since our meeting Fr. has given the okay to implement the other two suggestions as well. Groups will be formed to begin their journey!

Synodal Meeting 4: Jan. 25

Ecumenism: This was attended by interdenominational church members.

In years past there has been an Ecumenical Ministerial Group. Several pastors met regularly to plan various ecumenical activities at each of the churches. This has not been done for a few years. There has been a big turnover of pastors at Douglas churches.

In Douglas, churches journey together:

Helping Hands: An ecumenical thrift store in town helps the poor and needy. The monies collected are given to those who need help with utilities, rent, medical, food....and other needs.

Food pantries: Kings Portion and WY Food Bank at the Trinity Baptist
Kings Portion is open Thurs. from 4-6; Trinity Baptist on Sat. 10-1

National Day of Prayer: It is up lifting to see pastors and parishioners from many churches come together to pray for our community government, families, churches, the world....etc.

Bible Reading Marathon: The entire bible is read in its entirety during the week of state fair. Parishioners from several churches help to lift up His word!

Over the years different churches have offered weekly free meals and yearly free concerts to the people of Douglas.

In order for churches to journey together we need to be open and honest, yet positive and accepting of the differences. We must accept our differences without wanting to change or berate one another. Journeying with respect shows true Christianity.

5th Meeting: Jan. 30

Decision-Making and Formation

As a parish it would be beneficial to get an up-date from the Parish Council and the Finance Committee a few times a year. We feel it would be helpful to have a question and answer period from both as well.

We are losing our youth. We need to look at their formation and have open conversations with church, parents, and children.

Our relationships with one another can improve if we reach out to all with positive dialogue. Some parents have expressed that their children do not want to attend mass after someone sitting near them reprimanded them. All of us need to dialogue with kindness and patience. After all we are reaching for mutual understanding as Christians.

Our church and Rome needs to have clarity on issues.

Now that Covid is less invasive, our parish has resumed bible studies, a Mom's prayer group, and a retreat. We hope these continue so that we communicate more with one another and walk together as a community.

Now we are forming committees to resume past activities such as Ministry Fair, Church Directory, and Welcome Committee with welcome bags for new families.

St. Patrick's Catholic Church-Casper

December 5, 2021, General Listening Session

Responses to fundamental questions for the consultation of the People of God

- 1. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeying together". How do you see this "journeying together" happening at St. Patrick's?*
- 2. How could St. Patrick's make a bigger difference in people's lives and our community?*
- 3. What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take?*

St. Patrick's is a very family orientated parish, that offers many ministries to its parishioners throughout the week. St. Patrick is a welcoming community and validates all the groups that choose to meet within its walls, such as all the different bible studies, classes, Carmelites, Adoration, it opens its heart to all those who want to participate in the faith community. It offers community, social life, beautiful sacramental life and every-thing is relational to the church. It provides the parishioners to be with like-minded people, which develops a family of God. St. Patrick's is a place of retreat in times of uncertainty. The prayers of the community are vital within this community. This parish has given

children faith in a Catholic structure. The parish has an active youth program. The families have enjoyed the priests that have been assigned here as they have been engaging through the sacraments, ministries and with families as they enjoy meals in the homes of the parishioners. It is critical that parishioners feel welcome and wanted in the parish family to develop a vibrant parish. As a Casper Catholic community, we need to journey together, and this is going to become more and more difficult in the times we live. St. Patrick's is the arms and feet of Christ, that are called to reach out to those on the fringes.

St. Patrick's has a family dynamic, which allows parishioners to feel at home in the community. As the result of having a vibrant family orientated parish, parishioners feel comfortable inviting others from other faith denominations to participate with them in our weekend experience, and inviting others to our adult formation as a means of evangelization. The opportunities of learning at St. Patrick is immense and Fr. Gary challenges us to better our lives in his homilies. As we journey together the parish is open to the movements of the Holy Spirit, being open to new ideas, immolating behaviors for the transformation of life. Being open to the Holy Spirit leads to a dynamic faith community. The small groups within the parish that meet through-out the week help the celebration of the Mass become more vibrant. It is important as we journey together that individuals feel listened to and are confirmed in their own journeys.

One perspective that was gained due to the interruption of COVID, was those who were in ministry no longer took for granted the roles they played in the faith community. It became an eye-opening moment, and brought about a deep emotional loss, changing their language from *"having a job to being a vocation"*. Being with like-minded people helps develop your spiritual life. All the groups that are active listened to and con-firmed you feel a part of the community.

We are being challenged to journey together, and we must keep mind the end goal, and ask ourselves where we are journeying to. This is a challenge, and will continue to be a challenge in our times. The Holy Spirit may be leading us to work together to become more of a tri-parish community, working together with the other two parishes, to create a more unified Catholic community. Part of the journeying together is the need to look at forgiveness. As we journey together we need to be open to the Holy Spirit in prayer and being connected to God the Father. We must understand the power of prayer and the connection in scripture and the Holy Spirit. We need to learn to encourage one another in our journey to God the Father. There are lots of hurting people in our world, and having the ability to reach them, we cannot just assume that the Church will take care of them, we as individual need to reach out to them. As we look at our group here today, who is

Listening Session-December 5, 2021

What are the fruits of ?

- The Holy Spirit is drawing us closer to God the Father.
- Being intentional to reaching out to those living on the fringes, by living out our faith throughout our day. to our protestant brothers and sisters to have a dialogue about how they us?
- Evangelizing those of others faiths, and those who have walked away from our faith.
- Getting back to our basics, asking and answering the questions what we are doing at the Mass. Have a deeper understanding of the Mass.

- We are called to be missionaries, how do we make intentional disciples to the greater community.
- How do we grow leaders, so those in leadership do not burn out?
- Bridge the gap between our protestant brothers and sisters, by engaging conversations, and asking them in how do you see us.
- We need to be a Church that listens to those who not a part of the experience, those who are struggling and to those who are doing the best they can.
- We need to be a missionary Church.
- The Holy Spirit is calling us to get up and go out and listen to people, to be there in the name of Jesus.
- We need to get the treasure of the love of Jesus out there. We need to get the message of hope, the good news of the gospel out to the streets.

January 11, 2022 , St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Casper-Parish Council & Knights of Columbus

Responses to fundamental questions for the consultation of the People of God

1. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeying together". How do you see this "journeying together" happening at St. Patricks.?
2. How could St. Patrick's make a bigger difference in people's lives and our community?
3. What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take?

The Universal Church "journeying together"

1. What are the "signs of the times" e.g. what do you see happening in the world and what does that indicate/mean?
2. Where is the Holy Spirit guiding the Church?

St. Patricks is a large inviting community moving toward the same goal, but we are all at different stages in doing that. We are a very inviting community, that offers lots of formation classes. We as a community com-municate well, using social media avenues to reach parishioner, such as an updated website, face book page, and getting information out through flocknote. Our growth as a community is good, and we are willing to look at our areas of deficiencies, making corrections, and being open to change. St. Patricks has been very good with education, faith, community, conversion and charity. We journey together by being diverse in opening our doors to other cultures, such as ministering to the Hispanic and Vietnamese communities. Our youth group is smaller than it was prior to COVID, COVID having a big impact on the current attendance. Our middle school groups are lacking in attendance, because Confirmation is looked at as graduation, graduation is looked at as the end and not the beginning of your new life as an adult Catholic. The community at large is not inviting to youth, and as we have seen in the past personal invitation is the best way to draw individuals into activities.

We need to call families with children to become more engaged and participating in the Church. We need to find a way to engage the youth of our parish, which may entail reaching out to other local denominations to see how they engage the youth of their church. We often see each Mass as a separate community, so there is a need to provide opportunities for large group fellowship to build parish community.

The Holy Spirit is guiding us in prayer and evangelization, to be open to all people, to plant the seed of our faith. We need to have courage to talk about our faith outside our Church community. We are being called to come back to the basics of our faith, and to stand by our traditional values. We need invite others to “come and see” what we are about, or possibly connecting with those who are not attending to engage in activities through social media, such as Zoom and providing them with Catholic resources that can be found in different apps. etc. Possibly having mentors, connecting an older member with a younger member. Inviting the younger members to do service projects, and letting them take ownership of the project. We need open up the doors to all people, and to invite them into our community. The Holy Spirit always calls us to evangelize. Due to COVID we have not been able to have our outside David Street Mass, but we need to continue to be visible to the outside community. The youth look at our Church as a list of rules, and they see themselves as being spiritual, but necessarily religious. We need to find a way to connect with the younger generations and where they are at, possibly providing something less than threshold event. The Holy Spirit may be guiding us to develop a Vision Statement.

Listening Session-January 11, 2021

As we look at the “*signs of the times*,” we see lots of division: political division, division within the Church division in families, countries, through natural disasters, social media, unjust war, homosexuality, gender issues, abortion etc. We live in a world with much disrespect, intolerance and have become very selfish, with putting self before others. We need to work on bridging the gap of divisions, through education and forgiveness. We need to get out into the community to invite each person as an individual, as a “child of God,” to participate in our liturgies, classes, to be a part of God’s family. We need to bring people together.

We are in a time of disorder. During a time of disorder people look for an organization with order, so as a Church we need to be a place of order for the outside community. In an orderly fashion we can reach out to the rest of the world. In this time of disorder we have developed a new sense of community. We have a need to connect with others. The demographics are changing in our country. COVID is the common enemy, and we need to come together to fight against it. The Church is called to take a risk, we need to go out and take a risk. Pope Francis said, “Who am I to judge.” So we are called to go out and take a risk.

January 26, 2022, St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, Casper-Youth Group

1. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeying together”. How do you see this “journeying together” happening at St. Patrick’s?

- The youth do not feel as if they are included or consider important within the body of the Church.
- They feel there is a lack of individuals caring about the importance of people learning about God.
- They feel that the teachings of youth are relevant or geared toward them past Confirmation.
- They feel that Confirmation is looked at as a graduation and their faith journey comes to an end.

2. How could St. Patrick's make a bigger difference in people's lives and our community?

- They would like to see more conversations, in growing a relationship with Jesus, and then have it brought into action with the community

3. What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take?

Developing community outreach, and service. Having more inclusivity with all the groups with the Church.

The Universal Church "journeying together"

1. What are the "signs of the times" e.g. what do you see happening in the world and what does that in-dicate/mean?

Our society is very Godless, and decisions and actions are being made in that fashion. We live in a very pessimistic atmosphere, in a state of chaos. The Church needs to be a place of unification.

2. Where is the Holy Spirit guiding the Church?

The Holy Spirit needs to be called upon within us to move in the direction of God.

Individual Responses that were turned in to St. Patricks-Casper, Unedited

Response #1

Everyone was being so positive on Sunday, December 5th which is good, but I feel reality wasn't addressed. The group here in town who believes Vatican 2 is wrong, says the pope is teaching heretical info and wants the Mass in Latin does not make our journey together as Catholics easy. I've been preached to that pope is wrong and more. They listen instead to a man (Marshall Taylor) over God and pope. Just think this needs to be a part of discussion if not too political, which I'm sure it is. But it's reality and part of the journey right now. Always been something over the long history of our beloved church.

Response #2

Answering these questions:

- 1. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeying together". How do you see this "journeying together" happening at St. Patricks.?**
- 2. How could St. Patrick's make a bigger difference in people's lives and our community?**
- 3. What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take?**

Being a member of St. Patrick's Parish has been a real blessing for us. Both of us have been able to get more involved with activities that strengthen our faith and improves our relationship with the church. From help-ing with teh environment committee, the Knights of Columbus and the Monday ladies study group. We have met so many people that have become very good friends and helped us grow closer to our Lord.

This community has made a difference in the way we live. As I said above, the friends we have made have helped strengthen our faith.

We are journeying together by the activities we participate in the church. The St. Patrick's community does a good job of bringing people together by the invitation that is extended. When people were staying home due to the Covid, I believe Fr. Gary reaching out via social media was a big part in keeping people in touch with the church. Streaming Father's messages and the Mass was a big part in bringing people back to the church when we were able. I think an occasional message sent out that way will still help with keeping people in touch.

The Spirit is encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone and do some things I am not comfortable in doing. I believe the Spirit is strong in St. Patrick's Parish and is inviting us to step out and step up.

I think the parish has started with the process by the adult classes that are coming up. The class we just finished "The Case for Christ" was excellent. We are excited for some additional classes in the future. As I said above an occasional online message from Father on upcoming events, or even more so a spiritual message for us would also be well received.

Again the experiences I think of are the adult classes and the ladies study night. They are great experiences in helping us to build our faith. Also, by providing Formed.org to everyone in the parish is wonderful since there is so much info on there.

MORE COMMENTS

The catholic Church, all its Sacraments are essential to us. Never, ever again should our churches be shut down so that we are not able to take part in the sacramental life of our church. The damage caused by the lockdown, masks, and isolation from our church community may be unrecoverable. We were taught to fear rather than have faith and the remnants are still visible in our churches.

While the big box stores, liquor stores, and abortion mills were all considered to be essential and stayed open and functioning our souls were neglected and our churches were considered non-essential. We must fight against the tyranny of the Godless culture we live in rather than caving to the 'experts'.

Catholics should be educated first about the Mass and its importance for our spiritual well-being. With a 'captive audience' in the pews, priests should use homilies to teach those ignorant of what takes place during each Mass. Most of us adult catholics were very poorly catechized except for the Baltimore Catechism which taught by memorization rather than in a relational context about Jesus and his Church. Our priests must be bold from the pulpit and take the opportunity to teach Catholic dogma to the souls in the pews.

The fallout of little catechesis on the Mass has led to a huge lack of reverence in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament on the altar.

Gum chewing is always inappropriate during the Mass. The nave of the church should not be a place for unnecessary noise, chit chat, etc. Many come to the church long before Mass begins and stay after to pray and it is nearly impossible to avoid the unnecessary distraction of those who are chatting. We should establish a place outside of the nave for visiting quietly. Also, an announcement to silence cell phones would be appreciated.

In love our bishops, priests, and deacons should be prepared to teach about difficult issues our culture faces today. They shouldn't be concerned that young people are too fragile to hear the real truth about sex, homosexual lifestyles, co-habiting, porn, the potential evils of electronic devices, gay "marriage", etc. Heaven knows, our youth have access to the filth of the culture through friends and electronic media. We must counteract the voices of our culture by teaching them the beauty of guarding the purity and virtue of not only themselves but their friends and acquaintances, etc. We must be bold and unafraid to teach the Gospel truth and be able to defend the same and we can learn this well from our Shepherds.

Religious education throughout the lifespan must be emphasized. A family centered approach has proven to be one of the most effective ways to engage all ages in a fun and refreshing approach to learning about our beautiful catholic faith. Publishers should work to produce programs that feed the minds and souls of all ages together in a space conducive to hospitality and friendship. FIRE (family-centered intergenerational religious education) was used in our parish with phenomenal success many years ago.

We must use a goodly portion of our parish's financial resources to form life-long Catholic learners. Spending money on environment upkeep of a parish plant is essential. However, there must also be a substantial investment in EXCELLENT catechesis and fellowship. The catholic Church is bleeding youth. In our own parish there has not been emphasis on continuing education, fellowship, and mission following Confirmation and we are losing those youth - some of them forever. It doesn't have to be this way.

February 20, 2022 Fundamental questions for the consultation of the People of God

First of all, I might suggest that the above title is too broad. Instead of "People of God", it should read people of the Church. People of God would include Jews, Muslims and many others who do not have a stake in directing the Catholic Church toward greater truth especially in Christ Jesus... I wonder if this is intentional?

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together". How do you see this "journeying together" happening at St. Patrick's? More importantly; Where are we going? Is Christ really calling for a "different Church"?

How can I know that?

How could St. Patrick's make a bigger difference in people's lives and our community?

The people in any parish can begin making a difference for others by first asking about those who are left behind; about those who cannot "journey" with us. Good example:

The Vatican's secret deal with Communist China appears to be aiding the world's most brutal government in its destruction of human and religious rights. The underground Church, faithful to the Holy Father for many years is now destroyed. Communist party bishops now replace all former leadership. Priests are imprisoned, church buildings are

being demolished, children under eighteen years of age cannot go to church under penalty of law. Teaching children the faith is punishable. It will be nine months the 27th of February that the last known bishop truly faithful to Rome was arrested along with all the priests in his diocese, we know not where they are or if still alive. Another bishop that I know of has been living homeless on the street, but has been months since last heard of him.

The winter Olympics is taking place only a few miles from one of the torture centers. Additionally, people are being held as prisoners to supply the multi-billiondollar involuntary organ harvesting. Where is the outcry from Church leaders? I write letters; no response... Just chirping crickets... What has the Church gotten in return for keeping silent or for its treatment of our brothers and sisters in China? I'm grieved to say, it appears we the Church, have blood on our hands.

How do we discuss "journeying together" as a synodal Church without questioning the leadership at the Vatican?

How can any Church leader claim to be truly close to the heart of Christ and know the voice of the Holy Spirit while remaining silent in the face of so much evil?

In 1917 Jesus wept in front of Padre Pio over scandals of that time. It would be hard to imagine how He must feel today.

Saint John Paul II and Ronald Reagan worked together to successfully battle against world domination by communism. In recent years, the advancement of the new world order and the culture of death are on the rise. The Holy Father is involved with world politics in a very different way. Some actions are a little surprising, i.e. among other issues, selecting world population control and abortion advocate Jeffery Sachs to the Pontifical Academy of Science. Possibly among the most heartbreaking is the support of pro-abortion politicians and receiving Holy Communion, raising eyebrows worldwide.

Some visionaries past and present might suggest that we have reached the end of an era. Christ may soon deal with the problems in His Church. John Paul II said that it's too late to avoid the chastisements, but we can mitigate them with prayer.

The current direction of the world is toward total domination of totalitarian government, with atheism and a culture of death on a scale possibly never before seen. It's bad enough that some Church leaders are failing to teach the Gospel truths accurately, but by their silence, it feels like Church leaders in general are blinded to the possible threats.

Where is the Holy Spirit guiding the Church?

I can only suggest that we pray for His guidance back to where we once knew where we were. We can know from Scripture that the Holy Spirit will lead us personally toward God, but it is difficult beyond scripture, tradition and the Magisterium to individually know new revelations from Christ for His Church.

Only thirty percent of Catholics believe Christ is truly present in the Eucharist today. In all the confusion, I really question trying to do anything new. It seems like we should consider going back to the teachings of scripture and tradition that was effective some time back.

I think this needs to be heard; One of the most troubling issues with the so-called synodal process as opposed to calling all of the cardinals together for a Vatican council which would help to maintain balance is that it is a subtle way of setting the Holy Father up as king. One person, the Holy Father gets to decide which people make decisions. The Holy Father's choice to lead the world synod, a German cardinal who with very extreme ideas and certainly not with Christ's teachings only leads me to further question who is actually listening to the Holy Spirit?

According to Vatican reporter, Edward Penton during interview on EWTN, said the Holy Father has been rather heavy handed in his management behind the scenes; employee moral at the Vatican is quite low. He has been told that the Pope wants to know what anyone is saying about him. So I'm not surprised that there is current effort to direct attention to possible mistakes of previous popes to possibly take focus off the current pontificate.

I do not say this in anyway with anger, but with zeal for truth and love of my Church. I have grave concerns about the leadership at the Vatican and souls lead astray. I pray every day for the Holy Father's conversion; we're all sinners and all need deeper conversion. But given some of the current scandals, teachings, and rhetoric coming out of the Vatican gives great sadness, if asked whether I would want anyone at the Vatican teaching my children or grandchildren their catechism, I would have to say probably not at this time.

Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Casper

Our Lady of Fatima Parish held Synod gatherings after each mass the weekend of December 11-12, 2021. There were a total of twenty-nine attendees over the three gatherings. The attendees ranged from long-standing parishioners to new parish members of less than one year.

The general response from all attendees was positive toward the Parish and the Church. There was discussion on how COVID has affected the Parish and how we can begin recovery and move forward. Another large part of the general discussion was focused on *community* and *communication* – the lack (or inadequacy) and how they can be made better. There is a strong desire for more ways to bring in our youth and families, not just through RCIA or religious education.

Due to the varied responses (verbal and written), a listing of responses to topics follows.

OUR LADY OF FATIMA IS “HOME” –

- In my travels, I attend different churches – a difference in attitudes in caring for each other. This parish cares.
- One thing I like about Fatima, single women are not excluded. It’s not just about family and couples.
- This church is my rock. I belong here; there is no other place for me.
- I grew up here, got married here, raised my children here. It’s my family.
- CCW . . . supported me when I needed help. We don’t want to lose that.

COMMUNICATION –

- Would like better information regarding [second] collections and other matters. Advance notification would be good.
- Priest’s retirement fund, St. Joseph’s Children’s Home, *etc.* – seems like we are getting hit from every direction and do not really know where it’s coming from.
- Better website information.
- Not everyone is tech-savvy or has access to any type of online information.
- No information about current COVID guidelines. What can be done now to physically bring people back into church, or bringing the Eucharist to the homebound? Communication is totally broken down in this regard.
- Social media footprint is not very big. Parish website is not really great.

COMMUNITY –

- Don’t really know what people’s needs are.
- Outside ministry – not sure we know how to do that to reach out, as a group or individually.
- Pay more attention to the marginalized. It’s not about the programs. It’s about people.
- Be more welcoming to new attendees, let them know we want them here.
- It would be nice to have more events than the Parish picnic, to get people from church involved together outside church.
- I desire and crave community – it’s been hard to find. Start with the people in the pews; engage them.
- Your culture is lame. We are dying for community. Same music since the 70’s. (*direct quote from an RCIA candidate*)
- Tri-parish activities have always been a struggle.

ISSUES –

- Very few children in the religious education classes. Most of the families don’t go to mass.
- It starts with us. Why are they sending their children, but not coming themselves?
- You don’t reach youth without reaching the whole family. If it’s not supported in the home, it doesn’t matter.
- These discussions have been had since the 70’s – nothing seems to change. Concerns for the *whole* church.
- How do we connect with the youth?

- Not just our parish – people in the mid-age range (20s – 40s) – where will we be if we cannot keep them. We have a noisy, busy culture, and have not done a lot to keep them.
- People my age (young 20s, just graduated college), some are drawn to the church but they think “I don’t know what to do, how to pray.” Afraid of messing up, making a mistake. Children’s programs exist, but is there a way to have something that applies to *my* demographic?
- We have not identified barriers that parents face – busy, indifferent, lazy.
- Would be nice if we had more family functions (that would include children and family groups).
- Confirmation is like graduation – once confirmed, you’re done.
- If you do not have safe environment training/background check, you cannot participate (*e.g.*, cook/volunteer at local mission).
- The lack of priests is a big issue. The church should look into the celibacy rule, whether changing that would cause more to consider/become priests.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE GOING FORWARD –

- Church needs to be relevant. When you invite people, what are they going to see?
- The laity can raise us up.
- While we have some great things going on, I think we could do so much more. I am working on Ananias Training from the Catherine of Siena Institute. The groundwork is being laid.
- Youth inviting youth.
- Developing a “Theology on Tap” or “Faith on Tap” program – meeting at a local brew pub – would attract young people. (Limiting alcohol consumption, of course, but more attractive than sitting in a church basement.)
- Having a strong spiritual leader, to be a good example and organize all the talents and gifts that each person brings.
- Why do we do what we do at Mass? Maybe a different topic each week/every other week/month, about what the Mass really means.
- One on one invitations.

