

SYNTHESIS OF THE PARISH SYNOD CONSULTATION SESSION

PARISH NAME: St. Joseph PARISH CITY: White Church

How many consultation sessions were held at the parish? One

On what date(s) was the session held? Tuesday, April 26, 2022

About how many participants attended? Twelve

How were invitations issued? Church bulletin, email, phone calls, personal encounter

How did you invite and connect with those at risk of being excluded or those on the peripheries? Were there any groups of people whose participation was especially noteworthy and why? Personal encounters, phone calls and email. No participation was especially noteworthy.

Were there specific groups of people who did not participate and why (if known) did they not participate? No

Through the consultation session, what were some of the positive descriptions of how the Church is journeying with people to “grow in holiness?”

The accessibility to religious materials, mass media, many and various types of evangelization (Bishop Barron and Word on Fire ministry and example here), theology courses through Franciscan University and the Knights of Columbus, podcasts.

What were some of the challenges, disappointments, or frustrations conveyed in describing how the Church journeys together to “grow in holiness?”

Here at the parish level, our opportunities to grow together in holiness, fellowship and knowledge among adults are limited by our lack of facilities to Mass only, making growing spiritually difficult. Steps are in process to address this in the near to intermediate term.

What are some of the positive descriptions of how the Church is “forming intentional disciples?”

Here locally, the parish offers a strong sacramental program directed at our young people. During their time in PSR and after conclusion, they are involved as altar servers, lectors, music ministry, at the offertory collection and in multiple service projects both in the parish and in their community.

Also, a Bible Study organized and administered by parishioners has been a great help for several of the parishioners over the past ten years or so in understanding the Word of God and helping realize our responsibilities as Christians and as Catholics.

What were some of the challenges, disappointments, or frustrations conveyed, in describing how the Church journeys together to “form intentional disciples?”

In our local parish, there is no organized continuance of religious education after confirmation/high school. Again, it is hoped that development of a facility will help address this shortcoming.

What were some of the positive descriptions of how the Church is responding to the commission of: “being sent forth to witness?”

Again, the model for being sent forth to witness seems to be the Word on Fire Institute and Bishop Barron. Obviously, there are other many other ministries that focus on spreading and explaining the teachings of the Church, but this seems the most recognized and most appreciated, at least among members of our parish.

What were some of the challenges, disappointments, or frustrations conveyed, in describing how the Church is responding to the commission of: “being sent forth to witness?”

Dissatisfaction was expressed during the session regarding the leadership of the bishops at times in addressing clerical abuse in a timely manner, and also in faithfully entreating “Catholics” to adhere to Church teaching on issues such as abortion and homosexuality. There was also concern expressed about some activities of Catholic Relief Services that were perceived as abusive of immigration laws.

Here locally, the parish offers very little in the way of organized witness activities. We are an extremely rural parish, with limited technological resources. Also, our pastor of 36 years retired six months ago, and we are still working our way through new ways of doing things, and more involvement of the laity in administration and leadership. Our witness at this point consists mainly of the witness of our lives. However, we believe our faithfulness to the Eucharist, our parish and our Church serve as an effective witness of our faith.

During the overall consultation process, what dispositions, attitudes, or feelings were notable? What tensions or disagreements emerged from the listening process? What was significant, surprising or unexpected during the session? What new perspectives or horizons opened up? What were the fruits that the Holy Spirit brought about through this experience?

See the first paragraph in answer to the question above regarding tensions or disagreements. The expression of dissatisfaction with the hierarchy was somewhat surprising, but was discussed without rancor. Discussion of this topic occurred early in the session, and went forward into a productive discussion as described in this synthesis.

What did participants have to say about areas where the Church or your parish is in need of healing and conversion in its spiritual life, culture, attitudes, structures, pastoral practices, relationships, and missionary outreach?

Maintaining better communication with our parishioners is a goal. We have not always done a good job of following up with members absent from Mass, as our tendency in this part of the world is to "let people be." One attendee at the session explained her effective use of text messages to check in with parishioners who are absent. In this regard, an update to our parish directory (now roughly ten years old) will be crucial.

Also, it was noted during the session that the parish could benefit from having a greeter at the entrance of the Church for each Sunday Mass. Plans are to address this recommendation.

What dreams, desires and aspirations for the church were expressed by participants?

That St. Joseph Parish, almost 140 years into its life, will become an even more vibrant parish in coming years.