



St. Elizabeth of the Visitation Parish

RESPONSE TO THE CALL OF THE HOLY FATHER FOR A SYNOD ON SYNODALITY



Introduction

On April 6, 2022, fifteen participants joined six members of the parish synod working group for three hours of sharing, reflection, discernment and prayer. In addition, until April 24, a Synod Questionnaire was made available on the parish website and in hard copy form in the church to gather input from those not able to join the in person consultation.

Context for the in person consultation:

- ▶ Most participants were born into Catholic families and received their formation from strong family traditions, parents, grandparents and also from Catholic schools.
- ▶ Traditional routines were families attending mass, praying the rosary together, having processions, participating in the Way of the Cross.
- ▶ Many are long time parishioners of St. Elizabeth, but have experienced other parishes.
- ▶ Faith is an integral part of their lives.
- ▶ Life in the Church is important.
- ▶ Some came to Canada/Ottawa from other locations.

The following is a thematic synopsis of the notes taken at the synod consultation, supplemented by input from the questionnaire.

Responses to the two questions

Question 1: What has been your experience, in terms of joys and challenges, as you live your faith within and outside our parish and the Catholic Church?

Joys within our parish:

- Small size is a strength:
 - a small community that exhibits love for one another; feel welcome; like angels
 - can get to know everyone.
 - children are involved in the parish – ensures that the Church will continue to grow.
 - a spiritual home to journey in faith with community, energized and guided by the Spirit.
 - find strength and comfort in difficult times.
 - pastor/deacon clearly demonstrate the love of God.
 - share gifts and feel connected to the church through different ministries/groups (e.g. Lector, Choir, Ladies Auxiliary).
- Open to new Canadians:
 - felt welcomed
 - immense gratitude for parishioners helping as they settled into a new life in Ottawa
 - often bring strong faith witness into our parish.
- Being involved outside the parish helps faith grow: Catholic Challenge Movement, Catholic Cursillo Movement, NET Ministries.
- Homilies informative and reinforce teachings of the Catholic faith.

Joys with the Catholic Church:

- Has remained a dedicated constant, upholding the very essence of our Faith.
- Infant baptism plays a big role in their faith growth and should be encouraged.
- The Eucharist/Eucharistic Adoration brings much joy, key aspect of our Catholic faith.

Challenges:

- Living the Faith:
 - Family members, children (big and small) and grandchildren, no longer attend church → empty churches and church time replaced by other activities.
 - Lack of parental attention to the growth of children in the Faith.
 - Can be difficult to stay engaged if only attending weekend mass, when other opportunities are limited.
 - How to encourage participation and provide opportunities for everyone to share their gifts, contribute and feel invested?
 - Need to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and not those of politicians.
- Parish shortcomings:
 - Lacking some ministries, especially for children, youth/teens, young families.
 - Music ministry should be encouraged to provide a variety of hymns and forms of expression to encourage participation of the congregation. Good music enhances the liturgy but should never overwhelm it.
 - Single individuals can feel excluded and not recognized at times.
 - Some priests changing the “original” rubrics of Mass to suit some people or deviating from

the traditional practices of the church (liturgy, music, etc.).

- It can be difficult to join any organized group for prayers or other kind of activity.
- Sometimes find it difficult to concentrate while praying & reflecting prior to mass due to the chatter.
- Catholic Church:
 - Faith formation has changed. Not enough focus on instruction and catechism (no longer taken as priority).
 - Need to reinforce the teaching of Catechism in the church, presently not enough is being done to share the faith with the younger generation.
 - Need for all faithful to preserve and protect the "truth;" especially by the priests in their homilies at all times no matter the circumstance.
 - A bad experience (e.g. with a priest or parishioner) can cause a negative feeling towards the Church as a whole.
 - The Church has been too silent when mistakes are made; more transparency needed; finding out through the media rather than from the Church.
 - Distractions - attending Mass with drinks, food and cell phones switched on.
 - Communicate God's love to the people through more involvement (community presence) of lay parishioners.
 - Emphasis in some parishes on appearances and correctness instead of at least acknowledging different approaches.

Question 2: What improvements can our parish and the Catholic Church make as they endeavour to spread the joy and love of Christ's gospel to all: in our parish, neighbourhood and nation?

- Archdiocese considerations:
 - An amalgamation of churches might be a good thing in that it would lead to bigger parishes.
 - a major Shrine in Ottawa to attract Catholics.
 - think beyond the Catholic faith and be more inclusive and tolerant of other faiths.
 - Bring back more formation.
 - More evangelization, get excited and loud about our faith, get visible.
 - how we can be more inclusive of gay, LGBTQ communities.
 - suggested adopting programs like "Virtues" which they have in the U.S.
 - Catholic Schools:
 - Not sufficiently teaching nor practising Catholic beliefs.
 - Many students not Catholic.
 - Teachers are not regularly attending mass.
 - Catholic schools should instruct children in line with Christ's teachings and His expectations from His followers, as it was done in the past.
 - Basic Catechism be brought back into the schools to help children grow in their faith; is of immense benefit and should be encouraged.
 - More celebration of Masses for the children: in the schools and in the Church.
 - Emphasis on the need for the sacraments of Baptism, 1st Holy Communion, and Confirmation of our children should be made by the Priests, Parents and the School

authorities.

- Government funding of Catholic schools remains a big concern. Efforts should be made to let the government know that there is no alternative to faith building, if we must raise tomorrow's good leaders. We must present and reinforce Catholic teachings in all Catholic schools no matter who is funding them.
- Efforts should be made to get committed Catholics elected to the school board.
- Neighbourhood considerations:
 - Neighbourhood prayer groups.
 - Outreach with Caldwell Centre; church across the street.
 - Compassion over condemnation as the best way forward.
- Parish considerations:
 - Opportunities for getting to know other parishioners, to build community within the parish and reach out to the broader community.
 - Host a "Meet the Parish" social event. Need for community gatherings where non-parishioners and non-Catholics can be invited.
 - Host a "Newcomers" gathering for new parishioners to connect with others.
 - Create a "Greeting Ministry" for weekend masses, to create a connection with both existing and new parishioners.
 - Encourage regular parishioners to reach out to someone new (e.g. "Change Pews" week)
 - Continue with social gatherings.
 - Review/update music regularly.
 - Explore hosting a program like Alpha, New Life Retreat, LifeTeen (NET), RCIA/Catechism.
 - Outdoor procession for the Feast of Corpus Christi.
 - Adoration evenings.
 - Praise & worship evenings.
 - Continue to reinforce & educate on the Catholic teachings, the meaning and importance of following (respecting) the Ten Commandments. Perhaps would be of benefit to those who only attend mass during special occasions.
 - Guidelines on what is expected of parishioners (decorum, dress, rites, practices, etc.) to be stated by the pastor and reiterated as needed. Eg. Unity on the position to take (kneel or stand) during and after Communion.
 - Altar servers to always dress in the appropriate vestments.
 - Establish a "Spiritual Council" to tap into, share and discuss individual spiritual experiences for faith expression and growth.
 - Better explanation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
 - For children/young families:
 - Continue Children's Liturgy at Sunday mass.
 - Organize other fun activities for children and families, e.g. play/pageant, carnival.
 - Bible study for young families with child care provided, as this is often an obstacle to attendance.
 - For youth/teens:
 - Contact school chaplains for their input and help on building a connection with the high school students.
 - Develop a youth group/youth activities.

- Tie activities in with volunteer hours required for graduation.
- For seniors:
 - Provide drop-in time for viewing EWTN Catholic Television, combined with a share group/time for fellowship
 - Form a prayer group for special intentions
- We need to be realistic in how much can be done, since it can be difficult to recruit volunteers and most endeavours require an investment of time and money. However, we can't be afraid to fail! Even if we only get a few people involved, it is worth the effort!
- Catholic Church:
 - Church leaders (The Holy Father, Bishops, Priests etc.) to be BOLD in teaching/proclaiming the faith. The Church must not concede to the urging and pressure of secular societies, governments, and organizations worldwide as to make itself modify the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ be in conformance with politically correctness. The Church must actively defend the truth and make clear its stance regarding sexuality, families, marriage, and religious vocations.
 - Bring back the traditional Latin Mass.
 - Stand firm against any government regulation that goes against the doctrine of the Church and imperils the salvation of souls, e.g. abortion, LGBT laws and their likes. (i.e. stand firm in proclaiming the truth at all times, no matter the level of pressure from any quarter.)
 - The Christian faith, and the Catholic expression of it in particular, is undergoing intense scrutiny and being undermined by political and secular forces directed in particular at our children. The Church leadership must work hard to protect the hopes, dreams and aspirations of all its members.
 - For the Church to preserve and not change The Sacred Deposit of Faith; our Sacred Tradition and Scriptures; traditional liturgy of the sacraments.
 - For the Church to refrain from seeking consultation from non-Catholics but rather go back to the teachings of the Church Fathers in seeking clarifications and solutions to its challenges.
 - For the Church to reject any Catholic School funding being offered by any government or organization that entails an attached condition of any prohibition of teaching Catholic doctrines, Catechism and Christian values to Catholic students everywhere.
 - For the Church to teach more about the last things, Heaven, and Hell.