



Catholic Diocese
of Cleveland

Synthesis from Parishes, Schools, and Catholic Organizations

Instructions: Collect the notes and sign-in sheets from the listening sessions and synthesize the input gathered, developing one summary report of 3-5 pages. Return to Lynette Saenz, Assistant Secretary for Parish Life, at lsaenz@dioceseofcleveland.org before Friday, February 11, 2021.

Date: 4/15/2022

Name of Parish / School / Organization: Holy Spirit Catholic Church

City: Garfield Heights, OH

County: Cuyahoga

Summary of Listening Sessions

1. What are the most common themes that emerged from the listening sessions? Which points of view were mentioned less but are interesting and noteworthy? What did participants have to say about areas where the Church is in need of healing and conversion? What dreams, desires and aspirations for the Church were expressed by participants?

What are the most common themes that emerged from the listening sessions?

Many of the cradle Catholics who participated expressed how their parents and grandparents exposed them to our faith and had a profound impact on their faith journey. Those who attended Catholic schools reflected on how school and church life went hand in hand in their spiritual growth. Church and school were the center of family and community which kept them grounded in the Catholic faith. The vibrant church and school activities kept the community together.

There were many Catholics who participated, who converted to the Catholic faith because of marrying a Catholic, or from exposure to evangelical organizations such as Operation Good News, The Holy Name Society, Social Justice Initiative, Black Catholic Youth Input, Black Catholic Music Ministry, and the Office of Black Catholic Ministry. These organizations encouraged diversity. Groups of diverse cultures were able to express their spirituality in different ways.

Which points of view were mentioned less but are interesting and noteworthy?

The teaching of the church pre- and post-Vatican II changed the church. Some felt there were positive changes such as turning the altar to face the congregation and having Mass in English. However, some experienced rules in the church excluded them from full participation. As a result, they left the church. There was a mixture of fear, and rigidity in the ritual practices.

What did participants have to say about areas where the Church is in need of healing and conversion?

All Catholics, whether currently practicing or not, expressed a deep concern for the church's cover-up, and handling of the pedophile scandals of religious. Many witnessed or experienced disrespect, verbal and physical abuse inflicted upon them as children from nuns and priests. These experiences are hurtful and embarrassing. The hurt remains with them today. Some parents have decided not to raise their children in the Catholic faith because they do not feel their children are safe and protected.

The church position on gender identity and same-sex relationships is viewed as outdated. It is hurtful and excludes otherwise strong, faithful Catholics. Church rules on abortion and birth control continue to exclude individuals and is seen as hypocritical to the teachings of Christ as we are to love and take care of one another. The church needs to take a more active role in ministering to the addicted and those suffering from substance abuse.

Excluding non-Catholic Christians from participation at the Eucharistic table is embarrassing. Catholicism is not superior over other denominations. What happened to one baptism in Christ? Additionally, not all Catholics truly believe in the transformation to the actual Body and Blood of Christ, nor do they respect all doctrine taught in the church.

Not allowing priests to marry, women to be ordained ministers, and lay people to be allowed to lead liturgical celebrations hinders the church's growth. Lay persons who have a divinity education have left the church because they were married or female and are not allowed to practice their calling on a higher level. Religious desire to have a higher role in the liturgical life of the church but are prohibited because of their gender.

Systemic racism further hinders growth in the church. Cultural bias discourages those from diverse backgrounds to enter religious life. There is a lack of diversity on the diocesan level which perpetuates ignorance and lack of acceptance, especially in the African American community.

The diocese does not seem to view parishes with diverse communities as worthy of offering any value to the diocese or the church. African American communities are not viewed as positive nor included in diocesan decisions.

Youth lack of participation and involvement, and interest in attending diocesan events are the result of culturally diverse youth being excluded in the planning and preparation of events.

The diocese needs to understand African American Catholics feel unappreciated, forgotten, and unequal. Not filling the open position of the Office of Black Catholic Ministry is perceived as another example of African Americans being ignored and not a priority of the diocese. African Americans are a part of One Body, the church.

Religious and lay Catholics have offered input to change in the past and nothing has changed. There is a great deal of concern the comments, suggestions, and key points expressed in the Synod process will be lost when the diocese presents the report to the Vatican.

What dreams, desires and aspirations for the Church were expressed by participants?

A church in which the liturgical ministry is open to women who want to serve on a higher level.

Racism in the church, parishes, and diocese is eliminated. Diversity is truly encouraged, and accepted. People of color are accepted, encouraged, and fully treated as part of one body when joining vocations. Remove personal bias from the professional vows process.

A church in which the Beatitudes are truly followed and corporal works of mercy are visible in all communities. Social justice and politics of the church that are not based on universally judging of people but led by compassion.

Stop closing /merging churches in the African American communities. A church that sees all ethnic communities as an equal body of the church and not a "training camp" for teaching new priests cultural diversity results in instability of parish priests in African American parishes.

A church that makes changes or compromises some of the rules in order to promote inclusion, and does not limit participation and a sense of belonging. A "church that focuses on the business of Jesus." Acceptance that "not all things can be legislated." Stop "pushing the Catholic narrative" on other denominations and being the "church of exclusion." Stop alienating non-Catholics.

A whole church community in which youth participation is the focus across all ethnicities.

A church that gives a public apology to all Catholics, not just the victims of sexual and physical abuse. Stop covering up the sexual abuse scandal. A church in which "moral authority" is rebuilt.

2. What are the emerging actions recommended? What challenges or opportunities do these reflections pose for us in our personal lives, in our communities, and in our diocese? What are the consequences of not addressing these issues?

What are the emerging actions recommended?

Many Listening Session participants expressed concern about the lack of visibility and participation from a great number of our youth and young adults in the life of our church. One participant referred to our young people as, “our best hope to grow and sustain a viable church.” The recommendations included making sure our young people are greeted and acknowledged on a consistent basis. Growing the number of adults who commit to listening to and engaging our young people as they discover ways they can grow in their faith and share their gifts, is another recommendation. Additionally it is suggested that parents, grandparents and other family members and friends take on a greater role in passing on the faith to the younger generations in an effort to inspire them to want to share their gifts with the church.

Another recommendation involved ways to draw on the gifts of women in the church. One participant expressed that, “So much of the church’s wisdom is lost when so many women don’t feel they have an avenue for being leaders.” Recommendations include recognizing the gifts and talents women bring to our faith, and accepting that the church can benefit from widening their participation in passing on the faith. It was also very clear that some participants recommend and support the church accepting women as deacons and priests.

Recommendations to address systemic racism came from personal experiences of many of our participants. It is recommended that the church at every level acknowledge that racism exists, and understand that our goal of becoming one church cannot be accomplished if any among us feel, “less than.” The diocesan-based Office of Ministry to African American Catholics is viewed by many as an important resource for the communities it serves and the recommendation is that it be staffed and maintained. Recognition of the rich contributions of African Americans and other minority groups throughout the diocese is highly recommended. Another recommendation is that African Americans and other minority groups be allowed equal representation when decisions are being considered that affect them.

The church’s response to the sexual abuse scandal elicited concerns and recommendations from our Listening Sessions participants. The recommendations include the urging that apologies be made to victims by church leaders, and that transparency be the response to all allegations. Additionally it was felt that there needs to be a definite plan to prevent these actions on the parish, diocesan and Vatican levels.

The belief that the church has become too much of an institution of exclusion was of concern for some. Recommendations to address this concern include closely reviewing any church teachings or practices that alienate and exclude certain populations: for example, people dealing with abortion, same-sex relationships, and divorce. Some indicated their belief that more compassion and less judgment should be applied to these situations.

What challenges or opportunities do these reflections pose for us in our personal lives, in our communities, and in our diocese?

The reflections shared in this synopsis certainly will cause some disagreements as well as opportunities for discussions. Decisions will need to be made about which areas need immediate attention and which can be postponed. Additionally, while some areas can be addressed at the parish level, others will need attention on the diocesan and Vatican levels.

The Synod can be an instrument for either bringing parishes and the diocese into closer relationship, or it can widen the gap and even cause mistrust. Some participants expressed their fear that the diocese will choose not to share our recommendations with the Vatican while others stated that recommendations have been shared in the past and no changes or improvements have resulted.

What are the consequences of not addressing these issues?

The consequences of not addressing these issues will most likely result in less participation in efforts of this kind in the future. Participants could doubt that their input is valued and the result could lead to alienation and no changes or improvements.

Additional consequences could also lead to the belief that the diocese does not value our input and mistrust and alienation will follow. As shared earlier in this document, some participants already have doubts that the diocese will share our reflections and recommendations with the Vatican. An opportunity to begin the process of bringing us closer to being one body as a church could be lost.

What light did the participants of the Listening Sessions shine on some of the positive practices and actions currently happening at Holy Spirit Catholic Church?

Great fellowship

Diversity of membership; very ethnic

Priest is sensitive, reflective, gives knowledge and hope

Loving community

"Our church community has a signature way of welcoming visitors and new members"

"Merging of great music. Wonderful choir"

Operation Good News

"Holidays at Holy Spirit, especially Holy Thursday - Washing of feet"

"Holy Spirit is a cornerstone in the community"

"Come on in. Holy Spirit invites you to join. I feel appreciated and understood."

"Holy Spirit has feeling of family and warmth and good preaching, which is good"

Demographics

Who participated in the listening sessions? *(Note: Provide best estimate for percentages.)*

Male, all ages:	24	Percent over age 30:	79%
Female, all ages:	46	Percent ages 18-29:	1%
Total participation:	70	Percent under age 18:	20%

Briefly describe the participants of synodal process. There were 16 listening sessions conducted in person, zoom, and one on one private. The cultural self-identification consisted of African American, multi-cultural and Caucasian. Participants consisted of lay, religious, and parish staff. The participants are involved in the Music Ministry, Liturgical roles, Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, Bible Study, Prison Ministry, Cantors, Youth Ministry, Sacristans, Women's Guild, Ladies of Peter Claver, Men of Faith, Operation Good News, Praise Dance, Bereavement, Ushers, PSR Educators and students, parishioners, and non-parishioners.

Briefly describe those encountered on the peripheries as part of any missionary action and why you consider them to be "on the peripheries."

- **Who they are:** There were 6 people, all adults, who participated in the listening session. All the participants had some direct contact with the Catholic church and have left the church due to past hurts, church teaching and practice, or the sexual scandal in the church.
- **Locations:** We engaged 69 participants at our Parish Hall or via zoom meetings. 1 person was engaged in their home.
- **Gender:** 100% of the of the peripheries were female.
- **Catholic identification.** 100% of the peripheries identify as not Catholic.

**Observations specific to life at Holy Spirit Catholic Church
Garfield Heights, Ohio**

SYNOD LISTENING Sessions -2021-2022

WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT HOLY SPIRIT?

1. Church is welcoming
2. Wonderful choir. "Music keeps me present"
3. Loving community, sense of family
4. Feel loved and cared about
5. Holiday celebrations at Holy Spirit, especially Holy Thursday
6. OGN's love of people and faith
7. Eucharist is full
8. O.K. to speak up
9. Merging of great music
10. "Quietness of Holy Spirit Catholic church allows me to hear God"
11. Homily is nourishing my marriage
12. We can acknowledge the word openly
13. Love choir
14. Great fellowship
15. Diversity of membership, very ethnic
16. Sermons good
17. Priest is sensitive, reflective, gives knowledge and hope
18. Confessions are good and offer tangible ways to be, and do better, not just prayer
19. Live streaming Mass for shut-ins should continue
20. Holy Spirit accepts me no matter my race, how I look or dress

CHALLENGES FOR HOLY SPIRIT

Below are the comments and suggestions from the 70 participants in the listening sessions.

1. Be more aware of the needs of community we serve
2. More programs like home visits
3. Young people seen uninterested
4. More activities for ages 20-50 age group
5. Senior burn out
6. Be supportive of PSR and Spirit teens and how to get children engaged. Develop "Holy Spirit Teen Corner" in bulletin to keep Parish aware of what are youth are doing and providing a means for Parishioners to support our youth.
7. Elders and mentors must be willing to change to attract youth participation. Be mindful of what we say and how we treat our young people
8. More personal level interactions through Parish events

9. With Covid, not all things done in a safe way. Explore ways to make everyone comfortable and participating. Stop letting Covid dictate but continue ministries despite Covid
10. Create questionnaire asking what people want
11. Bring adult choir back. It is one of the core ministries of who we are. Encourage and support youth choir in songs and ways youth want to share their vocal gifts
12. Increase participation in Parish organizations, create an updated list of Parish ministries and what each does. This may help people discern what they want to participate in
13. More activities for 30–45-year-old to strengthen Parish participation
14. Create a pamphlet created about who we are, and what we do offer in the food pantry
15. Reach out to other churches in area and outreach to Parishioners we have not seen
16. Hold online conversations about next steps for church
17. Let youth get involved and offer gifts on how they want to. “Meet them where they are”.
18. Develop our shepherd ministry
19. Increase OGN participation and activities
20. Keep our mission as core
21. Fix instability of streaming services
22. Praise dance is great but boring and not creative. Let youth choregraph and select song that can relate to.
23. Refresher courses on Church Doctrine. What has changed and what has not incorporated into Homily, bulletin, or online meetings. Talk to parents about “what is your most important duty or thing to do in order to get your children to heaven”
24. Do more in community
25. Have family days
26. Transportation and/or volunteer carpool program for members to get to church and activities
27. Interaction between other parishes in African American parishes
28. Analyze why young people complete baptism, 1st communion, and confirmation then afterwards are not activity coming to church and not participating in service to church. Implement ways to get them involved.