

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Pius X Parish,

In 2021, Pope Francis issued an invitation to the global Church to gather in prayer, listening and discernment to forge the future of the Church for the twenty-first century.

Earlier this year parishioners of St. Pius X convened in the process of Synodality, a way to gather and participate in listening and sharing toward the goal of finding ways to connect the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Church to our everyday lives. The format and content for the sessions were provided by the Archdiocese.

I would like to thank all who participated in our parish's Synod on Synodality discussions and on-line survey. Our responses as a parish, along with the responses of those submitted by other local parishes; Catholic orders; students in Catholic universities and high schools around the globe will be consolidated, summarized, and shared at the Synod of Synodality in Rome during October 2023.

The submission by the Archdiocese of Newark to The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has been made available on the Archdiocese of Newark website and is also available on the St. Pius X website.

The Archdiocese of Newark submission is comprehensive and well worth the time to review. A companion piece, St. Pius X Church is Convoked in Synod – Overview, also appears on our parish website. Below are summarized highlights of St. Pius X responses. There are no significant differences to those of other parishes as compiled in the Archdiocesan submission.

I. Highlights of Responses Pertaining to the universal Church

What supports our journeying together within the universal Church?

- The universal church allows for the traditions of the sacred scripture and the sacraments to unite all the faithful on our journey towards Christ. “Wherever you go in the world, the mass structure will be the same and you will know what to expect.” The common beliefs, rituals, traditions, and sacramental rites continue to unite the faithful as the collective body of Christ. Worshipping together brings a sense of belonging, identity, and peace.
- Serving others is another way we “walk together” in our community”. The Church allows for mission-based opportunities to unite its people through service to those in need. “The immense power of the Catholic Church is used in service to [help] people with hospitals, schools, [prisons], food, pantries, shelter and many support programs. This is what we are supposed to be doing in the world.”

What is necessary to journey together within the universal Church in the twenty first century?

The universal Church can benefit by becoming more welcoming and inclusive.

- Expand the role and privileges of women in the Church. "It's hard to be a woman in the church today. As women, we are denied full participation. Although there has been a great change in the last twenty years, it's not enough for many girls. Although we believe without a doubt that God loves us, it's hard to explain to our daughters and goddaughters why they should be part of an organization that doesn't value them as much as their brothers."

- The marginalization of divorced or divorced-and-remarried Catholics not accepted as fully participating members of the Church tarnishes them with sin. There is a call to change rules regarding divorced Catholics.

-The marginalization of those who live as LGBTQ+ prohibits participation in the Church. "So many of my friends in the LGBTQ community have left the church because it's damaging to be seen as "disordered" and your committed love is not worthy of solemnizing as a sacrament. When the LGBTQ community is a person of your family, being a part of a faith that isn't fully accepting can feel callous."

-The man-made rigid and dominant hierarchy of the Church is remote from laity and religious orders and is not viewed as what Jesus envisaged. *Denial* was the theme: of women being ordained; of priests being able to marry; of celibacy being optional for priests. Refusal to change will cause greater exodus from the Church. "*The (hierarchical) Church is the barrier between Jesus and me*".

Atonement and justice for sex-abuse crisis and cover-up.

The long history of the Church's unwillingness to address the priest abuse scandals and to hold transgressors accountable is a hurdle too high for many. The lack of action to protect and acknowledge the most vulnerable victims – both children and adults - has driven Catholics away from the Church and inhibits them from returning.

II. **Responses pertaining to momentum and concerns in the local parishes.**

What are the major concerns of parishioners and how is journeying together working at St. Pius X Parish?

Concerns

There is worry for the future of the Church, and by extension, for parishes.

The dominant concern of participants was that family members who have been raised in the Church were not practicing their faith due to loss of confidence in the Church, and the competing elements of society (work, social media, other activities deemed more attractive).

Parishioners – the young through the elderly – were disappearing from parish life. With the caveat of the two years of the pandemic, noted was the diminishing investment of time and energy to maintain a robust Catholic Community.

The Positive - How are we Journeying Together at St. Pius X in 2022

Coincident with the 2020 arrival of a new parish pastor ready to engage peoples' spirits, and the development of treatments, protocols and technologies to drive through the pandemic, the determination of parishioner volunteers grew and thrived to build community, worship God and create disciples.

The momentum.

With the support of our Parish Pastor, Fr. Kevin Kilgore, and the continual interaction with parishioners including the Synod exercise, new and expanded ministries and programs have been developed through the work and dedication of the Parish Pastoral Council and the many volunteers who have emerged to strengthen our parish community and influence those beyond our parish boundaries. Included is our local Knights of Columbus who continue their decades long support of our parish. A summary of activity is included below.

In February 2021, a new Parish Pastoral Council was formed; the Finance Council has been strengthened; a Parish Vision Statement and Mission Statements have been written and embraced. A Welcome & Hospitality Ministry was formed and resurrected New Parishioner Events. The SPX Café, where all can mingle after Masses, opened. The Beyond Soup Ministry resumed its weekly meal preparation for a Newark shelter and has hosted quarterly themed-Senior Lunches. Mommy and Me is being formed. SPX has collaborated with Good Counsel Home in Rockland County to donate supplies and other on-going services to provide a safe home for young mothers and their infants.

Monthly Eucharistic Adoration has been re-established. We anticipate the second All Souls Day Mass and Celebration next month. Currently, we are in the third series of the Bereavement program.

The first ALPHA program, engaging people in guided small-group sessions to have a conversation about Jesus, has recently kicked off with plans for additional series to come. A 2023 Women's Cornerstone Weekend is in the works. A faith themed speaker series for adults begins this fall and the monthly SPX Book Club initiated this spring continues. Religious Education for children through teens and adjacent groups continue.

Parish galas and dinners have been successful, and more are planned. The Golf Outing continued as an annual event, along with Pocket-Book-Bingo. Plans for Quiz Nights are in the works. The second Color Run took place in September, this year to promote Suicide Prevention Awareness.

The focus of the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Staff in the next year will be Families and Children. We must expand from Children's Religious Education as a check-the-box transaction to a transformative life-long involvement for families and their children.

Much of the momentum at SPX has been influenced by discussion among parishioners. The Synod sessions were invaluable for us as a Parish. We can hope that the messages in the submissions from Catholics around the world are heard in Rome next year, and that the issues raised are considered crucial and we begin to see change.

I want to thank the members of the Parish Pastoral Council who organized and executed the program for the SPX Synod on Synodality submission, in particular Mariliza Tong, Synod on Synodality Program Lead; and Alicia Soltys and Scott Litchfield who contributed to this summary.

With gratitude,

Rosemarie Loffredo

Chairman

Parish Pastoral Council

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