



On Saturday, September 23rd, 2023 over 130 People of God from the Archdiocese of Boston gathered at the Pastoral Center in Braintree, Massachusetts to participate in a **Synodal Gathering**, responding to Pope Francis' invitation to communion, mission, and participation and to become a more synodal, listening Church. Inspired by the two Vatican Documents (*Enlarge the Space of Your Tent* and the *Instrumentum Laboris*) the faithful from across the Archdiocese gathered in faith, hope, and charity to discern the ways the Church is being called to **Rethink Women's Participation**. Attentive to the Holy Spirit, animators from St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish (Chestnut Hill), St. Anthony Shrine, St. John and St. Thomas Parishes (Peabody), Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Glastonbury Abbey, Sacred Heart and Our Lady's Collaborative (Newton), St. Katharine Drexel, The Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Paul (Cambridge), St. Cecilia's, Our Lady of Sorrows (Sharon), St. John - St. Paul Collaborative (Wellesley), St. Patrick's (Stoneham), Mission Church, St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Acton), St. Mary of the Assumption (Brookline), St. Joseph's (Wakefield), Christ by the Sea Collaborative (Hull), Stonehill College, Holy Rood Collaborative (Chelmsford) and the Sisters of Charity brought decades of prayer, petition, and lament to spiritual conversations currently being discerned at the highest levels of the Church's structure.

The day began with an opening liturgy replete with scripture readings, imaginative prayer and Catholic female-penned poetry. A powerful witness was provided by Kayla August, a Doctoral Student at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Kayla broke open the Gospel for the **25th Sunday in Ordinary Time**, reminding participants that while it would be tempting to envision the late-arriving workers in the Parable of the Vineyard Workers as lazy, and the parable 'unfair', it was more likely they were last-chosen for a perceived shortfall in their own ability. They were always poised to work, just not yet invited. Kayla witnessed that while restoring woman to diaconal ministry wouldn't change *that* she preached, it would change *where* she was able to do so. Kayla shared that she preaches so that her nieces might someday preach - a legacy of hope for generations of Catholic women to come, shared almost unanimously by all participants.

Following the opening liturgy, participants were divided into diverse small groups, facilitated following the guidelines for Conversations in the Spirit, provided by the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the Synod on Synodality's preparatory documents. Small groups spent an hour in communal discernment over four questions and completing three sentence stems. Those three sentence stems were shared as a community witness from each small group.



QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATIONS IN THE SPIRIT:

Inspired by the Instrumentum Laboris

- Share your name and a memory of a woman who transmitted the faith in your family or parish, in consecrated life, lay institutions or as teachers and catechists.
- What charisms of women are already present and at work in the Church today? What does the Spirit teach us through them?
- How can women be included in greater numbers in governance, decision-making, mission and ministries and all levels of the Church? How can this participation be given the support of appropriate structures so that this does not remain just a general aspiration?
- What ministries could be created or reopened to provide opportunities for women's effective participation in discernment and decision making bodies in the Church?

FRUITS OF COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT:

Completing the follow stem sentences

The Holy Spirit is calling women to ...

Women's Baptismal Dignity means ...

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women ...



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN BOSTON
"THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CALLING WOMEN TO..."

The Holy Spirit is calling women to renew the Church through boldly using their voices and gifts to live out their vocations in equal dignity.

The Holy Spirit is calling all **women to** stay, full participation in the sacramental life of the Church, to preach the word and to renew the face of the earth.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to be faithful to the struggle and not give up.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to full and active participation in the Church. No apologies.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to courageously initiate being heard and not just seen in the Church.



The Holy Spirit is calling women to speak the truth of their calling to leadership and to voice their vision.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to recognize and embrace their God-given gifts and help the Church evolve.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to live out the call to holiness in full, visible participation in the life of the Church.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to live their baptismal calling as equal disciples, to preserve and save the Church.

The Holy Spirit is calling women and girls to stand in solidarity, recognizing and using their gifts and voices to occupy the space which God calls them to courageously.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to lead in the virtues of Synodality through invitation, leadership, preaching, and community participation.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to full participation in our Church and in all that entails.

The Holy Spirit is calling women to full participation in every ministry of the Church.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN BOSTON "WOMEN'S BAPTISMAL DIGNITY MEANS..."



Women's Baptismal Dignity means the right to participate fully in the life of the Church.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means the same as the baptismal dignity of men, equally loved and called by Christ and empowered to live out their individual call.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means full participation in the Church for we reflect the Image of God, and Jesus Christ.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means to embody Christ in ministry and realize the fullness of their baptismal calling.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means 7 sacraments instead of 6.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means ability to exercise their God-given gifts to serve more fully.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means they are made in the image and likeness of God; they are integral to the Body of Christ and the work of their hands and feet are Holy.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means women are made in the Image of God and so are already Priest, Prophet and King.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means they are made in the image and likeness of God; they are integral to the Body of Christ and the work of their hands and feet are Holy.

Women and Girls' Baptismal Dignity means we are each images of Christ, anointed as priest, prophet, and rulers, and meant to renounce every form of evil.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means we are co-creators in the shared life of the Church and recognized as children of God representing the Image of Christ in the world.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means that we are full members of the Body of Christ.

Women's Baptismal Dignity means full inclusion in Church both sacramental and administrative.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN BOSTON

"THE CHURCH WILL BE MINISTERED TO MORE COMPLETELY WHEN..."

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women are as free as men to respond to the Holy Spirit and the call of the community.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women are seen as equal participants in the life of the Church and hold a seat in the Church with a voice and a vote.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women's holy equity is visible and women are not viewed as competition.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women have equality and there is a form of structural process in hearing grievance.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women are included in all levels of decision-making and serve as leaven transforming a top-down patriarchal system.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women's full dignity is recognized and their work and ministry is represented and valued equally at both the local parish level and in Church governance.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women can hear and respond to God's call in whatever form that may take.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women and girls are recognized as equals and their gifts are welcomed and embraced.



The Church will be ministered to more completely when women more completely minister to the Church.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women are recognized for our baptismal dignity and encouraged to answer the call of The Holy Spirit.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women have the same opportunities as men.

The Church will be ministered to more completely when women are invited by the Church, receive an apology and are reconciled to her.

CONCLUDING IN EUCHARISTIA

After a communal gathering of the spiritual fruits of small group conversations, the group gathered at the Eucharistic Table, participating in Vigil Mass celebrated by Father Richard Lennan. Women and men gathered their voices in hymns and psalms, petitioning for a more recognized place at the table for women and that the movement the Holy Spirit over us all would '**not remain just a general aspiration**'. In his homily, Father Lennan called back to the Parable of the Generous Landowner, reminding the congregation of the landowner's distribution of both **justice** and **generosity**. Father Lennan highlighted what he found to be 'the most intriguing part' of the Instrumentum Laboris in the Church's call to both **love** and **truth**. Where in love are we called to be more than just? Where are we called to be generous? Can we be generous with the Church's gift of the sacraments? Can we be generous with our imaginations and our willingness to be transformed by encounter?

Participants offered the fruits of communal discernment on the altar for Mass, trusting the Holy Spirit to stir them into flame and for Our Lord to intercede on our behalf, in Glory to Christ's Church.

Participants left inspired and filled with hope that the Synod on Synodality would in fact **Rethink Women's Participation** and through its work more effectively recognize **Women's Baptismal Dignity** by inviting them into full participation in the mission of the Church.

