

Resurrection Parish Synod Session Synthesis

On March 27, 2022, 81 parishioners from Resurrection and nearby parishes responded to Pope Francis' call to "listen, and dream together about how the People of God can discern the Holy Spirit's guidance for carrying out the mission that Jesus gave to the Church." The following synthesis, prescribed by and submitted to the Diocese, was distilled from session notes. As we approach Pentecost, may the Holy Spirit continue to inspire us as we journey forward, together.

*- Respectfully submitted,
Mary Swindal, Organizer, Resurrection Parish Synodal Session*

What was particularly significant, surprising, or unexpected?

There is skepticism about outcomes from the synod session and also genuine appreciation for the process. One participant reported that "in 67 years...this was the first time the church has ever asked for my opinion." There was hope that the synodal model, being guided by the Holy Spirit, could encourage parish cohesion and greater participation.

While there were mixed impressions of the parish's current vitality, there was yearning for opportunities to intentionally journey together: to build relationships and "to hear each other's stories." There was a desire to encourage those who "only go to Mass" to be more engaged. The lack of connection is blamed on the pandemic and parish mergers, and the pain and disillusionment caused by the abuse scandal.

The tension around what it means to be Catholic was also evident. There is concern to "defend the faith," and "know what the Church stands for," while otherwise there is unease about attitudes of "judgmentalness" and hope to be "open to all."

What new perspectives or new horizons opened up?

There must be a "deeper and more expansive role of the laity" with integration into parish leadership and decision-making. There is a deep desire to "use gifts and talents" on behalf of the parish. Lack of involvement by and openness to laity causes frustration and wariness about transparency and accountability. Many laypeople reject the passive model of "pay, pray and obey" and want to participate in the management and mission of the church. The pastoral and finance council structure is ineffective.

New large parishes can be overwhelming, especially when "church used to feel so much closer." We must nurture small faith groups which encourage a sense of belonging and "break down the barriers that sometimes come with large groups."

We need formal adult education since "many don't go beyond CCD." Options include offering RCIA to all parishioners, or welcoming everyone to all religious education sacramental programs" so that those wanting to learn more about their faith could attend."

Which stories or personal experiences were especially moving and why?

We are torn between our love of the Church, and "How can we still be Catholic after all that has all gone on." An entire table agreed that they'd hesitate to "invite a friend or non-Catholic to church" but also that they are "firmly committed to their faith."

Another table felt "lost in the Spirit's guidance" with all that is going on in the church and world currently. At the same time, they had faith that "the [Holy Spirit] will lead us in the right direction."

A parent participant described inclusivity with their child as a "small 'c' catholic (universal) approach." "Parents must journey with kids where they are even if they aren't where we want them to be." Our children and grandchildren witness our journey and how we live and this has an influence.

A participant lamented that church teaching is often black and white, but there is pressure to not "speak out." The current cultural narrative is different from our faith, and "those trying to live their faith become counter-cultural."

Which points of view seem to have strong resonance?

There is ongoing frustration about the limited role of women in the church who should “be seen as capable...and be in leadership.” Women deserve more visibility, and must “be involved in the mission,” perhaps through women deacons who minister in Word and Service. The exclusion of women is tied to the decline in church attendance.

There is deep concern about the absence of young people in church. We need to know why younger generations do not attend church. A suggestion was to encourage inclusivity (racial, LGBTQ), while it was also noted that the Latin Mass is drawing in many young families.

The command to love and serve one another echoed through the session. “If we don’t ‘love one another or our neighbors, where are we going?” We are called to be the “hands and feet of Christ. This manifests in parish service: Ladies of Charity, St. Vincent DePaul, Appalachia trip, etc. We must be “in solidarity with those on the margins” and always “reach out and address the needs of the community.”

Which points of view were mentioned less but are noteworthy?

There was concern expressed about the loss of the “domestic church.” In the past, so much of living and passing on the faith occurred in the family, now “children are not necessarily learning from their parents.” This also reflects that perhaps parents need more formation since “they are not forming their children.”

We must reach beyond our local faith community to other parishes and other denominations (ecumenism). We can “learn what is working in other faiths” and also mend relationships hurt by past “we’re right, you’re wrong” attitudes. We can also improve by sharing resources with nearby parishes on common projects.

Clericalism is a damaging yet complex problem since “it is on both sides,” while “the clerical side of the church has disenfranchised its members and has made them passive.” This is compounded by the damage to the priesthood of the abuse scandal.