



Synod on Synodality Listening Session – Convener Feedback to Archdiocese

Date of Sessions May 16 & 23

Location of Session Saint Agnes Parish Center Multipurpose Room

Estimated No. of Attendees: 50

Person Completing Form Deacon Ned Berghausen

#1

Describe the listening session experience (attendees' attentiveness, engagement, openness, etc.).

Saint Agnes parishioners actively and attentively engaged with our two listening sessions. Most participants embraced the spirit of the synod as a time to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit and to speak courageously. A few came with prior grievances, but most understood the synod not as a time to fix problems but to engage with the Church as the People of God and to dream about what and who God is calling us to be. A common sentiment was that this should not be the end of listening in the Church.

Our participants tended to be older parishioners. Despite having one session targeted for under 45-year olds, only 3 attendees were in that age group. We otherwise had excellent turnout, particularly for getting started late in the process.

#2

Highlight frequently cited points that generated energy or struck a particular chord with attendees.

We journey together as a Church through our shared baptism, Catholic education, service to others, two thousand years of history (including dark chapters) and communion at the Lord's Table. We journey as part of a local parish, a community of churches in our archdiocese, and in the global church. We are united by these things. We are also divided. We self-segregate into like-minded groups, and racially and socioeconomically similar communities. The growing isolation and political polarization (heightened by the pandemic) of American culture has infected our church, making us afraid to talk to each other about anything of consequence. We exclude many. One participant asked, "How can we be the Body of Christ when we leave out so many voices?"

God is speaking to us through women's voices. God is speaking to us through Black voices. God is speaking to us through Hispanic voices. The voices of the poor and marginalized. The voices of gay and transgendered people. We have often ignored them. God is calling us to listen to them and to Him. And to open windows to let the Spirit in. The face of our church is changing locally and globally. Our hierarchy has been slow to reflect this, and sometimes is resistant or hostile to it.

The People of God are hungry for the sacraments and for sacramental ministry. In the absence of ordained ministers, our participants suggested that the Church think creatively about how to fulfill her ministry. Additionally, this view was extended to the leadership of the Church, recognizing that orders and leadership are separate. As one attendee put it, "right now in our moment in history, the Holy Spirit is calling for us to open up the leadership by providing a need – we lack enough ordained, celibate men." Participants wanted the important role of laity as "workers in the vineyard" to be strengthened, recognized, and celebrated.

At the same time, many parishioners believe we should ordain women to the priesthood, or lift the ban on discussing it as a first step, and quickly move to restore women to the permanent diaconate. The desire to ordain married men to the priesthood was expressed by many, as well.

#3

Describe less-frequently cited points that attendees found inspiring or that introduced new perspectives.

We do not hear the name “Jesus” spoken enough. We should take a cue from our evangelical brothers and sisters and return to a deep devotion to his Holy Name. Our liturgies have become stiff and lifeless. How do we express joy and praise through our communal prayer?

Adults need ongoing, life-long catechesis but this care for our fellow Catholics often stops with the end of high school or sooner. Our Church needs to pay more attention and care in providing comprehensive, life-long faith formation, including spiritual direction, along with the resources to meet these needs. Many participants mourned a “lost generation” of young adults and middle aged former or nominal Catholics. This was connected by some to a lack of evangelization by lay Catholics and by a lack of emphasis on service.

One parishioner asked, “in what ways should the Church be political?” This was not answered directly, but was an evocative question, reflecting the need to put our faith into action.

#4

Provide examples of diversity of views and opinions that were shared by attendees.

We should prudently incorporate new technologies into worship. The forced experiment of streaming liturgies should be seen as an opportunity. We should also embrace multicultural music, worship, and rituals.

Our community described feeling embraced by the universal Church and sometimes rejected. In the first case, for example, a naval officer experienced being spiritually cared for on ship, and a transplant felt welcomed to a new church community in Texas. On the other hand, a Hispanic member had a painful experience of being discriminated against and felt unwelcome in a new church.

One participant mentioned the value of persons who are poor in our Church, “they have so much to teach me [about] emptying myself of things.” Several members expressed concern about the destruction of the environment, echoing themes of *Laudato Si*.

#5

Highlight any pertinent, unique feedback that was shared by attendees.

One unique suggestion was the creation of a Catholic Community Center, looking to the very successful example of Jewish community centers in creating spaces for living out one’s faith in a holistic Catholic culture in community, with leisure, childcare, and ways to lead an overall healthy lifestyle.

#6

Share additional observations, comments, or input that you feel could add to our learnings in this Synod listening phase.

Our parish said that this should not be the end of listening in the Church. Echoing the Holy Father, the synod should be a process not a destination and deeply woven into our identity as church. One participant added, “we need many more conversations like this. It is how we intentionally build the Body of Christ.” Others added how conversations should be supported by active listening, prayer, and finally, with action. Our actions may be small, but should be enlivened by great love.

Return this form as soon as possible after your listening session(s). The form can be turned in online by going to www.archlou.org/Feedback-Archdiocese. You also may email the form to Tink Guthrie at tguthrie@archlou.org or mail it to Tink Guthrie, Archdiocese of Louisville, 3940 Poplar Level Road, 40213-1463. All forms must be returned by June 1, 2022.