

Thermopolis Deanery
Phase I: In-reach Notes

St. Anthony of Padua - Cody St. Theresa mission church- Meeteetse Our Lady of the Valley mission church - Clark

Background

Synod listening sessions were conducted in St. Anthony of Padua (Cody) parish in January 2022. Four sessions were held: Jan. 9 Our Lady of the Valley mission church in Clark, attended by 10 people Jan. 15 St. Anthony of Padua in Cody, attended by 14 people Jan. 16 St. Theresa mission church in Meeteetse, attended by 13 people Jan. 30 St. Anthony of Padua in Cody, attended by 6 people All sessions were 90 minutes in length.

The “General Format” provided by the diocese was followed exactly. By design, clergy did not participate so as to allow parish members to speak freely. However, after the first three sessions, we invited the pastor, Fr. Heston, to attend the final session with deacons. Unfortunately, he said that he would be unable to attend due to schedule conflicts, and he told us the deacons would also be unable to attend.

Each session included an explanation of the purpose of the synod and what Pope Francis is looking for in terms of “the fundamental two-part question.” The ten themes were explained. Attendees were then invited to share whatever they were hearing from the Holy Spirit by writing their thoughts on flipcharts, one for each of the ten themes.

Observations on Feedback

Many feedback items are along the lines of “We need to.....” or “We must.....” In some cases, this applies to all Catholics, in others it means the church organization. In discussion on some items, we sought to clarify who “we” is, but because of time constraints and the ground rules that “We will not set specific goals or strategies” we did not go too far down that trail to define what exactly should be done and by whom. We were surprised by the diversity of the feedback, not so much in types of ideas, but in viewpoints on specific ideas.

You will see in several sections that some people felt strongly in favor of something, and others were strongly opposed. We got comments on the synod concept itself, and although those comments don't fit in one of the ten themes, we added a section called “Comments on the Synod” after the ten themes. You will see in that section that some people think that the Pope asking for feedback is a great idea, while others think it is a terrible idea.

And finally, one session had an outbreak of small thinking, which consisted of complaints and comments of strictly local concern, such as content of the bulletin, building maintenance, content and length of homilies, flower selection, and many other things. We will not call them insignificant, because they were clearly important to the commenters. But these items do not meet the Pope's request, and they are of local concern only. Therefore, they are not included in this document, but have been split out into a separate document, which will be provided to Father Heston. The

listening sessions resulted in well over 100 separate feedback items, initially. After combining similar items and splitting out the local concerns, there remain 65 items.

Listening Session Feedback Items Feedback items are presented below, sorted by the ten themes provided to us, and including one additional category, “Comments on the Synod.” Items at the top of each category in of 2 10 **bold, blue type** are those deemed by participants to be most important

Companions on the Journey - Small prayer groups are a blessing. These help us to enhance our spiritual growth and help us support our fellow Catholics. Small prayer groups should be encouraged. - The church must find ways to support those in need in more important ways than we have in the past. There are many people of all ages who are homeless, unemployed, released from jail, new mothers in trouble, at-risk youth, etc... They need shelter, food, stability, mental-health support, and to know they are God’s people. We must find a way to give them a hand up, not a handout. The church can and should start, or support existing, programs to help these people in need. There are members of this church with land and construction experience and the willingness to give. We should take advantage of those generous inclinations and build facilities to shelter and pull up people in need. We can partner with other churches (Ecumenism) to bring some of these to fruition if they are beyond the means of the Catholic parish. - We need to focus on loving our neighbor instead of small details and rules that don’t matter. We need to work together and find ways to help each other and our community, and remember that we are all God’s children, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, etc. How can bishops and priests help us to focus on what matters? How can we move away from our old, rigid rules to welcome back those we’ve driven away?

- Confidentiality and liability concerns hamper the parish’s ability to help those in need. Needs are kept quiet to protect confidentiality and prevent liability, which prevents parish members who could be able and willing to help from doing so. As an example, a young, homeless woman frequented the church for over a year, seeking shelter and trying to meet other needs. When she died of likely exposure this winter, in a ravine near the church, many parish members were shocked to be hearing about her for the first time. - We need more fellowship in the church so that we can make people attending church more comfortable and enable them to get to know others in their church community.

- We need to find ways to encourage more church vocations.

- We focus on helping families in need at Christmas, because it makes us feel good. But those families have needs the other 364 days, too. We need to do a better job of providing help year-round to those who need it. They should know we are there to help and be able to depend on us more than one day each year. of 3 10

- We must integrate our Spanish-speaking community into the church and unite it with our English-speaking members. We are leaving our Latin brothers and sisters behind, and missing out on the wonderful contributions they could make. Our language differences also make it difficult to listen

and understand the feelings of those who don't share our language. We must find ways to share our church and life experiences across language divides.

- Catholics are one worldwide. We can go to any Catholic church worldwide and know that the others attending share our beliefs. And our Catholic church family is a huge source of support to Catholics worldwide.

- Catholic schools used to bind together Catholics, especially youth, but also their families. With the demise of most Catholic schools, how can we re-create this togetherness that the schools used to provide?

- We need to focus on the good in our world instead of the evil. There is great disparity on this point among clergy. Some seem to see only evil, and others see much good in the world. Guidance from bishops to priests would be helpful.

- We should stop judging others who don't share our beliefs. It's not our job to decide who is "Catholic enough" and who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. We need to focus on treating others with kindness and helping those who need it. Hearing this from the pulpit would be helpful. **Listening**

- We need more clarity coming from the pulpit on our Catholic faith, especially on social issues. Pastors have become more reluctant to address the church's social teachings, and although the people are listening, we are not given enough opportunities to hear it. Perhaps the Pope and bishops are not providing the support needed by local pastors to interpret and spread the church's message.

- We need to "turn off" the world so that we can hear God and our fellow Catholics speaking. We need to tune out the distractions of the modern world, such as social media. - We need to educate ourselves on Vatican II. It is often presented as the root of all that is bad in the church, or the beginning of the decline of the Catholic church. But many of the things attributed to Vatican II are not true or are misunderstood. The church must begin speaking out about what Vatican II actually accomplished, and begin to counter the many myths about it.

Speaking Out

- The church should speak more strongly about equality (gender, race, income). Jesus didn't separate us - why should our church? The Catholic church has a big voice and should use it to promote equality. of 4 10

- The church needs to have a strong, united voice to uphold truth and morals. We should not cower and avoid speaking of our moral code.

- We must get the word out to the community, believers and non-believers, that they are all children of God, and we welcome them.

- The Pope needs to speak out more strongly on core church positions, such as the sanctity of life and other social issues. The Pope must find effective ways to speak directly to Catholics worldwide on these positions so that we don't get this information filtered through media, and sometimes even through pastors.

- When the Pope meets with influential leaders, it is good to talk about their common goals, but he must not shrink from speaking the truth on important matters where the leaders are not with us, such as abortion. This failure is especially egregious when he meets with Catholic leaders who actively oppose the church's pro-life position. **Celebration**

- The church should emphasize feast days during the liturgy. - At Easter and Christmas seasons, use the Latin Mass to increase spiritual joy.

- We must increase outreach during Christmas and Easter to people who aren't attending church, and invite them to return during these times of such joy and love. Of course, our church's other celebrations provide the same opportunity to invite those who are missing out on our faith's celebrations.

- We need help finding ways to get all Catholics actively involved in the celebration of the Mass, such as through serving in our various ministries (lector, cantor, choir, server). We need more methods for each of us to "plug in" to our local church, especially in the mission churches, and for those methods to be made known.

- To help us gain the most from the Mass, we need coaching or teaching so that we can understand and properly respond to new prayers or chants in the Mass. We get more out of it if we understand and can be involved.

- The Mass is our primary celebration, but there are so many others. Pastors and all of us must become more active in promoting, and inviting our brothers and sisters to attend, these other celebrations such as Praise and Worship, Liturgy of the Hours, Meditative Service.

Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission

- It is important to find ways to evangelize as Catholics. Retreats are important, and not just for the older members who seem to be the ones attending, but for our youth as well. of 5 10

- We must not shirk our responsibility to guide our families and friends away from their sinfulness. If we don't know how to proceed, we must pray for guidance.

- We need a separate children's liturgy that is age-appropriate and geared to kids. This will help them learn and feel loved and involved. Children's involvement could also be increased by allowing them to bring up their own gifts to the altar. **Dialogue in Church and Society**

- We must dialogue with openness to listen to others, not to convince others of our ideas.

- Catholics must be better at welcoming new parishioners and encouraging them to actively participate so that they feel a connection to the church. Personal invitations are most effective, and we must develop ways to enable our church members to be more effective at making those personal invitations.

- We tend to gather in groups of like people in the parish. We must increase the gatherings of multi-age groups to open up communication and sharing across generations and throughout the parish.

- We in the church most stop being afraid to step on toes. We must speak the truth, even when it's difficult. We Catholics must become more involved in politics.

- Catholic churches should invite elected officials to come at regular intervals and talk to our parishes about social issues that are of concern to the church. Great care must be taken to keep the church above the political fray.

- We must find ways to take what we gain from our faith and participation in Mass into positive actions that benefit our greater community and society. \

- Our church is doing a poor job of getting the word out on the good things we do and have done for society. How many people know of the hospitals that were started, and in many cases are still run, by Catholic organizations? Our church cares about people and endeavors to provide health care

- let's tell our story so that others can see the love and caring that are important in our church. We should leverage the church's activity in our communities to increase awareness of the Catholic church.

Ecumenism

- We should be holding celebrations with other faiths, especially those with which we share beliefs. Emphasis should be on things that benefit the greater community. Community groups such as Church Women United can be very important to building communication and community across faiths with similar goals. Invitations to the larger community to events such as live stations of the cross are also important. Community-wide, non-denominational days of prayer help our non Catholic brothers and sisters see our willingness to journey with them. of 6 10

- The Catholic church must get past our "superiority complex" if we are to ever bridge the gap between Catholics and people of other faiths. So many good things can be accomplished if we work with our other Christian sisters and brothers in the community on things such as "food for kids" programs to send food for needy families home with school kids, pro-life events, World Day of Prayer, etc.... Alternating venues among the different churches would be more effective than only inviting them to our church. We need to put Christianity before Catholicism.

- Ecumenism has not strengthened the Catholic faith. Rather, it has weakened our position as the church formed by Christ with the salvation formed by Christ. - Before we can reach out to other

faiths, we must solidify our beliefs and practices within the Catholic church. We must understand our faith and be unified before we can be effective joining with other faiths.

- There needs to be dialogue between faiths at all levels, from the local community all the way up to the Pope talking with other worldwide church leaders. This dialogue should not all be private, but there should be public elements such as forums, panel discussions, etc..., especially at the highest levels such as bishops and the Pope, so that the world can see this dialogue for themselves.

Authority and Participation

- Ordain women as deacons and priests. When did Jesus say only men can be ordained, or that women cannot be ordained? Probably never. The Catholic church makes assumptions in this tradition that may very well be erroneous. And while there may be no biblical prohibition on ordaining women, there is a very practical benefit - it would solve the priest shortage worldwide.

- Church leaders have created confusion and “scattered the flock” by not holding fast to long-standing church teachings. There is confusion regarding “worldly” or “political” topics. We need a unified message from church leaders. Our leaders seem divided on important church teachings, and this causes confusion. We must learn to understand our common mission, and church leaders must help us understand.

- We need ways to involve youth and young adults more in our church. We are losing our young people. To reverse this trend, we must increase dialogue with them, and involve them more to increase their feeling of connection to the church and sacraments.

- Our kids are not learning enough of the faith in CCD. There is too little faith education and too much “feel good” content.

- We need better family support and mentorship within our faith community. We could have families join together to educate our kids. We could have family support, marriage support, and mentorship from other parish members. The Mormons do a much better job of 7 10 of teaching their kids with their daily Seminary, and with and their family and marriage support. Surely, we can do as well as the Mormons?

- The sex abuse scandal created a crisis in the church, resulting in a distancing of the church from young people. Young men will not want to serve a church such as this as priests.

- The church needs to take a stand and speak the truth - if it does, it will encourage young people of strong faith to serve the church as priests, deacons, sisters.

- Prominent “Catholic” leaders in our country are giving the church a bad name by not following the teachings. The church should take a stand on this and speak the truth.

- We pretend that we are one “universal” church, but various areas of the world choose which teachings they agree with and those they don’t. The Vatican must unite the church by speaking one truth.
- We must work to respect Pope Francis as the holy father guided by the holy spirit. He values inclusion, and we need to respect that.
- We must make marriage tougher, rather than making divorce and annulment easier.
- We must streamline the RCIA and annulment processes to allow people who wish to join our church to be able, rather than pushing them away with difficulty and delays.
- “Too strict” priests drive people away. Priests need some space in which to fulfill their calling, but bishops should provide guidance on interpretation of church doctrine to prevent priests from interpreting in ways that are more strict and harsh than the church intends. This guidance should begin in the seminary.
- Priests could be more effective in spreading the church’s position by focusing on the positive (what we should do) rather than the negative (what we shouldn’t do).
- We must get much better at cultivating participation. Priests and nuns are in short supply, and we the Catholic people must adapt by taking on the work previously done by them. Deacons can do some of that, but the deacon formation program is a rigorous one that attracts small numbers. Parish priests are trying to do too much. They should focus on taking care of their flock and sharing the gospel, and then delegate many other things to parish members. This will make pastors more effective at the mission, and increase a feeling of belonging among parish members. “Regular” Catholics will have to step up and take on new responsibilities. Dioceses will need programs to train us to do that.
- If a thought about participation in the church comes to mind three times, act on it. It could be the Holy Spirit asking you to do something for the good of others.
- Nuns are typically found in big cities, if they are found anywhere these days. Smaller towns may actually be better positioned to house them and support them, and nuns could add much to religious education and spiritual growth in those communities. How might dioceses help support nuns in smaller communities? of 8 10

Discerning and Deciding

- Translate broader church beliefs into actionable initiatives or activities that are tangible and benefit the community.

Forming Ourselves in Synodality

- We Catholics need to better understand our faith before we can be synodal. We must strengthen catechesis. as individual church members all need to learn more about our church. Specifically, there is a need for more education in prayer - how should we do it? what kinds of prayer?

- We must take small steps to create habits of participation and volunteering. One small step leads to others.

- We must learn to embrace change to be synodal. It is hard, but we should emphasize that God walks with us when we are called to change or learn.

Comments on the Synod

- Why are we even doing this? The church is not a democracy. Instead of the Pope asking people what the church should be doing, he should be telling us the direction the church should go.

- It is good that the Pope is actually asking all Catholics how the Holy Spirit is talking to them.

- This synod is detrimental to the church. It encourages people to look at the world's ways and ignore the basic truths on which the church is built.

Most Important Themes by location Mission churches

- **Clark** There was significant emphasis on three major points. 1) The church has abandoned speaking with one voice and proclaiming the foundational truths of the church. We must bring the church back to a consistent, reliable voice of unshakeable truths. 2) The church is failing our youth by not educating them in the faith, and by not speaking the truth in a way that would attract young people with strong beliefs to serve the church. 3) People feel like of 9 10 they don't know how to be more involved with the church, or "plugged in" as one put it, and they are looking for ways to be more involved.

- **Meeteetse** There was emphasis from the attendees on these three points. 1) Our church must get better at helping people in need in all communities. 2) The church must speak out forcefully on equality of all people, and then back this up with action by ordaining women. 3) The church must be a more welcoming place for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Many options would contribute to this - more welcoming priests, making it easier to join or stay in the church, ecumenical activities with other faiths.

Big church in Cody Major points were 1) Education - we Catholics have a great need for more education on our faith, more education on the truth about Vatican II, and more education regarding prayer. 2) A need for our church and church members to step up and take the lead or at least a cooperating role in caring for those in need in the community. 3) Small groups are critical to building community and furthering our faith. Evangelization and prayer groups already exist, but any small groups are highly beneficial.

St. Margaret-Riverton

From: Louis Shea

To: Diana Marie Waggener; Deacon Mike Leman - Active

Subject: Fw: Synod Parish Response

Date: Tuesday, April 26, 2022 4:48:22 PM

The first meeting was fairly dominated by three people who “knew” what the problems with the church are and how to fix them if everyone would listen to them. At the rest people were open but reticent.

On Tuesday, April 26, 2022, 4:26 PM, Mick and Pat Newlin <mpnewlin@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Father,

Here some of the comments from our first Synodal meeting on December 8, 2021. Journeying together is more difficult now because of the perceived factions within our Parish. There doesn't feel like the same unity today as there was from the “old” church.

Comments:

There appears to be a lack of understanding of basic Catholic beliefs, i.e. the Eucharist

We are losing guidance to follow the scriptures

There is too much silence and tolerance towards the secular world's corruption

There are some parishioners not having their personal needs fulfilled by our church.

Conclusion:

This was a fairly well attended meeting that was met with reticence on the part of most to participate in discussion, while there were a few who wanted to talk on and on.

January 8-9 Gatherings. This set of meetings was designed to gather after our normal Masses. Its theme was to explore how the Holy Spirit is working within us here at St. Margaret's in our journey.

5:30pm Mass: One participant who talked about her journey from Mormonism to Catholicism

8:00am Mass: We had about 10 participants and several spoke of their faith journey and used the analogy of family in their description of our parish

10:00am Mass: Fairly well attended, but mostly just a listening group: Three folks shared their faith journey and how the Holy Spirit touched them.

January 26 Gathering: This meeting was on a Wednesday evening during other faith formation meetings to see if we could gather any fruits. The meeting was poorly attended and discussion was minimal.

Our Lady of the Woods-Dubois

From: Clifford Fewel <clifford@stayfreeforever.com>

Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2022 9:03 AM

To: Deacon Mike Leman - Active <mleman@dcwy.org>

Our first and only report, below, is what we have to offer. I had hoped to pull together the extended community meeting, as directed, but did not make the time to do so.

Notes:

Parishioners expressed fond memories of the days when OLW was more active with a wide spectrum of ages and family types. It was expressed that some felt that “journeying together” described that past more than it does the present. Some expressed a desire to do more to make newcomers feel accepted/integrated into the congregation “group.” There was some concern that the core group of people who do most of the work for the parish may be needing help but are not sure how to ask for it.

Likewise, newer members expressed a desire to help but are not wishing to intrude on what may be working just fine.

All expressed a desire to see the parish come back to life, to grow in number, to have a younger crowd join, and help make the parish a vibrant place of worship and a light for the community as it once was.

Ideas to generate the community feeling included restarting potluck suppers, having movie nights, having some studies in person and available remotely, praying the rosary as a group, and having adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Many of the activities would be open to the public to perhaps draw in lapsed or former Catholics as well as to share our faith with those of other faiths.

St. Barbara Catholic Church- Powell WY

Gathering the Fruits Parish Meetings Feedback

Rick Hannon, Facilitator; Alyson Leighton, Recorder

What is the Holy Spirit asking of us?

- To continue to be obedient and faithful, and to continue being open to the Holy Spirit as to what this means in our lives
- To raise a Catholic family
- Responsibility. Both repentance and forgiveness among ourselves. A growth in mutual familial respect and love
- Pray for more unity, both together and separately
- Communally, fostering a love of Christ through means such as love, devotion, reverence for Jesus in the Eucharist. This will be the fuel of our efforts to love our neighbor—serve, fellowship, support, and the community we all want to have
- Unity and Faith
- Pray-focus souls redemption
- Share the joys of life in the Spirit when possible
- To get the youth involved
- Do not support abortion at all levels
- Supporting one another in our faith journeys to live out our Christian faith
- The need to understand obedience, authority and participation in proper order for the good of the Catholic Social Teaching
- Work together to united Jesus, to worship
- To love one another—to stop drawing lines in the sand and helping and praying for one another
- Push for more sacrifice among the laity and clergy, especially during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
- Teaching meaning of Mass

What concepts and feelings are confirmed?

- The importance of Mass/reverence
- Mass is the most important thing
- More reverence needed; the importance of the Mass needs to be stressed and modeled
- Gone are the days of pray, pay, and obey—we are all necessary members of this ship!
- Community support is important at all levels. We need to do a better job of catechizing/teaching the faith at all levels, especially with our youth—restoring the DTS

(Dead Theologian's Society) program, which addressed many positive aspects for our youth—prayer, catechesis, social interaction, love of faith, and living faith.

- All should be heard
- The need to be together
- Confession, Book study
- All people be heard
- Love of God and neighbor are inseparably entwined—we need to get our love and worship of God right and give that the importance it merits, then we'll be better able to express this life-changing love in our relationships with others, which will create the unity and community we want
- There needs to be There needs to be more appreciate and value for service in our parish
- That suffering is a gift from God and an opportunity to grow as a church family, as a larger form of our own Catholic families
- Love, redemptive suffering
- Our parish has a mission to support each other

What are the prospects for change?

- With the grace of God, change is possible
- Totally up to God's grace. *Ad orientem* would help focus on the Mass better
- To treat the Church more as a family
- Try to encourage people to become actively involved in different areas of service within the parish. Show more appreciation and acknowledgment for those who do serve or have served in many areas within the parish over the years
- If clergy give the good example and guidance of acknowledging God's real Presence in our church at Mass, we will follow the lead they give, realize we have Jesus literally with us, improve our relationship with him, and give the fuel to the rest of our lives. We feel it needs to start with clergy—give the liturgy the solemnity it deserves and not make Mass a “casual” experience
- Get more involved in the church
- Pray—Rosaries after T, W, Th, and F Mass 45 minutes
- We should always be open to change
- We need to include young and old together in social activities
- Change Friday Mass to 5:30 year round
- This (parish-level gathering) is a start!
- Working together as a Universal Global Church. Jesus, pray for us
- Encouraging contemplative praying in our young people—less screen time
- *Ad orientem*, kneelers, use of extraordinary ministers only in extraordinary times
- It takes the priest and also the laity (laity)-treating each Mass as if it were the 1st and last. We teach/support/form community by what we show/live/believe. Education/teaching the meaning of Mass; tidbits in bulletin to deepen our faith

CCD Teacher

Joys: bringing the Word of God to children and preparing them to receive the Sacraments

Difficulties: uninvolved parents, other (secular) activities

Wounds: thinking that I'm not doing all I can do to catechize my own children

Insights: Be glad when the children are here; pray for them when they aren't

Sacraments During COVID quarantine

Difficulties: Sacraments were shut down

Revealed: Division throughout the Church—denying our faithful ministers the chance to nourish the congregants

Insights: focus is needed to nourish the souls to not be afraid

Diapers/Wipes in the Cry Room

Joy: Children are welcome at Mass

Companions on the Journey

March for Life: walking with other faiths, united in one cause

- a way of speaking out by witnessing to the larger community
- celebration of the value of life
- common mission to serve society by protecting the human rights of the unborn
- we promoted collaboration with all religious communities in the area

Celebration

- have more reverence for the Mass
- More authentic belief in presence of Jesus in the Mass
- Priests (and laity) that treat Mass as if it is their 1st and last Mass
- Burials—need to walk closer as a community to support one another
- The Mass has to be first—everything comes from that
- We all show/support of 1 Body of Christ, as we are together in our walk, have companionship and belief
- Need a sense of the sacred

Authority and Participation

- Obedience to the Bishop during pandemic
- Lay people for Extraordinary Eucharist Ministers
 - Readers

- CCD
- RCIA
- Funeral dinners
- Mother's Rosary
- Lay Carmelite Order
- Knights of Columbus
- ^Word of mouth invitations (to form relationships)
- Focus and refocus on the sacrament of the Mass
 - Center = Eucharist and sacrifice of Mass

Celebration

- Guidelines for how to take action using Bible readings
- Way to be unified in a larger community because you're all there for the same reason
- Celebration requires action as well as passive times. This is an all-encompassing way to worship
- The Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the Church's life and mission—a proper orientation of our celebration to God and reverence/reception of Communion is a foretaste of Heave (the “point” of our life) and also a source and engine of grace to strengthen us in the rest of our lives and responsibilities/duties/mission. Appropriate reverence/recognition of God's real presence here in the Eucharist to underscore/reinforce this belief.
- Regular communal celebration/prayer encourages and focuses private prayer which when done regularly and sincerely enables us more easily to hear the “still, small voice” of God guiding us in our decisions.
- “Active participation”—education on liturgy/meaning of things in Mass so people more consciously engaged and understanding of their role in the Mass
- Want regular, good training of altar servers and encouragement to serve in this role, especially on the part of the clergy.

What is the Holy Spirit asking us?

- To raise a Catholic family in the domestic church
- To offer more sacrifices on the part of laity for clergy
- For clergy to preach on penances/sacrifices
- For radical, unconditional surrender
- For inclusion for the feeling of oneness
- For acceptance—all in the Body of Christ
- For validation
- To work and walk together as a universal Church in imitation of Christ
- To continue to be obedient, thankful and open to the Holy Spirit and what this means in our lives
- To love one another, stop drawing lines in the sand, and start listening to enemies

- To Treat the Church as a family and less as an operation. We are members of the same body and need to love and respect one another
- To share the joys of life by actions; participation through the Spirit
- To make it a priority to pray for UNITY (for parish; for a universal Church)
- Supporting one another in our faith journeys

Prospects for change:

- Extraordinary ministers should be used in extraordinary times
- Celebrations should be *ad orientam* as we walk together

Feelings/Concepts that are confirmed:

- Mass is the most important thing—reverence is important—needed and expected
- Prayer is confirmed in Confession; in book study
- Inclusion—we are communing together as one
- Mother’s Rosary, Adoration Chapel

Prospects for Change

- Knowing that when we’re open to the grace of God, change in the right direction will happen
- To encourage contemplative prayer
- Reverence of Mass needs to come from the Priest, then will be practiced by laity
- To teach the meaning of Mass to younger people
- To have beautiful artwork and/or educational tidbits in the bulletin
- Calls to Serve--To bring back service opportunities and the value of serving
- To have a Daily Group Rosary
- To have increased participation in different groups
- To have activities/service activities after Mass (including a meal)

Holy Rosary Parish, Lander, WY

Phase I: Summary of Parish Listening Sessions

Themes from Listening:

Polarization and Judgment

- Our parish community is polarized around different expressions of the liturgy, and many
- experience judgment about superior and inferior forms of worship. We’ve lost members because of changes to the music and liturgy.
- We label and judge one another based on the groups we belong to, and we feel a need to maintain an image or show up perfectly in order to be accepted.
- Isolation and Marginalization

- Those who prefer a liturgy that is not celebrated feel marginalized; those who don't belong to a certain group feel marginalized; the elderly are marginalized.
- There is a lack of hospitality and welcoming of newcomers. Several mentioned experiencing a crisis of faith and feeling isolated and abandoned within this community. Others spoke of how well the community supported them during times of crisis.
- In order to walk together or listen to one another we actually have to be together. It takes time to build trust. Structure like this helps create a space that feels safe.
- There is poor publicization of groups and events in the parish. Many would like to be involved but don't know what is going on.
- The church is familial. We love our family, but it's also where our worst hurt comes from.

The Episcopacy and the Laity

- There's a lack of unity and clarity coming from the bishops. We're borrowing from other traditions in order to make sense of things. The best thing the parish can do is support families in teaching their children the faith.
- There are too few pastors; one priest can't attend to the needs of 1000 parishioners. The bishop doesn't come and let us know him. It feels like he isn't interested in dialoguing with the people. Did the laity have any input in the 2030 diocesan plan?
- The laity doesn't feel listened to. Is the hierarchy listening to the spiritual sense of the people?

Importance of the Eucharist

- The Eucharist is why we're here. It's what makes being Catholic better than being any other kind of Christian. How do we set people on fire with love for the Eucharist?
- During COVID, alienation from the sacraments was hard.

Ecumenism and Mission

- How do we get back the passion and the zeal? The church lacks enthusiasm. These listening sessions bring some of that enthusiasm back. They give us hope.
- We need lifestyle evangelism - to be Jesus to people in the Church and outside the Church. How do we retain our Catholic identity as we engage with the secular world?
- We experience solidarity with other Christian traditions in the Pro-Life movement and other community events. How do we find common ground while retaining what it means to be Catholic?

Themes from Gathering the Fruits:

Hope

- This is a beginning. Church is more than celebrating Mass together once a week or doing service projects. It takes time to build a sense of safety and community - the time of simply being together and getting to know one another.
- People who we thought don't feel what we do expressed things that we can relate to.
- Assumptions are breaking down. It's encouraging to see people from different poles in our parish come together in these sessions.
- Bickering happens in families. We don't always get along. Maybe this is a sign that we love each other and don't want to leave. Part of healing is exposing the wounds, and that's what we're doing in these sessions.

Longing for Community

- We have a shared hunger for community, connection, belonging. Maybe we're supposed to be a little bit hungry, and instead of going outside the church to fill that hunger, we need to be committed to filling it here, in the church. We're so hungry to get past the hurt of the past 10 years and rebuild our community.
- It is important to practice hospitality and welcome newcomers. Many people feel isolated and alone. Fallen away Catholics have said that no one missed them when they left. Nobody called, nobody reached out. Those people who don't come anymore are still out there, and it matters that they're gone.
- There's been a lot of talk about categorizing and generalizing groups of people. The more we can say, "you are you," and not a representative of a group that you're a part of, the more we can be ourselves to each other and walk together. The Church should be the safest place to show up as we are, messy as we are, and not feel judged or inferior.
- We speak different languages - different languages of worship, different languages of spirituality and belief and politics. People who come together and don't speak the same language fumble a lot at the beginning, but this is a start.
- How do we get more people here? How do we do this with the people who won't show up for these sessions? How do we move forward together as a community?

Joy in the Holy Spirit

- These sessions are such a blessing. We get to come together and look each other in the eye as we talk about our differences and the tensions between us. This synod is a powerful work of the Spirit. The Pope was led by the Spirit to call this synod now.
- The Holy Spirit is very much alive in the Church and wants to be our Comforter. He wants to heal our wounds.

- Even if none of this makes it to Rome, it's beautiful, because the Holy Spirit called us here and everything that was said needed to be said. It's amazing how God brings people together.
 - Many times, during these sessions, we were called back to the sacraments, back to the Eucharist. Our foundation is in Christ. It makes sense that our experiences and expressions of faith are different, because we're all different parts of the Body. Jesus in the Eucharist brings us together.
 - What is beautiful about this is doing something, even if it is not perfect.
-

St. Mary Magdalen, Worland

11-21-21; 18 adults plus 8 children attended

Overall points

1. New people to our church said we a community that is open and they felt embraced the church
2. Need for more community service especially with the young people of the parish
3. People being of service in the great Worland community is being noticed
4. We need all of us working together.

Child care for provided for the children

St Mary Magdalen, Worland

2/9/22

Fr. Robert gathered with High School Youth group to engage in the synodal process. With the time we had, two main questions were asked of the youth. Their responses are noted below.

Q: How do we need and support one another as the Church on our journey of faith?

- The church is a "family," a healthy environment
- Being friendly, getting along
- It is a community where we can talk about faith openly
- We find support in trials and doubts and delve into the true meaning of things
- We find connection, growth, faith
- Sharing the faith is hard, but when we see others doing it and living the faith, it becomes easier

- We can learn from others who know more about the faith.

Q: *What is the mission of the Church and how do we live it better?*

- Spreading kindness, more community service
- Spreading the Gospel and Jesus and helping others get to heaven by grace. We cannot be afraid. We never know who we might impact by our witness of faith.
- To bring people closer to God. We need more kindness and connection with people outside our religion with friendliness.
- To show everyone that when we feel alone, there is a greater love that will be there for us. Political views shouldn't get in the way. No one is turned away.
- To learn and understand more about God and not being afraid to show it.
- To get to heaven and take as many people as you can with you and to get closer to Jesus. There's too much judgmentalism. We need more acceptance and welcoming and compassion.
- To teach people about our faith and not be ashamed.

St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church

Notes from Synodal Process Gathering of Hispanic Catholics

1/30/22

Topics for discussion were presented very broadly and generally. The following are the salient points proffered by the group. Participation was good and varied.

- Felt like the church was a strong support during the pandemic
- We need to persevere in inviting friends to Mass
- Overall, people are happy with their experience of church
- Grateful to have Spanish Mass every Sunday
- Some people might not come to Mass because they feel judged and/or are still afraid of Covid
- More participation in reading and other ministries at Mass is needed
- Feels the presence of God in the church and felt love from the community during the pandemic, especially when she was sick. We're here at church for the love of God and because we have the Holy Spirit within us.
- We could improve the CCD program – facilitate fun and activities for the kids like the other churches.
- We could celebrate more church feasts with a meal, like we do for Our Lady of Guadalupe
- We could make invitation pamphlets
- **When asked about the Alpha program**
 - People wouldn't come
 - We would have to start with the small group of practicing Catholics

- We could do more retreats, Bible Studies, Rosaries, invite speakers
 - We could form prayer teams who could go to people's houses
 - Personal testimony inspires people to come
-

St. Francis-Thermopolis

Our discussions began with the observation that after our kids are confirmed they are seldom seen, and in fact often done with parish life. Often after their kids are confirmed parents are gone as well, as if with confirmation the mission is accomplished. This is bad because a quick look at our congregation would indicate that in twenty years eighty percent of us are going to be dead. We see the most important issue facing the church being keeping our youth actively participating in parish life or we will wither on the vine. Our parish is not alone in facing this problem. I know of a fairly large church in Colorado that no longer has a youth group because they have no youth.

We discussed reasons that our kids quit attending church. Primary among these were “you shoved it down my throat,” “I don’t get anything out of mass, there is no relevance to me in the teachings of the church.” Church teachings are too regimented, dependent on laws, rules, and rituals that must be followed. Discussion went to how Jesus was always after the Pharisees for wanting to be able to follow rules and laws as the path to salvation and how wrong they were. Yet here we are doing exactly the same thing.

Our kids tend to be far more concerned with social justice than social issues.

Environmental issues and global warming should be major concerns, along with issues of racial prejudice and immigration, which for the younger set should be easier not harder. Abortion is evil, but not seen as the disease but as a symptom of other ills; poverty, poor education, lack of opportunity, lack of hope. These are what we need to be working on as a church and as a society. The church should be more inclusive of gay people, divorced people, and unmarried couples. Allowing women to be priests is very important to some. Basically, the church needs to get out of the dark ages and in tune with the times.

Needless to say, these thoughts and attitudes are like drinking poison to many of the older members of the congregation.

What then to do about these things? Alas we came up with no good answers. Perhaps there are none. Even so, many thoughts and ideas were discussed.

1. Youth and adults alike need to be spiritually searching to get anything out of Mass.
2. Our kids and the rest of us need to find relevance in church teachings as the path to salvation.

3. Salvation itself must be seen as a worthy goal which must be worked for, not taken for granted.
4. Kids may well have misperceptions of what God is all about. He is a God of forgiveness and redemption, not a monster eagerly waiting to smite you.
5. The importance of the example set in the family setting cannot be overstated. We must work to bring the gospel into our daily lives. We need to try to share examples of how the gospel has been relevant to our personal experience and made us better people. We need to be joyful in our daily lives and proud of our faith.
6. We live in a very selfish society; our young people are constantly being bombarded with materialism, sex, violence, and perversion. We need to counter this with the fellowship and the commitment to serving others that the church offers.
7. Remember that positive experiences are joyful, but negative ones are equally valuable in making us thoughtful and compassionate human beings.
8. Mass is not meant to be entertainment but a means to self-improvement.

Other thoughts on what we may need to work on:

1. We should always have an attitude of thankfulness and gratitude for all that God does for us.
2. We all have value and purpose, "God doesn't make junk."
3. Perhaps we need to somehow make religious education more relevant to our kids' lives.
4. We need to show our kids that tradition is valuable, that respect, responsibility, reasoning, and religion are all part of what makes us whole as human beings.
5. Living and growing require change. It would be good for us as adults to keep this in mind as well.
6. Life is a journey, not a destination.
7. So, we need to pray for our kids and pick them up when they fall.

We had excellent discussions but came up with no solutions. Perhaps the fact that the church seems to confirm kids earlier and earlier would seem to indicate that the church has no good answers either. Perhaps tellingly, everyone who came to our meetings was at least sixty.

So, we shall carry on. Peace.

