

OUR LADY OF THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT
PARISH

Synod 2021-2023

Local Listening Session
Parish Feedback



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament conducted two phases of the Synod on Synodality Local Listening Session. The first was a half day prayer service and workshop with an open invitation to all known parish members. The prayer service/workshop was held on February 26th. The second phase was written feedback submitted to the parish office using the feedback form designed by the Archdiocese. The form was made available to all parishioners both online on our parish website and through a parish wide mailing. The mailing went out in early March and was due back by March 25th for inclusion in the parish synthesis. Our synthesis represents a combination of the comments presented during the local listening workshop combined with the written feedback received in the Parish office.

The workshop was attended by approximately fifty parishioners. Those in attendance represented a socio-economic and demographic cross-section of the parish population; single members, young families with children enrolled in the School as well as Faith Formation programs, and senior members. It is fair to say that senior representation in the 60 plus age demographic was strongest. The agenda for the Listening Session consisted of an overview of the synod and the synod process, a working lunch, followed by small group breakout sessions where everyone was given the opportunity to share their lived experiences of the faith as they pertained to the themes of community, participation and mission. We then re-convened as one group to share and reflect on the feedback from each small group. The spirit of the conversation with participants on this day as well as shared thoughts returned from the responses forms clearly express a hope and desire for a new beginning as the two parishes merge as one. Participants are very supportive of our new pastor, Fr. Dan Folwaczny and associate pastor, Fr. Louis' Mboe. There is a sense of hope that is life giving. However, this hope is in tension with the following issues: a secularizing culture, the breakdown of the family unit, observed absence from participation in the life of the Sacraments, the stresses of living through the COVID pandemic, and other disappointments that have affected the Church at home and universally.

The following major themes and issues were identified as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the ongoing mission of the universal church to be presented for further review and discernment at both the parish level and through the church hierarchy.

1. Spiritual indifference has challenged the Church on a global basis. It is most evident in the declining numbers of regular church goers and those identifying as practicing Catholics. Our participants in the Synod process are worried about their children and other young family members who have lapsed with no discernable desire to return to the Church.
2. People desire a more intimate and welcoming relationship within the Catholic community. We harken back to the time when the parish community felt like a tight-knit family with a true concern for each other's well-being and a desire to grow together in spirituality. Several participants from both parish campuses shared fond memories of feeling welcomed as they entered the Church, concerned about if they were missed as absent over a short period of time, and respected by the previous pastors and visiting priests who embraced the parish as family.

There is an expressed concern that young people feel more judged and less welcomed to the Church.

3. The inability to receive the Eucharist during the pandemic has influenced the desire and life practice of many Catholics. Some have been re-awakened to their personal desire and need for the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ present in the consecrated bread and wine. At the same time, great concern exists over the expanding lack of belief by Catholics in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The use of media to bring the faithful to the Word and Spiritual Communion has offered multiple gifts and challenges. Some view media celebration as entertainment. Others view Mass on the media as an opportunity to dig deep into the readings of the day and personally, without distraction focus and pray silently in a new and life-giving way, albeit without reception of Eucharist. Loss of belief and media options have distanced many of our young adults. Attending Mass has been replaced not necessarily by media options but simply by other activities and new habits with the challenge of relevancy.

Catholics have lost their perspective on the significance and necessity of honoring God on the Sabbath. We must recapture Sunday for God and for our families.

4. Secular arguments on the perplexing moral issues of our time have become more convincing. Social media provides broad-based instantaneous messaging that is in direct opposition to our Catholic moral doctrines. People feel ill-prepared to articulate Catholic social and moral teaching as a convincing alternative to the secular positions on these matters. Adult education is needed. Many also feel that the Church needs to better reach people on the fringe in our community. It is important to share this because our culture competes at every socio-economic, geo-political and educational level. Behind every door there is a family in need. Families want their members who desire Catholic identity to be respected and ministered to. We feel the need to be advocates for the family and the stability it brings to the community. Families are not bringing their children for education/faith formation and preparation for reception of the Sacraments as they did even ten years ago. The tension between Belief/Faith/Culture is strong and evident in our community. We must engage the family in the practice of the faith, as a family, in order to build a stronger, more resilient parish community.
5. Confirmation is treated as a graduation FROM the faith rather than as an introduction to the spiritual richness of a mature and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. College age student are particularly vulnerable to the secular messaging that bombards their senses with concepts and images that weaken their resolve to remain active and faithful Catholics. How we engage young adults to embrace the faith is a key to a vibrant Catholic faith community. The catechetical mission of the parish can offer various formats or programs that engage the parents and families better to help with this; however, the problem is deeper and requires support.
6. The Body of Christ seeks clergy who are living models of holiness who can challenge us to become the best versions of ourselves. We desire consistent and harmonious interpretation of Church teachings that are communicated boldly with clarity and charity to both the faithful and to people of all faiths. Dissention creates scandal and doubt. Both are detrimental to the spiritual well-being of the individual and to the Universal Church

7. Strong ministries offer Catholics a productive outlet for their stewardship of time, talent, and treasure. They also serve as tools for the evangelization of fallen away and non-Catholics by the example they set in the community of our love for God through our selfless acts of service to God and our fellow man. Most all participants in the survey indicated they had either been actively engaged in ministry in the past or were currently engaged in one or more ministries of the parish. Within a community of kind and caring stewardship, the concern for aging in place is strong and the need for mission to invite high school teens, young adults, and families to Catholic stewardship which may also be considered as valuable as community volunteerism and fund raising for good causes. These are in essence good but fail to bring people to prayer, and Sacrament, as well as fail to invite God to the cause.

It is impossible to return to an era of less controversy and build a community as was lived in the past. We are in a new place and time and need to form our local parish. Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament parishioners can offer new opportunities and challenges through which we can build a more meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ. The participants at the Synod on Synodality Listening Session and those who responded to the Reflections mailing are aware, articulate, and passionate about meeting head on the issues, worries, concerns, and needs facing our local parishes, dioceses' and world. Their conversation will inspire adult education to teach, clarify, and enrich the conversation and mission. They long for direction in how to bring fallen away Catholics home. They deeply express a zeal for the faith and that burning desire for intimacy with our Savior, Jesus Christ, to work as we build the new community of Catholic faith in Elk Grove Village at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament parish. Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament is longing for joy in Communion, Participation and Mission of the Church.

Let the dreaming continue...