



## Diocesan Synthesis

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## Experience of the Synod

On October 17th, 2021, Bishop Thomas Olmsted introduced the Synod in the Diocese of Phoenix with a special liturgy, in which he and his auxiliary, Bishop Eduardo Nevares, invited our local Church to engage in prayerful discernment about journeying together as the Body of Christ (see Appendix 1 for diocesan and synod statistics). Those gathered prayed the *Adsumus*, *Sancte Spiritu* prayer of the Synod.

Bishop Olmsted also introduced the Synod in a special video message ([www.dphx.org/synod](http://www.dphx.org/synod) and [www.dphx.org/sinodo](http://www.dphx.org/sinodo)), in which he stated:

My brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus tells us, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" [John 14:6]. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that the first Christians were called the people of "the Way" [9:2]. These words remind us that it is Jesus who keeps us on the right path as we go forth together during these troubling times.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis has opened a synod, which is a special kind of Church council, on the subject of journeying together as a Church during these times. He has asked local Churches around the world to engage people in a conversation about journeying together better as a Church, about entering into a deeper communion of life with Jesus, and with each other.

We hope that this engagement will deepen our participation in the life of the Church and the living out of her mission of evangelization. Pope Francis has asked us frequently to invoke the Holy Spirit so that He can assist us in this process of engagement and discernment. I am also asking that we invoke our Blessed Mother, she who was Christ's greatest disciple and a model of listening, discernment and fidelity to God's will. She is the Mother of the Church who shows us how to follow her Son.

... Let us all pray that this Synod will strengthen our Church throughout the world and especially in our own Diocese of Phoenix. May the Holy Spirit and Our Lady of Guadalupe inspire us all to follow Christ more closely as the people of the Way.

In harmony with total reliance on the Holy Spirit in imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Diocese of Phoenix was guided by five official documents of the Synod: the *Vademecum*, the Preparatory Document, Pope Francis' Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio* (2018), and two studies by the International Theological Commission: "Synodality in the life and mission of the Church" (2018) and "*Sensus fidei* ['sense of faith'] in the life of the Church" (2014). (See Appendix 2).

Perhaps the two greatest challenges to the implementation of the Synod in the Diocese of Phoenix were COVID-19 and widespread confusion or skepticism in regard to both the concept of synodality and the aims of this Synod. Many struggled to understand what synodality meant and how it is connected to the Church. News about the Amazon and German synods, and comments by certain prelates, also resulted in confusion and skepticism. Connected to all of this was also a perception shared by many that the secular culture is having more of an impact on the Church than the other way around.

Despite these challenges, over one hundred parishes, schools, and other groups or communities participated in various consultations, resulting in 112 reports.

### *Response to the Fundamental Question*

*A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church?*

In the Diocese of Phoenix, the "journeying together" that is experienced in announcing the Gospel occurs in multiple ways and with a variety of companions. A primary setting is the parish community with its leaders and the Holy Mass as the focal point. One parish stated, "We come not only to receive but to bring the offerings of our prayers, works, joys and sufferings." Another parish highlighted how reaching out during the pandemic demonstrated a kind of "journeying together:" "During the Covid lockdowns the office staff called every parishioner to see if they were okay and needed help or prayers. Many people felt very cared for and the office reaching out kept them close and gave them a strong sense of community. Many expressed that this is why they feel welcome and loved."

The parish also serves a starting point for journeying together in various faith groups and apostolates of service and/or evangelization. One parish stated, “We host social gatherings, warmly welcome guests, and invite everyone to participate in our faith sharing groups and ministries. We offer activities that are not exclusive to parish membership.” Another setting is the Catholic school community and its journeying companions of teachers, students and staff.

Insights gathered also demonstrated the importance of "journeying together" in announcing the Gospel within the family. There is a unique experience of journeying together spiritually between husband and wife, between parents and children, and among children. Also mentioned was the journeying that occurs on the individual level, where one's spiritual growth is fueled by prayer, Scripture, the Eucharist, and otherwise assisted by the Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints and angels. One parish stated, “Participants found strength for their journey with God in the Mass, the sacraments (especially the Eucharist and Confession), holy priests (see Appendix 8), scripture, prayer, adoration, private devotions, spiritual books, Catholic media, and parish small groups.”

Persons or groups identified or self-identified as marginalized included Hispanic Catholics, Black Catholics, the elderly, the sick and homebound, the grieving, those scarred by sexual abuse, the handicapped, the disabled, homeless, migrants and refugees, police, veterans prisoners, addicts, single and/or divorced Catholics, married couples with children, parents in need, homeschooling families, men (especially fathers), women (including widows, women in crisis pregnancies, post-abortive women and some women religious), orphans, those struggling with loneliness, depression or grief, persons experiencing same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria (see Appendix 7), those who prefer the Traditional Latin Mass, and those who don't agree with Church teaching or are away from the Church.

*What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?*

Four essential activities shaped the communion of the nascent Church in the immediate aftermath of the great catalyst of Pentecost. Acts 2:42 describes them: 1) *the teaching of the apostles*, 2) *fellowship*, 3) *the breaking of the bread* and 4) *prayers*.

The Holy Spirit seems to be inviting the faithful of the Diocese of Phoenix to grow in "journeying together" through these four activities, all of which enter into the dynamics of *communion, participation and mission*.

#### 1) *The teaching of the apostles*

Acts 2:42 shows that the early Church with its new Christians was fed by catechetical teachings handed down authoritatively by the apostles in the power of the Spirit. This tradition has continued through the successors of the apostles: the pope in union with the bishops.

A near-constant theme emphasized by the faithful of the Diocese of Phoenix was the necessity of understanding our Catholic faith. Many consultation participants mentioned concern over widespread confusion about Church teaching among Catholics and non-Catholics, in the territory of the diocese. A fair amount of anxiety, compounded by many different voices on online/social media, seems to also exist due to what many Catholics understand to be division among Catholic bishops and priests. There is also a fear of evangelizing among at least some Catholics because they are not confident in their knowledge and they are afraid of being judged (see Appendix 4 for more on evangelization).

Widespread concern was also expressed for the youth and their faith formation in the light of the influence of social media and contemporary cultural trends. (See Appendix 5 for more information on the feedback gathered from youth for this synod)

Catholics young and old expressed interest in learning more about various topics such as the nature of God/Trinity, God's love for us, Jesus Christ, the Church (ecclesiology), mercy, justice, evil, sin, salvation, judgment (see Appendix 7), the Eucharist and other sacraments, the Mass, apologetics/evangelization, the saints, moral relativism and various moral issues, Vatican II, Catholic Social Teaching, and the relationship between the Church and politics. A great insight out of one parish consultation was the recommendation to take a parish survey of what people would be interested in learning.

A deep desire was expressed by many participants for more religious education opportunities by way of Bible studies, books, RCIA/OCIA, retreats, Vacation Bible School, parish missions, pilgrimages, classes/seminars, conferences/presentations featuring expert speakers, teaching Masses and more homilies in which teachings or basic catechesis is given. Radio and online resources were mentioned (Catholic websites, Catholic speakers on YouTube, FORMED and other Catholic apps, podcasts, etc.) but this recommendation occurred less frequently than opportunities live, in-person interactions. Making learning resources such as apologetical pamphlets and handouts in churches was also emphasized.

A minority of Catholics advocated for a change in Church teaching and discipline on certain subjects (priestly ordination for women, same-sex marriage, recognition of other sexual identities [see Appendix 7], etc.). A significant number of Catholics called for the Church to be "less judgmental" or even "non-judgmental" (see Appendix 7). In one parish consultation, many respondents said the Church should accept everyone and anyone no matter what they do, even at the expense of changing Church teaching. A majority of Catholics, however, emphasized the importance of remaining faithful to Church teaching and doctrine.

Faith formation opportunities for youth, young adults, newly married couples (including couple-to-couple mentoring) new members and parents were emphasized. The crucial role of the latter in educating and setting an example for their children was mentioned on various occasions.

## 2) *Fellowship*

Acts 2:42 notes that the new Christians came together in fellowship, again by the power of the Holy Spirit. This fellowship was characterized by a deep bond of charity and caring for one another's needs, and mutually supporting one another in bearing crosses.

As we all know, COVID-19 has left many people isolated, hurting and divided. This has translated to a lack of unity within many parishes. A dominant theme articulated in this synod has been the need to come together again and end the isolation. There is a longing to do more as a community. Catholics are calling for more events (retreats, luncheons, Bible studies) for the sake of bringing people together in fellowship.

One-on-one sharing and listening from the heart are much preferred to mere email communications. People want more opportunities for genuine in-person conversations, mutual dialogue and exchange of faith stories, so that relationships might grow into fellowship. In this way, the community can better love and support its members, who can be there for each other and give of themselves in imitation of Christ. In doing so, members will be better assisted in shouldering the daily crosses of life.

Many types of fellowship events were mentioned. In addition to the types of learning events mentioned under "apostolic teaching," fellowship events for the following groups were emphasized: families, new parishioners, visitors, youth, young adults, and parents.

Catholics also expressed a desire for fellowship with others through events involving others who reside within the parish boundaries in order to build up the wider community,



whether through religious, school, sport or service-oriented events. Finally, consultations with other faith communities such as the Greek Orthodox and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints revealed their desire for deeper fellowship with Catholics. Finally, a desire was expressed for better fellowship via the inculturation of various religious minorities.

Two themes that emerged in tandem with fellowship were communication and collaboration. There was various feedback for the improvement of parish communication structures. Some parish consultations went so well that they exploring incorporating a version of them on a regular basis. Others mentioned more direct communication or involvement from the pastor and/or staff to better facilitate communication. One parish mentioned the need of the parish to educate the parish on the various means it uses to communicate information. Ultimately, there seemed to be a consensus view that better communication paves the way for deeper fellowship and a deeper overall sense of community.

Collaboration was also emphasized, in a number of ways: between parish leadership and parishioners, between pastors and the religious orders that work with them, between deacons and their ministry partners, between the various groups and apostolates within the diocese, and between parishes and the Diocesan Pastoral Center. Better collaboration also results in deeper fellowship.

### *3) The breaking of the bread*

The breaking of the bread referred to in Acts 2:42 bears deep connections to the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-38; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25), the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-14) and the encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:19-35). It therefore signifies the Eucharist

and the participation of the Church, the Body of Christ, "in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist" (*Catechism* 1322).

In this synod, Catholics expressed widespread concern over family and friends of all ages who have drifted away from Mass and the Eucharist. One parish report noted, "Many parents appear to stop attending Mass with their children after they receive Confirmation."

Compounding this problem, noted by a 2019 Pew Research study and some Catholics in this synod, is grave concern over the majority of American Catholics who do not believe that the consecrated bread and wine is really, truly and substantially the living Body of Christ. One parish report stated, "[This] was noted multiple times as a central problem of unity and missionary witness."

A few parish reports expressed concern over the differences in how the Mass is celebrated across the diocese, that this is a source of division for at least some parishes and schools, and that some parishioners fear being judged for "picking a side." Some who expressed a preference for the TLM (Traditional Latin Mass) shared frustration over it not being more widely available, and fear that it could be restricted. One school appealed to *Sacrosanctum concilium*: "[I]n faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way" (4). Other Catholics, in a parish report, used political language in expressing a preference for what they termed "progressive liturgical services." Another parish report noted that devotion to the Eucharist was of critical importance for achieving unity, a parish that is home to both the Novus Ordo and the TLM.

A number of synod reports expressed reverence and appreciation for the Eucharist and its centrality in our faith. They also expressed that Jesus is truly present with them in the midst of

their lives. A middle school student noted, “Mass helps me remember God and inspires us through prayer and the Eucharist.” Some parishioners asked for more catechesis and preaching about the Eucharist, while another parish noted in its report that their pastor already did a good job of this. A group of college students recognized the need for a deeper belief in and reverence towards the Eucharist. Also articulated was the resolve on the part of individuals to attend Mass or visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with more frequency. There was also recognition of the importance of making a greater effort to invite others to Mass. Some also recognized that the responsibility for this invitation falls not only upon bishops and priests, but laypeople.

Finally, a national Eucharistic Revival awaits ([www.eucharisticrevival.org](http://www.eucharisticrevival.org)).

#### 4) *Prayers*

Acts 2:42 also points to the power of communal prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit and associated with the Eucharist. During the pandemic, some parishes reached out to every parishioner to check on them and see if they needed prayers. This was greatly appreciated and contributed directly to the preservation of a sense of community. The importance of daily prayer and communal prayer for sustaining one's faith was also mentioned.

Communal prayers were cited as a source of strength, fellowship and reconciliation, in particular through the Rosary, prayer groups, General Intercessions during Mass, processions, consecration prayers (to Jesus, Mary and Joseph), the Liturgy of the Hours, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, novenas and litanies. Some faithful expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage in these kinds of communal prayer, including deeper catechesis on prayer. Two of many examples mentioned were a special Rosary for the United States, communal intercessory prayer for global crises, and Marian consecrations.

Eucharistic adoration was emphasized in a special way; in one consultation it was referred to as a necessary companion on the journey of faith. One parish noted a deeper sense of community because of a religious order of sisters that has been leading them in Holy Hours of Eucharistic adoration. One grade schooler noted, “Through adoration I feel closer to God.” Another student said, “I can reach out to the forgotten and outcast by prayer. I could teach them prayers and how to pray or I can just keep them in my daily prayers.” More widespread opportunities for and catechesis on Eucharistic adoration, and Eucharistic processions involving families were also mentioned.

The faithful expressed the desire to include neglected groups in the General Intercessions during Mass, such as divorced Catholics, single Catholics, and other groups considered to be marginalized. The need to catechize parents on prayers that they can pass along to their children was also mentioned. Parishes were asked to consider providing and/or communicating opportunities for parishioners to make prayer requests, making available or distributing various prayer cards. Greater devotion to the Holy Spirit was also mentioned as an area for growth.

The four activities of Acts 2:42 results in an early Church life full of wonders, generosity and joy (Acts 2:43-47). Today, this dynamic should result in renewed parishes, or, in the words of one report: “Walking together would reflect a parish or church that is committed, influential, strong, family-based, non-political, less divisive, [with] more solidarity, full of peace, unity, and love.”

Bolstered by the four activities of Acts 2:42 (see Appendix 3 for a selection of participant quotes grouped by these activities), the early Church was also positioned to reach out, heal and evangelize (see Appendix 4 for synod feedback on these themes).

## Conclusion

Reliance upon the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and guidance from the official documents of the Synod (see Appendix 2) will help the Diocese of Phoenix journey forward together as faithful People of the Way.

More specific avenues remain to be discerned under the guidance of our new shepherd, His Excellency Bishop John Dolan. May the Holy Spirit guide him in all things as he discerns how to best lead the faithful of the Diocese of Phoenix into deeper communion with Jesus, deeper participation in his life of grace, and a deeper commitment to the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

## Appendix 1 - Diocesan and Synod Statistics

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix consists of 94 parishes, 23 missions, 29 elementary schools, seven high schools, three universities, and one seminary, with more than 1.1 million Catholics making this diverse, vibrant, and faith-filled diocese their home. Of the 228 active Catholic priests who serve the diocese, 49-percent were born outside of the United States. The Diocese of Phoenix is comprised of Mohave, Coconino (except Navajo Indian Reservation), Yavapai, and Maricopa Counties, and the Gila Indian Reservation in the State of Arizona for a total of 43,967 square miles.

Information about the synod was communicated to priests at a convocation in September of 2021, and in more detail via email in October. Drawing from the *Vademecum* and the Preparatory Document, all pastors were asked to announce the synod and oversee consultations in their parishes, giving them freedom to delegate as they saw fit and choosing the consultation format that worked best (in-person consultations were recommended). The diocesan websites for the synod ([www.dphx.org/synod](http://www.dphx.org/synod) and [www.dphx.org/sinodo](http://www.dphx.org/sinodo)), three dimensions, ten core themes, and adapted *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus* prayer of the synod were communicated. It was also communicated that pastors had freedom to discern particular questions to ask. Guidelines for the synthesis as given by the *Vademecum* were also communicated.

Seventy percent of parishes in the Diocese of Phoenix participated in the synod.

Information about the synod was communicated to Catholic schools in the Diocese of Phoenix in December of 2021. Mention was made of the intention of the synod to also hear from children, and freedom was given to the schools in phrasing questions based on the dimensions and central themes of the synod. It was recommended that K-8 schools incorporate results in the synod report of the parish to which they are associated, and that stand-alone schools write their own report. Some K-8 schools associated with parishes decided to submit their own reports, which were accepted.

Ninety percent of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Phoenix participated in the synod.

The Diocese of Phoenix also invited various groups, associations, organizations and faith communities to participate in the synod, sharing themes and inviting them to pose questions as they saw fit.

A total of 112 synod reports were submitted.

### Participating Parishes (with affiliated Catholic schools)

All Saints Parish	St. Bernadette Parish
Ascension Parish	St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish
Blessed Sacrament Parish (Scottsdale)	St. Bridget Parish
Blessed Sacrament Parish (Tolleson)	St. Catherine of Siena Parish
Christ the King Parish and School	St. Charles Borromeo Parish

<p>Corpus Christi Parish  Holy Cross Parish (Mesa)  Holy Spirit Parish  Immaculate Conception Parish &amp; School  Immaculate Heart of Mary &amp; St. Anthony  Mater Misericordiae &amp; St. Edward Parishes  Most Holy Trinity Parish &amp; School  Most Holy Trinity Parish, Spanish Speakers  Newman Center at Arizona State University  Newman Center at Grand Canyon University  Newman Center at Northern Arizona Univ.  Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish  Our Lady of the Desert (Dolan Springs)  Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish &amp; School  (Scottsdale)  Our Lady of Fatima Mission  Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Queen Creek)  Our Lady of Joy Parish and Annunciation  School  Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish &amp; School  Our Lady of the Lake Parish &amp; School  Our Lady of the Valley &amp; St. Raphael  Parishes  Resurrection Parish  Sacred Heart Parish (Prescott)  San Francisco de Asís Parish &amp; School  Ss. Simon &amp; Jude Cathedral and School  St. Agnes Parish &amp; School  St. Andrew Parish  St. Augustine Parish, English Speakers  St. Augustine Parish, Spanish Speakers  St. Benedict Parish and St. John Bosco  School</p>	<p>St. Daniel Parish  St. Elizabeth Seton Parish  St. Francis Xavier Parish, English Speakers  St. Francis Xavier Parish, Spanish Speakers  St. Gabriel Parish  St. Germaine Parish  St. Helen Parish  St. Henry Parish  St. James Parish  St. Jerome Parish &amp; School  St. John Vianney Parish (Avondale)  St. Joseph Parish  St. Louis the King Parish &amp; School  St. Luke Parish  St. Maria Goretti Parish  St. Mary’s Basilica  St. Mary Parish and St. Mary-Basha School  (Chandler)  St. Mary Parish (Kingman)  St. Mary Magdalene Parish  St. Matthew Parish  St. Patrick Parish  St. Paul Parish  St. Rose Philippine Duchesne Parish &amp; Good  Shepherd Mission  St. Steven Parish  St. Theresa Parish &amp; School  St. Thomas Aquinas Parish &amp; School  St. Thomas More Parish  St. Thomas the Apostle Parish &amp; School  St. Timothy Parish  St. Vincent de Paul Parish &amp; School</p>
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Stand-alone Catholic schools

<p>Bourgade Catholic High School  Brophy College Preparatory  Holy Family Academy  Notre Dame Preparatory  Seton Catholic Preparatory High School</p>	<p>St. John Paul II Catholic High School  St. Mary’s High School  Ville de Marie Academy  Xavier College Preparatory</p>
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Groups / Associations / Organizations / Faith communities

Black Catholics	Homeless and Domestic Violence Survivors
Catholic Singles Society	(Catholic Charities)
Consecrated Women of the Diocese of Phoenix	Mary's Ministries
Crosier Village	Homeschooling Parents
Deacons of the Diocese of Phoenix	Knights of Columbus
Disabled Persons	Latter-Day Saints
Diocesan Pastoral Center Employees	Married Couples
Ecumenical Partners	Native American Catholics
Ecumenical/Interfaith Partners	One Community ( <a href="http://www.onecommunity.com">www.onecommunity.com</a> )
First Responders - Fire Fighters	Online Survey Participants
First Responders - Police Officers	Prison Inmates
Foster Care Providers	School Sisters of Notre Dame
Greek Orthodox Church, Phoenix	St. Paul Street Evangelization
Homeless (St. Vincent de Paul Society)	Refugees and Immigrants (Catholic Charities)
	Youth (Renovación Carismática)



## Appendix 2 - Guiding Documents (with selections) of the Synod

Complete list - <https://www.synod.va/en/resources/official-documents.html>

1. *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission* (2021)  
Vademecum / Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches  
(<https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/document/common/vademecum/Vademecum-EN-A4.pdf>)

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

*We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.  
With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.  
We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.  
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.  
All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever. Amen.*

*May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church, intercede for us  
as we journey together on the path that God sets before us. As in the Upper Room at Pentecost,  
may her maternal care and intercession accompany us as we build up our communion with one  
another and carry out our mission in the world. With her, we say together as the People of God:  
“Let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).*

2. *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission* (2021)

Preparatory document

(<https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-preparatory-document.html>)

3. *Episcopalis communio: Apostolic constitution on the Synod of Bishops* (2018)

Pope Francis

([https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/episcopalis-communio/EN\\_Episcopalis-Communio.pdf](https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/episcopalis-communio/EN_Episcopalis-Communio.pdf))

Especially sections 1, 5-7.

4. "*Sensus fidei* in the Life of the Church" (2014)<sup>1</sup>

International Theological Commission (ITC)

([https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20140610\\_sensus-fidei\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html))

Especially sections 1-6, 12, 18-21, 36, 39, 45-47, 49, 54-58, 62, 65, 67-70, 74-80, 83, 87-100, 102, 104, 105, 110, 112-115, 117-127.

5. "Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church" (2018)<sup>2</sup>

International Theological Commission (ITC)

([https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20180302\\_synodalita\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_synodalita_en.html))

Especially sections 3-9, 11, 19, 20-23, 40-76, 83, 103-121.

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<sup>1</sup> This ITC report explores in depth the meaning of *sensus fidei*, the "supernatural sense of faith" of the People of God (cf. *Catechism* 91-93, 99). This "supernatural instinct" is "intrinsically linked to the gift of faith" and enables the faithful "to recognise and endorse authentic Christian doctrine and practice, and to reject what is false" (n.2). The report also distinguishes between the sense of faith of the individual believer (*sensus fidei*) and the "Church's own instinct of faith" as "a communal and ecclesial reality" (*sensus fidelium*), both of which converge (n.3). The report is organized into four chapters: 1) The *sensus fidei* in Scripture and Tradition, 2) The *sensus fidei fidelis* in the personal life of the believer, 3) The *sensus fidei fidelium* in the life of the Church, and 4) How to discern authentic manifestations of the *sensus fidei*.

<sup>2</sup> This ITC report unpacks the theological meaning of the term "synodality" (from the Greek *σύνωδος*: "walking together"). This Greek term is a fusion of the preposition *σύν* ("with") and the noun *ὁδός* ("path"). In the mind of the Church, then, synodality "indicates the path along which the People of God walk together" (n. 3). The report is organized into four chapters: 1) Synodality in Scripture, in Tradition and in history, 2) Towards a theology of synodality, 3) Implementing synodality: synodal subjects, structures, process and events, and 4) Conversion to renew synodality.

## Appendix 3 - Consultation Quotes: The Four Activities of Acts 2:48

### *1. Apostolic teaching*

"The comments [from participants] strongly reflected an interpretive lens that might be called Hegelian; that is, history is "new" and the Church is "old." The modern world is dynamic moving forward, and the Church is static rigid, and not moving. Even some Catholics who were engaged in the life of the Church seemed to operate somewhat under this assumption, though their judgment differed than their more secularist counterparts. It is fascinating that this worldview was generally assumed by the majority of the respondents and formed the framework for their judgments. A secondary framework that seemed operative in comments was something resembling that of the current American political landscape, i.e., a conservative/liberal dichotomy."

"The path of beauty (as opposed to logical argumentation or moralizing) seems promising... The beauty of the liturgy as well as devotions and sacramentals seems truly promising, especially for post-modern persons who idolize personal autonomy, especially in the arena of sexual ethics."

"We now live in a Catholic culture in which many, even very faithful Catholics, feel ill-equipped and very hesitant to engage in direct evangelization activities. There is a real fear of not knowing the answer to a question, and just a general insecurity surrounding their knowledge of the faith."

"There is a widespread fear of speaking out for the Church or stating what she believes in for fear of coming across as judgmental." (see Appendix 7)

"What do we believe? There is so much information out there, and I'm confused."

"You can receive two YouTube videos of two Catholic priests/theologians saying two opposing things."

"Oftentimes it is hard to talk about issues because they can often become politicized. Our parishioners can be politically involved and responsible. This causes a lot of conflict within the person and the surroundings. This has always been an American problem: Fidelity to the Faith and the Constitution. We find that we face the same general human problems involved in any conflict of visions. This isn't a 'catholic' problem necessarily, but a generally societal one. At the same time, the catholic faith has really changed the way we think about issues. We find the experience of "metanoia" is real, and that we attempt to think as Christ would have us. Even people who have a hard time with immigration issues see that we are all one community guided by the same Spirit. We experience conversion really influencing our civil life...speaking of religion in the public square is difficult. People tend to keep religion to themselves."

"Truthfully and firmly teach the doctrines of the Church."

"It shouldn't matter if what we teach doesn't align to culture...we need to teach the truth!"

"[H]elp people today to develop more sophisticated models of the relationship between the Church and the "world," beyond simply one of antagonism and enmity, e.g., one in which Christ comes to engage, purify, heal, enlighten, and deify creation, especially the human person. Something like a godly humanism centered on Christ needs greater articulation. We became more convicted that the Second Vatican Council's pastoral engagement with this topic is as timely and helpful as ever before."

"The vast differences in opinions and comments suggests to us that people simply do not know what the Catholic Church believes and why she believes it. It is not there are thousands of catechized persons who have left the Church. There are thousands of persons who have never really been exposed to the body of Catholic Christianity who have drifted away and have strong opinions about a faith they haven't really grappled with yet. This renewed our conviction that the New Evangelization (i.e., re-presenting the gospel basics to the baptized) is a fundamental priority for us."

"[T]he Church still has something valuable to offer a growingly secularist world, especially a sense of transcendence or the divine, holiness of life and examples of genuine love, and clear teaching about the truth and dignity of the human person and morality."

"Individual Catholics have taken their own political and personal opinions and preferences and have made them Catholic teaching."

"Are we attempting to change the teachings and doctrines of the Church so that we can 'fit in'? I don't want a watered-down version of the truth."

"Many felt that either there was a lack of formation for parents and catechists or that parents and catechists failed to get across the importance of the sacraments to the youth. Many felt ill-equipped to meet the challenges of the modern world."

"[There is a desire] to have the Church respond to and acknowledge the difficulties of living in this world and changing culture, yet a significant portion of the respondents don't necessarily desire change for change's sake, but a desire to understand in a deeper way the teachings of the Church already in place."

"The Church welcomes all, although there are many who believe they are not welcomed because they do not understand or agree with Church teachings."

"Listening cannot become accommodation with the wider culture. Others seemed to equate listening with changes in Church teaching."

"There were a multitude of parishioners who did not understand why the Church does not allow women to be ordained to the diaconate or priesthood, and refuses marriage for priests."

"Trust must be restored. Clarity of mission must be articulated."

“[W]e need to be strong in our faith before we teach others. We cannot teach what we do not have.”

“[T]he leaders in the Church should encourage participation in faith formation classes or read certain books to learn more about a Catholic topic. It would be good to have the guidance of the clergy on ways to grow one’s faith or spiritual life.”

“Christian formation should help people fall in love in the Church and not be members simply out of obligation.”

“Most expressed they need to learn more about the faith. They want to understand the saints better and their role in the faith. They want to know the Bible better.”

“The more the Church can encourage the religious connection between parents and children, the more likely that the children will embrace the faith [when] they become adults... “[T]he more the parents realize that they share Christ’s prophetic mission, the more they would be motivated to grow in their personal faith.”

"Our faith formation needs to be less cerebral (assimilation of information) and more of a deepening of our relationship with God and one another. The church does doctrine well, but people poorly."

"The experiences of accompaniment and listening are valuable to some degree at least in the measure that it builds trust and consolidates friendships open to evangelization. In the measure we accomplished that, it was a blessing for our parish community. At the same time, we are aware that it must be shaped by, and lead to, a confident and charitable presentation of the Catholic faith that inspires and challenges our friends to repent and believe in the gospel and discover life in the Church."

“Attending [Bible and religious education] classes makes us feel closer and feel more like companions on the journey to eternity.”

“Educate parents on how to teach children about God and our religion”;

"Teach people to become better evangelizers by helping each Catholic feel more confident in their understanding of the faith, so they have confidence to go out and evangelize"

“Less emphasis on social justice and more emphasis on saving souls.” \

## *2. Fellowship*

“Christians are not meant to be in isolation from each other; we need to see each other.”

“Catholic anonymity (we attend the same Mass, sit in the same pew, smile at the same people) keeps us strangers to one another until we become involved in the lives of one beyond the smile and pleasantries.”

“Those with a positive outlook on parish life attribute a sense of community to a strong youth and catechetical ministry along with a vibrant liturgical life and a sense of outreach beyond the parish.”

“When I come to the Newman Center, people give me hugs and remember my name. I feel so at home. It feels very different in that way than being in a club or something.”

“We need to listen to those who have left the church, those who no longer come to Mass, struggling veterans, the isolated elderly, those in crisis pregnancies, essentially all who are marginalized from society or from the Church.”

“We met at church but developed a relationship on our own time. We need help to get to heaven. We need to know that community is not just helpful or good, but it is necessary... we need more authentic friendships.”

"Having an open heart and forming relationships with each other. All of this is part of the common mission. Creating relationships, between each other and with God. We have to be vigilant in staying sincere and showing love to one another... Having a genuine care and love for the brother, that is the mission. Changing the dark view of the church isn't as important as helping others to know they are loved by Christ. Once this is reached, this becomes a safe place. When we are safe, we can be open and truthful. Love makes us free. In a family this is true, its unconditional love and so we can challenge one another freely knowing that we are still loved at the end. This is what we are striving for in the church community. When we achieve this level of love, we can challenge ourselves, brothers and sisters to become saints.”

“It takes some effort to remember names, to spend personal time together or to journey with someone who is struggling. Each involves a free decision to invest in the other, a conscious choice to be journeying companions.”

“Many participants mentioned small groups as places of profound spiritual growth, often prompting greater devotion to the faith and development of a strong relationship with God. For some, past small-group experiences provided the opportunity for participants to embark on a new way of life. Many participants recognized the value of small groups for spiritual development and desired greater opportunities specific to their individual needs.”

“Several [college] students wrote about their participation in Holy Week, large diocesan events, or experiences of World Youth Day that made them feel like part of a Church that is alive and universal.”

“We need to try to be more like the other Christian denominations. They do a great job bringing their groups together. They have more youth excited about their faith. The youth groups in the Catholic Church need to be more fun and social. Of course, there should be Scripture classes and

faith formation but also, we need to just have groups that support community and building friendships in the faith.”

“Journeying together begins in [the Eucharist, even for] those who celebrate daily.”

"Dealing with the crosses of daily life (suffering, loss and health, the dying and the poor) was an important need fed by [the] Eucharist, devotions and credible community life.”

“Community becomes viable when we participate in the life of the church community beyond attending Mass.”

“[W]e are called to an increase in hospitality when gathering at church for Mass or other parish events which will help us grow in our journey together.”

“A point of convergence is the need to achieve better communication between clergy and faithful. By doing so, not only will there be more volunteers for the work being done in the parish and school, but it will also make parish leaders feel closer and more accessible.”

“Events like the synod provide the opportunity to share views, but there is still a need of other spaces to share concerns.”

"Breaking bread with others builds community, fellowship and relationships."

### *3. The breaking of the bread*

“The most holy Eucharist as the source and summit of the Faith. Most Catholics don’t believe this.”

“The Church needs to be more educational about the Mass. Parishioners have gotten into the habit of just attending Mass without understanding each part and how it is relevant to our daily life. Another consensus of the group was the theme of Eucharist. Many parishioners make their way to receive the host, but do not believe that it is the body, blood, soul, and Divinity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A true understanding of Mass and [the Eucharist] would empower our evangelization.”

"Low regard for the Mass and the Eucharistic contributes to weak spirituality.”

“People are encountering Jesus Christ in prayer, attending Mass, in reading of Sacred Scripture, in the Eucharist, Catholic writings of the Saints, and in ministerial service. Some encounter Jesus in the people that they meet or in beautiful things such as music which are part of Creation. The most common response was that they encounter Jesus Christ in their prayer time, whether it is a personal time at home, at Mass, in a Rosary, or through Adoration in the Chapel.”

"A [high school] junior acknowledged that she enjoyed going to mass on Sunday for the thoughtful homilies and for the Eucharist."

"I like how the youth group teaches me to love the Eucharistic Jesus."

"The Holy Spirit has shown the Eucharist is central and needs to be treated with reverence."

"We believe the Spirit is inviting us to grow in holiness and reverence for Christ in the Holy Eucharist."

"We need to recommit our love for the Eucharist and our Lord present in the Eucharist."

"[W]e are called to an increase in hospitality when gathering at church for Mass or other parish events."

"We want the church filled with worshipers... educated on the truth of the Eucharist"

"The churches should be places of great beauty, where the Eucharist is the focus of all that is celebrated."

"[Communion is] founded upon love and mutuality in eucharistic worship."

#### 4. *The prayers*

"People are encountering Jesus Christ in prayer, attending Mass, in reading of Sacred Scripture, in the Eucharist, Catholic writings of the Saints, and in ministerial service. Some encounter Jesus in the people that they meet or in beautiful things such as music which are part of Creation. The most common response was that they encounter Jesus Christ in their prayer time, whether it is a personal time at home, at Mass, in a Rosary, or through Adoration in the Chapel."

"There is nothing more intimate or connecting than praying together."

"Personal prayer, recitation of the Rosary and Scripture study must increase for us individually so we can grow in our communal prayer life."

"It was the 'oneness' of everyone worshipping the Lord together, through praise and worship, through individual prayer. It had the Catholic both/and quality to it. We were there as one people, but each person praying individually. And how timeless it was..."

"[During adoration, everyone felt] the yearning to follow God's will and the awe and wonder."

"I was in the midst of many, experiencing the one love of the Eucharist. For a moment, we forgot about the problems of the world and join together in the most important thing in the world."

"Recently at adoration... being in the presence of the Father felt like we were all meant to be there, as if we were home."



“Students overwhelmingly shared positive emotions of joy, glee, peace, gratitude and excitement in celebrating school liturgies, morning prayer, and special prayers services at school.”

“When there is disagreement, we talk and pray our way through,”

“Many respondents called for a renewal of devotion to the Holy Spirit to handle challenges”

“The communion of faith that happens in intercessory prayer for those bearing crosses, the solidarity of having another pray for you.”

“Single lay persons should be prayed for in the Petitions of the Faithful. Families are always prayed for, but not groups of single individuals.”

“We can pray for them to find God and do our best to help them in whatever way possible” - young student.”

“There is something particularly beautiful in the [college] students’ descriptions of adoration. It is common for today’s young people to have difficulty with focus, a preoccupation with their own interests, and apathy towards religion. It is exceedingly rare to hear them use words like yearning, awe, wonder, and presence. These times of communal adoration seem to be a uniquely fruitful environment for students to experience themselves not only as in communion with others but as members of a people in communion with God.”

## Appendix 4 - Reaching Out, Healing, and Evangelizing

Events subsequent to Acts 2:42 reflect additional themes contained in the feedback from this synod: reaching out, healing, and evangelizing.

### Reaching out

In Acts 2:45, the faithful reach out to each other and provide for particular needs. In Acts 3:1-4, Peter and John reach out to a marginalized man.

Many synod reports stressed the need to reach out to those in need, especially the marginalized. More than one parishioner mentioned that a place to start in terms of reaching out is to family and friends in need: "Let's encourage Catholics to reach out first to their families and friends who have fallen away." This follows the pattern of Acts, not to mention the wisdom of Saint Teresa of Calcutta:

We are commanded to love God and our neighbor equally, without difference. We don't have to look for the opportunities to fill this command, they're all around us, twenty-four hours a day. You must open your eyes wide so that you can see the opportunities to give wholehearted, free service right where you are, in your family. If you don't give such service in your family, you will not be able to give it to those outside your home.<sup>3</sup>

Many different suggestions were offered as to how parishes and individuals might reach out, and to whom. Here is a partial list:

- Invite the marginalized to parish events
- Volunteer / donate to St. Vincent de Paul Society (<https://www.stvincentdepaul.net>) / parish food pantries, Catholic Charities of Arizona (<https://www.catholiccharitiesaz.org>), St. Mary's Food Bank (<https://www.firstfoodbank.org>), Habitat for Humanity (<https://habitatcaz.org>; <https://www.habitatflagstaff.org>), etc. See also Appendix 6).
- Reach out to school families that don't attend Mass
- Reach out to those who have left the Church
- Discern ways of reaching out to the "nones" (the growing number of Americans who profess no religious affiliation whatsoever)
- Support local crisis pregnancy centers, or even open up private homes to women in crisis pregnancies, and for people who are willing to not cohabit but can't afford it.
- Get involved with Walking with Moms in Need (<https://dphx.org/walking-with-moms-in-need/>), a ministry that is rapidly expanding in the Diocese of Phoenix
- Visit the sick/homebound
- Visit prisoners
- Visit the homeless where they are (do not go alone)
- Reach out to public schools to explore the possibility of inviting children and their families to learn more about Catholicism

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Mother Teresa: Her Essential Wisdom*, ed. Carol Kelly-Gangi (Fall River Press, 2006), p. 39.

- Connect with the local community by hosting resource fairs (food, jobs, housing, training, ESL, etc.)
- Initiate service projects in conjunction with youth ministry that aid the local community
- Coordinate a regular “toiletries collection” for basic soap, shampoo, socks, razors, feminine hygiene, etc.
- Host a community “yard sale” on parish property
- Begin a food pantry ministry
- Collaborate in service initiatives with the other Christian denominations
- Develop a team of volunteers that visit members of the community who can no longer attend Mass"

As the Book of Acts confirms, one should be ready to encounter unexpected and amazing results. We must never underestimate the power of reaching out and the power of invitation.

A beautiful example of this is a group of parishioners engaged in a ministry called Salt and Light (cf. Matthew 5:13-16). They gather in pairs at the four corners of busy intersections holding signs in English and Spanish offering to pray for people and hand out sacramentals as gifts. They have had countless memorable encounters with people of all faith traditions and walks of life, overwhelmed with gratitude.

One college student whose life was impacted by ministry at a Newman Center shared this testimony:

Everyone in my life had left me because I had been going down the wrong path (drugs, substance abuse, ran away from home), and when I looked for help in the Church, they didn't turn me away. Ever since then, the Church has been my home.

Prisoners in one facility stated, “We’re just so appreciative of these kind people, when the rest of society looks down on us.” They also expressed gratitude for the volunteers who assist their families.

The impact is also felt in the person who reaches out. One college student stated, “In my service, I can feel as if I put my small grain of sand to build up God’s kingdom.” A Newman Center chaplain explains the impact of Christian service on students this way:

It is often said that today’s young people have a great enthusiasm for activism and want to help change the world in a meaningful way. With that in mind, it is interesting to note how the students’ reflections can help us to articulate some of the reasons that serving in and with the Church is so formative... “[D]oing God’s work together” invites us to experience ourselves not merely as living members of a body but as living members of the Body of Christ, that is, the Church. Experiencing this reality through service seems to engender a sense of co-responsibility and shared mission more readily than discussion alone.

### Healing

In Acts 3:7-8, God miraculously heals a man lame from birth through Peter. This is the first of many healing miracles described in the Book of Acts.

The need for healing and reconciliation was mentioned often in synod reports. One consultation leader wrote:

Along with the offices of teaching, sanctifying and governing, there is a great need for healing... [The Church] needs to be increasingly thought of as a place where people can come for healing of mind and soul ... So many people need healing due to Church sexual-abuse scandals, to abortion-related issues, to broken marriages and families who have fallen away from the Church, to the loss of a spouse or a loved one, to traumas and abuse, to drugs or alcohol abuse and addictions, to health issues... The role of the pope, bishops and priests as well as nuns and sisters and the laity in healing is very, very important. The priest must be seen on the local parish level as a healer.

Possible means of healing mentioned included healing Masses and prayers, Confession, Eucharistic adoration, healing retreats, healing prayer groups, grief counseling ministries,<sup>4</sup> and better pastoral accompaniment with people going through divorces and annulments.

Healing for various groups of marginalized people was mentioned. One report noted, "People have become polarized due to religious and/or political beliefs and the beliefs of the secular world. We need to figure out how can we be a voice of healing and reason and begin loving each other rather than being in conflict."

In one consultation, Black Catholics also spoke of their need for healing including acknowledgement and apology for the sin of racism, particularly in the Church, and the need for priests to speak about the subject. Part of this acknowledgement includes a willingness to learn about the Black Catholic experience.<sup>5</sup>

In another consultation, Catholic police and fire personnel mentioned their desire for healing and reconciliation in the form of more opportunities for pastoral counseling.

Healing was also mentioned as a necessary precondition for receptiveness to the *kerygma*. It was stated that perhaps one of the reasons the Gospel message is not getting through to certain people is that they are in need of healing first.

### Evangelizing

Acts 3:11-26 depicts Peter fearlessly evangelizing. The synod consultation reports reveal a dire need for evangelization at time when the spirit of the world and modern culture have seemingly drowned out the voice of God.

This synod reminds us that, like Jesus, we must be ready to encounter indifference. One Newman Center reported: "It was interesting to notice how many students had no desire to participate at all ... It was not an aggressive or confrontational experience, but an experience of *apathy and indifference*" (emphasis added). This recalls the complaints of Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque in the seventeenth century about the indifference He received and his desire to promote devotion to his Sacred Heart.

This synod reveals the importance of simply asking questions to gauge where people are. This was the technique employed by a Newman Center by a group of five FOCUS missionaries (Fellowship of Catholic University Students; <https://www.focus.org>) who spent hours interacting with students at a public university on two separate occasions.

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<sup>4</sup> Examples of specialized healing retreats available in the diocese include Rachel's Vineyard (<https://www.rachelsvineyard.org>; healing from abortion), Grief to Grace (<http://grief-to-grace-lsi.squarespace.com>; healing from abuse) and Retrouvaille (<http://retrouvailleofarizona.org>; healing of marriages).

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent resource on this subject, see Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (Herder & Herder, 1995).

On their first venture, they attempted to interact with 400 students and found 33 who were willing to participate. These participants self-identified as Catholic or agnostic. When asked what they would like to say to or ask of Pope Francis, “many students asked questions that centered on divorce, transgender ideation, and same-sex attraction, especially in regard to their own personal lives and how to respond to family members,” the FOCUS missionaries reported.

A second round of questioning by FOCUS missionaries on a different date centered on this question: “Of the following topics, which one are you most passionate about or most impacted by? The majority of votes (60) pertained to the combined total of those who said pro-life or pro-choice. Racism and LGBTQ+ came in second and third respectively. The Eucharist, source and summit of the faith, came in a distant last place, after community service and marriage. The report noted, “[S]tudents did not know how to articulate why they were passionate about such topics ... It was also surprising and interesting to see the number of students who asked... “What is the Eucharist?” These interactions clearly illustrate the challenges of evangelizing at a secular university, yet the Newman Center and FOCUS are planting seeds every day.

Evangelizing requires engagement, relationship, invitation and moving out of comfort zones. Sometimes fear can get in the way. One synod consultation conducted by Saint Paul Street Evangelization (SPSE) noted:

We now live in a Catholic culture in which many, even very faithful Catholics, feel ill-equipped and very hesitant to engage in direct evangelization activities. There is a real fear of not knowing the answer to a question, and just a general insecurity surrounding their knowledge of the faith.

There is also an unwarranted fear of conflict, as SPSE also noted:

Confrontations while evangelizing are extremely rare, even though that remains as a real fear for many on the fence about getting involved. This may be due to a common misunderstanding that street evangelization is the same as ‘Bible thumping’ or ‘proselytizing’ and the image of yelling at people through a bullhorn that they are going to hell. The reality is that people, especially young people, are starving for the truth.

SPSE also spoke of how "practice makes perfect" in this sphere:

Many SPSE evangelists find that the more practice they have on the street, the easier it is to speak the name of Jesus in everyday life. From restaurants, airplanes, workplaces, and schools, and with family and friends, it becomes easier to speak about Jesus when you keep his Name always on your lips.

As for parish evangelization, one parish reported that the need is evident: "Why don't we see missionary activity at the parish level? ... People here in our own communities need to know the Lord... Right here, right now, we need to re-evangelize."

Synod reports did offer ideas. One was that deacons take a more active role in training lay evangelists. One parish has a group called Catholic Truth Seekers, organized by young adults, which focuses on fellowship and growing in one's understanding of Scripture and Catholic teaching so that they are better equipped to be evangelizers. More than one parish suggested taking teams, laity and clergy, door-to-door, within the boundaries of the parish. More

experienced evangelizers can teach others how to reach out "to immediate and extended family, as well as our neighbors and friends." It can begin with a simple invitation to Mass, along with prayer for conversion of heart. One report added, "parish leaders need to provide the necessary resources and the people need to take part in this missionary formation."

SPSE offers resources for both individuals and parishes; deeper collaboration with the diocese and individual parishes is a possibility. Parishioners can join SPSE teams on evangelization outings, where they can "build great friendships, build confidence, and strengthen our faith."

One report summed up well God's invitation regarding evangelization: "[The Holy Spirit invites us] to be bold in our faith, speak the truth, evangelize with love and be active."

## Appendix 5 - Youth (grade school through high school)

There is a massive number of men and women in our diocese, ordained, religious and laypersons, especially in our Catholic schools, who dedicate themselves selflessly to forming our youth in the faith. And there is a massive number of Catholic youth being formed, and formed well. Nonetheless, the participation of youth in the synod consultation made two things clear: On the whole, there is a crisis of faith among young people and there is an accompanying need for evangelization, compelling witness, and catechesis. The Church is losing young people and the noise and spirit of the world is drowning out the Gospel.

Young people who participated in synod consultations made frequent mention of enjoying school Masses and retreats, but in general, as children get older, a disconnect develops between what the Church teaches and what their lived experience is. They're affected by parents who don't take them to church and they often feel they don't have a voice.

### Grade-school students

At one grade school, the consultation leader wrote, "Students feel excited and happy when attending school Mass... Students were grateful to have the opportunity to celebrate Mass and the sacraments together as a family." At another grade school, a student said, "My classmates make sure we ensure all classmates are included by working in groups where we can help each other out."

Fifth-graders who participated said they feel close to God when they "pray, go to Mass, go to confession, say the rosary, or help others." The consultation leader said, "They love God and thank Him. Many mentioned they struggle with temptation and sin."

### Middle-school students

Many of the students in middle school focused on family prayer, personal prayer and adoration as key contact points with Jesus. They also remarked how they wish the Sacrament of Reconciliation was made more available. They said they enjoy retreats and service opportunities.

A consultation leader who wrote up middle schoolers' comments noted, "Parents also do not influence the culture of the Catholic faith onto the students at home."

Middle-school students also spoke out on their willingness to engage in prayer: "As a member [of the Church] I can reach out to the forgotten and outcast by prayer. I could teach them prayers and how to pray or I can just keep them in my daily prayers."

A sixth grader worried about missing Mass: "I feel if I had time I could be going to church more. I should go more but I don't. My parents are really busy. They only have time to take me when I altar serve, not otherwise."

One consultation leader noted that their school has Adoration, Reconciliation, and Mass throughout the week: "Currently, students feel close to God because the school has taught them how to grow in this area. Students are taught to have conversations with the Lord through prayer so that they know Christ is always with them."

An element that seemed worrisome — and indicative of the need for catechesis — was this comment from a consultation leader about seventh- and eighth-graders and their lack of understanding about why they are Catholic:

[Our seventh and eighth-graders] report that they have difficulties with prayer. *They do not know if God hears prayers or answers them.* The content of their prayer is mainly petitions dealing with everyday life, family, loved ones, and safety. They don't consider themselves distant from God, but not close either. For many of them prayer only happens at mealtime. *Our kids are more or less aware that they are Catholic but are not sure why.* A lot of their Catholic life is limited to their parents' involvement (emphasis added).

And in spite of the financial burden of a Catholic education, many parents aren't practicing the faith and that, in turn, is impacting their children's relationship with God. In fact, students can't begin to explain what a relationship with God is. Said one consultation leader of a middle school:

Many parents do not practice the faith in spite of sending their children to Catholic school. Attendance at Mass is limited to their parents' attendance. *The question of relationship with God is strange to them.* They do not know how to answer that without further explanation and examples. They think that the experience of God is different for everyone and therefore hard to discuss (emphasis added).

Abandoning the faith as one matures, in fact, seems to be a rite of passage, at least according to one consultation leader who spoke with middle-school students:

They are very aware that, though they are Catholic now at school, many of them might abandon the faith in high school. In fact, some of them are very forward in anticipating that, but not through any repulsion to the faith but as an expectation of growing up. For others who do not look forward to leaving the faith, they acknowledge that high school will be a challenge to their faith and do not know how they will remain Catholic. Most are not planning for this conflict. Most students, nevertheless, acknowledge a need for God in their lives. Some report some experiences where they felt judged negatively at Church and that turns them away. In general, they don't understand why the Church has authority to teach what it does, but they are open to learning.

Sixth-graders who were asked how they could reach out to the forgotten members of society offered this approach: "going door to door to spread the Gospel."

Seventh-graders at one school noted that their relationship with God was not good. The reasons given were lack of prayer; not going to Mass; concern with sports and school; and too much time spent on technology. They also offered their take on what the Church should and shouldn't do: "The church should not judge." This invites better catechesis (see Appendix 7).

As far as reaching out to those who may feel excluded or on the margins, one student brought up junior and high school students who are outcasts and dealing with bullying, harmful thoughts, or other trauma. This student suggested creating a group within Catholic schools so students can talk about these issues.

Eighth-graders who felt close to God mentioned the importance of prayer and attending Mass. Many said daily prayer or praying with a family member was important. There were a number of eighth-graders (about 14 at one school) who said they did not have a strong relationship with God.

To reach those who feel excluded, middle school students mentioned having a stronger social media presence as well as holding more retreats and faith events for different groups of people within the Church.



Other suggestions were to accept people for who they are and what they are; not judging and showing love and kindness to all. “Let people know they’re not alone by making cards for them, listening to others, and taking time to talk to others,” students wrote. Other suggestions were to try to give people hope and welcome the lonely in our communities and pray for those who are troubled. Another suggestion was that students could help at St. Vincent DePaul Society by donating food, clothing or other items.”

### High-school students

Synod feedback confirms that many of our high school students are struggling on multiple fronts. One chaplain wrote:

Shame plays a major part in our students’ lives. Whether it’s from the pressure of parents, the status of social media, or personal perceptions, our students can feel deeply unworthy and that living the sacramental life is not normal. Some of the real struggles of sin, trauma, and abuse have caused some deep wounds/lies that dispose our students to assume that this “Jesus stuff” is not for them and they are unworthy. It was noted from particular students that what keeps them away from the sacraments are “overthinking,” “guilt for sin,” and “falling into temptation.” Students note that there is a kind of despair/lethargy to get up and try again because there can be a heavy temptation to think “what is the point?” Yet, when pressed, it is important to note that our students do want the love and grace the Church has to offer. But some major wounds need to be healed and concrete acts of the will need to be made in order to become less discouraged so easily.

Another school report spoke along similar lines, and noted the importance of counseling to provide additional assistance:

[O]ur youth are struggling with a lot of depression and anxiety. Many of this stems from very real difficulties and even trauma. As these students seek intimacy, they look for it in the wrong ways and they are hurting. This hurt can create barriers to conversion. In order to reach these kids, it is important to note that counseling and psychological resources are going to be key to assist in the spiritual needs of these students. Just presenting the faith is not enough. These students need to experience inspiring testimony and love from educators. Yet these educators need the assistance of experts to triage these major issues that are bubbling up.

Students at one school shared a number of personal stories that led to their distrust of and frustration with the Church: “I went to confession and the priest was on his phone;” “being rejected for being gay;” “priest scolding parishioners;” “racist and homophobic comments;” “bullying at school;” and a “harsh and judgmental teacher.”

One high school consultation leader wrote that many students “view the Catholic Church with apprehension.” Even those who are faithful Mass-goers might regard the Church with uncertainty or apprehension; for many of them, they were never properly instructed how to be Catholic, and so they experience trepidation and self-consciousness when approaching the faith.”

As is the case with younger students, compounding this problem is the lack of support and guidance from some (not all) parents. As one consultation report noted:

Many of the freshman and sophomores who can't drive have a desire to attend Mass, but their parents have lost the rhythm or simply do not go to Church. As we progress to junior and senior year, this habit becomes solidified.

[P]arents need to be brought into the equation. The Catholic schools cannot be the [be-all-end-all for the] spiritual needs of these students. Many times, as these participants spoke, the lethargy or indifference of the parents contributed a habitual disposition of lukewarmness to the faith.

The impact of the clerical sex-abuse crisis has affected students' view of the Church, as one consultation leader noted:

Even though none were alive to experience it, the clergy sex abuse crisis is a significant aspect of their perception of the Church. The students feel that, in many aspects, the Church does not look at what is difficult, painful, or out of line with her worldview. One student expressed that "just because the Church ignores something or doesn't speak about certain realities of life today, doesn't mean they're not there."

There was a sense that the Church is not listening, engaging, or dialoguing with youth enough, with one student saying, "My voice matters to God, but not the Church." Along similar lines, two separate school reports confirmed this attitude:

Our students identified as Catholic, but at times would note that they felt, 'they were not a part of the Church.' When trying to understand this discrepancy between identifying as Catholic, yet not feeling a part of the Church, a common cause was lack of Mass attendance and sin.

In general, the students expressed a positive view of the Catholic Church but did not seem to have a desire to live in communion with her.

And, like teenagers from time immemorial, they expressed a painful complaint: "Teens do not feel anyone listens to them. They feel ignored or dismissed. "

One chaplain pointed to challenges of receptivity and interpretation on the part of at least some students:

One student who came from a faithful Catholic family wanted the space to be able to express her doubts about the Catholic faith and simply have some honest conversations. For me, this seems archetypical for the students. They want the Church to be a place where ideas and moral issues can be genuinely talked about without immediately being "shut down." How the Church can accomplish this, as a body of believers who receive the truth from the Lord (and not from horizontal dialogue), is certainly a matter for creativity. Many of these students urgently need to be rescued from false truths of the culture, but the question seems to be what the most effective way to "reach" them is... This is not a matter of what is being said, but what is being received.

The essential issue is not what is being taught. Our theology faculty on campus is actually rather talented and faithful. The deeper issue is that large majority of the students do not have the receptivity (culturally, intellectually, affectively) to hear what is being said in any fruitful way... This absence of receptivity seems to be a crucial issue for the Church going forward if we are to have any meaningful presence in American life.

Some of the most thoughtful responses involved the students' formation in Catholic theology. Taking theology classes for four years, many of them encountering Catholic teaching for the first time, means that they have both an outsider perspective and a wide-ranging presentation of the faith. One student expressed that the message of Christianity came across clearly, but not the meaning. Another said of a theology teacher: "She gave the right answer, but I didn't know how to interpret it."

Disturbingly, another chaplain noted that [some high school] students have a deeply rooted conviction that the Church hates them in spite of a dearth of evidence:

[Some high school] students have a deeply rooted conviction that the Church hates them. It has been my experience through several candid conversations with students who feel this way that they are often convinced that the Church hates them despite the fact that they cannot name any specific people who have treated them hatefully and cannot recall any specific experiences of being treated in a dehumanizing way. On the contrary, they can usually name several specific "Church-people" who have treated them with great kindness. Yet, for some reason they remain convinced that this is the exception rather than the norm. As a priest, I have found this to be particularly heartbreaking. It seems that no matter how much we pour ourselves out to love and accompany these students, they remain convinced that our kindness is in spite of the Church's disposition towards them rather than an expression of the Church's disposition towards them. How does it happen, specifically, that some people become so deeply convinced that the Church hates them that this belief is held as a kind of first principle even when it is contradicted by their own experience? I believe this is a question for further discernment.

The students' need for witness was noted. Hearing witness stories "boosted my understanding of my relationship with God," one student said. Two separate reports noted the following:

... One non-Catholic student was impressed by the faithful Catholics on campus who were more than just "nice," but genuinely cared for other people and gave what she called an "open-minded witness." The students often find that religious people can carry themselves with a certain moral superiority that is off-putting...

... [M]any students found the Church to be filled with good people. They expressed, almost unanimously, that the sincere Catholics they have encountered are kind and thoughtful people. Perhaps the personal witness of extraordinary sanctity is, as Cardinal Newman preached, the true way forward.

Something stressed over and over again was the need for witness. Many students were inspired to practice the faith more when they saw their parents' practice, or they had a teacher who loved them and "listened to them." A key hunger in the students is the desire for someone to know them... Consistently, over many sessions, the power of testimony from the saints and living witnesses contributed to willingness to be more personally invested in the faith.

These insights confirm the wisdom of Pope Saint Paul VI's famous quote: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 41).

At one Catholic high school, the consultation leader wrote that, “the formation of the students as missionary disciples is regarded as the highest importance” and this is accomplished through “a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through prayer, study, community and service as disciples.”

In spite of a disconnect between students and the Church, there were still many who expressed a genuine love for their Catholic faith. One student said she enjoyed going to Mass on Sunday for the thoughtful homilies and for the Eucharist. Students reported they like to discuss Bible stories and the history of the Church. Other students voiced strong opinions on their theological studies at Catholic high schools. One student expressed pride in her Catholic faith, and if anything, was frustrated that it was so misunderstood or denigrated on campus.

Students report liking school liturgies, noting the unifying power of music, sung together as “we.” They are also touched by how the community comes together to support one of their own, by praying for a concrete, personal intention, or in one case, supporting a student whose mother died. Some students expressed that they enjoyed quiet time in the chapel.

Even those students not practicing reported enjoying very much school retreats, “visiting the chapel with the team after a game, doing volunteer work like feeding the homeless with friends.”

What are students looking for when it comes to approaching the Catholic faith and learning more about it?

One principal, quoting Pope Benedict XVI (“The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness”), wrote:

We are called to help Christ rescue His beloved brothers and sisters from the culture. We are called to a life of heroic virtue so that we can assist others on their journey to become saints as well. Young people are hungering for this type of journey. They are tired of the journey the culture has laid out for them. They recognize its futility, and they want the “greatness” God offers them.

A chaplain offered this answer:

In general, it seems that the students desire a Church that is willing to join with people in their weakness. *They don’t want a Church that will lecture them, but a Church that will love and help them when they make a mistake. They do not have a sense of the healing power of truth. For them, truth is a weapon used to belittle others.* This is important to note. Even in my conversations with the students, it was clear that they simply wanted to be listened to. *They don’t necessarily want anything to change,* but the fact that a Church representative wanted to hear their experience was deeply validating for them. One student remarked towards the end of a session: “Father, walls are coming down!... I didn’t think we’d have this serious of a conversation. I just thought we’d talk the whole time about gay people.” *...They don’t want doctrine to change, they just want to feel welcomed and understood.* This seems to have nothing to do with ideas for them, in fact, *they find the ideas get in the way* (emphasis added).

Some high school students said they were well-acquainted with what the Church opposes and what the Church disapproves of, but not so much what it stands for. One said, “This [is] because of how it is taught, and how we as Catholics are more told of who not to be.”

A chaplain at a different high school shared the following in his interview with a student:

Another individual who had difficulties said that he had trouble believing because there are “more questions than answers” and that Theology classes are “boring and don’t meet us where we are at.” A greater articulation and understanding of “more questions than answers” did not occur in this conversation. Knowing the individual, there is also great family hurt and it seems that this hurt has translated into his view of God, faith and the world. The individual’s point on theology classes is good to note because there were a few other individuals who founds classes at the school or parish unrelatable. There is a thirst in the students to be “listened to,” be taught things “relatable to me” and be met “where they are at.” It’s hard to gauge whether these comments are based off of class content, teacher’s teaching ability, or ignorance. But the students do seem to respond well and talk highly of theology classes when they know the “teacher loves them.” This makes them become more invested in the subject.

High school students who do not attend Catholic schools also participated in the synod. Some lamented the lack of youth groups and what they perceive as a lack of attention to youth in the diocese. One participant said it made him sad that only adults seem to participate in Adoration and that he wished more young people did.

These young people also were saddened by the lack of opportunities for developing young leaders and the lack of community after Mass. “We don’t make enough of an effort to involve youth more in the life of the Church,” said one participant. Another said, “I would like the priests to be taught that the youth are the future of the Church.”

### *Students and sexual identity*

A number of schools posed questions addressed to those on the margins:

*How can the Church of the future show that all people are accepted and appreciated?*

*As Catholics we “walk together;” how do we ensure all classmates are included and not left out?*

It was largely in response to these questions that sexual identity emerged as a primary theme of interest among students, especially those in high school.

Despite the best efforts of many in Catholic schools to educate students on sexuality from the perspective of the Bible and Catholic faith and morals (including a special emphasis in recent years on Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body), contrary messages are impacting our children, especially through Hollywood, social media, and other means.

Some students at one middle school said they didn’t have a strong relationship with God because they disagreed with Church teaching on “gay rights.” At the same school, a group of middle schools gave their opinion that “the Church should not judge” (see Appendix 7).

Another school report leader wrote, “About 10 percent of the [middle school] students mentioned the homosexual and trans communities. They often spoke of being welcoming to them, ‘That no matter your race, age, appearance, gender, or sexuality that God loves everyone, no exceptions.’”

Turning to our Catholic high schools, one student said he felt “rejected for being gay.” At another high school, the chaplain spoke of this encounter with a student:

One student... asked to be referred to... [by] her chosen masculine name. She feels afraid to express her transgender and queer tendencies for fear that she might be removed from the school. This student finds it hard to accept when teachers or guides say that Jesus loves everyone, but also that “God hates queer people.” This is not a matter of what is being said, but what is being received.

At another high school, a student composed a prayer that was included in the consultation for his school: *“We’re hopeful the excluded will find a home and safe haven, and that our minds will open more, and we’ll put ourselves in others’ shoes, and accept them without judgment, regardless of race, sexuality, [or] gender.”*

A chaplain captured a part of the challenge this way:

It seems that many of the students disagree with the Church’s views on sexuality enough to disinterest them from meaningful Church practice. This does not mean they want or expect the Church to change her teachings, however. Put simply, they find our teachings regarding human sexuality implausible and uninteresting.

Some high school students questioned the Church’s teaching on human sexuality while others said they’d like the opportunity to have genuine, open discussion of moral issues “without immediately being shut down.”

High school students remain open to learning and dialogue. But a prudent approach is required. The findings from the synod in this area invite teachers to re-examine their pedagogy. The Church boldly professes the fullness of the truth, beauty and goodness of human sexuality as ordained by God. But along with evangelizing and catechizing is the duty to listen to students and engage them in a dialogue that will ultimately facilitate their engagement with learning. Teaching what God has revealed with clarity and charity, while allowing room for discussion and respectful dialogue, seems to be the way forward.

See Appendix 7 for more on the subject of gender dysphoria.

## Appendix 6 - Homeless, Refugees and Victims of Abuse

Synod feedback revealed that for the homeless, refugees or victims of abuse, there seems to be a two-fold problem of visibility and awareness. There are clearly people in our community who are struggling, but due to ignorance or fear or indifference, these least of our brothers often go unnoticed by Catholics.

Synod participants urged more communication, education, collaboration and support to help those on the margins. Here are some examples of better outreach and collaboration:

- Utilize chapel at shelters/community centers, etc. Clients here are open to receiving pastoral care.
- For pastors/deacons, more can be done to teach those experiencing domestic violence what resources are out there, and the parish can make it clear it's OK to move to a safe place.
- Parishioners can be taught to call Catholic Charities instead of 911 when homeless sleep on the property, etc.
- People can be trained on how to do follow-up with the homeless or at least point people in need in the right direction. There is a need to provide spiritual resources. People can be trained in this also.
- Parishes can do more to post easily accessible information.
- Parishes can reach out and partner with organizations like Catholic Charities
- Parishes can follow up with families that have stopped coming to Mass.
- Parishes can provide more printed resources on domestic violence support.
- Parishes can promote support groups in the community.
- Parishes can provide more retreats/programs for men and fathers.
- Parishes can offer a seminar/program on homelessness.

With refugees, there's a perception that Catholics are mostly about prayer but not about action. There are individuals who volunteer to help refugees, but parishes don't seem to want to engage on this issue, perhaps fearing that it's political or divisive. Others don't want to even hear about or deal with refugees.

The Church needs to remind people that if they need help, the Church is there for them. Since Jesus Christ transcends human politics, there's a need to look past politics with the eyes of Christ and see refugees as the human persons that they are, regardless of their country of origin or religion. Catholics can vote as their conscience dictates and still be Jesus to refugees.

"Refugees need to be welcomed as humans and they need friends here," one synod participant said. "The importance of walking with struggling individuals cannot be emphasized enough," stated another report. One participant noted, "every refugee needs at least one friend to give them guidance."

From inviting Catholic Charities to parishes to discuss what services they offer to help the marginalized to supporting efforts to provide affordable housing and becoming foster parents to refugee children, there were a number of ideas offered. Parishes could help people who lost loved ones bury their dead and follow up with pastoral support. Parishioners can invite a refugee family over for a meal. Also, the Church can support building more affordable housing for refugees.

A synod report conducted by the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP) revealed the spiritual impact on clients when one serves them with the disposition of Christ. SVdP seems to be a place where service and evangelization merge. Some 70 percent of client respondents said St. Vincent de Paul Society volunteers “help me have faith in God,” “are a blessing to me,” and “help me see Christ.” “Being here, I realize that I am worthy (of help from others),” reported another. More than 25 percent of clients in SVdP's Family Evening Meal program requested Bible studies. 100 percent of SVdP's Conference guests relayed that “SVdP people help me have faith in God!”



## Appendix 7 - Persons experiencing gender dysphoria or who define their sexual identities in ways distinct from biological sex

As noted earlier, these persons, all created in the image of God and many incorporated into the Body of Christ through baptism, are among those having been identified by this diocesan synod as marginalized.

What is gender dysphoria? What does the Church mean when she refers to "gender theory" or an "ideology of gender"?

Gender dysphoria refers to the distress some persons experience due to a variance between their perceived sexual identity and their biological sex. Drawing from the 2014-2015 Synod on the Family, Pope Francis defines and explains gender ideology this way:

[It] denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programs and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time... Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures, and not omnipotent. Creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.<sup>6</sup>

Pope Francis and the Synod on the Family therefore rightly view gender ideology as a threat to God's plan for the human person, marriage and family.

In 2016, during World Youth Day celebrations in Poland, Pope Francis expressed grave concern over the spread of gender ideology:

In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are genuine forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one of these - I will call it clearly by its name - is [the ideology of] "gender". Today children - children! - are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this [is] terrible!<sup>7</sup>

Six years later, feedback gathered from this diocesan synod can affirm that this ideological colonization has impacted many Catholics in the Diocese of Phoenix, in parishes and in schools, and has resulted in widespread confusion and division. This calls for an immediate response: to warn about the dangers of gender ideology, to teach about God's plan for the human

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<sup>6</sup> *Amoris laetitia*, 56.

<sup>7</sup> Address to Polish bishops, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160727\\_polonia-vescovi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/july/documents/papa-francesco_20160727_polonia-vescovi.html). To learn more about gender ideology, its origins, and its manifestation as an ideological colonization, see Gabriele Kuby, *The Global Sexual Revolution: Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom* (Angelico Press, 2015).

person, and to accompany, in a spirit of true compassion, those who experience gender dysphoria.

It may be possible to categorize three general viewpoints characterizing this division:

1. Catholics who, in agreement with Pope Francis and the Church's Magisterium on faith and morals, believe that sexual activity outside of the marital union of man and woman is sinful and therefore not part of God's plan for humanity, and who reject the anthropological claims of gender ideology.
2. Catholics who welcome the vision of the human person as articulated by gender ideology, generally regard the first viewpoint as unwelcome, judgmental, harmful and hateful, and likely reject the Church's position on the sinfulness of sexual acts occurring outside the marital union of one man and one woman.
3. Catholics who are not sure what to think about the claims and language of gender ideology and are looking to the Church for guidance, especially those who have friends or family members who experience same-sex attraction, gender dysphoria, or who sexually identify in ways distinct from biological sex.

As to the first viewpoint, this kind of sentiment was articulated more than once in parish reports. An example:

[Gender dysphoria is] confusing our Catholic and Christian brothers and sisters and unless they are grounded in biblical truth, they will be misled. *Priests need to address these issues at the pulpit!* Unless that is done, we will leave people adrift and that will be tragic.

The second viewpoint was well-represented in a synod consultation of Catholics identifying as "members" or "allies" of "the LGBTQ community." It was also represented to a degree in various school consultations. Below are some excerpts from the former consultation:

Participants shared that they did not have a problem with faith or their personal faith journey. In fact, most claimed to have a close and active relationship with God. They did, however, claim that they were struggling to maintain their relationship with the Catholic Church since doctrine does not welcome and invite LGBTQ people to the table. In fact, participants struggled with the demonization and lack of Christ-like treatment of LGBTQ parishioners, neighbors, family, and friends.

The Catholic Church needs to realize that LGBTQ people can also be people of deep faith who feel a calling and desire to participate in their faith community and give back. Many LGBTQ people want to live according to a Christian and even Catholic calling; however, they are not currently welcome under current Church practices and doctrine.

Participants shared that they strongly believe that Churches and communities of faith should be places of hospitality, acceptance, and nonjudgement. Many found it disturbing that a place of worship (Catholic Church) where people come in need of healing, for community, for reconciliation, is instead, "a place of division and in a way perpetuating demonization and hate."

[T]he Catholic Church needs to realize that “most Catholics” have people who identify as LGBTQ in their lives.

Many Catholics feel like they’re being forced to choose between their Catholic faith and those they love.

The third viewpoint was also represented by some synod participants, such as this excerpt from a parish report:

They do not feel that the Church is giving unified guidance on how to navigate the lifestyle choices and issues in the culture that we live in. People are struggling with how to respond to the growing LGBTQ+ lifestyles and agenda. Parents are seeking guidance and support on talking about it with their children and need a more unifying approach to the subject.

### Study, reflection and dialogue

How can members of the Body of Christ journey together while holding such differing views on the human person? We can look to God's plan for humanity as described in Scripture, and to the Church, for guidance. We might begin by recalling the International Theological Commission's four key dispositions necessary "to live and bring to maturity the *sensus fidei*" and "to put it to use on the synodal path" (ITC, *Synodality in the Life of the Church*, 108):

- 1) *Participation in the life of the Church centered on the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.*
- 2) *Listening to the Word of God in order to enter into a dialogue with it and put it into practice.*
- 3) *Following the Magisterium in its teaching on faith and morals*
- 4) *Awareness of being members of each other as the Body of Christ and of being sent to our brothers and sisters, first and foremost to the poorest and the most excluded*

The Diocese of Phoenix can propose these dispositions while educating the faithful who hold the three viewpoints mentioned above, and also while engaging in dialogue. Below is a hypothetical series of steps that might be applied in one scenario:

1. Listen to the stories of those who have experienced same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria, and/or their family members. Study the language, concepts and claims of gender ideology. Reflect.
2. Study, reflect upon and discuss insights from Sacred Scripture and resources such as "Gender theory/Gender ideology' - Select Teaching Resources" ([https://www.usccb.org/resources/Gender-Ideology-Select-Teaching-Resources\\_0.pdf](https://www.usccb.org/resources/Gender-Ideology-Select-Teaching-Resources_0.pdf)),

3. Study and reflect upon the concept of *sensus fidei*, the four dispositions listed above, their connection to journeying together (synodality), and engage in respectful dialogue.

It is important to take into account the ages, life situations, and dispositions of each particular audience. For example, while a historical survey of philosophical movements and figures that provided a foundation for the ascendancy of gender ideology might be beneficial for concerned Catholic schoolteachers, listening and dialogue would be more appropriate in accompanying young people struggling with sexual identity and their families. In all circumstances, a Christ-like disposition of charity and humility is paramount.

### *Sensus fidei and the theme of judgment*

The theme of *judgment* came up a number of times in synod consultations, often in connection with the topic of sexual identity. Comments ranged from “The Church should not judge,” to “Churches and communities of faith should be places of hospitality, acceptance, and nonjudgement.” This sentiment occurred among some adults and some youth.

Are these comments about judgment authentic manifestations of the *sensus fidei*? The International Theological Commission's report "*Sensus fidei* in the life of the Church," an official document of the synod, can help us address this question:

In order to understand how it functions and manifests itself in the life of the Church, the *sensus fidei* needs to be viewed within the context of history, a history in which the Holy Spirit makes each day a day to hear the voice of the Lord afresh (cf. Hebrews 3:7-15). The Good News of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is transmitted to the Church as a whole through the living apostolic Tradition, of which the Scriptures are the authoritative written witness. Hence, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, who reminds the Church of all that Jesus said and did (cf. John 14:26), believers rely on the Scriptures and on the continuing apostolic Tradition in their life of faith and in the exercise of the *sensus fidei* (n. 68).

As she awaits the return of her Lord, the Church and her members are constantly confronted with new circumstances, with the progress of knowledge and culture, and with the challenges of human history, and they have to read the signs of the times, "to interpret them in the light of the divine Word", and to discern how they may enable revealed truth itself to be "more deeply penetrated, better understood and more deeply presented" (n. 70, citing *Gaudium et spes* n. 44).

Authentic participation in the *sensus fidei* relies necessarily on a profound and attentive listening to the word of God. Because the Bible is the original testimony of the word of God, which is handed down from generation to generation in the community of faith [cf. *Lumen gentium* n. 12 and *Dei verbum* n. 8], coherence to Scripture and Tradition is the main indicator of such listening. The *sensus fidei* is the appreciation of the faith by which the people of God "receives not the mere word of men, but truly the word of God" [*Lumen gentium* 12, with reference to 1 Thessalonians 2:13] (n. 92)

These excerpts may help orient the Church for how she might go about structuring a more robust *catechesis on judgment* in parishes and in schools. This catechesis on judgment could draw primarily from the words of Jesus himself in the Gospel:

- John 5:22-30, 7:24 ("Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."), 8:15-16, 8:26, 8:48-50, 12:47-50, 16:8-11
- Matthew 7:1-5, 18:15-17, 25:31-46
- Luke 6:37-38

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (especially sections 91-93, 679, 1021-1022, 1038-1041, 1776-1802, 2477 and 2478) elucidate the theme of judgment. Some examples:

- "Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them" (*Catechism* 1786).
- "Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury. He becomes guilty of rash judgment who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor" (*Catechism* 2477).

Saint Thomas Aquinas comments on judgment at length in *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Question 60, where he states: "[Judgment] denotes a right decision about what is just."<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the kind of judgment for which the Church is specifically responsible, the documents of the Second Vatican Council<sup>9</sup> and the aforementioned ITC study on *sensus fidei*<sup>10</sup> also provide clarity.

Such a catechesis could help the faithful distinguish between 1) that kind of judgment that is reserved to Jesus Christ alone, 2) that which is reserved to the Holy Father and bishops, 3) that which is reserved to all followers of Christ, and 4) the kind of judgmental attitude that is sinful and to be avoided. Finally, this catechesis could warn against false notions of judgment (or non-judgment) that spring from the errors of moral relativism and moral sentimentalism.

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3060.htm> for the text of the entire question.

<sup>9</sup> "It is only right... that at all times and in all places, the Church should have true freedom to preach the faith, to teach her social doctrine, to exercise her role freely among men, and also to pass moral judgment in those matters which regard public order when the fundamental rights of a person or the salvation of souls require it" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 76). See also *Lumen gentium* (nn. 12, 25, 27), *Dei verbum* n. 12, and *Sacrosanctum concilium* n. 3.

<sup>10</sup> "The magisterium also judges with authority whether opinions which are present among the people of God, and which may seem to be the *sensus fidelium*, actually correspond to the truth of the Tradition received from the Apostles. As Newman said: 'the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of that tradition resides solely in the *Ecclesia docens* ["teaching Church"]'. Thus, judgment regarding the authenticity of the *sensus fidelium* belongs ultimately not to the faithful themselves nor to theology but to the magisterium. Nevertheless, as already emphasised, the faith which it serves is the faith of the Church, which lives in all of the faithful, so it is always within the communion life of the Church that the magisterium exercises its essential ministry of oversight" (International Theological Commission, "*Sensus fidei* in the life of the Church," n. 77, citing Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful*, p. 63).

## Appendix 8 - Priests and A New Pentecost—Insights from Blessed Concepción Cabrera de Armida

The Diocese of Phoenix is blessed with many dedicated priests who strive for holiness, and the author of this report thanks those priests who took the time and effort to help the diocese listen to our people during this synod.

A parish synod report noted, “*Holy, reverent priests should be the norm and not the exception.*”

The International Theological Commission's report "*Sensus fidei* in the life of the Church" states:

In the history of the Church, the saints are the light-bearers of the *sensus fidei*. Mary, Mother of God, the All-Holy (*Panaghia*), in her total acceptance of the word of God is the very model of faith and Mother of the Church. Treasuring the words of Christ in her heart (Luke 2:51) and singing the praises of God's work of salvation (Luke 1:46-55), she perfectly exemplifies the delight in God's word and eagerness to proclaim the good news that the *sensus fidei* produces in the hearts of believers. In all succeeding generations, the gift of the Spirit to the Church has produced a rich harvest of holiness, and the full number of the saints is known only to God. Those who are beatified and canonised stand as visible models of Christian faith and life. For the Church, Mary and all holy persons, with their prayer and their passion, are outstanding witnesses of the *sensus fidei* in their own time and for all times, in their own place and for all places (n. 100).

Vatican II was a new Pentecost, equipping the Church for the new evangelisation that popes since the council have called for. The council gave a renewed emphasis to the traditional idea that all of the baptised have a *sensus fidei*, and the *sensus fidei* constitutes a most important resource for the new evangelisation. By means of the *sensus fidei*, the faithful are able not only to recognise what is in accordance with the Gospel and to reject what is contrary to it, but also to sense what Pope Francis has called ‘new ways for the journey’ in faith of the whole pilgrim people. One of the reasons why bishops and priests need to be close to their people on the journey and to walk with them is precisely so as to recognise "new ways" as they are sensed by the people. The discernment of such new ways, opened up and illumined by the Holy Spirit, will be vital for the new evangelisation (n. 127).

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, states:

Christ, whom the Father sanctified, consecrated and sent into the world, "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and cleanse for himself an acceptable people, pursuing good works" (Titus 2:14), and thus through suffering entered into his glory. In like fashion, priests consecrated by the anointing of the Holy Spirit and sent by Christ must mortify the works of the flesh in themselves and give themselves entirely to the service of men. It is in this way that they can go forward in that holiness with which Christ endows them to perfect man.

Hence, those who exercise the ministry of the spirit and of justice will be confirmed in the life of the spirit, so long as they are open to the Spirit of Christ, who gives them life and direction. By the sacred actions which are theirs daily as well as by their entire

ministry which they share with the bishop and their fellow priests, they are directed to perfection in their lives. Holiness does much for priests in carrying on a fruitful ministry. Although divine grace could use unworthy ministers to effect the work of salvation, yet for the most part God chooses, to show forth his wonders, those who are more open to the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, and who can by reason of their close union with Christ and their holiness of life say with St. Paul: "And yet I am alive; or rather, not I; it is Christ that lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Hence, this holy council, to fulfill its pastoral desires of an internal renewal of the Church, of the spread of the Gospel in every land and of a dialogue with the world of today, strongly urges all priests that they strive always for that growth in holiness by which they will become consistently better instruments in the service of the whole People of God, using for this purpose those means which the Church has approved (n. 12).

In light of the above passages highlighting the importance of holiness in the lives of both laypersons and priests, Vatican II, the Holy Spirit and the New Pentecost, this diocese offers for discernment excerpts from *Priests of Christ* (The Society of St. Paul, 2015) by Blessed Concepción Cabrera de Armida (1862-1937), a Mexican laywoman beatified in 2019.<sup>11</sup>

In this work, she ascribes the following words to Jesus, who speaks of the important role priests play in a New Pentecost:

*My priests... should open their souls for a new Pentecost in order to honor the Father and save the world.*

*The Holy Spirit with divine anxiety searches for vessels into which to pour His infinite treasures. He wants priestly souls who, enlarging themselves, call Him, invoke Him, receive Him, transmit and give Him. He, in fact, is the gift of God, the gift of gifts, the only one capable of renewing souls and worlds. He wants to cleanse and purify souls so that they may be reborn in the Holy Spirit.*

*A new period, which belongs especially to the Holy Spirit, is coming into the world for its renewal; but He wants to make Himself felt especially in His priests transformed into Me. He wants to lift them up, to make them like angels, to sanctify them so that with Him, through Him and in Him they may give new impetus to His kingdom in the Church, which will then move souls and hearts.<sup>12</sup>*

*[P]riests should make a general and particular consecration to the Holy Spirit, not only of their dioceses and their countries, but especially of their priestly souls, asking Him, through the intercession of Mary, to come to them in a new Pentecost, in order to purify them, to make them fall in love, to possess them, to unify them, to sanctify them and to transform them into Me.<sup>13</sup>*

*A new Redemption will come, not through My human passion, but through My passion in crucified souls. And a new Pentecost, brought about by the living dynamism of the Holy Spirit,*

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<sup>11</sup> For further inspiration and meditation on the Holy Spirit, see *Come, Creator Spirit: Meditations on the Veni Creator* (Liturgical Press, 2003) by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., the Preacher to the Papal Household since 1980.

<sup>12</sup> *Priests of Christ*, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

*will come to honor the Father and this new Pentecost is the goal, which the Holy Spirit and I have proposed.*

*But, in order to save souls, to set souls ablaze and to perfect them, we have to start at the root, that is the Church, beginning with My priests, as a powerful aid to the saving work that is going to come, that is already at the doors.*

*My Father, with the Word and the Holy Spirit, is actively at work. Fire will come down upon the Church and the divine breath will set priests' hearts on fire by the Holy Spirit's burning dynamism. Then the Word made flesh will be better known, and at the same time My Father will smile to see His Divine Son exalted in His Church by means of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup>*

*Pray for a new Pentecost, as My Church needs holy priests through the Holy Spirit. The world is sinking because there is a lack of priests with living faith to rescue it from the abyss in which it finds itself.<sup>15</sup>*

*This is the fundamental point that I look for—because all others are only means to reach this end—how to make My priests fall in love through the Holy Spirit, who personifies Love, and through them, to renew the world as in a new Pentecost by renewing hearts, reminding them that their origin and end is love, making them see that the lack of divine love—the separation and departure from the unity of Love—is their ruin.*

*Through holy priests transformed into Me by true love and profound conviction I want to renew and restore My rights over souls. And if My priests study their Christ, they will fall in love with His Divinity, and thus reach the Trinity through Me, losing themselves in unity.*

*The earth is flooded with slime, darkened by the evil one and his followers, and it needs light and with light it needs purity, faith, charity and hope! It needs Love.*

*Generations pass, wallowing in what is material, suffocated by base passions. They depart from the Church, forgetting My law and trampling it underfoot. The world is falling apart because it has degenerated without God. My loving Heart is moved, and I want to return to earth to lift up hearts and divinize them, but My return to earth will be accomplished by My priests transformed into Me, all one, they in Me and I in them, to renew souls and entire nations by love and with love.<sup>16</sup>*

*Only a priest who is transformed into Me can transform other souls; the measure of his transformation into Me will be the same measure that the other souls will receive. This is a point that should make My priests tremble, because to the extent of their sanctification, they will sanctify, and to the extent of their transformation into Me, they will have the power to transform souls.*

*I want to come back to the world through My priests. I want to renew the world of souls by revealing Myself through My priests. I want to give a powerful impulse to My Church, infusing the Holy Spirit into My priests as in a new Pentecost.*

*I want to work, to speak, to live and to be perceived by souls in My priests. I, the Holy One, want to offer to the Father a triumph in My Church through My holy bishops and priests by renewing the face of the earth through their irresistible worldwide initiative. When I speak of My*

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<sup>14</sup> *Priests of Christ*, p. 81.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308.



priests, I am using the generic term, but I refer to the whole beloved hierarchy of My beloved Church.

*This is now My ideal: to transform the world through the perfect transformation of priests into the great High Priest, into the unique Priest from whom all proceed. The Trinity awaits this profound renewal, and already sees it, feels it, cherishes it and blesses it. Yet this requires the will and the cooperation of My priests, because even though I am God, I restrain Myself before the threshold of human free will and respect it without constraining it.*

*These confidences, which express My love for My priests and contain the tenderest fibers of My soul for those whom I most love on earth, will move them. Many priestly hearts, deeply touched, will come to Me longing for perfection and they will entrust themselves entirely to My will.*

*In My Church My charity embraces all, but I will give special graces to that chosen group if it corresponds to My designs.<sup>17</sup>*

*The Holy Spirit is the great driving force of the Church, her soul, her life, and He guides the hearts that entrust themselves to Him. Let My priests do this, and then they will give glory to the Trinity, thus fulfilling My purpose: for the consolation of My Heart, for their own good and for the salvation of the world.*

*Everything depends on their correspondence to what I am asking them for; everything depends on their faithfulness and love for Me: in their transformation, in their unity and in conforming their will to Mine. Mary has had an active role in obtaining the outpouring of these graces on My priests and on the Church.*

*Let them be her grateful sons, let them honor and love her ever more since they are her sons even more intimately than are the others. In a certain sense they received life, as did the Savior of the world, from her life, from her immaculate being and from the motherly warmth of her Heart. I promise them that this renewal will come and I will reign in My priests above all because I am the King of the Universe. of My Church and of hearts.<sup>18</sup>*

#### Daily Consecration Prayer to the Holy Spirit, written and prayed daily by Blessed Concepción

*Holy Spirit, receive the perfect and total consecration of my entire being.*

*Be in every instant of my life and in my every action my Director, my Light, my Guide, my Strength and all the Love of my heart.*

*I abandon myself without reserve to your divine actions and want to be ever docile to your inspirations.*

*Holy Spirit, transform me with Mary and in Mary into Jesus Christ for the glory of the Father and the salvation of the world. Amen.<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>17</sup> *Priests of Christ.*, pp. 341-342

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 360-361

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.