

Individual Synod Contributions



Please fill out this form with your individual responses to the fundamental question of the Synod, as well as questions regarding the Ten Themes as outlined in the Vademecum. You can find the Vademecum here: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/vademecum-synod-synodality> Please note all contributions will be shared anonymously. Your name and contact information will not be attributed to your submission. This is to ensure that all questions can be answered with honesty and authenticity in a synodal spirit. Thank you for participating in this important event in the life of the Church!

You can answer as many or as few of questions as you would like. Please turn in your responses no later than **Wednesday June 29th** to the Parish Office.

Please provide any additional information about yourself you wish to share.

The Fundamental Question

Description: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”

General Answers:

Questions to Answer: How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow in “journeying together”?

1. St. Matthias is trying to announce the gospel thru prayer groups, aiding the poor, offering enrichment by bible studies for adults, religious ed classes for 5 & up, and providing a bible camp this summer.

COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Description: In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.

General Answers:

Questions to Answer: In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

1. I believe persons coming to Mass joining Bible Studies, volunteering are walking together. The pandemic created a hole in what was happening by our younger parish members. We need an active plan to bring them back not only to Mass but also to volunteer in their capacity to make us more aware of the need to help is a way to live in the path of Christ. Many of our SVDP concerns are with our own “neighbors in need” and being able to continue both financially and physically.

LISTENING

Description: Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.

General Answers:

1. I feel people do not take the time to listen well. We hurry through our days like busy learners, so we really don't participate in the lives of others. We have a Sunday when volunteers tell why they joined a group and volunteer. I think we should do this same thing with saying before Mass what we do and what we need.

Individual Answers to Questions:

How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore?

1. God is trying to get people to hear the calls from those in need (people of color, women, LBGTQ+, etc) These people speak out, yet are being ignored by the church and pushed into roles of 2nd class citizens. I was always taught that Jesus cared for all, yet the practice of the church as a whole fall short.

How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people?

1. They aren't. If they were, then they wouldn't be losing their rights and be ignored.

What facilitates or inhibits our listening?

1. Church's listening is inhibited by it's lack of ability to grow and learn as new information comes forward. It is static in ways that end up causing it to go against the work of God.

How well do we listen to those on the peripheries?

1. The church as a whole does not do a good job at this. Those pushed to the boundaries of our community are ignored because they don't conform to a very old, closed minded idea of what a person who follows God should be.

How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated?

What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own?

1. Leadership within the church is stuck follow scripture in a way that doesn't follow Jesus' teachings. When you look at the Seven Pillars of Catholic Social Teaching and you look at the day to day work of the church there is a huge disparity.

What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

1. There isn't, they are pushed to fringes. The church as a whole needs to do a better job of following the Seven Pillars of Catholic Social Teaching.

SPEAKING OUT

Description: All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity.

General Answers:

1. I don't think we have anyone who speaks out continually. We hear now and then of an issue we should think about from the pulpit. We never are given a way to respond to the issue. Maybe a consensus of the parish could be presented back to the pulpit. Ex: returning to Latin Mass. When Latin Masses can be said. I don't hear much on media except at Lent. I have no idea who speaks up for St. Matthias. I would like to be informed of issues facing the Catholic community.

Individual Answers to Questions:

What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society?

1. Speaking up is hindered by the pervasive spread of hate permeating our society. There is a vulnerability in speaking out and unfortunately history shows that those who speak out for what is right tend to be treated poorly.

2. I keep hearing things from other parishes that the new priests want mass in Latin. I was brought up on Latin masses and hymns. I never knew what I was praying or singing. When the second Vatican council changed it to English, I felt prayerful, I wanted to participate more willingly. I believe my faith has grown since that time, more interested in scripture because I can see why we are doing things in the church today. If a Latin mass is said it should have a special ok from the Archbishop and not for just any mass.

A second thing that irks me is hearing that your young priest is so rigid in their beliefs. Jesus taught us to follow Christ... he explained things to his disciples so they could understand. I don't feel when a man becomes a priest, he should change the way things have progressed in the parish. Christ says we are all priest not ordained but a spreader of His word. Asking us not to raise hands in blessings to other is not hurting the priesthood, or other customs that were developed should not be forbidden by anyone in the clergy. This is a sign of support, of community not a takeover of the power to bless.

One thing I think is hurting the church is the ideas coming out to us that it is ok to go backwards in the beliefs we have developed. I know people who no longer attend a parish they attended faithfully, because of the practices being told are incorrect. These practices joined us as a community. It gave members unity to bless the person receiving the last rites or leaving on a mission journey. This seems to be fine with our archdiocese. Maybe we should look at the whole picture. Covid has caused many people to not come back to church. This is just another way of turning people off to the catholic faith we have finally come to understand. End result leaving the parish they felt comfortable with to join other parishes or fall away from the catholic

faith all together.

When and how do we manage to say what is important to us?

How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)?

Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

CELEBRATION

Description: "Walking together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.

General Answers:

Questions to Answer: How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy? What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

General Answers:

1. I feel celebrations are joyful and inspiring, and should help the mission of the church. Seeing the parish participation make me feel we may get active participation at some time. As said before we have a ministry presentation, unfortunately people feel they are too busy to volunteer and get roped in to too much to do. I am aware of the ministries of lector and acolyte are volunteers or requested.

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

Description: Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate.

General Answers:

Questions to Answer: Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptized from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

General Answers:

1. I feel St. Matthias does request us to ask ourselves through the pulpit to act as Jesus did. I feel families are pulled in many directions and take the financial support as all they can do. I feel we are asking the young to take over – but they feel time constraints – the newly retired feel they deserve to do what they want and do not feel volunteering is one of those things. Here again in a social aspect the social issue exist but we only hear regarding what they do when they have a campaign.

DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Description: Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.

General Answers:

Individual Answers to Questions:

To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church?

How do we promote collaboration with neighboring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.?

How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed?

1. They haven't been as far as I have seen. This Synod is a step in the right direction.

What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?

1. Poverty, Civil Rights, Human Rights

What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation?

1. I don't see any dialogue

How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

1. It doesn't. An recent example that comes to mind, is that the Catholic Schools in the Milwaukee area have done more to harm kids by not doing more to understand the LBGTQ+ community. The church continues to push away those that don't fit a mold created thousands of years ago, that in turn doesn't meet the needs to Jesus' teachings, nor of his followers. It instead pushes them away.

ECUMENISM

Description: The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.

General Answers:

Questions to Answer: What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

Description: A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.

General Answers:

Questions to Answer: How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

DISCERNING AND DECIDING

Description: In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

General Answers:

Individual Answers to Questions:

What methods and processes do we use in decision-making?

1. *It's a hierarchical system. While people might speak out, they are rarely listened to.*

How can they be improved?

1. *Leaders can take more time to understand the needs of the people and actually care about making changes to support the followers of God. This means looking at their concerns through the lens of the Catholic Pillars of Social Teaching.*

How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures?

Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God?

1. *I don't believe it does*

What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice?

What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability?

How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

1. *Help diverse groups of people feel not only welcome but accepted for who they are. Build trust within the community that their concerns are not just heard, but that something will be done about them.*

Final Question

FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

Description: Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning.

General Answers:

1. Bible Study is offered on Zoom and in-person.

Individual Answers to Questions:

How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue?

What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?

Is there anything else you would like to share with the US Synod Team?

I am not currently regularly attending St. Matthias though I regularly attend Mass where ever the Deaf Community has a signed Mass. I want to look back on my experience while I did attend St. Matthias from November 2007 until we began having signed Masses regularly. Those were the years I regularly attended the interpreted Masses at St. Matthias.

Rev. David Cooper was the pastor at this time. He was very sensitive to the Deaf Community. He signed parts of the Mass for which he knew the signs and tried to learn additional signs. During that time, the congregation would often join in signing responses such as “Alleluia” and “Amen”. He would sign “Body of Christ” when a Deaf person came to him for Communion. He was very welcoming. He was the ideal Pastor I want if no signing priest is available. The interpreters were all well qualified. The congregation often joined in signing responses. This made us feel very welcome.

In addition, I have attended Mass at St. Matthias when no interpreter was present and was pleased to see the congregation signing “Alleluia”,

When I first returned to Milwaukee in 2007, there was a woman whose name I cannot recall who provided adult education at St. Matthias. Booklets on various topics were used. When I requested an interpreter, I was able to join some of the groups and take part in the discussion. Some other Deaf people from the Deaf Community also joined.

This brings me to a topic that is difficult for Deaf people in a regular parish. The hearing people seem willing to copy signed responses in the Mass and learn to sign some of the prayers. However, even with interpreters present, I found it hard to join in conversation outside of Mass. If I approached a group, hearing people would question what I wanted though all I wanted was to be involved in the group’s general conversation. This was especially true when I was on the Pastoral Council and attempted to join a group. Some of the discussion on the topics being discussed in the meetings were discussed during breaks and the break discussion could have helped me to better understand the various positions. I am profoundly Deaf since the age of eight. Many people do understand my speech or the interpreter could voice for me.

I am enclosing a document “Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers, XXIV International Conference, Ephphatha: The Deaf Person in the life of the Church, 19-20-21 November 2009, Final Recommendations”.

This document was developed by representatives from around the world including the United States. In 2008 the International Catholic Foundation for Service of Deaf Persons held a pilgrimage to Rome which was attended by more than 1300 members of the Deaf Community around the world. Participants attended the Wednesday audience with the Pope and had workshops afterward which were attended by the Pope’s representative. Interpreters using the various sign languages of the Deaf Community represented were provided. The result of the 2008 pilgrimage was the Conference that developed the recommendations listed in the document I enclosed. I pray the synod will include these recommendations for the Deaf Community.