

**PARISH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
PARISH-WIDE SYNOD LISTENING SESSION: June 7, 2022**

**20 parishioners were in attendance. The session was moderated by Dcn. Michael Gaulke and Fr. Michael Brzezowski.**

**The comments from each section below—in boldface type—are the ones that Holy Spirit Parish would especially like the “Diocesan Synod Committee” to consider as it prepares its diocesan-wide report to the USCCB.**

**LISTENING ...**

Questions considered:

*How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people?  
What groups or individuals are left on the margins?  
What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own?*

Comments:

Some older Catholics, who may not have facility with (or access to) computers, the internet, social media, etc. find these technologies to be limitations on the ability to engage with some parish programs (like livestreaming, FORMED, Flocknote, etc.).

One person suggested the following: Let all in church at Mass write down one need/request they would like from the parish. These sheets would be placed in a basket at the exits of the church and reviewed by the Parish Council.

We need more engagement; that is, personal contact and interaction with people, to encourage active listening.

**New parishioners and new Catholics (from the RCIA) are often left on the margins. People desire fellowship as well as opportunities for worship and spirituality in the local parish. We need to continue to foster welcoming, socializing, and companionship in the spiritual life.**

One person suggested that many people need to take some initiative on their own. There are already many opportunities available for people to be engaged in parish life at the Parish of the Holy Spirit.

## **CELEBRATION ...**

Questions considered:

*How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community?*

Comments:

We should consider publishing the Sunday Mass homilies and keep the livestreamed Masses archived longer on our Facebook page. We should also continue livestreaming Masses indefinitely; especially for the sick and homebound.

More lay ministers (Eucharistic Ministers) to the sick and homebound are needed.

We need to encourage lay participation in liturgical roles: altar servers, choir members, etc.

The role of Greeters is crucial. A warm and engaging welcome to Mass (especially to visitors) can make all the difference and make a lasting impression.

More liturgical catechesis is needed to explain the various parts of the Mass and the meaning of its symbols, gestures, etc.

**We need to recognize that the youth of today cannot be “scheduled” as in the past; that is, they prefer spontaneity when it comes to volunteering, or assisting with roles at Mass. They are too busy with other activities, so they prefer not to make long-term commitments.**

We should place a greater emphasis on the virtues of the Christian life; not just on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during Lent.

When it is safe to do so again, childcare should be offered during weekend Masses and other parish events.

## **SHARING RESPONSIBILITY ...**

Questions considered:

*Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. What areas of mission are we neglecting?*

Comments:

We should consider revising our parish's Mission Statement; making it more concise and relevant to what we can reasonably accomplish.

The comment was made that the Catholic Church should be more visible in the public sphere ... billboards, signage, TV and radio, public service announcements, etc.

**The shared responsibility of the Church is outlined beautifully by Jesus in Mt chapter 25 and Mt chapter 28; that is, we need to continue to help and serve others in Christian charity and promote social justice, we need to continue to evangelize, to sanctify the Church's members (personal holiness) and the world through our witness to Christ, and we need to continue to teach the truth (which the world often ignores). On the point of teaching, there is a great need for continued adult education to form true disciples of Jesus for the work of lay evangelization.**

## **DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY ...**

Questions considered:

*What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?*

Comments:

Respect for life. The family is the foundation for strong human relationships, friendships, etc.

We are losing our youth and young adults. We should continue to analyze and reflect on the question: "Why aren't people choosing to participate in parish life?"

It is difficult for the Catholic Church to compete with other churches and Christian communities who offer a more "entertaining" style of worship.

**We need more transparency and a willingness to “speak-out” from our church’s leaders. There are too many “grey areas” in theological and moral matters, with different bishops (both here in the U.S.A. and abroad (Germany)) offering varying opinions on core issues related to the Catholic faith. As a result of this, people become confused when “mixed signals” are sent. A consistent prophetic voice is needed which emphasizes the truth; which, as Jesus explained, will “set us free.”**

The majority of youth today have friends and acquaintances who are homosexual. How can the church respond better to the notion, common in society today, that “love is love” regardless of one’s preference either for a same-sex or opposite-sex life partner? This notion makes perfect sense to many youth, yet the Church continues to describe any same-sex attraction as “disordered.”

The comment was made that, if we as Catholics are truly “salt of the earth and light of the world,” then people and the world will be attracted to our Church.

## **AUTHORITY, PARTICIPATION, AND DISCERNMENT ...**

Questions considered:

*How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted?*

*How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?*

*What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice?*

Comments:

Local parishes should do a better job of promoting small group faith/prayer communities.

**Women should be allowed to receive the “official” Church ministries of Lector, Acolyte, and Catechist. Pope Francis has allowed this in the Diocese of Rome, so why not here? Women feel left out of the mix when only men are officially recognized and instituted as Lector, Acolyte, or Catechist.**

To promote ministries, it was suggested that the ministry heads describe their ministries, perhaps at the conclusion of Mass during the announcements. This would be an ideal way to inform the parishioners

about the opportunities for serving in those ministries. Describing the process for how one is trained for a particular form of service is also needed, so that people can assess the level of commitment involved.

## **MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS ...**

**Why does it take so long to become Catholic? The RCIA process can take up to two calendar years in some parishes.** What can be done to streamline this?