

Synod on Synodality, Parish Cluster Report
St. Pius X (Solon Springs), St. Anthony (Gordon), & St. Mary (Minong)
Main Facilitator and Scribe: Andrew Trautman

Facts of the Parish Synodal Gathering:

Date: February 10, 2022

Participants: 16

Time: 6:00pm-8:00pm

Breakout Groups: 3

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Our parish cluster had a great movement of the spirit working within it and it's members during the synodal gathering. We began our gathering by engaging in the process of Lectio Divina utilizing the video from Chris Hurtubise provided by the diocese. After encountering the Scriptures in this way, we broke into our breakout groups and started reflecting on this passage within our small groups.

The feedback from our table facilitators is that by thoroughly rooting our discussion in the scriptures and prayer, our groups were able to open themselves to the Holy Spirit and let our discussion be guided by the will of God. After the engagement with scripture, our groups moved onto the suggested questions provided by the diocese, whose answers are summarized below.

1. Our groups focused on a few main areas where they see Jesus; In prayer, in our interior guidance, and in our neighbors that we see helping us and others.
2. We mostly see Jesus at work in our churches, in our prayer groups, and in those places where charitable works are being done.
3. Christ is needed to bring healing to all levels of our community. From children who have no context of the Christian faith, to the individual who needs both a desire for and access to the sacrament of reconciliation, to broken families, to our nation ripped apart through ideological, racial, and cultural difference, to our church and those who feel as though our shepherds have spent too long being uninterested in taking care of the flock.
4. Many felt as though getting to know God in one area where they felt unsupported. Although we listen to scripture readings during mass, and many read the bible outside of mass, there is a strong desire for group engagement beyond just what is in mass. A continual point that all groups expressed was the love of engaging with the Lectio Divina process and then group discussion and wished we could see the church support more small groups.
5. The ways people hear the Holy Spirit is in guiding them to engage more fully with God on a personal level, but also in their commitments to the community: ensuring that Children are properly catechized, drawing in those who have left the church and the sacraments, and getting those who do attend mass to see if they can use their talents to help the local church and recognize the joy of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

6. Throughout the discussion, from all of the table groups, this question was being answered in small ways. A general theme that emerged, although it wasn't explicitly named at the time, was an unconscious recognition that most of what the Church can help us with, can be provided by the Church in her universal form (i.e. a community of all believers, not just the ordained, but the laity and religious as well). While people are grateful for the direction of the Bishops and the sacraments offered through our priests, what people really want is for the local parish to begin to feel more like a community. We should be offering small groups of prayer and catechesis, we should be having opportunities for fellowship, we can engage together in acts of service for our community, we can encourage reconciliation and eucharistic adoration. The lack of catechesis is felt at all levels, among both children and adults, and includes everything from the essential catholic doctrines to catholic social teachings.

In summary, what we saw were engaged catholics, inspired by the group participation in prayer and scripture, coming to see themselves as full members of the Church. People recognized that the Church has the potential to exist as a bulwark of Faith, Hope, and Charity in a world that is torn by strife, but that the current reputation of the Church keeps her from being able to easily stand in that position. Specifically for those who are not actively engaged with the church, they see a failure of Charity in a lack of almsgiving and works of mercy, and instead associate the church as an institution which denies the science of climate change, refused to take Covid-19 seriously, and has lost any authority to provide moral guidance after its handling of the sexual abuse crisis. Despite all this, and very fortunately, we are the church, and we are the ones who can work to build those things that are needed to draw others to the Church, but we must be ready both to live a life transformed by Christ and "always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pt 3:15 - RSVCE)

Specifically, most recognized a failure of catechesis among children and adults, and see a big opportunity to provide that. We also recognized a turning away from the sacrament of reconciliation, and the need for us to show others the beauty of this sacrament. And finally, that the local church has an opportunity to be an extended family, both for its members, and for those in our community who, like the paralytic lowered through the roof, may need to find a way to be brought to Jesus that doesn't seem conventional. For some, the front door to the church may seem too inaccessible, and as followers of Christ we need to not be afraid to blow a hole in the roof if that is what it takes to bring others to Him.