



June 30, 2022

The geographic territory of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise is the entire State of Idaho. We are a Mission Diocese covering just over 84,000 square miles. The population of our state is approaching 2 million. The Catholic population is about 11 percent of the total. In comparison, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints comprises about 19 percent-of the population, evangelical Protestants are about 21 percent and mainline Protestants about 16 percent. Overall, 67 percent of Idahoans identify themselves as Christians, while 27 percent are unaffiliated.

Our Diocese is made up of 51 parishes, 31 stations and 25 chapels, with 60 priests serving in these various communities.

As we began our Synodal Process, we took to heart the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who encouraged us to become "experts in the art of encounter; not so much by organizing events or theorizing about problems, as in taking time to encounter the Lord and one another. Time to devote to prayer and to Adoration - that form of prayer that we so often neglect - devoting time to Adoration, and to hearing what the Spirit wants to say to the Church."

In summarizing the experience gleaned from the synodal gatherings, as well as the online responses to our questions, I would say the fruitfulness of such a process proved to be positive. There were three main unifying and similar points that surfaced from our parish and university communities as they gathered in regional settings. About one-half of our parishes participated, giving us more than 6,000 responses to questions we posed to them. Another 300-plus responses to the same

questions came from online participation.

The attached document describes the recurring themes put forward by those who participated. What is not stated in the summary is an underlying favorable sense of greater unity in our communities as expressed by those who participated in our regional gatherings. Time and again, people mentioned how much they enjoyed meeting with their brothers and sisters in faith. These regional gatherings gave them an opportunity to share faith and friendship with the broader community. For many Catholics, the evenings of prayer, Adoration and table conversations were the first time they had the opportunity to come together since COVID-19 began two years earlier.

There was, however, a negative aspect to the Synodal Process that put a damper on the beginning of the process we were called upon to undertake as a Diocese. Right before our gathering sessions commenced, the German Synodal Process was making headlines in Catholic news services. The response to this process as reported by the media caused our faithful in Idaho to question the true intention of the Synodal Process. Many who attended our regional gatherings entered with a sense of suspicion and deep concern. In response to this concern, the questions that were written by our Synodal Process Team were designed to keep the conversation more focused. Before we initiated our conversations, we allowed for prayer, Adoration and quiet reflection at each regional gathering. In doing so, we were intentional in following the invitation given by Pope Francis at his October 10, 2021, opening Mass of the Synodal Path. At that time, the Holy Father asked dioceses throughout the world to make this a journey of prayer and discernment as we call upon the Holy Spirit to guide us with listening and discerning hearts.

In conclusion, I offer a simple summary of what was discovered by the process.

I would say that about 10 percent of our people want to see the Church become more "traditional," turning the hands of time back to a pre-Vatican II Church. Another 10 percent would like to see the Church become more liberal, not too dissimilar to the views expressed in the German Synodal Process. The vast majority, about 80 percent, seek to deepen the faith they love as practiced in their existing communities. At the same time, they desire to bring their faith more purposefully into the world in which they live by involving themselves in evangelizing. Really, none of this was a surprise to their Bishop!

I would like to conclude with the words of Pope Francis who brought the Synodal Process deeper into to the Diocese of Boise when he asked us: "May we be pilgrims in love with the Gospel and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit. Let us not miss out on the grace-filled opportunities born of encounter, listening and discernment. In the joyful conviction that, even as we see the Lord, He always comes with His love to meet us first."

Blessings on the work of evangelization that remains here in Idaho, our nation and the world will come to us as we continue to seek for greater truth in our lives as experienced in the beauty of our Catholic Faith.

As I remain yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Christensen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a cross at the end.

Most Reverend Peter F. Christensen
Bishop of the Diocese of Boise

DIOCESE OF BOISE -REGION XII

DIOCESAN SYNTHESIS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The methodology used in the synodal process for the Diocese of Boise follows:

Diocesan Team was selected

- Representatives from each Deanery and various ministries throughout the Diocese were selected by the Bishop.

The Goal

- To revitalize our Diocese through the power of the Eucharist as we renew our invitation to "Remain in Him" through prayer, reception of the Holy Eucharist and Adoration. We also take to heart the invitation of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, to Encounter, Listen and Discern God's presence in our lives, as well as, to do the same with others with whom we interact.

The Plan

- To encourage our parishes, communities and institutions we represent to engage deeper into the practice of worship and prayer in the presence of the Holy Eucharist, as discerned at each local level.
- At the same time, during this first year of our Eucharistic Renewal and the Synodal Path, our goal is to surrender ourselves to encounter more deeply our relationship with Our Lord Jesus Christ as we journey forward into deeper faith as we encounter Him.
- During the second year, we will center on a deeper understanding of the Eucharist by means of increased catechesis. This will help us to open our hearts and listen to what the Lord reveals to us -the second phase of listening, as promoted by Pope Francis, is to hear the Word of God.
- The third year will be the celebration of our faith as lived in the Eucharist, as well as, the Synodal Year of Discernment as we work together to discover, in the Pope's own words, "the Holy Spirit's fresh paths and new ways of speaking."

The fruit of the synodal sessions can be summarized in the following manner:

- The respondents are very prayerful people.
- COVID and life challenges, in all ethnic and socio-economic communities, led the way to an increase in faith. The importance of the Eucharist and the other sacraments became more meaningful. Increased prayer life.
- Pastors and parishes are appreciated, even during challenging times. Many attributed their increase in faith to the parish communities and/ or the pastors and their witness to the Gospel.
- Respondents to our survey say they have participated in seminars/programs/ studies at both the Adult and Young Adult levels. Faith formation within families has also increased families' willingness to offer help in this area.
- Respondents expressed a need for building communities that have ethnic differences so that these communities can be more unified.
- Respondents expressed a desire to increase their service to others through participation/volunteering in various ministries.
- Respondent expressed their stories of conversions and reversions as they were returning to the faith.
- Respondents expressed a desire for more opportunity to increase our Catholic identity and celebrate our Catholicism with greater emphasis on the Saints, the Blessed Mother, our traditions and sacraments.
- Respondents want more emphasis on evangelization; sharing the Good News to bring people back to the Catholic Faith and inviting others to a deeper relationship with Christ.
- In the area of marriage and family life, husbands and wives credit each other for an increase of prayer life and faith and young adults who have moved from home credit their parents for their desire to attend Mass in places away from home. FOCUS missionaries have contributed to the life of faith on our college campuses.