

# Synod Update Meeting



Synod  
2021  
2023

For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

# Getting Started

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This session is being recorded. It will be turned into a YouTube video and posted to our website.

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General overview of each set of responses (St. Matthias → Archdiocese of Milwaukee → United States Conference of Catholic Bishops → Working Document for the Continental Stage)

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Where do we go from here?

# St. Matthias Responses

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- How did St. Matthias offer the synod to parishioners.
  - In-person listening sessions at parish and on Zoom
  - Gave individuals both paper copies and online opportunities to submit to all synod questions.



FAITH

*first*

SAINT  
MATTHIAS  
PARISH

# Key Insights from St. Matthias

## Good Things...

- Enrichment in Faith Formation
- Prayer Groups
- Volunteerism
- Joyful & Inspiring Worship

## Negative Things...

- Effect of COVID 19
- Ignorance of those on the boundaries (people of color, women, LGBTQ+)
- Pervasive hate
- Issues with young clergy

## Areas for Growth

- Refocus on the Seven Pillars of Catholic Social Teaching
- “I would like to be informed of issues facing the Catholic community.” (Speaking Out)
- Reintegration of different community members (ex: Deaf Community)

# Archdiocese of Milwaukee

- Online responses anonymously or by name
- Zoom listening sessions
- Parish listening sessions
- Sessions offered one-on-one, w/non Catholics, Black Catholics, Spanish speaking sessions, and sessions for the deaf community.



ARCHDIOCESE  
*of* MILWAUKEE

# The Consultation Process

- Questions That Were Asked:
  - • What are the two biggest challenges facing people in southeastern Wisconsin? • Where and how is the Gospel being lived and preached effectively in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee? When do we journey well together? What examples do you see? • In the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, when are times and occasions when the Gospel is NOT being lived out and preached effectively? When do we fail to listen or fail to journey with people? How can we grow? • How can the Catholic Church better journey together with you and others? What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together?" • If you could share one thing with Pope Francis, what would it be?
- Topics That Were Covered:
  - • The fundamental question: How is this "journeying together" happening in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together?" • Listening • Speaking Out • Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission and Sharing Authority and Participation • Discerning and Deciding • Celebration • How are we hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit today?
- 1842 People Participated:
  - 1042 Online submissions, 69 individual responses from phone calls, letters, and emails, and 731 in person group sessions

# Main Takeaways From 10 Topics

## One: The Church's Social Mission

- “The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has a richness of outreach ministries, including pregnancy resource centers, food pantries, meal programs, outreach to the homeless, ministries to senior citizens and the sick.” (Page 4)

## Two: Catholic Education & Christian Formation

- “Catholic schools remain an essential ministry of the Church's mission of evangelization, where children of all backgrounds and faith are welcomed and families are supported.” (Page 4)
- “At the same time, **the vast majority of** Catholic children are not enrolled in Catholic schools. More than ever, parents need the support of the Church in raising their children in the faith. **Concern** was expressed about the quality of catechetical resources, reflecting a desire for greater support of parish Christian formation programs.” (Page 4)
- “Processes and programs that help adults deepen their faith life are both appreciated and desired, particularly Bible studies, small faith-sharing discipleship groups, and formational opportunities. **Younger people are less likely to show up for parish programs and events; the Church does well to use technology to meet them.**”

# 10 Topics Continued...

## Three: Families

- Parishioners feeling a sense of helplessness as they think about how to encourage family members to participate in their Catholic faith.
- Greater focus on youth and young adults in the faith.
- Church should provide care for mothers of all kinds for and throughout all stages of life for their children.

## Four: Liturgical Life of the Church

- Concern for people not being present at Mass even after COVID
- “Frustration, confusion and anger was expressed about recent Vatican instruction to limit these practices, while little is done to limit liturgical abuses in other parishes. Others are deeply concerned that they see a return to devotional practices and worry that the liturgical reforms of Vatican II are being rejected.” (Page 5)
- Homilies are very important to parishioners. Mixed feelings on the use of social issues and politics in homilies.

# 10 Topics Continued

## Five: Racism

- Milwaukee is an extremely diverse city made up of Black Catholic communities, Asian-Pacific Islander groups, Filipino, Vietnamese, Hmong & Loatian groups, and refugees from Bruma.
- Hispanic ministry is the largest growing population in southeastern Wisconsin.
- Members of different communities recognize that some face “disproportionate barriers and lack of support.” (Page 6)
- Racial Justice was raised as one of the top concerns in the Synod.

## Six: Violence & Crime

- Increase in gun violence and reckless driving.
- “Some participants noted the impact of intergenerational poverty, incarceration, lack of affordable housing, joblessness, educational barriers, safety concerns, substance abuse, mental health issues, and abuse and trauma in our urban areas, and how that creates an environment in which violence flourishes.” (page 6)

# 10 Topics Continued...



## Seven: Care for Those on the Margins, and Calls for Integration into the Life of the Church

- LGBTQIA+ community was identified as one of the most marginalized groups.
  - “Out of touch” vs. Support of Catholic Teaching
- Greater efforts are needed for families with disabled children, people with mental illnesses, racial and ethnic minorities, homeless, women, incarcerated, and immigrants and refugees.

## Eight: Clericalism

- Clerics are inconsistent in their approach to ministry, in communication with each other, and how they communicate church teaching on moral issues.
- Lots of tension building on all sides.
- Role of women and laity need to be increased.
- Deepen human formation of seminarians.

# 10 Topics Continued...

## Nine: Division and Lack of Civil Discourse

- “Growing divisions in society, and the lack of ability to talk with one another in a civil manner have spilled over into the Church.” (Page 8)

## Ten: The Sexual Abuse of Children and Vulnerable Adults

- Participants called for:
  - Greater accountability and transparency from Church leadership
  - Deeper pastoral care for and accompaniment of victims/survivors of sexual abuse, and their families
  - Training for priests and pastoral workers in trauma-sensitive pastoral care

## Final Thoughts

- “The Church would benefit greatly from providing more opportunities for dialogue and listening. Synodality – the process of journeying together – is an opportunity for us to work together – clergy, religious and laity – in proclaiming the saving message of the Jesus Christ in our world.” (Page 10)

# United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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- Scope of Catholics in the United States
  - 66.8 Million People
  - 178 Latin Church (Arch)Dioceses
  - 18 Eastern Catholic (Arch)Dioceses
  - 700,000 Participants
  - 30,000 Opportunities
  - 22,000 Reports



# Enduring Wounds

## Sexual Abuse Crisis

- “The sin and crime of sexual abuse has eroded not only trust in the hierarchy and the moral integrity of the Church, but also created a culture of fear that keeps people from entering into relationship with one another and thus from experiencing the sense of belonging and connectedness for which they yearn.” (Page 5)

## COVID 19 Pandemic

- “The pandemic itself “has led to the fraying of our communities in some ways, accelerating a trend towards disengagement and intensifying the isolation and loneliness of many, youth, and the elderly in particular. A large number of the faithful have not yet returned to worship.” (Page 5)

# Enduring Wounds Continued...

## Deeply Divided Church

- “The limited access to the 1962 Missal was lamented; many felt that the differences over how to celebrate the liturgy “sometimes reach the level of animosity. People on each side of the issue reported feeling judged by those who differ from them.” (Page 5)

## Lack of Unity within the Hierarchy

- “Many regional syntheses cited the perceived lack of unity among the bishops in the United States, and even of some individual bishops with the Holy Father, as a source of grave scandal.” (Page 5)

## Marginalization – Women & LGBTQIA+

- “Among these are members of the LGBTQ+ community, persons who have been divorced or those who have remarried without a declaration of nullity, as well as individuals who have civilly married but who never married in the Church. Concerns about how to respond to the needs of these diverse groups surfaced in every synthesis.” (Page 5)

## Support is Essential!

# Enhancing Communion & Participation

## Sacramental Life

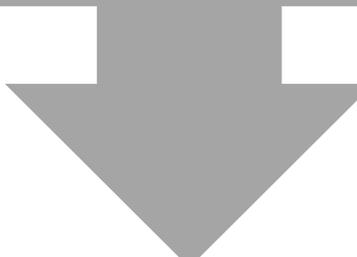
- Liturgy and the Eucharist is a source of hope and unity especially with the poor.
- More profound formation process focusing on parents/guardians.

## A Welcoming Church

- Tension between how to walk with people while remaining faithful to church teaching.
- LGBTQIA+
- Divorced, whether remarried or not
- Women
- Removing barriers with families who have special needs
- Diverse and Ethnic communities
- Racism
- The absence of young people

# Ongoing Formation for Mission

Importance of Evangelization lies in stronger formation. Focus is particularly important for parents and families and seminarians.



## Social Mission of the Church

*“Synodal consultations acknowledged that ‘the Church needs to help parishioners understand the connection between Catholic social teaching and outreach beyond the borders of the parish.’” (Page 10)*

# Ongoing Formation for Mission Continued...

## Communication

- Improvement in communication can help with misinformation
- Impact of digital communication especially with connecting with young people
- Transparency!!!
  - “More poignantly, nearly all of the synodal consultations saw clear, concise, and consistent communication as key to the strong desire for appropriate transparency. *‘The general category of transparency was mentioned over and over again: Transparency in the sex abuse crisis, transparency in making difficult decisions, transparency in financial matters, transparency in admitting when something goes wrong, transparency in planning, transparency in leadership. Transparency brings accountability which many people feel is lacking in the Church. To be a trustworthy Church, **transparency is going to need to be an essential component in every level and aspect.**’*<sup>55</sup> As the Church seeks to continue down the synodal path, a commitment to clear, transparent, and consistent communication will be crucial. *‘One key to improving collaboration among clergy and laity will be communication. Lay members in quite a few dioceses said they want greater transparency regarding decision making.’*” (Page 11)

## Co-Responsibility

- Tension between clergy and clericalism.
- Laity are ready and waiting for the opportunity for collaboration.

# Engaging Discernment

- Recombitment to authentic listening
  - *“a commitment to re-learn the art of listening and envision a new mission, goals, and priorities – remembering that we are on a pilgrimage together.” (Page 12)*
  - *“Insight becomes more profound when perceptions are based on actual listening and personal experience.” (Page 12)*
  - *“This is a path we have begun. Much depends on how we rediscover the spiritual discipline of listening and genuinely reintegrate spiritual aspects of discernment into local church life. Attentive listening in the Church provides the catalyst for engaging discernment.” (Page 12)*
  - *“Some noted how few opportunities are offered for true listening in a culture where we routinely speak past each other.” (Page 12)*



# Working Document for the Continental Stage

“Enlarge the space of your tent” (Isaiah 54:2)

Received contributions from 112 out of 114 Episcopal Conferences

49 Page document divided into 4 chapters

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# The Experience of the Synodal Journey

## The fruits, the seeds, the weeds of synodality.

- *“This kind of cooperation should become one of the ‘unwritten laws’ of the Church culture, so as to foster rapprochement between Church members and groups in society, thus creating a readiness of people for deeper dialogue.” (17, page 10)*
- *“I distrust the Synod. I think it has been called to bring about further change to Christ’s teachings and wound his Church further”*

## Our common baptismal dignity.

- *“There was a deep realization that in the synodal Church walking together is the way to become a missionary Church.”*

# Listening to the Scriptures

*“Enlarge the space of your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly, lengthen your ropes and make firm your pegs” (Is 54:2) (25, page 15)*

*“This is how many reports envision the Church: an expansive, but not homogeneous dwelling, capable of sheltering all, but open, letting in and out (cf. Jn. 10:9), and moving toward embracing the Father and all of humanity.” (27, page 15)*

*“Enlarging the tent requires welcoming others into it, making room for their diversity.” (28, page 16)*

# Towards a Missionary Synodal Church

“The vision of a Church capable of **radical inclusion**, shared belonging, and deep hospitality according to the teachings of Jesus is at the heart of the synodal process...” (31, page 19)

Listening that becomes welcoming – “Listening requires that we recognize others as subjects of their own journey. When we do this, others feel welcomed, not judged, free to share their own spiritual journey.” (32, page 20)

*“The laity feel that the flight from sincere listening stems from the fear of having to engage pastorally.”* (33, page 20)

# Towards a Missionary Synodal Church Continued...

- Listening to Those who Feel Neglected and Excluded
  - “The groups who feel a sense of exile are diverse, beginning with many women and young people who do not feel their gifts and abilities are recognised.” (38, page 22)
  - “Among those who ask for a more meaningful dialogue and a more welcoming space we also find those who, for various reasons, feel a tension between belonging to the Church and their own loving relationships, such as: remarried divorcees, single parents, people living in a polygamous marriage, LGBTQ people, etc” (39, page 22)
- The Church’s mission in today’s world
  - “For example, many African and Pacific Rim reports call on Churches around the world to recognize that addressing socio-environmental challenges is no longer optional...” (45, page 25)

# Towards a Missionary Synodal Church Continued...

## Walking together with all Christians

- “The reports request greater attention to divisive realities, for example the question of sharing the Eucharist.” (48, page 26)

## Communion, participation, and co-responsibility

- Beyond Clericalism
  - “The tone of the reports is not anti-clerical...Clericalism is seen as a form of spiritual impoverishment, a deprivation of the true goods of ordained ministry, and a culture that isolates clergy and harms the laity.” (58, page 29)
- Rethinking women’s participation
  - “There is almost unanimous affirmation that women love the Church deeply, but many feel sadness because their lives are often not well understood, and their contributions and charisms not always valued.” (61, page 30)

# Towards a Missionary Synodal Church Continued...

- Rethinking women's participation
  - “The Church faces two related challenges: women remain the majority of those who attend liturgy and participate in activities, men a minority; yet most decision-making and governance roles are held by men. It is clear that the Church must find ways to attract men to a more active membership in the Church and to enable women to participate more fully at all levels of Church life.” (61, page 31)
  - “After careful listening, many reports ask that the Church continue its discernment in relation to a range of specific questions: the active role of women in the governing structures of Church bodies, **the possibility for women with adequate training to preach in parish settings, and a female diaconate.** Much greater diversity of opinion was expressed on the subject of priestly ordination for women, which some reports call for, while others consider a closed issue.” (64, page 32)

# Towards a Missionary Synodal Church Continued...

- Synodality takes shape
  - Structures and institutions
    - “In different parts of the world, transparency is seen as an essential practice for a Church growing into a more authentic synodality: *‘The Catholic Church needs to become more open and transparent, everything is done in secret. Parish Council agendas and minutes are never published, financial committee decisions never discussed or balance sheets shared’* (individual observation from UK). Transparency will propel toward true accountability of all decision-making processes, including the criteria used for discernment.” (79, page 37)
  - Formation
    - “The overwhelming majority of reports indicate the need to provide for formation in synodality. Structures alone are not enough: there is a need for ongoing formation to support a widespread synodal culture.” (82, page 38)
    - “However, the need for more specific formation in listening and dialogue is also emphasised, for example through the establishment of synodality agents and teams.” (83, page 39)

# Towards a Missionary Synodal Church Continued...

- Synodal life and liturgy
  - Managing tensions: renewal and reconciliation
    - *‘Sadly, celebration of the Eucharist is also experienced as an area of division within the Church. The most common issue regarding the liturgy is the celebration of the preConciliar Mass.’ The limited access to the 1962 Missal was lamented; many felt that the differences over how to celebrate the liturgy ‘sometimes reach the level of animosity. People on each side of the issue reported feeling judged by those who differ from them’” (92, page 41)*
    - *“The quality of homilies is almost unanimously reported as a problem: there is a call for ‘deeper homilies, centered on the Gospel and the readings of the day, and not on politics, making use of accessible and attractive language that refers to the lives of the faithful’ (Maronite Church).” (93, page 42)*

# The Next Steps

- 106. The DCS is thus the privileged instrument through which the dialogue of the local Churches among themselves and with the universal Church can take place during the Continental Stage. To pursue this process of listening, dialogue and discernment, the reflection will focus on three questions:
  - - “After having read and prayed with the DCS, which intuitions resonate most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent? Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you?”
  - “After having read and prayed with the DCS, what substantial tensions or divergences emerge as particularly important in your continent’s perspective? Consequently, what are the questions or issues that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?”
  - “Looking at what emerges from the previous two questions, what are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with other local Churches around the world and discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?”
  - Page 47



# The Next Steps Continued...

- “Each Continental Assembly will draft its own Final Document of a maximum of about twenty pages confronting the three questions from its own specific context. The Final Documents are to be submitted by each Continental Task Force to the Synod Secretariat by March 31, 2023. Based on the Final Documents of the Continental Assemblies, the Instrumentum laboris will be drafted by June 2023.” (109, page 49)
- **St. Matthias will host new listening sessions to the three questions from January 2023 – March 2023!**



For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission