



ARCHDIOCESE
OF NEW YORK



Archdiocese of New York Synodal Synthesis

June 2022

In the Archdiocese of New York, the synodal listening phase was met with much enthusiasm. Emerging from the coronavirus pandemic, the people of the archdiocese were eager to come together with more than 4,000 people taking part in the various archdiocesan listening and discernment sessions. With the continued assistance of the Holy Spirit, I am confident that these sessions will continue to bear good fruit in our parishes and for the Church in New York.

The participants in the archdiocesan listening sessions represent the broad diversity of the faithful. The sessions included twelve in-person bilingual listening sessions at the deanery level, children from kindergarten through eighth grade in our Catholic schools and religious education programs, the student body from one of our high schools, men and women from *Obreros Unidos*, a Catholic Charities' Day Laborer Community, the Life Experience and Faith Sharing Association, and migrant farm workers. Many of the Religious Sisters / Brothers participated in the archdiocesan listening sessions; some also served as facilitators. In addition, through the Vicar for Religious Office special listening sessions were conducted for cloistered nuns in their own monasteries. One hundred and eighteen active members of our ecclesial movements also participated in a synodal listening session as part of their Day of Reflection of Ecclesial Movements. ArchCare, our health care ministry focused on elder care, held sessions at

many of their facilities, including PACE Harlem, St. John Vianney Clergy Residence, Cabrini Nursing Home, as well as several Zoom meetings for ArchCare community members and care members unable to attend a session in person. Lastly, there was an open-invitation online bilingual listening session with breakout rooms for seventy participants who were likewise unable to attend an in-person session in their respective deanery.

All of the archdiocesan listening sessions began with prayer, including Eucharistic Adoration at the in-person deanery meetings. At the sessions, guidance was given to participants on how to listen to the Holy Spirit and each other before discussing the synodal questions. This guidance emphasized how to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit, with scriptural reflections and time for discussion. Additional guidance focused on how best to listen to each other when in a group setting. The feedback about the addition of this section was very positive. The synodal questions engaged participants in dialogue and fellowship and resulted in people sharing their hopes and dreams for the Church. Sessions opened the way for new conversations where they had not existed before. For example, after their listening session, Catholic Charities' Day Laborer Community *Obreros Unidos* decided to include a faith-based conversation in their monthly meetings. Participants in one of the ArchCare facilities found the session so helpful that they will now be holding annual listening sessions.

The conversations surfaced many ideas and themes, but the desire that characterized all the feedback was the desire for the Church to feel like a community and for the clear teaching of the truth and beauty of our faith. One participant shared a particularly insightful comment, writing, “People (in the parish) need to come together more often to share about

their faith, their doubts, and questions and to learn the basics of their faith (prayer, sacraments, liturgy, Catholic Church teaching). Overall, they need to discover how much God loves them unconditionally.”

This report is separated into the various sub-themes that emerged during the conversations and sharings in the listening sessions.

THE EUCHARIST AND THE PARISH COMMUNITY

As might be expected, there are groups within the Archdiocese of New York that seek to change the liturgy of the Mass according to their personal desires, such as encouraging the use of gender-neutral language in liturgical prayers or having the Eucharist available to all Catholics regardless of their life choices or circumstances. On the opposite end of the spectrum, others expressed a desire for the return to the traditional Latin Mass. The Eucharist was often mentioned in the feedback as a way to include more people in the life of the Church.

One parishioner said, “Vitality in liturgical expression is lacking and not drawing people in.”

Many ask for varied music ministries and relevant homilies, and a more reverent celebration of the Mass. Another person said, “Ensure that the priest has time to prioritize prayer so that his celebration of Mass and homily are well prepared and not rushed.” On the other hand, one person stated how beautiful liturgies encourage her to become more involved in the parish.

Additionally, many people recognized the need to know their neighbors in the next pew. One person said, “our parishioners seem to turn inward and think of Mass as a time of private prayer, instead of as the communal prayer of the Body of Christ.”

OUTREACH AND EVANGELIZATION

One common theme expressed in many listening sessions was for a more significant outreach effort to the poor and marginalized, and that this responsibility belonged to the clergy and laity alike. Many saw a need for the Church to accompany others without compromising Church teaching. There is also an evident ask for guidance on how Catholics can better live out Catholic social teaching and, in this way, improve the Church’s image to the rest of the world by highlighting the good that the Church already does. Some suggested evaluating what initiatives are working in parishes to highlight and expand them elsewhere. More personal invitations to church events/programs are also encouraged. There is a great desire for a unified parish; one person said, “I think our parish is divided. Some think more narrowly, and those who think more broadly. Both groups

are very faithful Catholics, but they do not speak to one another.” Additionally, many wish the parish to interact more outside the church walls. One person said, “parishioners are generally very participatory in the Mass, devotions, and social ministries; much of the social outreach is very impersonal, i.e., even though it benefits others in the community, there is not necessarily active engagement with the community.” Various individuals wished for their parish to “develop a pastoral plan.” Some added that “The definition of mission should be clearer for laypeople to feel called to bring Jesus to the local community.” As a takeaway from the pandemic, there is a desire for continued use of technology, social media, Flocknotes, phone calls, and outreach to those in need.

Some people voiced their recognition that the “Church does a lot of good that often gets unrecog-

nized.” They asked for better promotion of this work, so that this awareness will help others better understand the Church and bring others back to a more active participation in the faith. Someone, for example, wrote, “there must be a way we can correct the misinformation and prejudices against the Catholic Church for us to be united as Jesus wanted us to be.”

Overall, there was a clear call for community-building, welcome, and outreach. Someone wrote, “we serve people, but we don’t know those we serve with.” There is a lack of togetherness. With the idea of re-nurturing the community aspect of the parish, ideas for more opportunities for fellowship and faith-sharing outside of the Mass was very prevalent in the feedback. Aligned with the community-building suggestions, it was also mentioned that there should be more hospitality ministries; others asked that the prayers of the faithful more closely reflect the needs of the community.

Additionally, many people asked for more frequent listening sessions. Someone wrote that the Church should nurture “relationships with other faith communities for prayer, dialogue, and community outreach.” Someone else wrote that we should “welcome those on the edges, the fringes of society – divorced and remarried people, gays, lesbians, and others, men, women, children who seek out the Church. God is calling them to come forward.” Many people voiced their concern for divorced Catholics and the need for “better pathways from divorce back to Church and sacraments.”

Outreach to the youth was also a prevalent theme that transpired from this process. Many participants mentioned integrating them into the evangelization initiatives of the parishes. There is also a recognition for a renewed way of handing down the faith to children in religious education programs.

FAITH FORMATION

Many people expressed a longing for more opportunities to grow in the faith and learn the truth of the faith. Many specifically long to study sacred scripture, apologetics, and the Catholic relationship between faith and science. Someone wrote, “Provide seminars based on the topics people talk about on a day-to-day basis, such as abortion, euthanasia, human rights, and theological questions that clergy and ministers can help discuss.” There is a recognition of the need for ongoing formation, with one person stating, “Continually educate and form faithful in the fundamentals of the sacraments, the Mass, doctrine and non-doctrine, Bible study, and prayer.” Someone else wrote that “Many Catholics do not understand the basis of their faith, and this may account for why they leave the Church.” With that formation, many people hope for more lay leaders to be recognized and nurtured. One person from this group wrote that we should “Encourage pastors and their staff to survey the parish to find out the talents, skills, hopes, and aims of the parishioners.” Another person expressed the sentiment as the need for “Better collaboration between clergy and laity.”

There was a clearly stated desire for these formation resources to be written in a straightforward language that engages both the person’s mind and heart. For example, someone wrote, “Psycho-social development should not be separate from theology.” Another participant shared that faith formation should be “At an individual level – integrate the contemplative/spiritual life with service to the community.” There was also a desire for the “education of the whole person.” Many ask for family evangelization and catechesis efforts, with intergenerational faith sharing and accommodations for children with special needs.

In many cases, the request is for the formation of the whole family. Someone said, “Walk with busy parents so that they value the faith journey as much as their children’s sporting events. Can something compelling be developed for them and be intergenerational?” Someone else wrote, “There is way too much secular education absorbed by parents and children in today’s world.... Forming a family group that is educated together, perhaps developing sports programs that encourage family and children to work together.”

There was also a call to re-focus on Catholic schools and to support them by lobbying for tuition relief from the government. Some asked to have Catholic schools

reopen which were closed for financial reasons and re-evaluate assets and allocations with the intent to put more into the Catholic education system.

CLERGY: DURING THE PANDEMIC, COMMUNITY LIFE, AND CONCERNS

Many people felt saddened, and some even felt abandoned by the Church when church buildings were closed during the pandemic and public celebrations of the Mass and other sacraments were not permitted. They stated that they wished they would have had access to the sacraments during such a challenging time. They are still recuperating from this decision. Some hold their pastor and the bishops accountable for this decision. Some said that they appreciated how their pastor went above and beyond to call his parishioners during the pandemic and make the sacraments available as much as possible. One person said, “Hearing from our priests, deacons, bishops, and the Pope via social media and knowing about their pastoral care and the challenges was important and prompted me to pray more and harder for them and the world.” While others were disappointed that “no one (from the parish) called or reached out during pandemic.”

There is a call for our priests to have a more significant presence among the people, both inside and outside the church. There is an ask for priests to be able to stay with the people they are serving and not be moved around as frequently, stating that it causes instability in the parish. Many people ask for seminarians to be trained on how to be inviting and deliver relevant and challenging homilies.

One person asked for homilies to “Speak to the

issues in the news, so we feel heard and connected to current day issues by focusing on our Catholic values.” Someone else said they would like priests to “Aspire to positive sermons that are humorous, reveal the imperfections and humanity of priests, and encourage us to feel we are capable of great things despite our weaknesses.”

Some people expressed concern for the population of seminarians who seemingly are in favor of the so-called “traditional Latin rite.” They worry that having more priests in favor of this rite will hinder the opportunities for community building within the parish.

As with the Eucharist, there are opposing views on changes desired for Church clergy. One group asked for the re-evaluation of the vow of celibacy for priests, while others asked for women deacons and priests. Another group expressed a desire to see holiness better lived out by pastors. Additionally, the priest abuse scandal still hurts many, and they ask for more intentional efforts to regain the trust of the people.

Many people also expressed a worry for the mental health of the clergy. Our people recognize that priests have a lot on their plate and want to “free up the pastors from all their administrative oversight – give that responsibility to laypeople and pay them for it! Let the pastors have spiritual oversight.” The ask is for a way to create a better support system for priests.

ECCLESIOLOGY

Feedback included the call for the Church to be “counter-cultural” and “Christ-centric.” There is also a call to emphasize having a personal relationship with Jesus and a desire for interparish collaboration, making way for new ministry leaders in

parishes. Some people believe that we should have women in more prominent roles in Church, including being part of the clergy. They have also called for a way to overcome clericalism and better integrate diverse racial and ethnic groups into the parishes.

NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

After reviewing the feedback from our listening sessions, we have discerned the following four goals for our next steps as an archdiocese, as well as some additional plans for our chancery, the Catholic Center.

Re-establishing Catholic culture A spirit of charity and faith between pastors and the parish community, priests with engaging homilies, and a deep appreciation for the vocations of all in the parish, are all a result of a parish that has established an authentic, healthy, and fruitful Catholic culture. Within the Archdiocese, we will focus efforts on helping parishes re-establish and maintain a Catholic culture, by helping our people grow to understand and embrace what it means to be Catholic, including educating adults on the foundations of the faith.

Increase awareness of our good works In order to better evangelize the people, and share news about the mission of the Archdiocese of New York, including its parishes, schools, charities, and other institutions, we will develop a comprehensive “digital newsroom” to more effectively communicate with the faithful. This initiative will be both a means of evangelization, to attract those who are not currently practicing their faith, and increase awareness of all the good works accomplished by the Church in New York.

Intentional support for evangelization and faith formation efforts at the parish level We would provide parishes with opportunities for increased evangelization, by incorporating elements of evangelization in all aspects of parish life. In addition, parishes would include quality prayer experiences, faith sharing, and formation to nurture the community aspect of the parish. We would implement a new vision for parish faith formation through our Department of Youth Faith Formation. The program gives pastors options of various models of formation, beginning with the formation of parents for the Sacrament of Baptism, inspiring and empower-

ing them to be effective as the first witnesses of the faith, engaging families in the early childhood years to support them in growing a family of faith, implementing models of religious education that reflect the gifts and needs of the local parish community, fostering increased engagement of middle school youth in their own faith formation and in the parish community, and providing the support and apprenticeship of young people post-Confirmation as they continue to grow and live their Catholic faith.

Consulting our clergy about synodality Some of our clergy participated in the synodal listening sessions throughout our archdiocese, yet not all. Therefore, we would like to consult our clergy on a broader level about their thoughts on how to grow in synodality within the parishes and with our archdiocesan offices.

Next steps for our Catholic Center The chancery, also known as the Catholic Center, is a microcosm of the Church in New York – from “the nones to the nuns.” Providing both Catholic and non-Catholic staff with opportunities to learn about the faith and mission of the Archdiocese, through bible study and faith formation classes during after-hours or at lunch. Spiritual direction could also be available for staff members interested in a more active practice of the faith. We would be more intentional about building community between offices and create an overall welcoming environment for visitors.

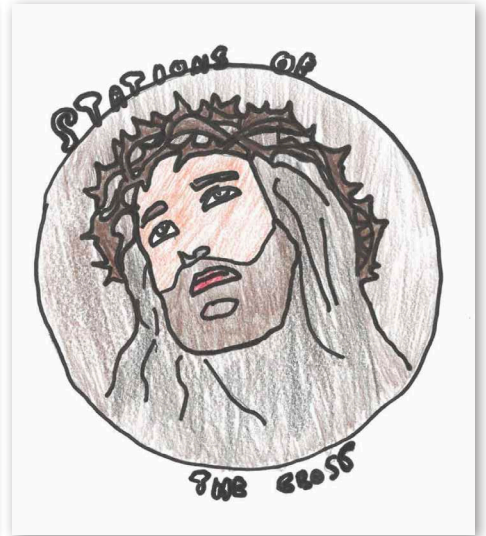
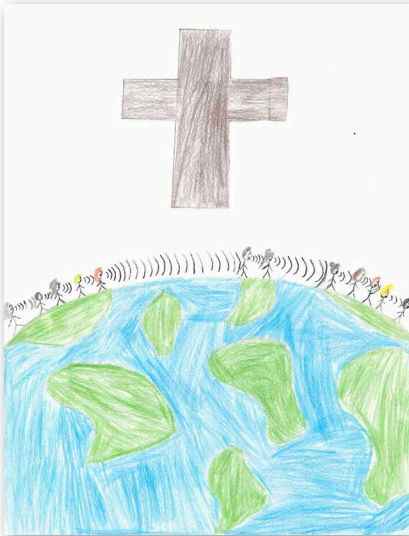
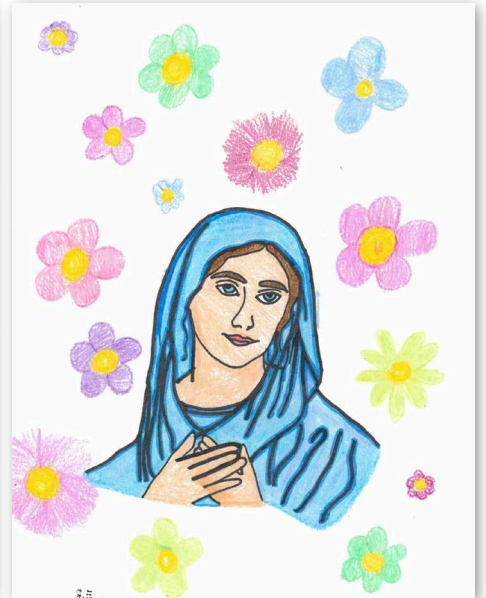
Conclusion We are grateful to our Holy Father for the opportunity to have gathered together in this way. We have grown in synodality as the Church of the Archdiocese of New York and will continue to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What an unexpected blessing it has been! On a personal note, the feedback from our people is uplifting and inspiring as a testimony of the great love and devotion the people of God of this acre of the Lord’s vineyard share for Jesus.

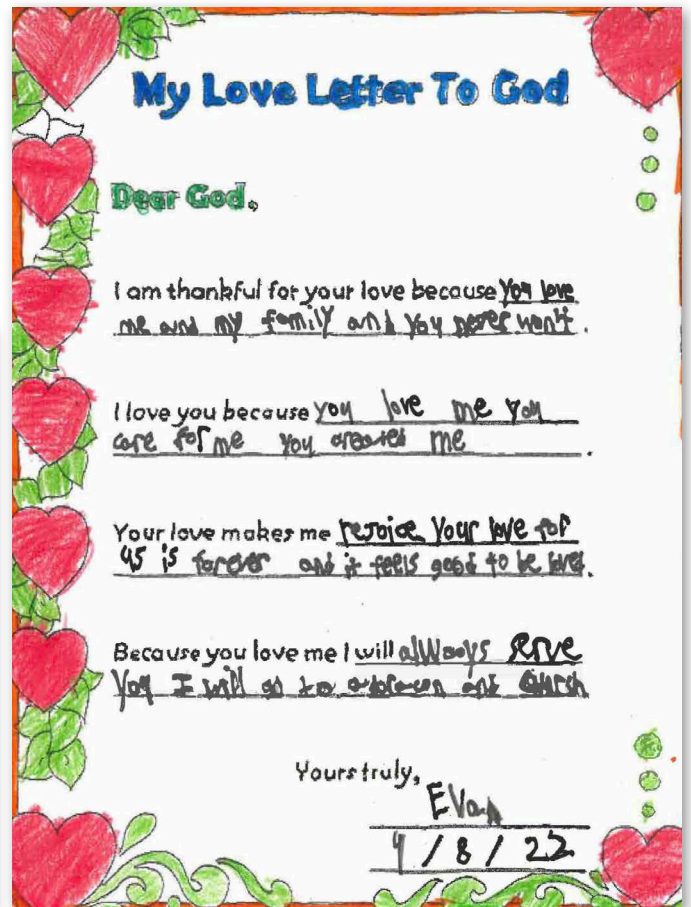
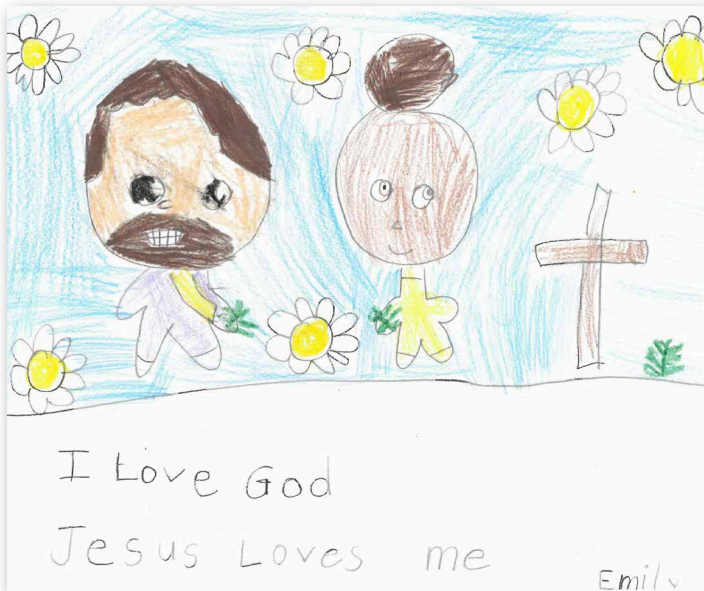
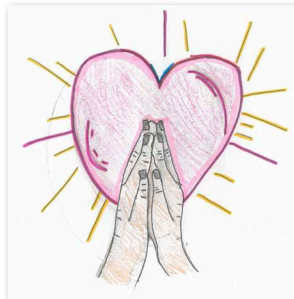
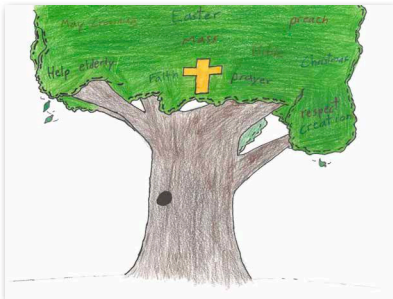


Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan | Archbishop of New York

FROM CHILDREN

Children who participated in a listening session expressed an appreciation for the God who takes care of their family, for their school community that fosters their faith and teaches them good values. They see their education as a way to live out the mission of bringing others to Jesus.





PHOTOS FROM OUR LISTENING SESSIONS



From every part of the Archdiocese of New York, the faithful came together in support of Synod 2021 - 2023, praying at Mass or Holy Hour for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then gathering for Listening Sessions in parish halls, church basements, and school gymnasiums.

LISTENING SESSIONS: PROMOTIONS AND RESOURCES

Guide for Listening Sessions Booklet (English and Spanish)



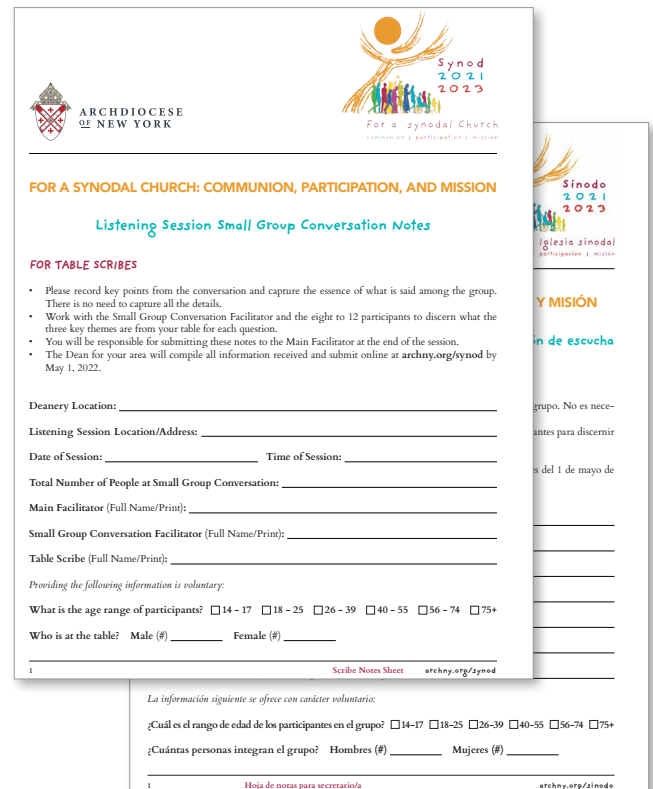
Flyer (English and Spanish)



Listening Session Discussion Questions (English and Spanish)



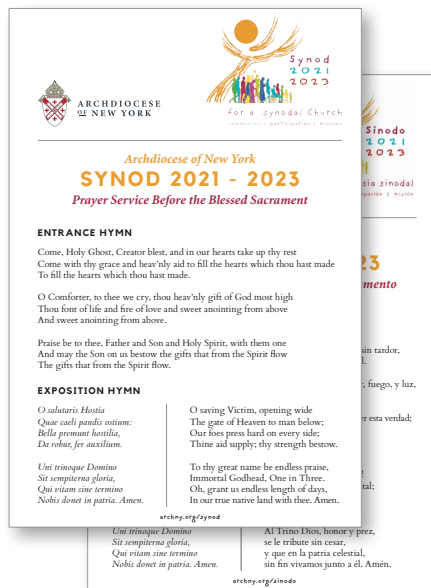
Scribe Notes Sheets (English and Spanish)



Discernment and Listening Handout (English and Spanish)



Prayer Service Before the Blessed Sacrament (English and Spanish)



Prayer Card (English and Spanish)



Facilitator Training Presentation Slides



Social Media and Website

