



St. John the Baptist Catholic Community of Covington Synodal Report

On October 9, 2021, Pope Francis formally opened a two-year process of listening and dialoguing in the Church. This Synod on Synodality, following from the Church's "renewal" proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live *communion*, to achieve *participation*, to open Herself to *mission*.

From January through March of 2022, 263 parishioners gathered in 21 parish synod sessions to share their experience of being Church. They identified challenges the Church is facing today as well as their hopes and dreams for the Church. This resulted in 61 pages of comments. Our Parish Leadership Team and those who facilitate the synodal sessions gathered in retreat to review the comments and began to identify major themes that seemed to be emerging. Two members of the Parish Leadership Team were then entrusted with the prayerful task of further refining those themes for the parish's summary report to the Archdiocese.

This is the report that was sent to the Archdiocese. We are one of 130 parishes in our archdiocese that participated in the synodal process involving over 11,000 individuals. The archdiocese will prepare a ten-page report from these parish reports and send it to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops this June.

1. Common or Important Themes

Church as a Guiding Light

- **Christ is in everyone and everything**
- As Church, we are culture and called to be transforming leaven in our world offering healing and forgiveness.

Church Leadership

- Radical new perspective required in light of sexual abuse history, current issues and politicizing our faith.
- Ease the rigid hierarchy, recognize the importance of women, expand diaconate to include women and move towards ordination to married people and women

Younger Generations

- Great concern for young people's place in the church

Education and Growth

- Growing the community spiritually and in numbers by providing sacramental and spiritual education through all life stages.
- Supporting families through the life & Liturgy of the parish and in their role of fostering faith in the home.
- Faith formation fostering greater knowledge of the faith and establishing a stronger relationship with God.

A Servant Church

- Living a faith that looks across multiple generations, locally, nationally and globally with a focus on social outreach.

Prayer, Worship and Community

- A faith community centered on Welcoming, Eucharist, and Word, layered with Diverse Prayer and the joy of more music.
- Holding onto the dream of deeply knowing one another; builds stronger community and fosters service to others.

2. Dreams, Desires & Aspirations

Growth – Spiritually and as a People

- Come alive with greater opportunities to grow in our faith and widespread participation in Small Faith Groups.
- Learning / Relearning the richness of our liturgy and places of worship.
- Opportunities for service / outreach across all generations and family compositions.
- Larger focus on social (systemic) issues such as homelessness, climate change, the arms race, etc.

Liturgy

- Respect the plurality of peoples' different liturgical styles and spirituality while establishing a liturgy that includes and speaks to people of all ages – esp. children
- Re-vitalization of Life in the Spirit and Charismatic Movement across the archdiocese

Inclusion, Acceptance & Engagement

- Church offers true witness, full inclusion, total acceptance and unconditional love for **all** people regardless of where they are.
- Inter-faith actions with other church denominations and religions (Jewish, Muslim, etc.).
- Active engagement and dialogue that is bi-directional and appeals, reaches and connects across generations while involving all ages, cultures & diverse family types.
- Strengthening family structure and cross-cultural ties
- Priest as both sacrament and example. Out of the sacristy and engaged in pastoral services

Ordination

- Expand the role of women and open ordination to women & married people
- Reform seminaries to develop Shepherds and better meet the needs of “seekers”



3. Challenges & Opportunities

Challenges

- Lack of unity within the church holds us back from achieving our potential as a powerfully vibrant *beacon of spiritual light and agent of change*.
- Church has developed a negative reputation due to its missteps, (e.g. sex abuse handling), which overshadows the good the church does in the world and mutes its voice of resurrection, forgiveness and mercy.
- Rigidity of the ordained or those in leadership, who too often focus on rules versus pastoral care and have lost touch with the needs of its people.
- Church is no longer in touch with the realities of its people as well as society in general
- Young adults are not finding the Catholic Church meaningful and relevant to the experiences of our time.

Opportunities

- Communicate our faith in ways that excite and inspire; honoring the celebration.
- Foster an inclusive community, esp. divorced & LGBTQ), recognizing everyone's gifts & talents and fully utilizing women in ministry of the church.
- Get beyond our image; move to our mission of leading change and helping the poor and disadvantaged.
- Offer improved education & materials regarding women's health care
- Using language that is understood by non-English speaking parishioners and children
- Embrace that life is messy – Apply Faith and Prayer to help accept and thrive in it.
- Greatly expand spiritual formation and development for all ages, especially the young and young adults.

4. What Steps Does the Holy Spirit Invite Us to Take in Order to Grow

The Holy Spirit invites us to feed the spiritual hunger people desire, be kind and inclusive with others, foster deeper relationships with God and our neighbors, better know and accompany one another on our faith journey, create of sense of belonging with all whom we come in contact with, support vocational callings, become more aware of barriers placed in front of others while finding ways to remove them and embrace the Holy Spirit's guidance in leading with love in all we do.