

REPORT ON SYNODAL LISTENING SESSIONS

St Mary's Our Lady of the Lake Parish

Cooperstown, New York

- **Overview of the local context, with some key facts and statistics, as a background against which to place the content of the synthesis.**
 - This parish has 490 registered families and is part of the Leatherstocking Vicariate.
- **What was done to engage as many participants as possible and to reach out to the peripheries?**
 - Announcements at least twice in parish bulletin, announced from altar, handouts distributed at all Masses for two weeks in advance, story in daily paper, website
- **What was the extent of participation?**
 - Three sessions on different days, variety of times. Participants 15, 15, and 20, with sum of 50. Participants were largely active parishioners
- **What were the main questions posed?**
 - What have been your experiences with the Church? Please describe your joys, hopes, disappointments.
 - Do you feel connected to the Church? Disconnected – in what ways? What can the Church do to enable you to be better connected, more a part of the Church?
 - Does the Church listen effectively to what you have to say? Does the Church offer the right environment for communication? What hinders or enables speaking up courageously and candidly in our Church?
 - What new dreams and visions might the Holy Spirit be inspiring for the Church? How do you want the Church to be?
 - What particular issues does the Church need to pay more attention to? What areas of mission are we neglecting?
 - Is the Church effectively promoting and enabling the active participation of all the faithful in Church liturgy and ministries?
 - How can parishioners become better connected with one another? How can St. Mary's become a more sharing and united church community?

What have been your experiences of Church?

What have been your joys?

Pope/Teachings/Global Church:

- The current Pope is very down-to-earth, has exposed corruption, and works to make things right, tries to move the Church forward

- The unchangeability of Church traditions, teachings on the Sacraments, marriage, family life, priesthood
- Feel at peace with the Catholic Church
- Christ's gift of unity to the Church
- Universality of the Church around the world
- The charity of the Catholic Church and its contributions to society - hospitals, universities, etc.
- The synod discussions the Church is having are very positive

Sacraments/Relationship With God:

- A personal, loving relationship with God
- The sacredness and the gift of the Sacramental life of the Church, the Eucharist, The Word, and unity of the Church
- The Sacraments are grounding
- The joy of being a convert
- The Latin Mass
- Attend Mass for the Eucharist, redemption, wisdom, and fellow travelers
- The Church is a source of strength and peace for the family and does not waiver

Faith Formation: "Formed" platform for daily or occasional use.

Other: The positive support received from the Birthright group

What have been your hopes?

- That the Church will welcome all, be radical in reaching out and in accommodating others, and be less dogmatic
- That the Church will be inclusive without compromising the sanctity of marriage
- That the Church will permit all to participate in the Mass and Sacraments
- That those who have left the Church will return
- An increase in young people at Mass
- An increase in new priest vocations
- That the Pope will hear/see the results from the synod and guided by the Holy Spirit, will make the right decisions
- That the Pope will continue to try to move the Church forward

What have been your disappointments?

General:

- The Church is stuck in tradition and is inflexible
- There are two separate Churches - the one Jesus established and human hierarchy
- Catholic schools are more liberal: differentiate God, religion, Church is human institution that attempts to apply religion
- There is a lack of outward signs that give witness to being Catholic, such as nuns do not always distinguish themselves by their clothing

Church And Politics:

- Tension in the Church - conservative/liberal at hierarchy of Church
- Too conservative bishops begot ultra conservative priests

Dogma:

- Too much dogma - dogmatism is not what Jesus intended
- The Catholic religion can be complex and intimidating - rules based disproportionately

Sacraments:

- The Church bars some people from receiving the Sacraments
- Sacraments are not available because of a lack of male vocations

Women/Priests:

- Women are treated poorly by the Church: They are excluded from being popes, priests, or deacons and do most of the work in churches
- Scripture language "men" is insulting, and women and men are portrayed unequally in readings
- Priests are put on a pedestal
- Priests are not permitted to marry
- Lack of a sense that we are all priestly people

Ecumenism: The Church turns away from ecumenism and is limited to "Christianity" - does not go to other churches

Social Justice/Outreach:

- Neglect of the poor, those who have left the Church

- The Church causes tension with moral teachings and should evolve regarding social changes

Welcome:

- The Church is not welcoming to all and is rigid in its opinion regarding divorced people, LGBTQ, etc.
- Adolescents struggling with sexuality, gender, etc., see the Church as unaccepting

Youth: Lack of youth participation and a decreasing number of young families attending Mass and receiving the Sacraments

Transparency/Communication: The Church doesn't listen, sticks to law, ostracism by clergy if you do - listening starts at the top with the Pope

When have you felt connected? During synod events

When have you felt disconnected?

- Have felt "Why am I here?"
- When the message from the Church is one of exclusion or is overly dogmatic
- When one priest refused absolution, and another gave absolution
- When the diocese puts money ahead of people

What might the Church learn from your experiences?

- The Pope and bishops should not be involved in politics but should stand with Canon law
- The Church should make it easier to enter/approach and should develop more radical methods of reaching people
- The Church should be more welcoming and less dogmatic - dogmatism is not what Jesus intended
- The Church should encourage more young people to return to the Church
- The Church should pay more attention to the decline in the Catholic Church and all religions
- The Church should fight back against the current anti-Church environment
- Women should be given more respect and responsibility in the Church

What new dreams and surprising visions for the Church might the Holy Spirit be inspiring? Suggestions:

General:

- By our actions and words make all welcome to join the Church and participate in the Mass and Holy Communion without compromising the sanctity of marriage
- The Church should stay true to the bible, rather than man-made rules
- The Church should modernize the Liturgy, especially the music

Ecumenism:

- Embrace ecumenism, especially to engage youth
- Russian Orthodox Communion
- Review catechism teachings for children

Faith Formation:

- More adult/youth education and education on why we need to attend Mass
- Encourage viewing of “The Chosen”
- Seminary for lay people for gaining wisdom and understanding
- Praying for priests is not enough; laity should be trained in interpreting the Gospel

Resource Use/Education: Invest in birth control policy education

Social Justice/Outreach/Sexuality:

- The Church should be more politically engaged in social responsibilities
- The Church should address the death penalty.
- The Church should change its stance on sexuality
- Outreach and education to prevent abortion
- Outreach to all who have stepped away from the Church, have substance abuse problems, have had abortions, unwed mothers, LGBTQ, divorcees, refugees, adolescents struggling with sexuality, gender, etc.- extreme liberal views are easily accessible, but young people view the Church as unaccepting.
- Continue charity, locally to worldwide - Help people out of poverty through action as well as funding - sponsor a family or child programs

Women/Priests And Church:

- Women should be given more respect and responsibility in the Church
- Involve more lay people in decision making at all levels

- Permit priests to marry

Clericalism: Need to be very clear that child abuse issues which many associate with the Catholic Church were due to individuals not the Church itself

Welcome/Diversity: Better representation of diverse races in pictorial representation (Jesus was likely not white)

Communication:

- A more open climate for communication
- The Church must find better ways to communicate without the involvement of the media
- Cooperstown is the tail end of the diocese in our area - diocese should pay attention to all counties

What actions can you take? What actions should be taken by your parish or the diocese?

- Make Pre Cana more accessible/simpler
- Permit women to be popes, priests, deacons, and priests to marry
- Define ways to engage more people to support local priests in various tasks given the shortage of priests
- Promote faith formation - EWTN, Formed, The Chosen, etc.
- Make others aware of the Albany Tribunal and its healing effects on those who have suffered in abusive marriages
- Make documentation relating to each stage of the synod process available
- Make the College of Cardinals minutes available
- Provide more information on the Church leaders' thoughts regarding the pedophilia issue, which is not over yet
- Provide reparations and closure of wrongs done in the name of the Church - physical abuse and cultural genocide - apologies from the bishops
- How do we compensate for a lack of resources as exists in Albany? - one idea: get more speakers to come to the local parish
- Bishop should respond to all written correspondence and communicate diocese news more effectively
- The diocese should not prioritize money over people

Please use this space to add anything else that you want Pope Francis and/or your local parish to know.

- Priests are put on a pedestal and not treated as regular people
- The synod process is not trustworthy because of the United Catholic Bishops hypocrisy
- The Church is not doing its job
- The Church needs a solid foundation
- The Church should be less dogmatic - dogmatism is not what Jesus intended
- The Church only responds to abortion and ignores all else
- We don't work for solutions, only pray
- Prayers of Faithful: pray for solutions to change society; be practical with prayers
- We should live for each other rather than ourselves.
- Replace the large cross with the body of Jesus that is displayed so prominently in churches with a symbol of something more positive like Jesus' body ascending to heaven like a dove. Even the symbol of the cross, like on necklaces could be a halo or something softer than the cross.
- Omit Consubstantial from creed