

May 21, 2022

NOTE: To protect the confidentiality of the participants, all responses listed below are compilations of the answers of all the tables, edited for space and clarity.



SMALL GROUP SHARING ON THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

A synodal Church “journeys together.” In your small group, begin by reflecting on these questions:

1. Is journeying together happening in our parish? If so, how? If you aren’t a parish member or you rarely or never practice, are there places in your lives/communities that journeying together is happening?
2. Now, think specifically about OLOL or the Church in general: what are the joys of the parish? What are the obstacles? If you don’t practice, what do you miss about the Church?
3. Where is the Holy Spirit in all of those experiences? Do you think of the Holy Spirit as being part of those experiences?

There does not seem to be a lot of “journeying together” other than at Mass. People are unaware of what is going on or what activities, if any, are available. Friendships grow when there are opportunities to connect and socialize. Two major obstacles have been COVID fears and restrictions, and the fact that OLOL is a more seasonal parish. There have not been enough opportunities to build the parish community. There is a sense of missing those Catholics, including family members, who feel excluded by the Church: LGBTQ members, divorced & remarried couples, birth control, etc.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: Re institute coffee and doughnuts once per month beginning in June. Planned social event in July (Jimmy Tingle comedy night and reception).

LISTENING:

“Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.” We all have something to learn: the people, the bishops, and the Pope, by listening to each other and the Holy Spirit.

1. We all have different lived experiences. Do you feel that there is a space in the Church for your lived experience?
2. Has the Church ever made you feel marginalized?
3. What ideas do you have to enable listening and dialogue to happen?

People are seeking relevance from the Church, including speaking on events that are happening in the world. The Church needs to make space for people of different lived experiences. Respondents relate more to God is Love rather than God as Judge. There is a sense that the Church has marginalized people where God has not. They would more leniency in “ritual practices” (vs. doctrine) in the Church like where weddings can take place, etc. There is a desire to connect with local events to “open up” the parish.

SPEAKING

According to the preparatory documents for this worldwide Synod, “pastors...should not be afraid to listen to the flock entrusted to them.” We are all invited to speak up with “freedom, truth, and charity.”

1. What space is there in your parish for the voice of the people? What stops you from speaking out?
2. How can we improve outreach to not only parishioners, but also to those who no longer attend Mass or have a different or no faith tradition?

People have to have something to be involved in and we must be more welcoming. The culture of the Church (vs. the parish) is not to listen to the flock. Does the Church want to hear us? People who don’t know each other do not feel comfortable speaking out, so there needs to be more opportunities to get to know and understand each other. Even if they were willing to speak out, they are not sure how to do it. Events like the synod conversation are helpful.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: See immediate response answer under fundamental questions for ways to begin to know each other.

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY

“Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. A Synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.”

We all have equal responsibility for the Church and its mission; it is not exclusively clerical or papal. We all have different vocations but the same mission, to be Christ to the world.

1. Do you feel like you have a voice in the Church?
2. Do you feel like you have a role in the Church?
3. What would it take to get you to be more involved in making this parish or the Church what you want to see in it?

People felt they could have a voice in the parish, but not the Church at large. Isolation, both as individuals and as parish, is a problem and building our parish community is the answer. One participant said that “The spirit is more important than the system.” The parish needs to be re-energized through more community building, internally and externally, and, again, more chances to socialize and communicate with each other.

DISCERNING AND DECIDING

Synodal decision-making goes like this: listen, develop a dialogue/conversation, pray, communicate. “A Synodal Church does not make decisions to accomplish pre-identified priorities.”

1. How can we better hear the diverse and rich voices of baptized Catholics?
2. How can we use all voices to do what God wants us to do—to love each other in Jesus’ image?
3. How do you imagine being able to participate in the decision-making process of the Church? How can you approach that decision-making from a place of good will/good intentions vs. forced opinions?

The synod conversation afternoon was a good way to be able to hear each other. Respondents want the parish to be more ecumenical and meet with people of other faith traditions. There should be more emphasis on loving and forgiving if we want to hear all the voices. *We must find ways to be more welcoming and accepting.* The Church hierarchy seems to impede rather than promote listening and participation. There is a desire for women to have a bigger role in the Church. Allowing priests to marry might attract a larger

pool of clergy and one that better understands people's lives. People want the Church to ask "what can we do to help you spiritually?"

CELEBRATION

Celebration in the Church comes from the first apostles who devoted themselves to communal living and the breaking of the bread.

1. Does the Church radiate Christ's love, mercy, and joy? If so, how?
2. How can you use your voice to make this parish more vibrant, loving and welcoming?
3. How does Sunday Mass inspire and guide this parish?
4. How can the Church help you grow in your faith?

People find joy in the Mass and feel that our Masses and music radiate love. Having a good liturgy and good homilies that are more relevant would be helpful, along with a better sound system. Greeters at Mass should be reinstated to welcome people. We should continue dialogues like this one and seek support from the diocese.

REFLECTION

"May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." *Romans 15:13*

Name one insight you heard from the Holy Spirit today:

The Holy Spirit brought the respondents together for this dialogue.

Change is okay.

Start right away welcoming people.

Connection is important.

It's good to share different opinions.

There was a sense of joy, real sharing and reflection in the conversation.

Start to build real community.

For comments and questions please email OLOLSynod@gmail.com