

Diocese of Nelson – Diocesan Synthesis (2022)

For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation & Mission

Introduction

Our pastors were charged with organizing the synodal gatherings in their parishes and missions. The gatherings were focused on the questions derived from the Preparatory Document and the *Vademecum*, as well as listening to the Holy Spirit in order to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Each parish was to compile the discussions from their gatherings into a synthesis for the Dean. Then, the Dean was to formulate a Deanery synthesis from all the parish syntheses. Finally, each Dean forwarded its deanery synthesis to the Bishop, which became the Diocesan synthesis.

There were many challenges to holding the synod in the diocese from time constraints, which limited the time available for gatherings, to the pandemic, which put certain restrictions on gatherings or prevented people from participating. Even so, many positive comments were received about the process, especially the opportunity to gather, discuss and listen to one another. Some people felt that this was the first time they were heard and included in important discussions about the Church.

Synodal Contributions from the Diocese

These are the contributions from the lay faithful and the clergy as collated from the four deaneries of the diocese:

Synodality is seen as a model for the Church.

Accompaniment is seen as part of what it means to be Church. Priests need to accompany their people and the people need to accompany their priests.

There is a need for opportunities and structures for listening and dialogue at the parish level, the diocesan level and between them.

There is a need for better communication at the parish level, diocesan level and between them. This includes training in how to communicate and dialogue with one another. It is important that the tools and technology available are well used to ensure good communication. There was a concern that the Church does a poor job of communicating the good it does.

There is a need for a better understanding of the structures and processes of the Church, and that the current structures, like the Bishop's Office and the Parish Pastoral Council for instance, are functioning well, and their role and purpose are understood.

There is a need for more respect and involvement of the laity in the Church including a better understanding of their role and responsibilities, as well as taking responsibility for learning and growing in their Faith and baptismal call.

There is a need for a better understanding of the ministry of the clergy, their role and responsibilities (governance, sanctifying, teaching) and the meaning of ordination. Clericalism, lack of self-awareness and proper training in parish administration is a concern.

There is a need for a better understanding of the role of women in the Church and their place in the Church.

There is a need for catechesis, and a better and deeper understanding of our Faith and the “why” of Church teaching.

There is a need for greater accountability and transparency in the Church, especially concerning its leadership and finances.

There is a need for transformation from functioning (stagnant) to flourishing parishes. This includes outreach, evangelization, witnessing, ecumenism and building up the parish community. This means being outward rather than inward looking.

There is a need to create a space for everyone in the Church, especially those on the peripheries: the poor, marginalized, minorities, women, divorced, imprisoned, addicted and homeless. The Church needs to be able to connect with all members of society: children, youth, young adults, adults and seniors.

There is a need to better understand the centrality of the Mass to our Faith, and to understand the importance of the Holy Spirit in the Church, especially with regard to listening.

There is a need to identify and/or create and foster leaders in the Church; to encourage team work and collaboration as laity and clerics, to be authentic witnesses to the Christian life and to be instruments of unity in the Church.

There is a need to re-build trust between the clergy and the laity, and the Church and society.

There is a need for the Church to speak out/defend itself in response to secularism, and the scandals and crises that have damaged relationships in the Church and the wider community.

Conclusion

The synodal process was eye-opening and a breath of fresh air in the Church. This process needs to continue and become part of the structure of the Church. In addition, the synodal contributions identified various diocesan concerns that need to be addressed.

All said, the gatherings of the laity and clergy show us that we are all called to “walk together, share our stories and to live our life of faith in visible, tangible ways.”