



SYNODUS EPISCOPORUM

SYNOD 2021 – 2023

*FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH:
COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION*

SYNTHESIS OF DIOCESE *of* RALEIGH
SYNODAL PROCESS

1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this process is to listen and journey together. Despite our differences or our own agendas, we are one body of the Church. What is said is important. Each voice, each idea, is important. And I ask you to join me in praying that in listening, not just to each other but to what the Holy Spirit is asking of us, this journey will be fruitful.

Bishop Luis Rafael Zarama

BACKGROUND

The Diocese of Raleigh responded to Holy Father Pope Francis' call, "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission," a two-year process of preparation for the 2023 XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Nearly 4,000 people in the diocese, including those no longer affiliated with the Church, those from other faiths or no particular faith, responded to a web-based questionnaire used to gather information and to issue randomly selected invitations to those open to attending in-person listening and dialogue sessions.

The diocese host listening sessions in English and Spanish, in four locations across the Eastern NC - Elizabeth City, Greenville, Raleigh and Shallotte. Several parishes and campus ministry centers also hosting listening sessions.

The information gathered and the fruits from listening to one another are summarized in the following as the Diocese of Raleigh's contribution to the 2023 XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

2: BODY OF THE SYNTHESIS

THEMES

From the feedback provided during the Synod process, particularly the written comments from in-person listening sessions, the following were the top ten themes or topics that arose during the diocesan Synod process.

In each case, the theme is illustrated with actual quotes or excerpts of a quote from a listening session participant.

1 **Laity Formation**

Providing information and formation for adults, leaders, youth, families and children.

Preparing volunteers and creating catechists and apologetics.

“Participation” should also mean a deeper spiritual experience – praying the Mass, receiving the Eucharist worthily, etc. – not just “activities” such as ushering, greeting, etc.

2 **Evangelization**

Encouraging personal encounters with Christ.

“We need to take the liturgy home with us. Mass should dovetail with small group community meetings where we will build a personal relationship with Christ.”

“We need evangelize like the disciples, promoting that Jesus is alive!”

3 **Clergy Engagement**

Training for clergy to provide for more involvement in the parish and clearer messaging on Church teachings.

Help priests to increase their intercultural competency. Permit pastors to remain at a parish for longer and get to know their parishioners.

Ministers need to receive more formal training.

The need to be more humble and not take their role as putting them above others.

We need to be heard by our priests!

We are all Catholics. We need bilingual and bicultural priests who respect the traditions of all cultures.

4 **Inclusivity - People Feeling Unwelcome**

Recognizing and embracing the diversity in race, genders, ages, cultures, etc., and providing a more welcome environment for all.

We, the Church, need to be more inclusive to our people. The Church has an air of un-welcoming behavior to those who are unlike "us."

We are all Catholic. We need to do a better job of being universal and being loving and welcoming to all.

There is a lot of hurt in the Church and we need to be able to dialogue with others with completely different backgrounds. The Synod gives hope that there will be a more welcoming approach to the Church where all feel welcomed and loved.

5

LGBTQ

More understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ community, including same sex marriage. Some members of the LGBTQ community expressed hurt with the label of “intrinsically disordered.”

We need to communicate that you are loved and worthy just as you are. We are all sinners in need of grace but that isn't where we need to stay.

I came to this session to share my unique LGBT experience. My faith community spoke on my behalf before I had the chance. We are all still a community of love that strives to be a home for all. “All” is a diverse definition not limited to a single factor of a person's being.

6

Culture

Increasing difficulty to live a faithful, Catholic life in an increasingly secular and divisive culture. Influence of technology and media

It has become “Church vs. the World” and the outside world is influencing the Church and not the other way around.

The Church should bring back traditional programs/practices/music. The Church tries to emulate secular culture too much, we should stop compromising with secular culture.

I feel as though I can speak clearly in church but not in society in general – you will be “cancelled” or judged.

7

Social Justice

More engagement on issues including immigration, racism, climate change, the poor, and respecting life. The Church needs to move and act beyond the walls of the Church.

The Church has failed to articulate its full message on Pro-Life, the concept seems to be limited to only abortion.

Instead of only loving and serving "acceptable" people (AKA: us), the Church is called to be the Body of Christ and minister to all through prayer, justice and mercy.

Emphasize the social teachings of Jesus to address racism, poverty, and immigration. The Church should be actively involved.

8

Youth

Reaching out and engaging young people; listening to them and being more welcoming of them and their ideas. Balancing the information and impact of technology and secular culture on youth.

For many older Catholics, our faith is our heritage and our identity. We don't know if our children will remain Catholic because of disagreements with the Church or just a lack of engagement.

Youth clearly understand what a Synodal Church is about; and we might need to follow them.

I came here to share what I feel would benefit our youth. As a 14-yr-old, I have strong opinions. I want people to hear from someone young. Teens don't get to express our opinions. I was glad to be invited. I spoke and was treated as a member like everyone else. I feel the Holy Spirit came to me in my words for a better future.

9

Laity

More pastor support to lead ministry, retreats at the parish level.

I came to complain and without hope because I thought our Bishop sent us a priest that did not understand our parish and caused division. But after sharing with the group I understand that I have a responsibility as a member of the Catholic Church to be a servant and a participant to help the priest.

10

Church Teaching

A stronger emphasis on Church teachings, remaining firm on ethics and moral teachings, the sacraments, etc.

We need to focus on the "true presence" in the Eucharist. We should let more people celebrate the Latin Mass.

There is too much relativism – each person has their "own truth" the Church needs to teach the "one truth."

3: NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

NEXT STEPS

The diocese will share the synthesis of the diocesan Synod process in order to facilitate ongoing dialogue and encourage further engagement on topics that warrant additional discussion and/or discernment.

CONCLUSION

Overall, presenting the opportunity to provide personal feedback and community dialogue via the Synod process was well received. The Synodal process seemed to be effective in inviting and involving the Holy Spirit. The act of listening and involving one another had value beyond the specific topics of discussion and/or the “agendas” that guided, or were brought to, the process.

I heard the voice of the Holy Spirit in our communal voice. We are all on this journey together.

There is too much hurt in the Church. Sometimes it overshadows the joy and hope. But the Synod is a precursor of hope, healing and joy in the Church.

I am so happy that I came today. Each person contributed and we had good dialogue. We all have HOPE. And while we have work to do, I believe meeting these people contributes to my hope in our Church. We have Jesus' words that HIS Church will never be abandoned by HIM."

This Synodal process has begun something very good. This effort has allowed conversations with family members who have left the church. The Synod listening effort needs to continue and the channel of communication needs to remain open. All voices need to be heard, as some feel they are not being listened to.

I will return home with hope, putting the Holy Spirit as my motivator at the center of my life!



CATHOLIC DIOCESE *of* RALEIGH

For a *synodal Church*

communion | participation | mission