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4. Name of Parish or Group?

- St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Eugene, Oregon

5. City Name

- Eugene, Oregon

6. How many Synodal Discernment Session(s) did your parish/group hold?

- Seven In Person Sessions (used the Archdiocese Format Questions)
- Online Form for Homebound Parishioners (used the Archdiocese Format Questions)
- Online Form for Outreach to the Marginalized (used customized questions that leads to the Archdiocese Format Questions)

7. Approximately how many people total participated in the Synodal Discernment Session(s) for your parish or group?

- 159 = In Person Session Attendees
- 20 = Online Submissions from Homebound Parishioners
- 11 = Online Submissions from Outreach to the Marginalized / Estranged Catholics

8. Have you been designated to summarize and report, on behalf of your parish or group, what was heard at the Synodal Discernment Sessions?

- Yes, along with several Parish Representatives

Question One

9. John 3:16-17 - Please summarize comments and themes that emerged:

(Please limit summary to approximately one typed page)

1) What in the church fills me with life? How is the Holy Spirit working in my life to deepen my faith and inspire me to be a better disciple and witness of Christ's love to others?

Our participants stated that the Mass filled them with life –noting both the importance of the Eucharist as well as the communal nature of liturgical prayer. Some compared the two: Christ is truly present in both the Blessed Sacrament and the community in prayer. The rituals of the Church are life giving, as they connect the individual with the community of believers as well as the Holy Spirit, as do the community, homilies, music, and scripture. Many also noted participation in the liturgy, whether as a Lector, Extraordinary Minister, Music Minister, Altar Server, or other roles.

The participants noted that community filled them with life. They noted the universality of the Church, and its inclusion of many people, including Pope Francis, lay-people, pastors and

bishops, teachers, preachers, and the saints (great and small). These people often inspire them to live more holy lives, through their actions, wisdom, compassion, humility, and love. More tangibly, our participants often meet these people in groups, small and large, dedicated to Faith and Scripture Sharing, Retreats, Social Justice, education etc., and show Christ's presence in the world.

The participants also noted the importance of actively living the Christian life. This can be in the form of active ministry, as "in ministry I am able to help others open the door to a personal relationship with Jesus." Youth ministry was specifically mentioned. Additionally, and more commonly, this active living is found in simple demonstrations of kindness, acceptance, friendship, and love – that is, Christian Charity. "We experience the goodness of others and deepen our own spirituality." This helps make "Church" into an active word – rather than a merely intellectual construct, for we are the Church! The Body of Christ is in the People of God. We can, as the Lord taught us, forgive others and in turn be forgiven.

They also mentioned the importance of personal relationship and piety, as the life of Jesus, as set forth in the New Testament, provides us with a personal "Road Map" for our lives – a God who loves and cares for us! Aspects of this include various forms of prayer: the sacrifice of the Mass, adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, Contemplative Prayer, etc. Additionally, they noted that religious music, spiritual reading, teaching, and online-access to learning helped them to grow and better understand their relationship with God the Creator as well as the whole of Creation. They noted the roles of architecture, art, and the beauty of religious spaces in inspiring reverence before God. On a moral level, they noted the value of the "Primacy of Conscience" which makes one a "mature Catholic." The individual believer has to take responsibility for what they have done and what they have failed to do. It also requires them to be personally accountable to God, and thus to develop a relationship with Him. They found the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church to be important, for it is guiding and inspiring our individual journeys, in "often unexpected, soft, comforting, even challenging ways."

They also noted the importance of the Second Vatican Council. Many of those who remembered the changes stated that "Vatican II was life-changing for me", the "high-point of our lives." "We lived our Christianity," "We didn't just 'go to Church,'" "The Church was alive through the People of God." Many also noted the importance for them of the shift from Latin to Vernacular for the Mass; that it made them feel "like a disciple" and they "learned that God loves me."

Other notable points are service to the poor and needy--especially as it built community and encouraged Christian living, the life-giving nature of good, effective homilies, encounters with the mystical tradition of the Church, good Pastoral leadership, and the living witness of Pope Francis.

Question Two

10. Hebrews 10:21-24 - Please summarize comments and themes that emerged:
(Please limit summary to approximately one typed page)

2) As a community of believers, what experiences of the Catholic Church have brought joys or revealed wounds? And how can these experiences help us grow together in faith and offer the hope and healing of Christ to the greater community in which we live?

When we asked people in our parish “what experiences of the Catholic Church have brought joys or revealed wounds,” the joys they singled out included:

A sacred space to experience God; the humility and openness of Pope Francis; Catholic social teachings and social actions; the Catholic belief in Primacy of Conscience (“We do not simply do ‘obedience’; we inform our consciences, and that informs our behavior.”); music ministry; youth conferences; retreats; FOCUS ministries; the universality of the Church; tradition; Latin Mass; adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; small-group Bible study; the steadfastness of the Church’s teachings over the centuries; engaging with a diverse and inter-generational community; outreach to those in need; Zoom Mass when we can’t attend in person (including opportunities to participate in small-group discussions of the readings instead of only listening to preaching).

Common responses about wounds included:

- “People leaving the Church hurts.” “Our children, raised as Catholic, are leaving”.
- Church legalism and the unwelcoming treatment of some of God’s people, particularly members of the LGBTQ community, have wounded many.
- “Historical discrimination against Black, Indigenous and other people of color” are wounds.
- There’s too much “gate keeping” and not enough reaching out: Examples include 1) the Church’s approach to divorce, remarriage and communion; and 2) shaming people because of political views or sexual orientation. “It’s driving people away.”
- Again and again we heard: “Women are treated as second class citizens”. Many men and women felt that women’s current roles in the Church don’t reflect the model of Jesus. Rejecting women as priests, deacons and in other leadership roles “is a sin,” said one person.
- That the Church is becoming too conservative was a theme. “Rejecting Vatican II would be a nail in the coffin” of our Church, observed one respondent. Non-inclusive language was discussed frequently. “Fourteenth Century thinking is not going to cut it,” said another.
- Sexual abuse by priests compounded by the “cover-up” by higher authorities is a “bleeding wound.” Lack of a meaningful response has made people “ashamed to be Catholic.” “A healthy gender balance, a feminine view, a feminine voice,” might have subverted or shortened the abuse scandal. Others discussed celibacy, saying priests should be free to marry.
- “The Archbishop and priests have hijacked our parishes”, said one, expressing a commonly held view. An example cited was a focus on “petty liturgical changes” instead of deeper spiritual issues. “Our Bishop won’t listen to the people,” said a respondent who doubted the potential outcome of the Synod.

- The Church's pro-life stance doesn't include all "life-issues", nor support people facing horrific beginning and end-of-life decisions, some said. Pro-life should embrace the care of those born into poverty, or illness or need, and the nurturing of the Earth which sustains all life.
- The Church's focus on business and finances, and the influence of business and financial leaders, some said, is disconnected from the message of Christ.

Thoughts on how joys and wounds can help us grow:

- Recognize that the Church is a path to God, but it is not God.
- Reclaim Vatican II's empowering of the laity.
- See the Church as a community rather than a structure or monument.
- Be a Church of action, not just of words.
- Be inclusive. See Jesus in everyone.
- Extend an olive branch to those who have been hurt or are isolated
- Empower women. Allow priests to marry. Welcome Lay leaders.
- Develop mature, sophisticated religious education for youth and adults.
- Stay with the message of Jesus. It gets lost with the power-keeping.

Question Three

11. 1 John 1:1-4 - Please summarize comments and themes that emerged:

(Please limit summary to approximately one typed page)

3) As a Catholic community, we are expressly enjoined to invite others into a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ. When we dream about how best to accomplish this, what steps is the Holy Spirit inviting the Church in western Oregon to take?

We dream of a Church that hears and respects the "invitation of the Holy Spirit" to be a listening Church, a Church where we are all full participants (we were all anointed in baptism as "priest, prophet, and king"). That Church will boldly encourage full integration of women into all church activities. The Church will listen to the synodal discernment of each parish, because synod is, as one of us said, "an example as to how parishes can run." The Church will develop "a culture of synodality," from now on. It will empower the Faithful (our multi-talented, multi-faceted, broadly experienced parish communities) to be involved in every aspect of Church ministry, operations, and continuity. The Church also will remove barriers between "the faithful" and "the clergy" ("we are all "Christ's Body" and "we are the Church--not just the people in hats and robes.>"). The Church in western Oregon will be open to "the many" and not "just the few."

We, so many of us, dream of a Church that is open to change ("Growth comes from change"). We dream of a Church that respects Vatican II, doesn't revert to pre-Vatican II practices, and embraces Pope Francis' call to journey together. The Church will model humility and denounce clericalism. Bishops will be "servants of the servants of God." The Church will "give priests the option to marry and have a family," and will support retired priests. It will provide help for loneliness. Priests will be "servant leaders," like Jesus. The church will move out of the Middle

Ages into today. (“The clergy need to be pastors, not officials.”) The Church will restore subsidiarity, the principle of governance at the lowest level possible, and the bishop will listen to the individual parishes and lay people before integrating a new rule in that parish. The Church will face sex abuse scandals and protect young people. It will ordain men, women, married and unmarried; integrate laity in ministry; provide continuing education; adopt family-friendly policies for church staff, and engage in interfaith ministry.

We dream of a Church that lives the Beatitudes, embracing and consoling those who are suffering, that lives like Jesus (“Jesus made it pretty simple: ‘Love God and Love one another’”). The Church will lead by example (“Preach the Gospel always, and when you must, use words”).

We dream that the Church, our Church, will adopt an “All are Welcome!” policy. The Church will be inclusive, compassionate, and respectful of individual conscience. It will meet people “where they are.” It will provide opportunities for spiritual growth from childhood through adulthood, and train and support capable ministers (men and women, clergy and non-clergy) to be “Spiritual Directors.” The Church will “make the Eucharist more available to people who need it most.” “People are drawn to love and acceptance, not judgment.” The Church of western Oregon will “see Jesus in all people” and work to break down barriers with others. It will recognize and welcome LGBTQ individuals and communities, celebrate diversity, and utilize gender-neutral language.

The Church of our dreams will build respect for our common home, the Earth, with Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’* appeal “as a core and central issue.” The Church will “Encourage and prepare volunteers ministering to the homeless, the mentally ill, the addicted, and those working in hospitals, jails, prisons and senior living centers. The Church will recognize that many outside the Church are doing sacred work at the margins. It will reach out and help people because we are Catholic, not just “for Catholics.” It will connect with the “NONES” and “invite the dissatisfied”. The Church will build relationships with other religious traditions, believing that all of God’s creation is “good”.

The college students dream of a Church that listens to their expressed needs. A church that “welcomes all, that meets people where they are,” “accepts different levels of faith, and always welcomes people back.” A church that shows openness and willingness to address questions and that helps us learn from other faiths (e.g., “the Mormon Church’s importance of faith in family unity”). A Church that helps us better understand Vatican II, scripture, moral truths, sacraments, and spiritual gifts. A Church that helps us walk with people and helps us to be close to Jesus, as the men and women disciples were. A Church that helps us be apologists, evangelists, and witnesses to our Faith. A compassionate Church.

We, the Faithful of St. Thomas More, dream, most of all, of “the Church united, and power returned to the lay people.”

12. Did your parish or group pose questions different from the three above?

- Yes – But only for the Outreach to the Marginalized which received 11 responses.

13. If Yes, please share the exact questions that were used and summarize comments and themes that emerged from each question during the Synod Discernment Sessions.
(Please limit summary to approximately one typed page per question)

Question used for Outreach to the Marginalized:

1. If not in and through the Church, where are you looking for God? And where are you finding God?
2. What in the Church has brought you joy? How can we create a more joyful community?
3. Has the Church caused you wounds? And what would it take to have those wounds heal and for that wounding to never happen again?
4. Do you feel excluded from the Church? What would it take to make you feel welcome and included, so that would never happen again?
5. What else would you like to share?

Outreach Summary:

1. If not in and through the Church, where are you looking for God? And where are you finding God?
 - Numerous people find God everywhere. Through the values of kindness, mercy and patience; through prayer and self-study; in all of His wondrous creations; in nature; through children and grandchildren.
 - Actively involved in social justices and community organizations.
 - “I found great hope in Vatican II and that Pope Francis will resurrect this hope.”
 - “My work in the church and in ministry, but over the last four years I have felt catholic by default.” because of wounds received from the Church.
2. What in the Church has brought you joy? How can we create a more joyful community?
 - The Eucharist and an organization called Dignity, a Roman Catholic LGBTQ organization.
 - Communities that have a strong outreach program and Zoom services.
 - Being with others to discuss our “life afflictions” and connect directly to Biblical texts and literature.
 - Community provides a sense of belonging.
 - Being with a community that promotes the gifts of women in ministry.
 - Pope Francis and the Holy Spirit bring Joy.
3. Has the Church caused you wounds? What would it take to have those wounds heal and for that wounding to never happen again?

Several people stated the sexual abuse scandal caused and still causes wounds.

- Being sexually abused and the cover-up that surrounded this action. No apology, no counseling offered and being cast out as “too damaged”. Having the priest “re-located” to continue his abuses elsewhere.

Clergy not practicing what they preach.

- “I've witnessed a variety of unethical things happen between clergy and staff. I need a church that doesn't just move priests who do harm from one place to another.”
- The lack of acknowledgement and prevention of abuse of vulnerable populations is deeply distressing.

Judgements and bias

- “When my mom got divorced and hearing sermons of how ‘bad’ she was and [her] not being able to receive communion.”
- “If Catholics can't welcome and love each other, I have very little hope for the rest of humanity.”
- Persons who are not Catholic aren't interested in the Church because of the judgment, bias, and “pious attitudes” that they have encountered.
- “Theology is important, but it is often not shared in compassionate, pastoral ways.”
- “For my wounds to heal I need the Church - especially the hierarchy-to take ownership and practice what it preaches. “

4. Do you feel excluded from the Church? What would it take to make you feel welcome and included, so that would never happen again?

- The Church “says” that we are all welcome – but this is not practiced. The LGBTQ+ community, BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, People of Color] community, and those who disagree with how the Church addresses “Pro-Life” issues are not welcome.

5. What else would you like to share?

- Women belong in the Church. “Ordain women and have women serve in official capacities.”
- Recreate a Church that welcomes everyone. “When I was a child and a teen, all were welcome in the Church. I'm raising 2 little girls and it's hard to teach them the faith when I'm worried if they will always be welcomed, truly welcomed into it.”
- “So much attention is paid to abortion, and so little attention is paid to the quality of lives of other children and families.” The Church doing enough to help families care for their children nor helping to fix other issues of poverty, the environment, etc.

14. On behalf of the parish or group, is there anything not covered by this survey you would like to report that would contribute to the Synodal Discernment Process?

- Could the Archdiocese share the summaries from all parishes along with the Vicariate summaries and then the final Archdiocese summary to the USCCB?