

St. Michael Parish Synod Notes per Listening Session

St. Michael Parish Synod Listening Session November 30, 2021, (as part of our Advent Session) 28 Participants

Fundamental Questions: How is this “Journeying Together” happening today at St. Michael Parish and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take to grow in our “Journeying Together”?

- Eucharistic Adoration is blossoming right now.
- Where are the people under 40 (Mass and Parish involvement)?
- The people who go to Mass need to visit the people who are not attending.
- We need to be more welcoming including to people outside our church.
- Stewardship is strong at St. Michael Parish.
- We could be doing more with our Pro-Life efforts, and we don't hear enough about our Pro-Life Movement.
- The Teachers want to bring the Pro-Life Movement into the school.
- We need more youth participation from our students and more evangelization for the parents and the students.
- We need to hold onto the parishioners we have and reach out to the people who have left the parish and find out why.
- Include a picture of new Parishioners when we recognize and welcome them in our weekly bulletin.
- Children of Parents in our school need to attend at least 75% of weekly Masses or pay full tuition.
- We need to make sure our young people have respect for the Eucharist as they come forward to receive it.

Question #1 Companions on the Journey: In our Church who are those with whom we walk on our faith journey and what can we do to be a more welcoming community especially to these who feel left out or are less involved in the life of our parish?

- When phone calls are made to inactive parishioners, we need to attempt to schedule a visit to their home.
- We should also hold a special meeting with a group of inactive parishioners to speak about some of the reasons for not participating.
- When we start a project within the parish we need to execute well and see it through to completion.
- Our monthly birthday and anniversary blessings need to continue at our Masses.
- We should go back to the pre-mass greetings to each other that took place before the pandemic.
- We gave up too easily with our Mass in person attendance during COVID-19 as people can't receive the sacraments remotely. We need to think long and hard before canceling any Masses moving forward.
- We should reach out to parishioners who live near our new parishioners and encourage them to go and meet the new people to help welcome and make a connection.

- Reach out to all Lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and let them know we could use their help as we are back to work.
- We need to compete with the Vineyard Church by executing more fun projects and thinking outside of the box with projects families can do together.
- The younger parents need evangelization of the teachings of the Catholic Faith.
- We need to utilize the donut/cookie socials after Mass again to spend more time together.

Question #2 Listening: How is God speaking to us through others we encounter and how are the laity listened to in the church, especially women and young people?

- Christian Mothers/Christian Women are doing a great job bringing in young mothers.
- We need to make sure we have women and youth representation on our Parish Pastoral Council.
- We need more of the youth involved in Masses as Lectors and Cantors.
- We need more focus and teaching on the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist (education and from the Pulpit).
- The Procession for Christ the King was a wonderful event. We need to make sure all know to genuflect and make the sign of the cross.
- Father Carlos is seeing more enthusiasm by our Altar Servers, and he now has 8 trained for High Mass.
- People feel so scandalized by what happened in our Diocese that they have not been coming to church.
- We have a great Music Director at our St. Michael Parish. We need more parishioners to participate within our Music Ministry and we need to personally invite and recruit accordingly.
- We should have a Mass at Wheeling Park and get more attention by people passing by, etc.
- Rosary Groups are vital in bringing small groups together to build friendships.
- We need to be vocal when we want to try a new idea, project, etc. within our St. Michael Parish.

Synod Dialog: The Rosary Community

December 7, 2021, 22 Participants

Introduction: We had a reading about the 1st Christians. No authority. All were on equal footing, relying on corporate fellowship and trust in Christ. Then, we had one minute of silence.

Fundamental Question: “A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, ‘journeys together:’ How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow in our ‘journeying’ together?”

1. In our journeying together, we need to develop a greater, broader **community consciousness**, especially to those not participating or on the boundaries of the church.
2. Perhaps by giving invitations (verbal or written) to those who have never participated or no longer participate in the life of the church/parish.
3. Part of our mission is to reach out. This is a large church; maybe each group within the parish could be a starting point for inviting people to be more participative and faithfully alive.

4. There are people from different parish churches who come here to worship and feel comfortable, so that's a good sign.
5. We *are* journeying together through different ministries in our parish: Saturday scripture, Pro-Life ministry, rosary groups, Christian Mothers, Youth Group etc.

1) **Companions on a Journey**

- a. **Hospitality:** We are basically a hospitable, friendly church.
 1. However, we could greet people outside of church before they enter.
 2. An umbrella ministry might be a good idea (when the weather is inclement, meet people, especially the elderly, outside of church and accompany them in.)
 3. The Coffee and Donut Social should be reinstated. Different groups throughout the year could be responsible (each committee or group within the parish; each class in school); it would probably require twice a year.
- b. We have many things to be proud of and to be thankful for.
- c. St. Michael's Parish has many small groups where people are involved. The Youth Group seems to flourish as well with its leadership.
- d. All minutes of council meetings (the Buildings and Grounds Committee already does this) should be published on-line and in the bulletin for the whole parish to see and be informed.
- e. Who do we "walk" with on our faith journey? It depends upon where you are in your walk of life. If older or younger, you tend to walk with those of your age group, having relatively the same maturity, interests, spirituality, etc.

2) **Listening**

- a. More face to face encounters where we recognize people, listen to their lives, and call each other forward. **(This idea was expressed a number of times.)**
- b. How can we "follow up" with new parishioners to listen to their experience of being at St. Michael Parish and assure them of our support?
- c. A number of people suggested that when we lead a prayer, we should lead with our "outer voice," because our voices are often not loud enough. And when we pray together (rosary or mass prayers, we should strive to pray in unison, not one voice ahead of another.

3) **Speaking Out**

- a. **Clericalism:** the priest is the boss and most people are afraid to say anything.
- b. At times the priest is out of touch with the people he shepherds and maintains a superior attitude, so people remain silent but cynical and sometimes contemptuous of the pastor or priest in charge.
- c. **Pastoral Council:** Our parish would benefit if the Pastoral Council and other councils within the parish would extend an open invitation to all members of the parish to come to a meeting and be free (within the allotted time on the agenda) to speak (a five-minute time limit?)

4) Celebration

- a. **Music:** Need more contemporary forms of music, especially for the youth. More upbeat music to resonate with the spirit of youth. (Example was given of one particular church that had four musicians who provided a dynamic and joyful accompaniment to the liturgy).
 1. Some songs we sing are at a difficult tonal range; even the leaders cannot hold the notes.
 2. Use a many simple songs as possible so the congregation can join in.
- b. **New members** in the parish:
Celebrate new members of the parish by recognizing them at our liturgies. We do give all people who have gone through the RCIA program a “welcome packet,” but we should do this for new members of the parish as well. This builds community.
- c. Develop more prayer services and celebrations to inspire us and inspire society.
- d. We could do more to celebrate other cultures (latino, black, Asian, etc.); Las Posadas, which is a night of prayer and caroling in the Spanish tradition, is a good event in December at our parish.

5) Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission

- a. There seems to be a need for St. Michael Parish to reinstitute a Stewardship Director (a number of parishioners expressed this need).
 - 1.) She/He would help to organize both the groups and the activities of the parish.
 - 2.) She/He would increase the awareness of those who are sick and in hospitals, need cards or visitors. A Stewardship Director would also establish cohesiveness, informing the whole parish of the needs and activities of all the groups, and, in that way, would bind us together in our mission.
- b. All of us need to be more conscious of each other’s needs. If a person is sick or in hospital or not present at a group function, we should be ready to respond.
- c. Because most people sit in the same pews or general area of the church, it should be easier to recognize when someone is not present and then to check on their welfare.
- d. Pastors, associate pastors, and lay leaders should strive to create enthusiasm in the parish and bring up-to-date information that Catholics would be invited to attend or to respond. (An example was given of one particular priest who gave a talk before Mass, encouraging everyone to “get flu shots!”)
- e. Reasons Catholics do not participate in the mission of the Church
 1. Transportation (older people have difficulty; children whose parents do not attend)
 2. Sports on Sunday is a hindrance to full participation.
 3. Confusion by the Pope. He is not following doctrines in what he says. Too many contradictions; we need to stick to the teachings of the Church (Ex: one deacon in the diocese was reported to say that he did not believe in hell.)
 4. Gossip centering around the Church; mixed communications. One person tells a story and it has changed by the time it reaches the 10th person

5. Approaching people to discuss the faith or invite them to church is difficult. Some may not want to listen, feeling they are being “roped” back into church. Still, a seed has been planted through a friendly approach.

6) Dialogue in Church and Society

- a. The Church is backing off on guiding us to live the faith. Leaders need to live their faith.
- b. We need to call leaders to task on living their beliefs.
- c. We are getting mixed messages on doctrine (Ex. One politician, a pro-choice proponent, should not have been given a forum in a Catholic building).

8) Authority and Participation

- a. A question was raised: Why is a parish often listed or spoken of as “his parish,” meaning “the pastor’s parish?” Shouldn’t it be “the parish?” This is another aspect of clericalism as well as lack of “shared authority and ministry by all the members of the parish.”
- b. One priest was quoted as saying, “They do not teach us in the seminary how to run a parish.” This includes finances, everyday parish problems, coordinating the parish team, etc.
- c. Some priests supposedly feel weak and inadequate if they ask parishioners for help.
- d. Lay formation within the parish should be encouraged by the pastor. Lay people can bring their expertise and be taught to assist in the smooth functioning of a parish, both in temporal and spiritual matters.
- e. Often priests come and go from a parish, but the people are still there. Everything has to start over again; however, with significant lay training, the new pastor will be greatly assisted by competent parishioners who love their parish.
- f. The stress on a pastor can be greatly reduced by a trained and cooperative laity. The pastor can concentrate on his sacramental duties and his love of his people in the parish.

10) Forming ourselves in Synodality

- a. One key need or desire, expressed by a number of different members in our synodal discussion, was for a deeper, more relational community. In these uncertain, often anxiety-ridden times, there is a yearning to participate in a Catholic-Christian community which binds people together and gives them **a sense of belonging and hope with other human beings** to accompany **their own belonging to and hope in God.**

Further Suggestions:

1. When we are asking these questions in the synodal process, interlocutor/facilitator should distinguish between questions addressed to St. Michael Parish specifically or the Universal Church.

2. Our Parish School
 - a. Religion classes at St. Michael School
 - 1) What is being taught? Is Fr. Carlos aware of what is being taught?
 - 2) How (When) was the last revision of the religious program book?
 - 3) Is St. Michael's School religious program a diocesan program?
 - b. Suggestion: Making available the religious programs for all the classes to the parishioners, creating a stronger evangelical connection between the school and the parish.

**St. Michael Parish High School Youth Group
Synodal Listening Session (Communion/Participation/Mission)
January 9, 2022, 12 Participants**

Fundamental Question: A synodal Church 'journeys together.' How is this 'journeying together' happening today in St. Michael Parish? What steps do you think the Spirit invites us to take to grow in our 'journeying together'?

1. There are many significant groups in our parish: Youth Group, Christian Mothers, etc. There is a good deal of 'reaching out' among these groups involving others.
2. Several expressed the need for priests who will engage with young people. Clergy who will take the time to reach out and be with young people. They expressed the desire to have the priest preach homilies that would (at least sometimes) speak to young people.
3. Young Catholic people really want to know their faith, but they want to be free to ask questions—difficult questions—and not to be criticized for asking them. They are searching for answers to difficult questions and need an "open-ended" priest or teacher to listen and to explain the teachings of the Church.
4. More contact between younger and older people to bridge gaps—imaginary or real—which exist. Many older folks criticize the young without ever knowing them or their values.

Companions on the Journey:

1. Some believed that the Stations of the Cross produced by the Youth Group was a very active example of 'walking with others on the journey'.
2. Many were excited about establishing a 'buddy system' where one Catholic teen from the parish adopts a younger teen and partners with him/her in activities.

Listening:

1. Volunteering is an excellent way to get young people's hearts on fire for the Church. It fulfills the teachings of the Church for kindness through service and takes the mission out of yourself to others.

2. Through listening we encounter how other people think and feel. We receive advice on how to stay close to the Church.
3. As we experience others through service and through listening, we acquire a fuller open-heartedness.
4. We need to create more opportunities for priests and the young to talk on a regular basis.

Speaking Out:

1. People talk about what happened in the Diocese several years ago. Yet we have to realize that things like this do happen. Young people can work to refrain from further criticism and cynicism and be examples of good people to restore the image of the Church.
2. Some expressed a desire to investigate or learn further why negative things occur. Why does death happen as well as suffering. They would like to talk with others about Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory and to be free to ask the important questions. They were quite “upset” with the standard answer that “there’s a plan for everything.”
3. A desire to talk about grief and have people who are grieving or who have grieved come and dialogue with young people about grief.

Celebration:

1. Through our life in the Church, we desire experiences—both at Mass and outside of Mass that really catch and inspire us. To discover what works and to keep with it.
2. Some expressed that they seem closest to God when they receive Christ in the Eucharist. A very positive and powerful feeling that not all their fellow students feel or even believe in. Some are casual and see the Eucharist just as bread.
3. Also, a number of young people felt close to God at Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Dialog in Church and Society:

1. We feel young people are very open at school.
2. However, not all people have the same beliefs, so we are reluctant to say anything.

Authority and Participation:

1. Some were concerned about the recent sexual abuse crisis in the Church. When you have a priest “not doing a good job” they just move him instead of fixing the problem. There is a need for better training of priests.

St. Michael Parish General Assembly Synod Notes
January 25, 2022 17 Participants

Fundamental Question: A Synodal Church “journeys together”. How is this “journeying together” happening today in St. Michael Parish? What steps do you think the Holy Spirit invites us to take to grow in our “journeying together”?

- The Youth Group is an excellent example of what we are doing well. The Youth Group Leader keeps the enthusiasm going and is single handedly keeping young people involved with our faith (they are not getting enough in school). She could use more money and support.
- We need to do more social activities like dinners as these give people a chance to participate within our Parish Community. Can we do different times other than 6 PM?
- Mass attendance is coming back after the pandemic. We are second only to St. James in rebound attendance. 7:30 AM Mass has grown to over 30 people regularly which is unheard of in our Parish.
- Still some unhappiness with School issues and some arrangements are being made to have a parental discussion group to address the situation. The comments have been heard and are being considered.
- High School Youth Group participated in the Synod. They enjoy helping with the Children’s Church and it makes them feel good about participating. Even other High School students come out the back of the Church to help with the Children’s Group.
- Father Carlos is very involved in the liturgical decoration of the Church.
- We need to get more kids involved in our Music Ministry and focus on some more modern music to relate to our younger people (instead of the same traditional music).
- Father Carlos is very open to new ideas such as “drive through events” during the pandemic and “Los Posadas”, etc.
- We have done a good job addressing the abuse issues, but we cannot forget.

Companions on the Journey: What can we do to be a more welcoming community, especially to those who feel left out or are less involved in the life of our Parish? In our Church, who are those who we “walk” with on our faith journey?

- Outbound calling to inactive Parishioners; after original discussion can we invite them back or ask to have a face-to-face meeting in the future.
- Can we come up with a pamphlet on how to “break the ice” with Church Conversations.
- We should consider the book “God still makes House Calls”. A Nun’s view of how to reach out.
- How do we reach out to those who are different from us (Gay, Transgender, Divorced, etc.)?
- We need to meet people where they are. People are humans who have faults and we need to help them through their troubles. A large percentage of our Parish population are not attending because they do not feel welcome.
- Have a Listening Session for those who do not attend or participate to find out why, without judgement, and to better understand what is going on in their heads and hearts.
- What community is welcome?
- Where the Diocese could have planted a flag with Bransfield, who is in the club, but instead he got a pass on everything and did not even lose his retirement.

- Have Youth Group and a CRHP reunions for those who have been away.
- Welcoming may include accepting interested people where they are. This includes not judging people's lifestyles if they are legal and don't take advantage of or hurt people.

Listening: How is God speaking to us through others we encounter? How are the laity listened to in the Church, especially women and young people?

- The Christian Mothers Christian Women's Group is successful and developing with young and eager people who want to be part of something dedicated to their faith. We need to start a Men's Group on par with CMCW.
- Give open opportunities for people to voice their opinions and reward them for ideas, suggestions, etc. Try some On-Line opportunity channels.
- Are women within the Diocese running anything or is it all run by men? This was brought up to the Diocese and their response was schools are run by women, but they still answer to a Priest.
- Certain authority goes to men.
- We are worried about creating controversy and we tend to tamp down that conversation. They need to hear the truth.
- You can also go On-Line and add comments. Not sure how they are addressed.
- Father Carlos explained he works with many women. We need to work more complimentary and work with the gifts of one another.
- Someone took exception to the line "especially women and young people". This is a secular mantra. Who else is not listened to such as people under the bridge, handicapped, autistic, LGBT, and people who are divorced. Hearing about God's plan in reference to women. Mentioned the "I-Pad example" as an "order that works best".
- We need more participation opportunities for children. Building a solid youth involvement is critical to our future.

Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission: Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What might be some reasons that keep someone from participating in the mission of the Church?

- We need to verbally promote the Catholic Church and St. Michael Parish all the time.
- Kids at the Youth Group Meetings feel free to say things that they cannot express at school because they will not be judged at the Youth Group sessions. They cannot question things at school.
- We are not good about talking about the beauty of the Catholic Church and the Eucharist. We need to focus on the miraculous importance of the Eucharist. We have lost that.
- People don't come to Church because of committees or activities but because they believe the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. They are intrigued by the historical belief of the foundation of the Church "The True Mission of the Church".
- Some are afraid to participate in the Church. I did participate in all of the above activities but now I don't trust as Bransfield selected his young men he groomed. Not sure we have put the proper guidelines/measures in place to prevent that kind of activity. Everyone who surrounded Bransfield is still around.

Forming Ourselves in Synodality: How do we create a Church Community that promotes inclusion, listening to one another, participating in the mission, and engaging in dialogue. What type of formation do we need to offer our community to grow spiritually and ensure the participation of all the faithful?

- We need to realize why some of the people we have lost have gone to C3 and the Vineyard. It is great to talk about our core principles, but we need to be better about welcoming, “you can be redeemed”. We want you to come with faults, humanity, etc.
- Are we going to be in lock step with the Diocese or push back on things we see wrong? Are we just an outpost of the Diocese? If the message is just the “Global Church” the welcoming can be very difficult.
- Father did not discourage us from push back of the Bransfield Issues. We will lose people due to this situation. Some people said this is a purification and we will be smaller but stronger and better. That is not an attitude of inclusion.
- Taking the Kids to CCAC helps them to share their faith with others across the country.
- To me our Church is family.
- Doing VBS with other Churches (non-Catholic). I love working with others. There is still a great deal of good around.
- One step at a time.
- Chastity that is an adult conversation in which can use TV Programs as an example on what is wrong with that. Kids lined up after the program. We need to point out what is wrong with the stuff on TV.
- It is not about the entertainment but about the sense of community. 3C has community with love and that is making them more welcoming. Where am I going to feel more welcome?
- Stop Paying Bransfield. He still has his title, and we are still paying him from money collected from our Parishes.
- Advertise that we want people to come, that we accept differences and want them to feel that they are part of our community.
- How are some Evangelical Churches growing; sometimes drawing Catholics to their brand of ministry? Can we learn some lessons from them (not to change our basic foundation but to better meet people’s needs)?
- Until the circumstances of Bransfield and those who stood silent while it occurred is addressed fully; complete repudiation of his actions and separation of him (stop paying him and censure him) from our Diocese; many will stay away. His enablers need to be pointed out and rebuked as well.
- Our Youth Group Kids are doing well, and they have moved on from Bransfield. They do still talk about it, so it is still real to them.
- My formation at Church was from a predator.
- It is about the journey.
- Let’s utilize as much as we can from these Synod sessions within our Parish.
- We have developed a Veterans Faith Formation Group including men and women who have served in our military. We would grow enough to do some service projects within the Parish and larger community.
- We are trying to build the younger generation as leaders and volunteers.

The following Bullet Point Responses came from a pre-meeting survey of the question “what about the Church is keeping them from being active” by one of our General Assembly Synod Meeting

Attendees who sent the question to a group of voices that were all under 50 years old:

- Refusing to accept responsibility for everything that happened with Bransfield.
- Not being truly welcoming to LGBT plus community.
- Hold all abusive Priests and those who covered it up accountable and put real systemic changes in place to stop it from happening in the future.
- Stop protecting pedophiles.
- Equality for the LGBT plus community.
- Allow women to be Priests. How is this still a thing? What on earth is the reason for not allowing them?
- In general, the underlying problem with the Church is that it can't adapt with social changes.
- Non-inclusion of the LGBT plus community.
- An extremely heavy focus on purity culture and abstinence-only sex education.
- Putting way too much focus on preaching against sin particularly when speaking of common/minor ones. It takes away the focus from healthier versions of religion/spirituality (such as a sense of community, helping others, etc.).
- I'd like to see any explanation for how the Church is still able to claim legitimacy when every single person in the chain of command was an abuser or allowed abusers continual access to their victims.
- It's not possible for me to say I am an ally to my friends in the gay community and then actively participate in an organization that tells them not be who they are.

**Synod Listening Session Notes
St. Michael Parish Middle School Youth Group/PSR
January 30, 2022, 7 Participants**

Fundamental Questions: How is this journeying together happening today in our St. Michael Parish and what can we do even better on our journey moving forward?

- Technological advances in our Church such as the Monitor Screens; keeps us current with modern day communication.
- Group events such as the Boy Scout Pancake Breakfast
- Community Service Projects (before the Pandemic) such as visiting the residents of Elmhurst and writing cards.
- Children's Choir is very good and well received.
- We need more Bible School/Scripture Activity for our youth/students.
- We need more daily attention and involvement from the Principal and Teachers.
- We need as much encouragement as possible for Students/Parents to attend Mass regularly.
- Teach and guide Students to focus on God.

Companions on a Journey What can we do to be a more welcoming community, especially to those who feel left out or are less involved in the life of the Parish, especially younger people?

- Donut or other socials on a more regular basis.
- Show more compassion to people.
- Welcome everyone at the beginning of Mass including guests and visitors.

Listening: How is God speaking to us through others we encounter? What are some limitations or challenges in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own?

- Encounter and experience Sacraments with same age group.
- Always have a pleasant tone in our voices.
- Reconciliation with Priest
- Hard to listen because you have lost trust or when someone disrespects you.
- Sometimes challenging to see from others point of view.

Speaking Out: As young people, what enables you to speak out when something is important to you? What barriers do you as young people face when speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our community?

- If you don't speak up nothing will change, and problems will keep being repeated.
- Trying to speak up on a scenario or issue and others are saying it doesn't exist.
- Address concerns and situations and don't sweep them under the carpet.

Sharing Responsibility for our common Mission What will help you as young people in the Church stay and grow in the Church Community? What do you want to see happen? How is every Baptized Person called to participate in the mission of the Church?

- See it as our Ticket to Heaven.
- If you are not involved, you wouldn't be going to Mass.
- Youth Group & PSR
- Knowing that there is someone you can trust in the Community.
- Be involved in the tasks.
- Get more people involved and get their advice.
- Put new people on the different committees and groups.
- Re-evaluate and train our Leaders on a regular basis.
- Consider holding a Latin Mass periodically.

**Christian Life Fellowship Faith Formation Group Synod Listening Session
February 9, 2022, 10 Participants**

**Fundamental Question: How is this “journeying together” happening today in St. Michael Parish?
What can we do even better on our journey moving forward?**

- Compliments to our Parish for the Birthday/Anniversary Blessings each month at Mass.
- Take time to review our music liturgically as the words are beautiful but we don't really listen or understand the meaning.
- Overall, the school is doing a great job.
- Adoration is a great opportunity for Parishioners.
- We need to get kids involved as much as possible.
- The Christian Mothers/Christian Women group is making great progress and is our strongest Faith Formation group. They have a variety of ages within the membership group.
- The Bulletin included the new bill in congress regarding the \$4,500 education opportunity. A notice should be sent to every parent in the school and PSR.
- Father Carlos does listen and entertain ideas from the Parish Community such as the 6:30 PM Mass which has grown steadily (105 this past Sunday).
- The weekday 7:30 AM Mass is growing.
- We don't communicate well or promote ourselves well. We need to spread the word about good things verbally as “Referrals” are always the best way to grow our Parish.
- We need to get young Parents involved in the Synod Listening Sessions. We have the Teachers and Parents Synod Session set for Friday February 18th. We need to include other Teachers/Parents such as Central, Linsly, and PSR.
- We could use more Bible Study Sessions at different times (day/evening) throughout the week.
- Just like the list of needs posted in the Bulletin for Teachers; we need to post a list of needs for our Parish/Church.
- We need to start a Men's Group (like the Holy Name Society) and get some younger guys (including school aged) involved in the program.

Dialogue in Church and Society: What issues in the Church and Society do we need to pay more attention to? How does the Church interact with and learn from politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

- The Church hierarchy does not do enough to promote “Pro-Life”.
- “Walking with Moms” can be a great program supporting young pregnant women with all the resources available.
- The Church has failed to recognize the real presence of God in the Catholic Church.
- The Scott Peck book about “how to create Community” would be a great resource.

Ecumenism: What relationships do we have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? How can we come together with them to continue the mission of the Church?

- In the past we had all denominations come together to discuss Pro-Life.
- There is more being done to connect churches with synagogues, Baptist Church, etc.
- Can the Food Kitchen, House of Carpenter, etc., come together to buy in bulk and cross volunteers?
- Invite other denominations to our Parish Events.
- Host Black Choirs for some of our Music Ministry Events.

Authority and Participation: How does a Pastor exercise authority in the Church? Who should the Pastor consult with?

- Overall, we are doing better with our Finances.
- The Pastor does consult with the Parish Pastoral Council and other Leadership Groups.
- The Pastor has the final call within the Parish but ultimately answers to the Bishop.
- The Catholic Church is not a democracy.
- Does the Parish/Finance Council get Bids on major purchases and compare like prices (follow the 3 Bid Rule of Business)?
- Do we call in subject experts (volunteer consultants) to be in the review/discussion on major projects?
- Why don't we utilize all the talented people within our Parish Community?
- The Pastor should get opinions from the Parish on major projects/activities.
- Have appropriate meetings with "problem solvers" within our Parish.

Synod Conversation: St. Michael Parish School Faculty

February 18, 2022, 26 Participants

**Fundamental Question: How is the journeying together happening today at St. Michael School and Parish?
What can we do even better on our journey moving forward?**

1. The journey is different in each classroom, yet we all have same goal for the students: teaching Catholic values and morals; they came here for a "catholic" education.
 - a. The Middle School is trying to determine where they are and how they fit in with Christ.
 - b. The Younger grades use images to help remember what things are important in faith & life.
 - c. A need to help parents go through this faith journey with their children.
 - d. Religion is not just a time frame in your life (a class, a mass, a set time for prayer) but every minute of our lives

2. Positive journeying

- a. **teachers are models for their students; therefore, they need to keep learning and enriching their faith, being high role models for how God wants us to live (2 similar responses)**
- b. faculty and students have prayer in the morning where everyone hears it together; helps get the day started; we bring our daily intentions forward right away
- c. the parent perception response to the school has helped us
- d. Mustang masses and weekly masses, community events, faith formation opportunities, and service projects all help to build school and parish

3. Suggestions

- a. Incorporate the Pastor (and associate pastor?) into our religion classes
- b. Go on a “field trip” to the church and review the signs and symbols in the church and what students are supposed to do. This will help them practice their faith.
- c. **Rally together as a team**, becoming aware of our individual gifts, and reach out to include and inspire others (several responses like this one)
- d. **Get parents more involved**
- e. Multi-generational parish missions would generate enthusiasm for both parish and school
- f. Retreats for children based on their age groups
- g. A large-scale multi-parish collaborative (students, adults, families); this would help break the “silo effect” where each school/parish is a separate Catholic entity, not the greater Catholic community in Wheeling.
- h. Connecting generations will be important to keep the younger generation connected and the older generation less judgmental towards the young.

4. Critiques

- a. Lack of teacher evaluations has let us be lax, but now, with diocesan guidelines, we are being validated for our behavior.
- b. The class buddy system and the mustang mass are very important. They help build the relationship between school and parish
- c. A need to make the School Liturgy more relevant, more “fun”; get kids excited to go to Mass, appealing to the younger generation.
- d. An attitude change needs to occur: not **when are we going to mass**, but **are we going to mass?**
- e. Important to embrace the day to day of school life and people instead of overly focusing on future outcomes.

**Companions on the Journey: In our Church, who are those whom we “walk” with on our faith journey?
Who are those most active in our parish?**

1. Positives

- a. We walk with our families, co-workers (faculty), parents of our students and the students themselves, our parishioners and our priests
 - 1) As a faculty we “walk with” Fr. Carlos, Marcy, Kim and our peers, along with many others who help in the school.
 - 2) We walk with our peers who are going through the same things as we are; peer connections help us by making time to lift each of us up.
 - 3) We walk with Christ
- b. The most active parishioners
 - 1) The most active people in our parish seem to be the Christian mothers, the school faculty, Fr. Carlos, (who offers many great outreach events), the Parish office, all those who attend adoration, and the buildings and grounds and maintenance crews.
 - 2) The most active parishioners are the “older” ones because they have more time to dedicate to the church; however, we want to eventually be these people (several answers related to this one).
 - 3) Elders are the most active; they have been on their faith journey for longer and can advise and lead. Younger parents are in the “heat” of raising small children.
Thus, it seems that more availability/contact between older and younger people—sharing their faith experiences—would be a benefit to school/parish.

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

1. Suggestions

- a. Our Church needs to “update” to keep up with the times (compare to the “Experience Church” and others that are more energized).
- b. To create times to stop and listen, without feeling we must produce “outcomes”; thus, a more meaningful conversation/relationship may develop.
- c. Respecting our students’ journeys to adulthood and guiding them to be good people/listeners
- d. On the above note, giving students more one on one time each day, just for unscripted talking and listening.

2. Critiques

- a. Some parishioners are set in their ways
- b. Others are limited; some people can handle larger tasks where others struggle.
- c. Many are overwhelmed with various roles/duties/responsibilities in their lives.
- d. The job we have as teachers makes it hard to listen. We go home and are tired and have a hard time listening.

- e. Most of us are always in a hurry to talk and to get our point across or tell our story so we do not listen and receive the other.
 - f. Person to person contact is less and less; so much communication is done in the form of e-mail—much easier to do than to listen to someone. More electronics, less listening.
 - g. People are raising children differently: Less eating together, fewer family nights, which lowers the time for listening and our listening skills
 - 1) **A lot of people are unwilling to hear someone’s point of view, thinking they are always right; preconceived notions that we don’t/can’t have common ground with those who have different views. Intimidated by other ideas and the way others support them**
 - 2) **Many are prepared to argue, not encounter each other**
 - 3) **Different life experiences or lack of experiences**
 - 4) **A lack of empathy**
 - 5) **Many are afraid to speak of more plausible or different ideas for fear of judgement at different levels of the church/diocese school (number 5 especially).**
- NOTE: 1) TO 5) –HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS SECTION—WERE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED**

Speaking Out: What barriers do we face when speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our parish and in our community?

1. Positives

- a. We can share our school and appreciate the staff through Facebook
- b. The more confident you are in your Catholic faith, the more willing you are to speak up
- c. Some do not speak up because they do not know the answer

2. Suggestions

- a. We need to speak positively, and more often, about what we believe is just, right, and moral, or when we wish to see a positive change, are irritated by injustice, or want to stop rumors.
- b. To speak positively and not in a negative manner **(a common suggestion)**
- c. We can use the media (Facebook) to share good views and be an ideal model.
- d. Accepting everyone as themselves and helping them on their faith journey (see b1 above)
Note: Several groups suggested this open, non-judgmental attitude)
- e. **We are held to higher standards; therefore, we have to be very particular about what we say, do, or post. (How we use/abuse the media) mentioned several times by different groups.**
- f. What enables us to speak up: Approachability, empathy, an open mind, appreciation, and respect.

3. Critiques

- a. **A General Observation—expressed by several groups—is that speaking up is difficult with their particular job as teachers**
 - 1) We are part of the school, we work at the school, and children go here
 - 2) Thus, we might not have a job, and kids will feel the effects if we speak up

- b. When there is a lot of negative, you feel you have to stand-up and tell them the positive instead of the negative. This limits your ability to speak out.
 - 1) **Others wish to avoid confrontation**; they would rather avoid arguments with family, friends, etc., then speak out.
- c. The Church's inability to accept everyone with the changing times (see g5 above)
 - 1) Many views are not accepted, only church views are accepted (see g1 above)
 - 2) Finding a priest who will accept, listen and guide
 - 3) The approachability of those in leadership positions needs to be improved. More relatable and relational, less authoritative.

Celebration: How do we promote the active participation of the faithful, that is, our students and faculty, in the liturgy? How do we encourage parishioners to serve in a particular ministry?

1. Positives

- a. We attempt to catechize the children in the hopes that they will go home and get their parents to take them to Mass on Sunday.
- b. Our school culture has Mustang Masses and School Masses while involving the children in liturgical ministry.
- c. We make connections between what is happening at Mass, in the Sacraments, and in liturgical/church celebrations.
- d. We also provide classroom incentives (for what?)
- e. Within our parish we have community events including socials, opportunities for involvement through our stewardship fair and through personal invitation and communication.

2. Suggestions

- a. Mass attendance sheets for students
- b. What is the attitude of the many parents who do not attend Mass?
 - 1) Do they actually feel guilty?
 - 2) Would parents feel targeted if students were required to sign mass attendance sheets?
- c. In our parish celebrations, we often witness the joy of people in ministerial roles, but we need more ministers to remember to convey that joy in their ministry.
- d. Incentivizing mass participation and encouraging students to participate at mass through serving, reading, singing, etc.
- e. Make church services more appealing to all ages and more interactive through singing
- f. Ask parents/teachers to be part of the ministry group which will include students as well.
- g. PSR needs to be included and more involved with mass liturgies.

3. Critiques

- a. Some parents and students share a disconnect between school and the celebration of the liturgy; they are either here for a good education or for a Catholic education, not both.

Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission

1. Suggestions

- a. Everyone should equally have to participate in “mandated” events.
- b. All families need to be asked when they can volunteer for ministries and not told/or not asked as some other families are.

2. Critiques

- a. Many may not believe what the church is doing is right, so that will prevent them from wanting to participate.
 - 1) Rumors (?)
 - 2) The distrust and division caused by the former bishop: angry, heartbroken betrayed**
- b. Others have feelings of guilt (for not being in church, for not living a “perfect” life, for being a sinner).
- c. Many have very busy lives; too much on their plates **(2 similar responses)**.
- d. Families need to prioritize God before other activities **(2 similar responses)**
 - 1) Covid gave many an easy out
- e. It can't be solely the teacher's responsibility to encourage going to and participating in the Church's mission. It has to start with the parents/family.
- f. For the church and school to work together, there must be a mutual relationship. The church needs to be a part of the school as much as the school is part of the church. Working as a team.
- g. Support for the school from church officials at school functions would also help many families feel that the school and church are working together.
- h. Questions of justice concerning Catholic School Employees—a discrepancy between what they give and their inadequate salaries. Losing teachers because of this.**

Dialog in Church and Society

1. Suggestions

- a. More continuous interaction with the community and with those in poverty; increase our 18th Street connections. More active service opportunities
- b. More humility and setting the example of who we are called to be
- c. Reach out beyond the usual people, beyond cliques. (Volunteer)

2. Critiques

- a. It seems that the only way differences/difficulties/conflicts are addressed in the church is through a survey. Perhaps a perception group for the parish/diocese/church at large should be created to help with the perception of the church.
 - b. We as teachers have to watch how/what we say and do because of how it may be perceived.**
 - c. The church at large needs to also think about how what they say/do/or do not do is perceived.**

**St. Michael Parish Christian Mothers/Christian Women Synod Listening Session Notes
March 9, 2022, 40 Participants**

Fundamental Question: A Synodal Church “journeys together”. How is this “journeying together” happening today in St. Michael Parish? What steps do you think the Holy Spirit invites us to take to grow in our “journeying together”?

- Christian Mothers is successful and growing.
- RCIA is welcoming and kind.
- Parish is welcoming.
- Need Door Greeters at Masses.
- Need more School/Church Participation.
- Start up the Donut and other Socials again.
- School Food Drive
- Need to pay Catholic School Teachers more.
- Need to develop a School Board.
- Nick at Nite and Fish Fry are successful endeavors.
- Youth Group and Children’s Mass are important and successful.
- Need more Bible/Spiritual/Book studies and schedule at varying times.
- Would like to see better Mass attendance and more people involved in Parish Activities.
- Make announcements at the end of Mass to make the parish aware of activities in addition to the bulletin.
- Would like to see more “service” opportunities available along with participating in donations.
- Need more “fellowship” activities such as Fish Fry.
- Would like to see the Parish Picnic return.
- This Synod is a big part of our “journeying together”.
- The success of our different faith ministries such as Christian Mothers and the Rosary Groups, etc.
- Attending Mass together and the Children’s Liturgy.
- The Parish offers many social activities.
- During Lent the Parish offers many more opportunities to strengthen our faith by offering more adoration, Holy Masses, Penance Services, etc.
- We offer many opportunities for the children to partake in Rosary and weekly Mass.
- A member who is new to the area said that St Michael is welcoming and friendly.
- We do a great job at announcing community activities in the bulletin.
- The school welcomes with open arms.
- The Principal was wonderful and has done a great job with good leadership in keeping people in the right positions.
- We are good at welcoming though some people don’t want to be welcomed.
- Nothing is pushy and there is never any judgement.
- I still feel welcome though not a member of the Parish.
- The school is much better with communication versus last year.
- Parish is working on overall better communication as this can always be improved.

- How about a calendar for Church and School?
- Get the School to work and team up better with the Parish Office.
- We need more “Thank-you” and recognition for our volunteers’ hard work.
- We need a Team to sort out and locate new Parish Members to welcome them at Mass.
- Give a small gift to new Parish Members and welcome all new faces.
- Need more interaction within our different faith communities.
- Regular daily Mass and morning Rosary are successful.
- Our teens are very helpful with the Children’s Liturgy.
- The Wednesday School Mass is great.
- Christian Mothers continues to grow. Can we put our notices in other Parish Bulletins?
- Adoration Chapel is a wonderful opportunity.
- Our Bulletins are done well.
- Would like to see more small-group-meeting activity like our Rosary Groups, etc. How do we get new groups started or how do we get more people to join the ones already established?
- Keep the students engaged and involved at Mass.
- Successful activities such as “Trunk or Treat” and St. Michael Fair.
- Fundraisers are very important.
- Need focus on Sacrament Preparation for kids and adults.
- Confraternity draws interest from outside the Parish.
- Glad to see new “Veterans” Group getting started.
- Get more young men involved in Parish activity.
- Include PSR in Student Masses/Mustang Mass.
- Get all Parish Youth (school and other) involved in activities.
- Send Cards to those who are homebound.
- Have guest speakers to give Witness/Conversion stories.
- Reach out to fallen away parishioners and invite friends.
- Start a Card Ministry to send to College Students who haven’t been attending our Masses.
- Offer a Ride Service to Mass.

Companions on the Journey: What can we do to be a more welcoming community, especially to those who feel left out or are less involved in the life of the Parish?

- Door Greeters during Mass to say hello and welcome people to the church.
- Be less judgmental; don’t question why people aren’t coming to Mass.
- Be more encouraging to all.
- Go back to making announcements at the beginning of Mass.
- Utilize more socials after the Masses.
- Contact new Parishioners to see if they need anything.
- Utilize cards at Mass to have people sign up for Parish needs and activities.
- Establish new Parish Book/Directory.
- Go out of our way to say hello and introduce ourselves (before or after Mass) to people we don’t recognize.
- Invite new people to join our Faith Formation Groups.

- Start up a Door to Door Ministry (knock and inquire about Faith and share the Gospel; do you need to pray).
- We need all Faiths to come together in doing the Lord's work.
- There is great disparity between the tuition rates of Catholic vs Non-Catholic schools. Need more grants and scholarships for everyone.
- The process of joining the Church needs to be enhanced. Group tours and socials for all new members.
- New members need a welcome aboard phone call from the Parish.
- Make outbound calls to attempt to bring people back to Mass. Advise them of any changes, new developments, and our future vision and action plans.

Listening: How is God speaking to us through others we encounter? How are the Laity listened to in the Church, especially women and children?

- Women are listened to at Christian Mothers/Christian Women meetings.
- Women are involved at the Funeral Masses.
- God speaks to us through another's invitation.
- Through Prayer Chains.
- Verbally spread the word about Prayer and then explain how God has answered our Prayers.
- Encourage children to communicate and then answer and validate their questions.
- Encourage kids of all ages to give their input.
- Having men and women teaching our children.
- Listening to others and praying for others.
- Appreciation for the unique/different people we encounter.
- Kids are listened to at school and at our Youth Group.
- Christian Mothers to become even more active.
- Praying together more, more prayers at Christian Mothers and at other opportunities.
- Need more Bible Study not only for adults but also for our children so they can ask questions.
- Need more question and answer gatherings/opportunities.
- Can we get additional Priests to come in and participate in Church interaction?
- God puts people in our path for a reason; opportunities to witness to your faith and share the Gospel message.
- Groups like Christian Mothers/Christian Women create awareness to the needs of mothers, children, and families and to show how to grow in Faith as married couples, families, and the call to Holiness.
- The Church and the School offer Faith Groups for the kids (Youth Group, PSA, etc.)
- Through the RCIA Program
- Through the children
- Through our Community
- The Youth today are asking questions and are being listened to.
- When people pray for you and inquire how you are doing.
- Through the Rosary Prayer Group.
- Simply say, I will pray for you.
- When we ask for Prayers.

- Prayer will get you through personal and family problems.
- We don't have a problem being listened to at our Church.
- Jesus had female followers who were very active in his ministry.
- In other cultures there would be a big problem.

Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission: What might be some reasons that keep someone from participating in the mission of the Church?

- Too many cliques, we won't be listened to.
- People may not feel connected to the Parish.
- Lacking personal invitations rather than only on paper.
- Being mad about the scandals.
- People may feel they lack the knowledge to get involved.
- People who are divorced
- Challenging schedules
- Family situations (special needs children)
- Past negative or bad experiences
- Make people feel more welcome.
- PSR Students need to be more involved.
- Children who are not part of the school or PSR need to feel more welcome.
- Pray for a conversion of the heart for those who do not want to be involved.
- Need a much more efficient Annulment Process.
- Pre-conceived notion that they will be judged by their life-style choices.
- Because of the previous Bishop scandals.
- Scandal; the offenders should be prosecuted by the country.
- We are always going to be hurt in the church, but we have to have a strong faith.
- Racism in the valley
- It's good that St. Michael always offers childcare so that parents can attend functions.
- People desire the community but can be unsure of how to get involved or where to start. Some may also be too shy.
- Someone's lifestyle may not be what the Catholic Church sees as appropriate, and the Church can be very critical. How do we call them to conversion without condemning them?

Forming Ourselves in Synodality: How do we create a Church Community that promotes inclusion, listening to one another, participating in the mission, and engaging in dialogue?

- We need good follow-up regarding the Synod information and any action plans or changes resulting from these sessions.
- Keep having gatherings, Rosaries, etc., and push for attendance.
- Bring conversion without condemnation.
- Continue small group discussion sessions.
- Find a way to hear and address all opinions without judgement.
- Free dinner each week.
- Be Christ like in everything we do.
- Lead by example.

- Trust in our people.
- Promote inclusion by including all faiths, races, etc.
- Have special prayer events and put it in the bulletin and announce it in other churches.
- Develop a guidance tool kit.
- Accept others judgement free; God would want all people at Mass.
- Make a monthly Special Needs Mass with accommodations for families with a special needs member.
- Ask families what they need to make it more welcoming for people with special needs.

**Filipino-American Community Synod Listening Session
March 24, 2022 13 Participants**

Fundamental Question: A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “Journeys Together”. How is this ‘Journeying Together’ happening from your perspective, as guided by the Holy Spirit, in your Parish? How is this “Journeying Together” not happening and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take to grow in our “Journeying Together”

- The Pandemic has had an overall negative impact on the Catholic Church. The Church needed to take a harder stand against shutting down masses, wearing masks, etc. Other Churches (the Vineyard, etc.) worked closely with the Parishioners to counsel them about dealing with the COVID Virus and the Pandemic Culture.
- Our Parish (not St. Michael) is not getting a large turnout as people have not come back after the Pandemic. It is also an aging Parish. We still need to gather instead of watching Mass from home. How do we get people back in the pews? Can we do a door to door campaign?
- Evangelization can be On-Line. It gives people more access and can reach younger generations through electronic media.
- How do we evangelize with single families? Lead by example. The family unit as the “core” of our faith.
- I don’t argue politics or Faith. We need to teach our children about Faith from day one. Parents can get caught up in being way too busy. We all worship one God.
- People are concerned about opening a Faith discussion. We should be able to bank on our Faith. We need more education and practice of Faith for our children.

Companions on the Journey: As Filipino-American Catholics, what is your experience of being in the Catholic Church of America? Do you feel included or excluded or a little of both? Do you think of yourselves as separate from the larger Catholic parish Community or blended very well in the life of the Parish and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston?

- I don’t really feel any different.
- I feel welcome everywhere we go.
- The Filipino Community has had a positive strong influence on our Catholic Faith.
- At one time St. Michael was considered the Blue Blood of the Catholic area.
- I have always felt accepted, but I also take initiative to participate.
- Why do we have to move good long-term Priests around from Parish to Parish?

- Teach our kids by example as they learn from example. As teenagers they will continue to go to Mass.
- Emphasis should always be on school and education. Don't get caught up in CRT stuff.
- Teachers and parents should teach their kids to respect Priests and Elders.
- Our Parish was very welcoming.
- We never felt excluded, but we worked very hard to assimilate.
- Exclusion might be more of a challenge in bigger cities.
- I felt some racism at the Methodist Church. The Catholic Church is more welcoming than the Methodist Church.
- We need to teach our children how to deal with non-inclusion issues.

Forming Ourselves in Synodality: Do you share the vision of Pope Francis of a worldwide Church that is truly Catholic and connected? How do you think we can create a Church community that promotes inclusion, listens to one another, participates in mission, and engages in dialogue – following the insights from the spirit of Vatican II?

- Some Popes did a better job than Pope Francis.
- Pope Francis needs to stay in his lane and stick to religious focus.
- Unity is a great vision, but his approach is not working.
- Pope Francis makes comments without having the proper background.
- The Pope doesn't follow proper tradition. We shouldn't move away from the traditions of the Church.
- Pope Francis needs to focus on fixing our own house first before focusing on the world.
- Pope Francis wants to find Christ in Parishioners.
- We create Church Community one person at a time. Reach out to evangelize as it will have a domino effect.
- Always be kind to others regardless of their beliefs.
- Be good listeners, then try to understand.
- We miss going to actual Mass. We should stop the On-Line Broadcast and get people back into the Church. It felt great to be in Church at Ash Wednesday Mass.
- Mask data is false. Masks don't help and we have built up paranoia regarding the pandemic.
- How do we know who is symptomatic?
- We have created a paranoid culture.
- I felt more into God when physically at Church.
- If it feels good; do it.
- The Synod Listening Sessions are helping us to really gather together once again.

CRHP Synodal Gathering/Renewal of St. Michael Parish

April 4, 2022, 37 Participants

- 1. Welcome/Introduction: What brought you to this CRHP/Synodal Gathering this evening? Why did you come?**
 - a. Curiosity, seeing who is active.
 - b. Connections: the feeling of togetherness and positivity (renewing friendships) as part of CRHP) CRHP helped with the direction of her spiritual life.
 - c. To be “part of the solution”; people have drifted away and that is bothersome
 - d. To maintain and flourish the reverence for the Eucharist.

- 2. Fundamental Question: A synodal Church, in announcing the gospel, “journeys together.” From your perspective and the Holy Spirit within you, how is this “journeying together” happening today at St. Michael Parish? How is this “journeying together” not happening? What do you personally want or desire as a member of St. Michael Parish?**

How “journeying together” is occurring at St. Michael Parish:

- a. 7:30 am weekly mass attendance is increasing, as is 11:30 mass on Sunday.
- b. Rosary groups are significant.
- c. Some people are “journeying together” after these last trying years.
- d. This synod discussion itself is positive in bringing us together.

How “journeying together” is not happening at St. Michael Parish:

- a. More interaction and participation in the past; less now.
- b. Fewer people in church and a concern that the church will not recover
- c. St. Michael’s has had a great history in our church of “journeying together,” except in these last years. We need to recover this. CRHP kept welcoming and supporting those new to the program and created bonds between new and old participants. Need for fellowship and a CRHP-like experience with dynamic leadership.
- d. Less knowing of the people in the parish; through both Covid and age(retirement), we have lost our connection to and interaction with friends and church.
- e. We are older now and have less of a connection to the school than when our children attended. When we had children in the school we were involved; we helped with the fair and didn’t say “no” to involvement. We would walk into church and say “Hi” to many people. Now we don’t know who people are and have fewer connections with people.
- f. Leadership has changed often so no solid, consistent direction for the community; priests are under a lot of pressure to heal the parish and take care of other projects.
- g. Church corruption locally and worldwide has members disturbed.

Suggestions/Desires

- 1) Small groups needed.
 - a) The parish should encourage more study groups (men's groups especially). This would help everyone, but especially retirees, to form new friendships.
 - b) Perhaps small prayer groups once a month. Provide opportunities to learn more about the faith, following an RCIA model.
 - c) Perhaps a deacon or lay person to lead small group projects or a CRHP project.
 - d) We need lay leaders and it has to be us.
- 2) Young parishioners with families desire more activities for young children and young people to envelop them into the parish fold.
- 3) An increase in a welcoming atmosphere to add "a layer of fellowship."
 - a) We desire something to develop community, something akin to the feeling that CRHP created in us.
 - b) a need for homilies that will bring us together as a people and a parish which will help us "journey together" as a community.
 - c) more personal involvement with pastor and associates with their parishioners
 - d) When we have new priests presiding at the Eucharist, they should introduce themselves. This would increase his connectedness to us and our parish.
 - e) Greeters, donut socials, discussions such as those we had at CRHP
- 4) Bringing younger folks together with older folks to talk about similarities and differences. Older folks "extending their hands and hearts" to the younger ones.
- 5) Closure to what has occurred in our diocese with an apology from the Bishop.

3. Listening: How is God speaking to you (us) in others you (we) encounter? How are the laity listened to in the Church? What helps or prevents us from listening, especially to those who have different views than our own?

How is God speaking to you (us)?

- a. Family is primarily where we encounter God, especially in caring for children and parents and with members who are dying.
- b. An "Awakening" that something is better than our world is today.
- c. Through the Adoration Chapel, the laity in our church is awakening.
- d. We often "hear" through "action." Praying at Eucharistic adoration is one example or the priest from the Ukrainian Catholic Church who helped bring 49 people back. Actions from others inspire us or lead us to God.
- e. The screens in church (the monitors) help us to listen, pray, and sing better; they are not a hindrance but a great help to community participation.
- f. God is speaking to us by the welcome we receive from others; some new folks have been warmly welcomed.

- g. Some families with children are returning to church.
- h. Fewer priests may mean more lay involvement and leadership.

How are the laity listened to (or not)?

- a. Everyone needs to be heard; we need to learn to listen to others who may not think like us or believe in God. This takes patience and understanding.
- b. The worst thing is to stop listening to one another.
- c. In addressing problems between bishop and clergy, the laity are excluded or told to be quiet. Under our former bishop, the laity were not listened to.
- d. The pastor is crucial in helping or preventing us from listening.
- e. Lay people need to say what has to be said and be examples.
- f. Fr. Carlos is very open to suggestions and listening.

Suggestions:

- a. Need a “team” or a basic group for support to help folks become leaders.
- b. A welcoming committee would be helpful; you come close to these people, introduce yourselves, and talk with them.
- c. Could our parish do a mission? This spreads God’s love and message.

4. Speaking: What barriers do we face when speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our parish and in our community?

- a. Some of us worry about losing friends. Fear.
- b. How do we get our friends who have left back to the church and mass? Our center is at Mass, but it seems nothing vibrates with those who have left.
- c. Cultural differences with Fr. Carlos sometimes make it difficult.
- d. While Mass should be formal, it could be more interpersonal.
- e. Entrances and Exits to our church are small and narrow; thus, people cannot congregate before and after mass.
- f. Political correctness makes it challenging to speak up.
- g. Being raised Catholic in our educational system, we might fear speaking up or out. (see “a”)
- h. Whether we speak openly or not depends on your leader/pastor—how open or willing is he to hearing the voice of the people?
- i. It comes back to Satan trying to separate us. Closed minds keep us from speaking what we think and feel. If we try, we can disagree in a healthy, loving way. Find areas of agreement and commonality.
- j. A synod gathering like this one, where we speak and listen, is certainly helpful.
- k. We need small groups where we can talk and listen.
- l. Pro-Life is not preached from the altar.
- m. The former bishop stifled us in a number of ways.

5. Celebration: How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy and how do we convince or witness to others that we really receive Jesus himself in Holy Communion (the Eucharist)?

- a. How do you educate people—or forgive them—so that they can receive communion with belief in “the real presence?”
- b. Did CRHP members leave the Church and the Eucharist because they lost or never believed in Transubstantiation? It’s easier to leave the Catholic Church if you have lost your faith in the Real Presence, choosing instead to attend an “active,” “feel-good” church.
- c. There is a lack of reverence for the sacrament; body language is important.
- d. Converts seem to cherish their faith more than long-time Catholics; they have the benefit of actually learning about the faith as adults.
- e. We are special when we “salute” Christ; we receive our “spiritual dignity” in reception of the Eucharist.
- f. Liturgy is about the worship of Christ based on faith that “God is in attendance,” is with us.
- g. The parts of the Mass, such as the “Gloria” and the “Holy, Holy,” are tremendously uplifting.
- h. There are a number of programs which have come out or are being put out on the Eucharist (i.e. Bishop Barron, Matthew Kelly, Scott Hahn, etc.)

Suggestions:

- a. We need our faith and why we do what we do as Catholics explained better and more thoroughly.
- b. Better education/catechesis on the Eucharist.
- c. Homilies which are geared toward the people at large; what does participation mean? Participation which includes reverence and discipline.
- d. Always keep in mind that the Church has to be willing to accept everyone where they are and gradually call them to a fuller understanding and worship of the Liturgy, taking into account their life circumstances, how they are dressed, etc. without excluding them.
- e. More education on the history of the mass; where did it originate? How did it develop?
- f. Socialization (Coming together as community in many areas) will lead to an increased participation and appreciation of the Liturgy.
- g. Our pastor should meet with new parishioners to welcome, teach, and invite them to the celebration of the liturgy.

6. Spirituality: Besides Sunday participation in the Liturgy, what type of formation do you yourself look for to grow spiritually and to be a more welcome, active and alive member of the parish?

What aspects of a full Catholic life do you think you—and other members of the parish—are missing?

- a. St. Michael’s offers many programs: retreats, movies, talks
- b. Building of community and commitment to each other.
- c. Spirituality and Proper dress go together.

- d. Many cultural moral issues facing Catholics. We are inundated with increasing secularism in the media.
- e. There was a six months formation period after each person made a Christ Renews His Parish. Seeing other people doing/living the Christian life.

Suggestions:

- f. Offer a full day retreat or a men's/women's CRHP follow-up
- g. Making mass a little longer (perhaps by 25 minutes or so) would allow us to teach and learn about being Catholic: 1) Teaching about the Mass; 2) How to find Christ in ourselves and our daily life; 3) How to treat others and respond to them; 4) etc.
Note: This need for more Catholic education has been mentioned in many ways throughout this particular synod gathering as well as in others.
- h. Many are still seeking spiritual fellowship, to be connected in a personal way
Note: Again, this has been suggested many times during the course of these synodal gatherings.
- i. A Sunday Youth Mass (perhaps 6:30)
- j. The Chancery needs to give us more specific moral guidance regarding cultural moral issues: pro-life, traditional marriage, gay/lesbian/gender issues.

- 7. Mission: Pope Francis reminds us that we are “a universal church journeying together.” What do you see as the mission of the universal Catholic Church and how do we create a Church community that promotes this mission? What are your hopes for this universal Catholic Church?**

Mission:

- a. Our mission is to maintain the teachings of the Church; do not change to accommodate a changing society.
- b. The church needs to defend itself; what are the moral principles that need to be explained. Our children are confused.
- c. Our mission (the universal church's mission) is salvation and a universally shared morality. You can't have a universal church without a universal morality.
- d. You create faith and mission by starting in small groups; then it attracts others.
- e. A faith experience that can be shared, where the faithful are not closed out or excluded. Embracing others by inviting them into the faith life.
- f. To help each person discern their particular gifts and discover their role
- g. Evangelize through offering Jesus. Witnessing to how faith works in our lives.

Hopes:

- h. We look for a pastor/associate pastor/deacon to be involved in activities with parishioners.
- i. To make St. Michael's Parish special.
- j. We are doing a good job with the corporal works of mercy, whereas we are weak on the spiritual works of mercy.

