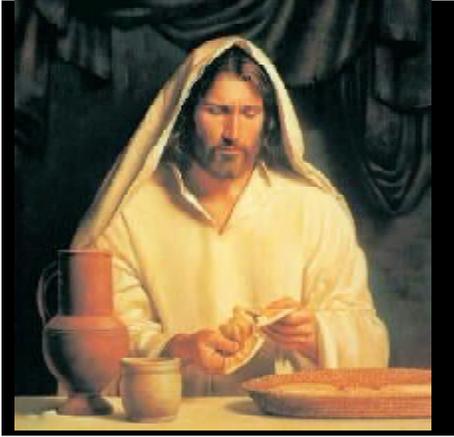


## CANADA'S NATIONAL SYNODAL SURVEY REPORT

Last Spring, our Parish, along with Parishes around the World participated in a Synodal Survey at the request of Pope Francis. It was developed to gather the thoughts and opinions of Catholics everywhere and to serve as a foundation for the discussions that will take place at the World Synod in the Vatican in October 2023. The following are highlights of excerpts that I have gathered of the Church's Report of the data collected from across Canada, that was recently sent to the Vatican. Msgr. Pat Stilla



### THE REPORT'S GENERAL TONE

- ◆ Great faith and love for the Church was expressed by most of the participants.
- ◆ It was noted that Catholic communities bring joy and consolation: through their meeting regularly as an extended family, by gathering together during the important moments of the year, by working together with those most in need, by educating each other to respect neighbour and creation, by providing the opportunity of being protagonists in the development and peace of the world and by proclaiming a world of hope saved by Christ.
- ◆ Most said that welcoming Parishes have been there for them in the difficult moments of life like a death or a family crisis.
- ◆ For most, the Church remains the link that gives rise to participation, commitment and sacramental practice. However, in some regions, this community reality has suffered greatly from the merging of parishes.

◆ Many expressed their appreciation for this synodal process, as well as the desire to continue the same type of meetings and exchanges well after the Synod. This form of "walking together" as the Church was greatly appreciated. However, some voiced their doubts about the outcome of the synodal process due to their perception of the Church as a rigid institution unwilling to change itself, or due to a suspicion that the synodal outcome had already been predetermined by some.

◆ In general, Canadian Catholics want their Church to be relevant, active and involved in the ongoing transformation of our world. In some areas there is an urgent need for the Church itself to undergo a missionary renewal.



### "WISH-LIST" SUGGESTIONS

1. The Formation of Small Groups  
In general, the majority of those who replied to the questionnaire encouraged the formation of small groups within existing Parishes. They felt that the presence and activity of these groups, whose members would engage in sharing their Faith and discussing

Scriptural texts would foster genuine listening and sharing. A greater use of such groups could contribute to the spiritual renewal of Christian life and make Parish life more personal.



2. Meaningful Liturgies Needed  
These consultations revealed a general awareness of the importance of meaningful liturgical celebrations in the life of the Church. The Liturgy, because it gathers the faithful around Christ is seen by most to be at the heart of the celebration of our Faith and therefore must be vibrant and nourishing. More specifically:

- ~ The role of the celebrant is especially seen as important in creating and encouraging a liturgical culture where clergy and laity "walk together" in celebration.
- ~ Most persons who were surveyed stressed the important place of the homily within the Liturgy, noting that homilies are often inadequate, uninspiring and disconnected from real life concerns and challenges of people today. One reason for this is a preacher's use of overly-theological language and concepts which are unfamiliar to people.

~ It was also noted that the Scripture Readings of the celebrations are often not well explained in homilies in a way that is relevant to the people today.

~ Concern was also expressed regarding music and hymns, which sometimes are not carefully chosen and performed in order to give greater meaning and nourishment to the celebrations.

### 3. More Co-Responsibility

Many stressed the need of a newly formulated leadership in the Church, an authority of service which would better involve the participation of a greater number of the faithful: ordained ministers as well as lay men and women together. With this shared leadership model, Faith communities would be better prepared to reach out to an often anonymous and consumeristic society. A strong desire was also expressed for greater communication and cooperation between clergy and laity in a Church of the future.

### 4. Better Dialogue with Society

Many noted that the Church must do more in the area of communications, not only being more centrally present in the media but developing its own means of communication in the future.

### 5. Praying with Other Christians

In many Dioceses, praying and working together with other Christians has become a common practice but this is not widespread across the country. Catholics should join with other Christians in common prayer and, in a country that is increasingly secularized, in proclaiming the Gospel and defending moral principles.



## SOME CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

### A. Poor Catechesis/Leadership

Laypeople are often "sacramentalized" but not catechized. Clerical defensiveness, poor leadership, and heavy workloads can lead to persons' refusal to participate in or establishing a synodal process in the Catholic Church.

### B. The Marginalization of Faith

This subject was of interest and concern throughout the regions of Canada. The marginalization of Faith in society and feelings of alienation are realities that many Catholics live with on a regular basis. At the same time. To make matters worse, it was noted that a certain polarization, publicized in social media has also been developing within the Church itself.

### C. A Feeling of Abandonment

Within the Church itself, it was noted that many Indigenous people and other groups have felt a certain pastoral abandonment after many generations of practising the Christian Faith. In many ways and for varied reasons, marginalization was also experienced by some among the poor, the elderly, the homebound, the imprisoned and others on the peripheries of our Parishes. Listening and welcoming by the Church are perceived as insufficient and follow-up afterwards is often lacking.

### D. Loss of Credibility & Trust

Many felt that the tragedy of sexual abuse by clergy, as well as the problematic history of Residential Schools as covered by the media, have contributed to a developing mistrust in the Church's credibility. It was also noted that there is a growing distance between the Church and Canadian society and that a negative image of the Church is often held by some in Canada. It was felt that this continues to be promoted in particular by a media perceived by many to be hostile to the Faith. Some in Canadian Society feel that Catholic teachings on sexual, family and moral issues are incompatible with a modern world. At the same time, there are those who have the impression that the Church is mute on important controversial issues and should be more vocal in speaking out. This can lead to conflicts within.

### E. Little Youth Participation

Much concern was also expressed about the absence of youth in Parishes, which is very acute in some regions of Canada. This is exacerbated by the loss of Catholic schools in some regions, and the ongoing challenge of the secularization in Catholic schools that remain. Communication with the younger generations about Faith can be very difficult.

