



# JOURNEYING TOGETHER

## Synod Listening Sessions Saint Patrick Parish, Hudson, Wisconsin

Members and friends of Saint Patrick Parish have come together to listen to one another and discern the workings of the Holy Spirit. At the invitation of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, we share this report of our synodal consultation.

MARCH 2022

# SAINT PATRICK PARISH | SYNOD REPORT

*AN EXERCISE IN CALLING FORTH THE HOLY SPIRIT*

Pope Francis has invited the entire Universal Church to participate in the synodal process or “journeying together on the same road.” In the Synod 2021-2023, he has asked all of us to come together in a series of listening sessions and call on the Holy Spirit to help us to reflect, share, and report on our past and present experiences, plus our hopes and dreams for the future.

**“We will be holding gatherings to open the doors to rich, vulnerable, and honest conversations about where the Church’s members are thriving and where they are struggling.”**

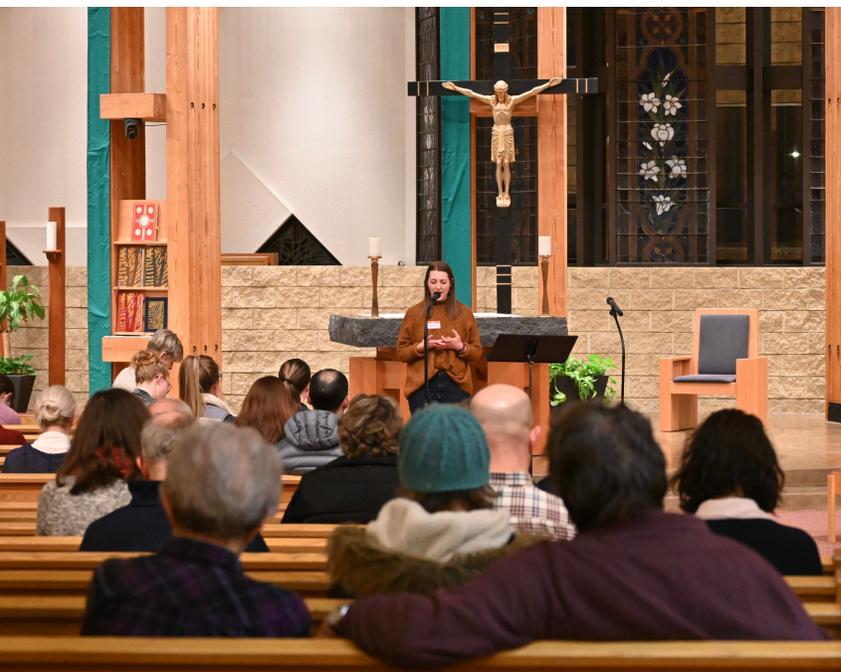
***Invitation to Parish Listening Session***

Saint Patrick Parish held a series of listening sessions in February and invited anyone with a relationship to our parish or the Catholic Church. In response, over 140 people participated in person. The participants included 7th and 8th graders at our school, a high school faith formation small group, young adults, parents of young children, empty nesters, retirees, and one person who proudly shared being a parishioner for 87 years. The groups that came together were reflective of the diversity in our Hudson community and had at least one thing in common - the desire to listen and understand.

As part of the listening sessions, participants were broken into smaller discussion groups. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions intended to stimulate discussion about experiences with our faith. Participants were asked to listen, share, and support one another. This was not an exercise in problem solving or trying to reach agreement. These conversations were meant to build trust, call forth the Holy Spirit, and allow for sharing of thoughts and feelings on topics important to our faith lives. Many people confirmed that this process was fruitful and that simply listening to each other has tremendous value. We believe new and deeper relationships were formed.



Each group had a scribe who took notes. These notes allowed us to prepare a summary two page report for our Diocese, which is presented below. The report is a short synthesis of six themes which emerged over the course of the multiple sessions. Parishioners were also given the option to submit feedback online directly to the Diocese if unable to attend in person. All of this input will eventually be synthesized by each diocese across the country and submitted as a United States report to the Vatican. The Holy Father will receive the benefit of all of these many discussions happening across the globe in response to his invitation. In addition, at Saint Patrick Parish, the key feedback from the listening sessions will be shared with our parish leadership: Pastoral Council, Finance Council, staff, and relevant ministry leads. More information about the entire Synod process can be found on our parish website under the tab labeled Synod.



Saint Patrick Parish called on the Holy Spirit with the Synodal Prayer which says in part: "Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right."



Saint Augustine inspires us with this quote: “In essentials - unity; in non-essentials - liberty; and in all things - charity.” These timeless words provide a summary of what we aspire to be as Church.

Through the listening sessions many expressed a love for what is essential to our faith, especially the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation. Participants experienced this unity. But the listening sessions reflected that there are things we Catholics disagree about. Many expressed hope that the Church would allow for open dialogue on topics “not essential” to our faith. But through this process people were willing to listen and the virtue of charity was practiced. The presence of the Holy Spirit was truly evident at each of our listening sessions.

One individual commented, “This kind of conversation can change all of us.” We believe having these types of conversations on a regular basis can serve to bring monumental change to our Church and local parish. Each attendee was asked to complete a short survey after the listening sessions and over 95% indicated a desire to continue with this process of listening and seeking to understand. We expect this process or something similar will become a regular event.

“This kind of conversation can change all of us.”



This Synod process of reporting input to the Pope will take two years to complete. For those who came and shared your comments, we thank you for your investment of time and energy. One thing was clear from our time at the listening sessions: we have many different opinions and experiences, but we were willing to take time to just listen patiently and be on the same road together. We hope you will take the time to reflect on this report and continue on the journey together.

The following pages are our diocesan report. The report offers the main themes that were heard among all of the listening sessions and quotes or general comments relating to the themes.



"Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the listening session last night. It was absolutely fascinating. I found myself at a table with five people, including four "older" men, that I would never have otherwise had a reason to talk to, and there we were sharing the most intimate details about our faith lives.

Amazing!"

*Saint Patrick Parishioner*



## SAINT PATRICK PARISH DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR | SYNOD REPORT

**"In essentials - unity; in non-essentials - liberty; and in all things - charity."  
- St. Augustine, Patron of our Diocese**

United in our love for the Church and especially the Sacraments, exercising our liberty by sharing many opinions, and above all showing charity in how we speak and relate to each other, we report that no fist fights broke out. We felt the Holy Spirit at work, assisting us to speak of our experiences with charity and to build trusting relationships. The process of prayer, reflecting on the words of Jesus in Sacred Scripture, and the many efforts to listen patiently, all created the trust necessary to share deeply. Here in two short pages, are the six overarching themes and a few selected quotes. We cannot capture every story or opinion expressed, but we hope this brief report conveys many of the heartfelt words that were exchanged during this process of "journeying together."

### Love for the Church and the Sacraments

1- "The Church is like a mother, imperfect and a bit crazy, but I will always love her and wouldn't leave her."

2- Eucharist - "We are concerned about the lack of faith in the True Presence by many Catholics. We need a return to the basics of our faith: what we do and why we do it."

- "I never realized the importance of the Eucharist to me until Covid-19 hit. It was joyful to return to church, as I had taken it for granted before."

3- Many commentators mentioned the sacrament of Reconciliation is a powerful gift.

4- The topic of Adoration came up frequently - "I am folded in God's arms when I am in Adoration."

5- Many, many expressed strong appreciation for our current Pastor, Fr. John Gerritts, especially his work with the sick, elderly, and grieving. "We are blessed to have Fr. John."

6- Many expressed their admiration for Pope Francis, his tone, approach, humility, and openness. He is a strong representative of our faith to the world. He is very pastoral.

## Hopes and Dreams

- 1- Some expressed support for a change to permit married priests, at least as an option.
- 2- Many expressed a desire for deeper relationships and an emphasis on how we treat each other. The Church should be more respectful, caring, and encouraging of dialogue.
  - “I hope the Church would be more concerned about the spirit of the law, rather than the letter of the law. The case of the priest in Phoenix who performed sacraments now considered invalid because he used one wrong word is a case in point. I doubt that God considers those people unbaptized and subsequent sacraments invalid.”
- 3- Many people stated the Church should be more welcoming and inclusive.
  - “My experience with the church has been one of constant struggle. My family includes many LGBTQ members, many of which no longer come to church because they don’t feel welcome. We (as a church) have focused extensively on enforcing certain aspects of what they view as morality, rather than on welcoming. I want my family to feel welcomed and comfortable.”
  - Some commented that the Church should be more open, welcoming and inclusive of those on the margins. Some expressed the Church should focus on youth who are leaving us in great numbers. Others expressed a desire for more social and fellowship contacts, as well as more catechesis and small group encounters.
  - “What I hope for the Church is to become more welcoming. We have a tendency to deal with people that look like us, think like us. We don’t seek out people who don’t think like us, look different from us, have different political views. At our Church, we are basically white. I go in town and I see a lot of people who are Hispanic. Maybe we’ve got to be more welcoming, and invite them to join us.”
  - “The Church should RESPECT everyone – the unborn, the underserved, the youth, the elderly, the people who don’t think like us, the people who feel shunned by our Church. Our Church should LISTEN better.”
  - “I hope it is a place where people genuinely feel welcome, and that is up to all of us. To connect and reach out. It’s my job to reach out to others and it’s others’ job to reach out to me.”
- 4- There was expressed a desire for a greater focus on core teachings of the Church.





## Diversity

- 1- Many stated a need to embrace different thoughts and opinions, to recognize the diversity of concerns, struggles, and experiences.
- 2- “We should spend more time and energy on what unites us as Catholics rather than highlighting divisions.”
- 3- “We should focus on the core teachings and truths of our faith but leave room for growth, change, progress and new approaches.”
- 4- Some expressed a desire to return to more traditional, reverent liturgies and personal piety/devotions. Others expressed frustration with so-called “conservative movements” in worship styles.
- 5- “There are voices within the Church, as there have always been, telling us that we need to get with the times. But that is not the Church’s mission. Our task is to create the culture, to recreate the times, to fix a broken world. If we are to be creative, let it be creativity in presenting ancient, refreshing truths to a world worn old by novelty.”

## Many People are Hurting, Including Some Hurt by the Church

- 1- On the topic of homosexuality, some expressed a desire for clear teaching on the sin of homosexuality. Others (more in numbers) expressed a desire to reach out to LGBTQ persons and make them feel welcome. There were specific stories of homosexuals feeling hurt and excluded and that they have given up on the Church. Some said we need to stop judging and emphasize God’s mercy.
  - “I have a gay nephew who is married to a man and has two children. He was dismissed from music ministry at his parish because he is gay and the Church believes his children shouldn’t exist. I can’t make sense of the Church’s point of view on this.”
- 2- Many stated we need to do more for broken marriages and divorced Catholics.
- 3- Leadership and Scandals – many people have been hurt locally (St. Patrick) and nationally and they continue to suffer. Some commentators found it difficult to be proud to be a Catholic due to recent scandals.
- 4- The role of women was a frequent and spirited topic. Some asked for more clarity on why women can’t be priests and expressed support for the current all-male priesthood. Many stated the role of women should be elevated and respected. Many stated support for ordination of women to the Diaconate. Others objected to the all-male Priesthood.

## Evangelization/Marketing/Mission Advancement

- 1- We need to work so that others could see the Catholic Church as a more fulfilled and free way of life, rather than just rules and barriers; show that it can be life-giving and a place for everyone.
- 2- It can be difficult to explain what is special or beautiful about our faith. We don't feel confident or equipped.
- 3- We want the Church to stay true and be clear about the message of Jesus. We need this clarity in our current culture.
  - "This is a post-Christian world, how do I navigate that?"
- 4- We desire closer relations with other Christian faiths.
  - "God is love, we can all agree on that."
- 5- We need to remember to serve the poor and homeless. The Church can lead us in this work.
  - "The Church should show the world how to love."
- 6- We need to communicate the good news of our faith, the beauty of our faith, and the positive experiences. We need better "marketing." This would assist with evangelization.

## The Church and Our Parish are Like a Family

- 1- Participants expressed thoughts about the importance of community, seeing the Church as a mother. Some have experienced committed relationships in their parish; where our family is far away, the church is a second family. Like a family reunion, you don't necessarily know everyone but blood is thicker than water.
- 2- Our parish is a tight community and we share a special bond, in prayer and worship
  - "My family prays the rosary every night."
- 3- "We need to live our faith by the words of the songs that we sing." "They'll know we are Christians by our love."
- 4- We can experience peace, community, and a space to listen to God. We seek to share a life with other people of faith.
- 5- "Keep Christ and His teachings at the center of our faith while recognizing our faith is not held in isolation but with connections we establish with each other."