



DIOCESE OF OGDENSBURG

For a Synodal Church



WHAT IS A SYNOD? Synod literally means "journeying together" or "together on the way." Synod is also a general term for an assembly of bishops and Church officials for discussions and decisions on matters important to the faith. The title of this synod is *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*. We are asked to consider how we journey together and how we are co-responsible for the mission of the Church. Pope Francis noted that the word "Synod" encompasses what the Lord is asking us to do: Journey together – laity, pastors, bishops, the bishop of Rome. The Holy Father said it "is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice."

BACKGROUND

- Bishop LaValley views the synod as an opportunity to renew the diocesan goals & priorities
- Pastors appointed delegates; pastors and/or delegates participated in one of three regional diocesan training sessions and five optional online gatherings.
- 53 feedback reports from synodal discussions were submitted by delegates and diocesan staff. This represents 57% of the parish groupings and 63% of diocesan families.
- 119 "My2Cents" online surveys were submitted by individuals.
- Delegates found limited success reaching out beyond the parish or to those on the margins.
- The report was composed in a synodal fashion by the diocesan Synod Committee with Bishop LaValley.

SYNTHESIS - WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

- Rather than divide us, diversity should be a source of strength.
- People are hungry for relationship with each other and with their priests, especially sacramentally.
- Joined or merged parishes need to see themselves as real, singular faith communities journeying together.
- There is a call to recognize the giftedness of the laity and encourage collaboration and co-responsibility for the mission of the Church.
- The Church is seen as judgmental and rulebound. We need to reach out and journey with people on the margins, including lapsed Catholics, transient, poor, those struggling with moral teachings, elderly, homebound, prisoners, women, divorced/separated, young, LGBTQ, those preferring the Extraordinary Form, liberals, non-whites, special needs and broken families.

SYNTHESIS - HOW ARE WE JOURNEYING TOGETHER?

- Community was the most common theme in submitted comments. Consensus recognizes that community is created within parishes through shared experiences (outreach and service, events and intentional small groups).
- There is a longing for opportunities to be heard and for safe, non-judgmental dialogue.
- The diocese and parishes need to clarify their mission and vision statements.
- Discussion participants desire additional faith formation, especially as it relates to the importance of the Eucharist, how to pray and how to apply Church teachings to lived experiences.
- Respondents said the Church must go forth and convert the world and affect the culture rather than building a fortress to protect herself.
- Outlier responses (submitted by one or two parishes/individuals) included comments calling for a greater role for women and recognition of same-sex unions.

CONCLUSIONS

- These discussions and what we learned from them strengthen our resolve to revisit and refresh the Diocesan Priorities:
- Building Parishes with Living Stones – The people of God must be connected. As part of the Body of Christ, all should grow in relationship with Christ and one another through prayer, fellowship, faith sharing, hospitality, dialogue, inclusion and invitation.
 - Strengthening Faith Formation in Family Life – The family is the critical transmitter of the faith. Parents should be engaged in catechesis.
 - Creating a Culture of Vocations – Called to holiness by baptism, the entire community must support the family and call forth all vocations from our youth and others.
- Let us continue this synodal process and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, grow in our abilities to listen to God and one another, speak the truth in love, travel together as pilgrims and invite all to join us on the journey.

For the full diocesan Synod Synthesis, visit rcdony.org/150/synod