

## **St. Ann Church Summary of Responses to Listening Sessions on the Synod on Synodality**



St. Ann conducted multiple Listening Sessions in the months of March and April 2022. What is recorded here reflects the responses shared by the participants. The repeated responses in some parts reflect how participants responded to the questions.

Parishioners are encouraged to read this report submitted to the diocese of Arlington. It is our hope that these responses will further strengthen our “journeying together” through the guidance of the Lord and our openness to his Spirit who leads us. There are specific recommendations that demand a follow up in our parish, so the parish leaders will continue to discern how to best address the thoughts shared in our listening sessions.

**A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together,” by proclaiming, celebrating, and living the Gospel as we make our way to the Promised Land of Heaven.**

### **FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS**

#### **1. What experiences of “journeying together” in your diocese and at St. Ann bring you joy and hope?**

- Parish - a warm, welcoming community, for English as well as Spanish-speaking communities
- Spanish community appreciates Mass in Spanish
- Priests of Missionhurst (CICM) are more open. They open us to a larger vision of the Church and the diversity of its members.
- Parish offers lots of opportunities for service and outreach (homeless, refugees and immigrants, hospital care, etc.).
- Meaningful and joyful liturgies, three choirs, and bilingual masses
- Excellent faith formation program and youth program (Invictus, CYO Basketball) Spanish and English-speaking teenagers can meet and get to know each other
- Many opportunities to pray and deepen one’s faith (novenas, various prayer groups, bible study, adult education programs, etc.)

- Feel connected with the diocese through programs at the diocesan level

## **2. What difficulties and obstacles have you encountered to “journeying together” in your diocese and at St. Ann parish?**

- Difficulties are more at the diocesan level and with the American bishops in general.
- Lack of communication with and accessibility between bishops and the people in parishes
- Spanish community: struggle between celebrating Mass in Spanish and participating in church activities and work on weekends
- Lack of means of communication, especially virtual
- American Church has become too politicized and too focused on a single issue (abortion). Needs to address all respect for life issues and social justice issues.
- American Church needs to be more inclusive of diversity (e.g., women’s leadership, race relations, inclusion of the LGBTQ community, etc.).
- Credibility gap of the hierarchy of the Church after sexual abuses scandal
- Church should pay more attention to young people (teenagers and young adults) and meet them where they are.
- Absence of special masses and activities which should be geared to young people

## **THEMATIC QUESTIONS**

### **3. How do we most effectively witness to the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Gospel?**

- By actively participating in numerous charitable activities, faith formation program, and various ministries.
- The parish promotes an open and welcoming environment so that anyone new to the parish is welcomed and acknowledged.
- We witness to the gospel when we are honest with one another, when actively serving the poor and the needy in our communities, and when parents and adults lead by example in order to share our faith with the children in our parish.
- By being informed about our faith and then sharing it with others who are non-Catholics or those who do not yet believe in God

- When honoring and respecting the sacred space of our church by dressing properly, coming to Mass on time, and not leaving until after the final blessing

**Recommendations:**

- The Church needs to be a lot more inclusive of the LGBTQ communities.
- More opportunities for the laity to share their faith with other parishioners
- More effort to reach out to those who have left the church or graduated from our school so that they stay connected

**4. How effective are we in our three-fold mission of proclaiming and teaching the faith, of celebrating the liturgy and sacraments, and of service in charity?**

- St. Ann CICM clergy's ability to speak Spanish and celebrate Mass in Spanish
- Offers faith -formation classes in Spanish, Spanish-speaking parents and their children continue to share their faith in the language spoken at home
- St. Ann's priests also help parishioners to better understand and appreciate diversity by sharing their unique perspectives from their own country, cultures, and family stories of faith, struggles and lessons learned; they are a blessing to our church community.
- Through participation in ministries, such as, the Hospital ministry, Sunrise Center Seniors masses, and the Parish Outreach programs, especially the annual Advent Giving Tree and The Mercy Cross

**Recommendations:**

- There needs to be a lot more adult faith enrichment programs; adults don't know their catechism nor how to defend their faith.
- There should be more women involved in the Church.
- There should be more listening sessions and the responses need to be shared and responded to by the Bishop.
- St. Ann needs more flexible schedules so that families do not have to choose between attending Mass or sending their children to faith formation classes.

**5. How do all the members of the Church—laity and clergy—collaborate in their common mission?**

- The listening sessions promote collaboration.
- Bishops especially need to listen more to the ideas of the laity.

- There is a need to educate people on what the common mission is—to spread the Gospel—a responsibility of all who are baptized, as emphasized by the Second Vatican Council.
- The Church undervalues the contributions of women, especially since clergy can only be men. The church should consider women ordained as deacons.
- There should be more emphasis on the unifying force of the sacraments, especially as individuals go through the cycle of life.

## **6. How well do we dialogue—listen attentively and speak up candidly—within the Church and with the wider community?**

- Create more spaces for dialogue within the Church’s community, with those of other faiths, and with the broader community
- The tendency of the Church to put some topics off the table for discussion limits effectiveness of dialogue. These include contraception, fertility treatments, role of women, and inclusion of gay persons.
- The Church’s constant public focus on “life begins at conception” reduces the effectiveness of the Church’s voice in promoting early childhood education, funding parental leave, and helping disadvantaged families and neighborhoods.
- Unmarried clergy, especially bishops, may not appreciate the challenges of children and family life
- We need more effective programs to reach the youth, persons who are divorced, persons who have been abused, and women who have miscarried.
- How to listen to laity should be part of seminary training.
- Should there be a special effort to call forth male lay leaders? Should work of parish council and liturgy committee be better known?
- Synodal process will be more effective if persons believe they are listened to.

