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Synod Report of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver



Archdiocese
of Vancouver



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INTRODUCTION

The Archdiocese of Vancouver (RCAV) acknowledges that the land on which we gather and work is the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

The Archdiocese covers 119,439 km² serving approximately 446,670 Catholics in a population of 3,192,778. It includes Vancouver, Canada's third largest city, which has the highest proportion of Asians per capita of any North American city. With gratitude, the faithful recognize the many blessings that living in such a diverse and multicultural Archdiocese bring to the Church. Mass is offered in at least 19 languages. Just over 200 diocesan and Religious priests, and 91 women and 30 men Religious serve its 77 parishes and 6 missions.

In response to the call of Pope Francis to listen to the voices of the faithful in preparation for the Synod of Bishops meeting in 2023, with the theme "For a synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission," the Archdiocese of Vancouver is committed, as were the Apostles and the earliest disciples, to act with faith in heeding the call of Jesus, guided by the Holy Spirit, to make the name of Jesus Christ known and loved by all.

For our local Church, this synodal process has provided a providential opportunity to walk together in charity, listen to one another with respect, and to hear what is on the hearts and minds of our brothers and sisters. This "is in our process of synodality. Jesus wants to hear our needs as individuals and communities. He wants us to talk about our lives in the Church, our real situations, painful or joyful as they may be, so that nothing is kept from him" (Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, Homily, October 24, 2021).

In preparation for the Synod, listening sessions (called "conversation circles") were held throughout the Archdiocese. Concerns were initially raised about the limited time available, the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 protocols, and the possible voices of rejection of the Church's mission that might emerge. As it turned out, these fears proved to be largely groundless.

Six questions were the basis for the conversation circles:

1. What helps or prevents you from being active in the Church's mission?
2. What areas of the Church's mission are we missing or neglecting?
3. What particular issues in the Church do we need to pay more attention to?
4. What particular issues in society do we need to pay more attention to?
5. How can we, the local Church, journey with our Indigenous sisters and brothers in a process of healing and reconciliation?
6. From this time of listening, could you sum up in one or two sentences how the Spirit is calling us to grow in "journeying together"?

From October 2021 through June 2022, our experience of synodality concentrated on the importance of the faithful gathering in small groups to share, listen, pray, discern, and reflect together. Providing a living experience of synodality at work was our primary objective. More than 5,000 people, including parishioners from 65 parishes, members of 46 movements, groups, organizations, and associations, as well as 206 individuals (by way of an online submission) participated in our synodal journey.

After the preparatory workshops, data was collected from the whole Catholic community: parishes, communities of consecrated women and men, movements, religious associations, organizations, and groups. These gatherings included: “Synod Conversation Circle Sessions for Religious Women in RCAV” (March 12 and 20, 2022); “Conversation Circles with Ecumenical Counterparts” (March 26, 2022); “Conversation Circles with All Priests” (April 19, 2022); and “Conversation Circles with Presbyteral Council” (April 28, 2022). Input on the questions posed was also received from individuals through the RCAV website. While we had hoped to hear from marginalized people or groups, our success in reaching out to them for responses was limited.

From the outset we wanted to hear all voices, including those who feel excluded or hurt by the Church. Most significant about our experience of this widespread consultation is the positive response we received from people who were pleased to be asked to participate in the synodal process and to be heard. A broad representation of the faithful affirmed their love for the Church, as well as their desire for greater communion with one another and for more engagement in the Church’s mission. The laity of the Archdiocese are actively concerned about the Church and want to be more involved in its life. We hope and pray that this synodal process is a first step to a synodal Church where all the baptized walk together as the People of God.

The goal of this synthesis Report is to make known what we did well, where we failed, and to document transparently the results of what we heard from the faithful. The synthesis that follows describes how we are growing in becoming a listening Church in the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

A LISTENING ARCHDIOCESE

As required by the Synod of Bishops, “the synthesis aims to gather and express the fruits of the synodal process in a way that is understandable even to those who did not participate, indicating how the Holy Spirit’s call to the Church has been understood in the local context.” In light of this mandate, a group of 15 persons prayerfully read all the responses received, recorded in more than 450 pages. They not only carefully discerned the main themes advanced by a large number of participants but also paid close attention to discordant notes as possible prophetic voices arising from the community. All voices were heard in this process of discernment, though not every single voice is documented in this report.

Mission

The need to understand the Church’s mission more clearly emerged time and again in our synod sessions, particularly as that mission impacts the People of God. Questions 1 and 2 elicited responses that helped us to clarify how people think the mission is being lived out in their personal, family, and parish life, and in society at large.

The Person in Mission

Not surprisingly, engagement in the Church's mission is higher among respondents who have an active, personal faith life facilitated by easy and regular access to the Sacraments. In this regard, culturally specific Masses for a broad range of people were important. Some did express a desire that more traditional celebrations of the Mass be made available to them. Participants appreciated it when Archdiocesan or parish initiatives and programs were clearly presented and accessible to them. Catholic schools and institutions were also praised for their role in helping people to engage in the Church's community life. Many expressed how encouraged they feel when they are recognized and appreciated for their participation in ecclesial life, knowing that their efforts have been valued. Others note that they have more recently gained a greater knowledge of the Church's mission, and are glad to be assured that they do not have to be "perfect" in order to share their personal gifts in their parish. The eager willingness of a great many parishioners to give back and serve the wider Catholic community is noteworthy – and encouraging.

A longing for ongoing formation and catechesis in the areas of Scripture, the Sacraments, and Church teaching was frequently affirmed. Respondents stress, however, that any such initiatives must connect with their real-life issues and be offered at a level appropriate to them. More opportunities for mentoring leaders in both spiritual and human formation should also be pursued.

All formation must equip the faithful to go forth and evangelize. First, however, it has to ensure that they themselves truly understand the Church's mission in depth. Knowing why and how the Church evangelizes would lead to greater parishioner involvement in their communities. The purpose of all evangelizing initiatives should be to provide a holistic formation that includes the spiritual, intellectual, and human dimensions, together with personal pastoral accompaniment. Many priest participants mentioned how they struggle with finding ways to reach out to their parishioners in order to help form them as missionary disciples.

External factors are also an obstacle to the faithful's full participation in the Church's life. Paramount among these are the endless busyness and distractions of modern life. Such conditions in the contemporary world make a life of prayer, silence, and reflection very difficult – practices that are indispensable to growth in the spiritual life and the process of discernment. In journeying together, the "workers in the vineyard" want their knowledge of the faith to be strengthened and to become more confident in proclaiming it. Lay spiritual direction was affirmed as necessary for spiritual growth, but is, sadly, frequently unavailable. Filled with the zeal of the Holy Spirit, the people of the Archdiocese want to give themselves generously to the Church's mission. They truly desire to be suitably formed, so as to be able to fulfil the Lord's mandate to go out and make disciples of all nations (cf. Mt 28:19).

The Family in Mission

A significant number of respondents think that greater focus should be given to the family as the “domestic church.” More attention should be paid to supporting marriages and living the faith in the family, understanding its struggles, and encouraging parents in their duty as the primary educators of their children. Families, especially young families, need to have more and better access to initiatives and programs adapted to their needs, as well as access to affordable Catholic school education. More attention should also be paid to single parents and the burdens they carry, often related to the pain of divorce or the cost of housing. The role and place of youth and the elderly in society and the Church are also areas of significant concern. Greater support of families, which by nature are intergenerational, could foster the needed integration of young people and the elderly in the Church’s life.

The Parish in Mission

Participants in the synodal process strongly desire parishes to be welcoming communities that include everyone. They want them to be open to people at every stage of their faith journey. Engagement with other Christians, those of other religions, and the secular world should also be more widely fostered. Some curtail their participation in parish life because they are disappointed that their community is not more open and welcoming to men and women who feel excluded by the wider culture and by the Church. We need to improve our engagement with those without a previous religious background by making their experience of the Church “less scary,” more joyful, friendly, and approachable. Hospitality, welcome, and creating a sense of belonging were frequently said to be lacking in our parishes. This situation leads to the neglect of many individuals: young families, disengaged Catholics, those suffering from disabilities, persons who identify as LGBTQ+, the elderly, immigrants, refugees, divorced and single Catholics, and those living in poverty or suffering from homelessness.

Very many respondents lamented the lack of engagement, support, and accompaniment for youth in our parish communities. This often causes them to drift away from the Church and the practice of their faith. Young people, among others, also think that parishes and their ministries frequently exclude them, whether intentionally or not. Closed and unwelcoming attitudes lead to cliquish behaviours and to ministries that are isolated from one another even in the same parish, and drive away many young people from getting involved in the community.

Where individuals feel unwelcome, judged, or excluded by cliques, they disengage from the Church. Where little opportunity to share their gifts exists, people’s interest in participation inevitably wanes or disappears. Having more social events in the parish beyond “coffee after Mass” could help break down insular groups and siloed ministries. Activities such as pilgrimages and small group ministries could also help build community. As well, a concrete personal invitation to take part in a ministry and encouragement from priests and other parishioners could contribute to broader parish engagement.

Poor clerical and lay leadership in parishes was very often mentioned as a major factor that prevents people from parochial engagement. For better or worse, leaders wield enormous influence on a parish's culture and sense of community. Many respondents expressed a yearning for a more "pastoral approach" from all leaders in their parishes. They said that too much attention is given to moralistic teaching and doctrine and not enough to building relationships among parishioners and with the clergy. From their leaders, synod participants desire more listening to their concerns, meeting people "where they're at" in their faith journey, and increased pastoral accompaniment. Whenever personal support by priests and parishioners is absent during times of bereavement, poor health, divorce, family dysfunction, etc., engagement inevitably lags. Many trace such inattention on the part of leaders to not understanding the Church's mission.

Liturgy is an area of significant concern for the faithful. They want more relevant homilies and uplifting music at Mass. Furthermore, the celebration of the liturgy and Sacraments should be offered with greater reverence and devotion. Many noted that the Church's teaching on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist should be explained in greater depth to the faithful.

Church and Societal Issues

Pope Francis is encouraging the Church to "keep pressing forward, beyond her own confines, in order to testify to all the love of the Church" (Message for World Mission Day, 6 January 2022). Questions 3 and 4 deal with issues that the faithful in the Archdiocese believe need particular attention in the Church and society. These issues are invitations for us to act on as we move forward in our synodal journey.

From our conversation circles, it is evident that on a number of issues there is widespread diversity, if not polarization of opinions, among the faithful. For instance, even where synod participants agree that they favour better music at the liturgy, some want more joyful praise music, while others, instead, want more traditional music; or, whereas some want catechetical formation so as to understand Catholic teaching more fully, others want changes in Church doctrine which are more open to contemporary culture.

Communication

Issues from the media, including social media, are leading to polarization in politics and social life, with "fake news" destroying a sense of objective and shared truth in society. When such polarization is coupled with individualism, consumerism, materialism, relativism, and greed, our care for one another and for the common good is at great risk.

Numerous respondents think that open communication is neglected in many areas. They note that, if we are to fulfill our mission, more attention needs to be paid to the image of the Church portrayed by society. A clearer message should be provided to the public of the many and significant contributions the Church is making to the broader society, especially in our Archdiocese. Moreover, the Church must be transparent in all it says and does, especially by taking responsibility for its own failings in the past.

The respondents see clear communication as necessary if the Church is to engage successfully with people, both inside and outside its walls. Evangelization and formation initiatives could be better promoted by improved use of the means of social communication. Different communication strategies should be used for different audiences, making better use of technology and social media to reach people depending on their age and stage of life.

The Church needs to communicate in an honest, transparent, and timely manner both with the faithful and with the broader community, not only in responding to scandals, but also in presenting its teachings in a forthright manner. Better communication would enable parishioners to have access to all the relevant information regarding clerical sexual abuse and other scandals in the Church, and so be in a better position to respond appropriately to inquirers and critics.

Other Issues

Environment – For some, a significant issue of social justice is the destruction of the environment caused by lack of care for our common home and lack of concern for the common good. An issue needing particular attention is climate change. It has had a major negative impact throughout the world, but is especially noticeable in British Columbia.

Mental Health – Of very great importance for the synod participants is the need for the Church to engage more broadly and frequently with issues related to mental health. This is a growing and widespread concern expressed by many of the faithful. High levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and substance addiction are commonplace and worrisome to parishioners. Moreover, all too often mental illness can lead to poverty, the breakdown of families, homelessness, and suicide.

Married Priests – Some expressed that they would like to see married priests serve in the Church.

Role of Women – Many engaged in the synodal process think that greater attention should be paid to fostering the role of the women in the Church, including enhancing their leadership responsibilities at all levels of ecclesial life. They also mention the need to examine further the possibility of admitting women to the diaconate.

Role of Clergy – Respondents had numerous suggestions regarding the clergy.

Seminaries: A greater emphasis on pastoral formation, on how to relate to parishioners and on how to form the laity to be co-responsible collaborators in the Church's mission should be provided to our seminarians.

Homilies: Homilies are frequently not relevant or relatable to parishioners' everyday experience. Sometimes they are too complex; at other times they are too shallow. Additionally, many respondents said they often experience difficulty in understanding the homilist, a concern that was also voiced by some of the clergy.

Clericalism: Some of the faithful think that clericalism is a widespread problem in the Church and should be addressed in seminary formation, among the clergy, and particularly by the laity.

Vocations: Concerns were voiced that more attention needs to be paid to promoting vocations to the priesthood and offering support to seminarians.

Clerical Sexual Abuse – People want transparency and clarity about clerical abuse that has taken place in the past and information about any current instances of abuse. While some expressed personal pain and sadness regarding the clergy sexual abuse situation and its impact on their practice of the faith, others acknowledged and appreciated how the Church in Vancouver has made progress in this matter.

Church Teaching – Synodal participants noted that there are many challenges in living the Gospel today. Some reported feeling disheartened because our culture makes it difficult to speak about Church teaching in an open and frank way. For many, their discomfort is connected to the Church's teaching on sexuality, especially as it relates to the LGBTQ+ community.

The need for the Church to stand against the widespread use of pornography, human trafficking, and sexual violence against women was also frequently mentioned. Additional social issues such as gender inequality, same-sex marriage, and widespread divorce are also areas of concern.

Respondents want to hear the Church's authoritative voice on matters of human dignity such as abortion and euthanasia. They also want it to be clear that those who have been marginalized by poverty, racism, colonization, homelessness, or by their recent immigration or refugee status are beloved daughters and sons of God deserving the respect and care of everyone.

Indigenous Sisters and Brothers

In response to many questions, but in particular to question 5, the faithful spoke passionately about the past, the present, and the future of the Church's relationship with Indigenous Peoples. This relationship is not one of "us" and "them," but "us" and "us," since all people are God's children. Moreover, many Indigenous People in the Archdiocese are themselves baptized Catholics.

Listening

Respondents affirmed that recognizing the pain and intergenerational trauma of the past and present is the first step in building relationships. Such acknowledgment requires careful attentiveness: first, to listen with the ears of the heart, to engage in open conversation, and to be inclusive; and second, to ask the Indigenous Peoples how Catholics in the Archdiocese can help in furthering healing and reconciliation. Creating intentional spaces within parishes to welcome and listen to Indigenous voices is indispensable if this reconciliation is to become a reality.

Educating

To create such spaces, the faithful realize their need to be educated. The synod participants are eager to expand their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous communities, cultures, worldviews, and spirituality. The residential school system in Canada and the treatment of Indigenous Peoples have embarrassed and demoralized many Catholics and have led some to disengage from the Church. For this reason, by learning the history of residential schools and our shared history with Indigenous Peoples we can allow the full truth in these areas to emerge, so that past tragedies will never be repeated. Respondents suggested holding a variety of meetings for leaders in the Archdiocese and for members of Religious congregations, as well as for lay people, to learn about what happened in residential schools and about the Church's current role in the process of truth, healing and reconciliation. It is important to educate the clergy and laity about all that took place in the past, as well as what is being done more constructively today. The archdiocesan and parish websites should also include resources, links, and videos of an educational nature.

Healing

Only by acknowledging past and present hurts, pain, and sin can healing together begin. Once the truth is heard, then genuine acts of penance and true reconciliation can take place. Many see special Masses and prayer services as ways to begin this process of reconciliation. Even now, liturgies could include prayers for this purpose. Some also suggested making a land acknowledgement at the beginning of the celebration of Mass.

Justice

A profound sense of the seriousness of the problems we have inherited from our colonial past is now widely recognized. Public apologies are considered to be a necessary, but not sufficient, step toward reconciliation. Providing resources such as counseling and shelters to the Indigenous communities affected by intergenerational trauma could contribute to rebuilding the relationship between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples.

Those engaged in the synodal process ask for transparency and accountability. Some think that the Church has made too many excuses for its role in the residential school system, while others want the Church to be less defensive in this regard. There are also mixed opinions regarding the extent of the Church's financial responsibilities in fostering reconciliation. Despite these differences, numerous participants agreed that the Church should always work for justice, and that this must include fulfilling its financial obligations.

A very large number of respondents expressed the desire to better welcome Indigenous Catholics into parish life. Many suggestions were offered, including: using the languages and adapting expressions of Indigenous spirituality in the liturgy; promoting respect and understanding for feelings of pain, suffering, and discrimination; inviting Indigenous clergy, elders, and knowledge keepers to give seminars for parishioners; fostering respect for values regarding the land; and supporting causes like clean drinking water for all.

CONCLUSIONS

Under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, it is now up to the parishes, movements and all Catholic associations and groups, with the help of the staff of the John Paul II Pastoral Centre, to formulate action plans to follow through on the following conclusions that emerged from the synodal process in the Archdiocese.

1. Small group interactions – the conversation circles – were the highlight of the entire synodal process in the Archdiocese. The widespread, even enthusiastic, participation by parishes, individuals, movements, and groups emphasizes just how much the lay faithful want to have the opportunity to share in a discerning manner their convictions about the Church's life and mission. This synodal process should serve as a model for the future engagement of the laity in parish and archdiocesan matters that require the prayerful discernment of all the baptized.
2. Regardless of their concerns and perspectives, most participants spoke warmly of their love for Jesus Christ and his Church, understanding the importance of a personal and intimate relationship with the Lord. They expressed enthusiasm about being invited to participate in the synodal process and were happy with their engagement, sharing their hope and prayer that the Church will become more welcoming and inclusive. We now need to find a path for this kind of engagement to continue in our parishes and at the archdiocesan level.
3. The Holy Spirit is calling Catholics in the Archdiocese of Vancouver to follow the example of the early Church and to journey together, respecting our differences of culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, family structure, perspective, and socio-economic situations, as we read the signs of the times. Among these, parishes need to pay a great deal of attention to mental health issues among parishioners.
4. We are called to boldness in listening actively to all the faithful as we carry out the Church's mission together. We will do this most fruitfully if we continuously listen to one another in a true spirit of humility, so that we can discern God's will for his Church in communion with him and with one another.
5. God is challenging us as individuals and as a Catholic community to model the life of Jesus by embracing differences, loving radically, and honouring and supporting each human being at every stage of life from conception to natural death. By cultivating the fruits of the Spirit in our worship, ministry, and mission, we trust that the Lord will enlighten us and give us the grace to live the Gospel with joy.
6. The People of God in Vancouver recognize that the clergy need care, assistance, and support to better minister to, and engage, their parishioners, especially in the formation of lay leaders and in their pastoral accompaniment of the faithful.
7. The Archdiocese should strive to create spaces where marginalized persons would feel comfortable participating in dialogue about how the Church can be "on their side."

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APPENDIX A

Homily, Archbishop Michael J. Miller, CSB

Opening Mass of the Synodal Journey for the Synod on Synodality in the Archdiocese of Vancouver

Holy Rosary Cathedral

24 October 2021

Dear brother priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, seminarians, brothers and sisters, dear friends all in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Introduction

The good Lord has gathered us in our Cathedral this afternoon to begin an historic synodal process in preparation for the Synod of Bishops that will be held in Rome, two years from now, in October 2023. Its theme will be: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.”

What Is the Synod and the Synodal Process?

The Archdiocese of Vancouver is no stranger to the role of a synod in the Church’s life. On May 4, 1997, Archbishop Adam Exner released his pastoral letter “Toward a New Springtime,” which set the Archdiocese on a nine-year journey. This synodal process, that many of you took part in, culminated with the Final Synod Assembly and Declaration on the Synod on December 3, 2006. Today we are embarking on a different process, a journey with the universal Church guided by the Holy Father.

The word “Synod” comes from the Greek word that means both an assembly of persons and a journey taken together of mind, heart, and spirit, one aimed at discerning God’s will for his Church.

Likewise, the word “synodality” refers to those habits of mind, heart and spirit needed for us to participate fruitfully in discussions that will manifest and deepen the unity in communion so necessary for advancing the Church’s mission.

Echoing both Scripture and Tradition, Pope Francis speaks of synodality as a constitutive dimension of the Church’s life, not as an innovation. It is a way of describing how the Church, as a communion of believers – the Body of Christ and the People of God, united around the Eucharist – cooperates effectively with God’s plan for his Church in history.

What the Archdiocese will be undertaking in the coming months – at least until the Spring – is a process of spiritual discernment that will unfold in adoration, prayer and obedience to the Word of God and the Church’s teaching.¹ Because it’s a process, many meetings will be involved among priests, deacons, consecrated women and men, and laity, among people of all ages and cultures. Listening and dialogue will take place in parishes, religious communities, and associations regionally and across the Archdiocese.²

¹ Cf. Francis, Homily (10 October 2021).

² Cf. Archbishop William E. Lori, Homily (17 October 2021).

Here's a sample of the kinds of questions the various groups will be asked, so that a ten-page summary can be drawn up for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:

1. What helps or prevents you from being active in the Church's mission?
2. What areas of the Church's mission are we missing or neglecting?
3. What particular issues in the Church do we need to pay more attention to?
4. What particular issues in society do we need to pay more attention to?
5. How can we, the local Church, journey with our Indigenous brothers and sisters in a process of healing and reconciliation?
6. From this time of listening, could you sum up in one or two sentences how the Spirit is calling us to grow in "journeying together" in our Church in Vancouver?

In coming weeks and months, under the direction of our Chancellor, Barb Dowding, and the team she is working with, we will all be learning how to put this synodal way – this "synodality" – into practice, so that, in years to come, it will become more of a habit. Admittedly, it seems right now that Rome has thrown us into the deep end of the pool. However, let's remember that this is only the first attempt using a process that the Pope hopes will characterize the Church's future life. We're all learning together, and it will be a challenge.

It's a daunting task, but a necessary one. I believe that at all costs we have to avoid "the mistake of not taking seriously the times in which we are living" and of trying to apply "old solutions to new problems."³

We also have to keep from thinking that the Synod and the synodal process mimic parliamentary debate, are just elaborate opinion polls or are study groups for those learned in theology or Church affairs. Quite the contrary, Francis says unequivocally that everyone is called to participate, because "the Synod is an ecclesial event and its protagonist is the Holy Spirit."⁴

The Synodal Process in Light of Today's Gospel

Now, let me offer just two reflections on the synodal process as it will unfold in the Archdiocese. Based in today's Gospel, they point to listening to others and to encountering Jesus. What light does this account shed on how we should think and act in a "synodal way"?

1. Be an Attentive, Listening Community

Bartimaeus is an abandoned, blind beggar on the periphery of Jericho. No one listens to him. When he tries to speak, everyone tells him to keep quiet (cf. Mk 10:48). Jesus, however, invites him to speak: "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mk 10:51). It isn't hard to guess that Bartimaeus wants to regain his sight, and be rid of all the problems caused by blindness. Nonetheless, Jesus takes his time; he takes time to listen. This is the first step in any journey of faith: listening. "It is the apostolate of the ear: listening before speaking."⁵

³ Francis, Opening Address for the Synod (9 October 2021).

⁴ Francis, Opening Address for the Synod (9 October 2021).

⁵ Francis, Homily (28 October 2018).

Our Call to Listen: This is Synodality

So it is in our process of synodality. Jesus likewise wants to hear our needs as individuals and communities. He wants us to talk about our lives in the Church, our real situations, painful or joyful as they may be, so that nothing is kept from him.⁶

We are not to be like those who ordered Bartimaeus to be quiet (cf. Mk 10: 48). For such disciples, a person in need was a nuisance. They preferred their own timetable above that of Jesus, their own talking over listening to others. Although they were following Jesus, they had their own plans in mind.

How important it will be for us to listen patiently and lovingly to one another when we come together, just as God listens to us and to our prayers, however repetitive they may be. Let's ask now for the grace of a heart that listens. Like Jesus, let's not be rushed in our response to others. Most important, we can't be afraid to listen with our heart and not just with our ears. Whenever we listen with the heart, others feel that they are being heard, and not judged; they feel free to recount their own experiences and their spiritual journey.⁷

Pope Francis puts these questions to us:

Are we good at listening? How good is the "hearing" of our heart? Do we allow people to express themselves, to walk in faith even though they have had difficulties in life, and to be part of the life of the community without being hindered, rejected or judged? . . . It is a slow and perhaps tiring exercise, this learning to listen to one another – bishops, priests, religious and laity, all the baptized – and to avoid artificial and shallow and pre-packaged responses. . . . Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties.⁸

The Synod, then, offers us the opportunity to become a listening Church in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, to break out of our routine and pause from our everyday concerns in order to stop and listen.

2. Personal Encounter of Jesus with Bartimaeus

Now to the second point: the importance of encounter in the synodal process: with Jesus and with others. Look at Jesus in this afternoon's Gospel. He wants to meet personally with Bartimaeus. "Call him here" (Mk 10:49), the Lord says to his disciples.

He doesn't delegate someone from the "large crowd" (Mk 10:46) following him to take care of the blind beggar. Jesus is completely taken up with Bartimaeus. He doesn't try to sidestep him.⁹ The Lord doesn't stand aloof. He doesn't appear annoyed or disturbed. Instead, he is completely present to Bartimaeus. "He knows that someone's life can be changed by a single encounter."¹⁰

⁶. Cf. Francis, Homily (25 October 2015).

⁷. Cf. Francis, Homily (10 October 2021).

⁸. Francis, Homily (10 October 2021).

⁹. Francis, Homily (10 October 2021).

¹⁰. Francis, Homily (10 October 2021).

Our Call to Encounter: This Is Synodality

We are all called to carry out God's work in the way Jesus shows us; that is, in closeness to him and in communion with our brothers and sisters. As we begin this process of synodality, we too are called to become experts in the art of encounter; that is, we must take time to encounter the Lord and one another. We encounter him in prayer and adoration, so that we can hear what the Spirit wants to say to the Church. As we journey together, we also need to take the time to look others in the eye and listen to what they have to say, to build rapport with them, to be sensitive to their questions, and to let ourselves be enriched by the variety of their charisms and ministries.¹¹

Today's Gospel shows us an attitude that hinders our willingness truly to encounter others in the synodal process. Unlike Jesus, the disciples continued to walk by Bartimaeus, going on as if nothing was happening. If Bartimaeus was blind, they were deaf. His problem was not their problem.

For us, this attitude of indifference is a danger that can easily hinder the fruitfulness of our synodal process. Faced as we are with so many problems, we might be tempted to think that it's better just to move on, to not be bothered by yet another time-consuming meeting. In this way, just like the disciples, we are with Jesus, but we don't think and act like him.¹² Quite simply, we can be disinterested in the call to encounter others. We can be happy, so we think, in our own little group, but are "deaf to the clamour of so many people in need of salvation, in need of Jesus' help, in need of the Church."¹³

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters: let's pray that our engagement with the synodal process now beginning will be a true season of the Spirit and a grace-filled initiative! We need the creative breath of the Holy Spirit, who frees us from every form of self-absorption, revives what is moribund and spreads joy. May the Holy Spirit guide us where God wants the Church to be, not to where our own ideas and personal tastes would lead us.¹⁴

In the months and years ahead, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and on our brothers and sisters. Together we are searching for the paths that the Gospel indicates for our times, so that we can bring Jesus to the world and the world to Jesus. Let us follow the path that the Lord wants. Now, before continuing with the Eucharist, we entrust the work of our synodal process to the maternal intercession of Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary. Amen.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

11. Cf. Francis, Homily (28 October 2018).

12. Cf. Francis, Homily (25 October 2015).

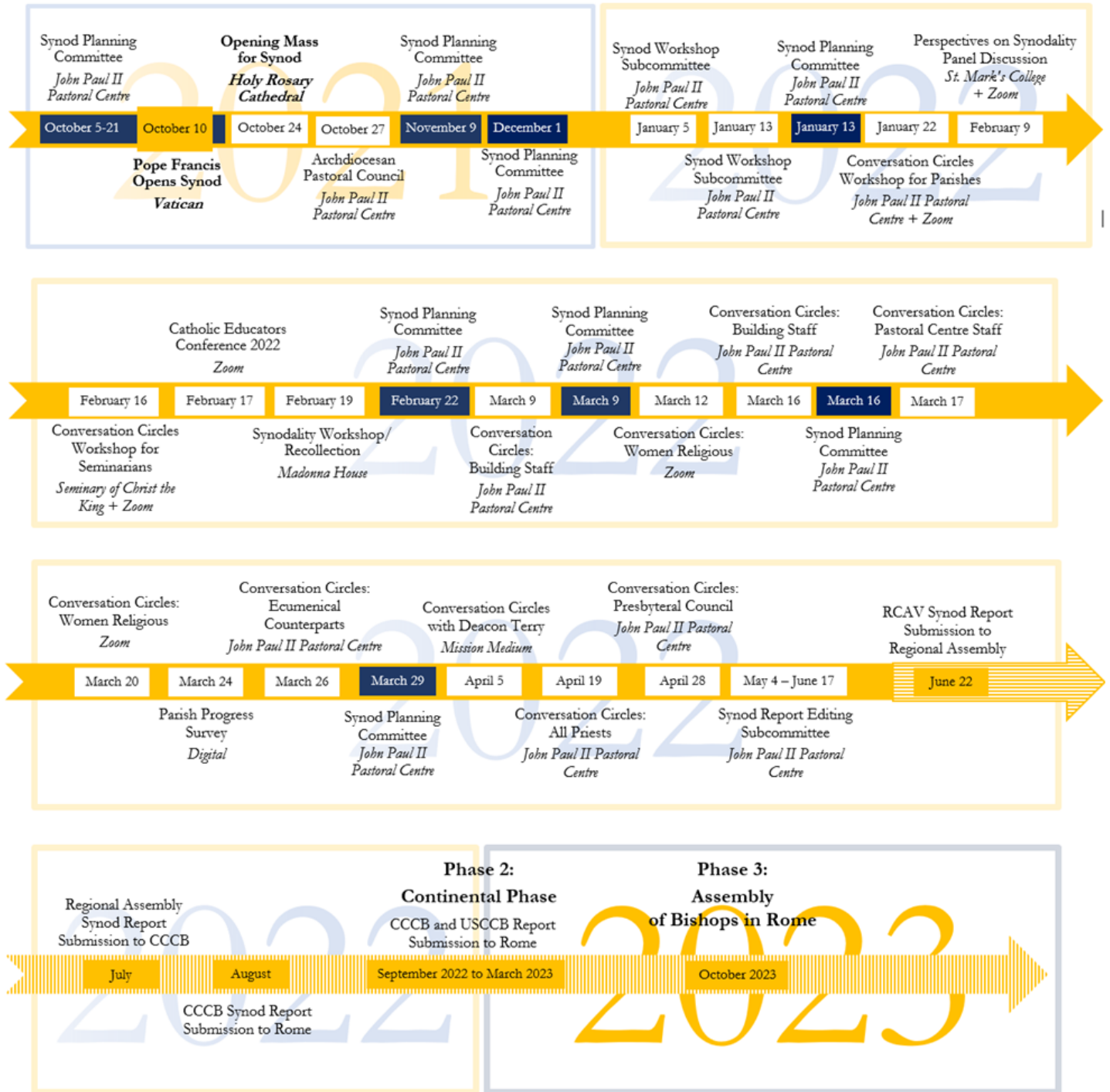
13. Francis, Morning Meditation (28 May 2015).

14. Cf. Francis, Opening Address for the Synod (9 October 2021).

APPENDIX B

Archdiocese of Vancouver Synod Timeline 2021-2023

Phase 1: Diocesan Phase



APPENDIX C

Parishioner Invitation



**The Church
wants to listen.
Come join the
conversation.**

SOME TOPICS OF CONVERSATION TO CONSIDER

- 1 What helps or prevents you from being active in the Church's mission?
- 2 What areas of the Church's mission are we missing or neglecting?
- 3 What particular issues in the Church do we need to pay more attention to?
- 4 What particular issues in society do we need to pay more attention to?
- 5 How can we, the local Church, journey with our Indigenous sisters and brothers in a process of healing and reconciliation?



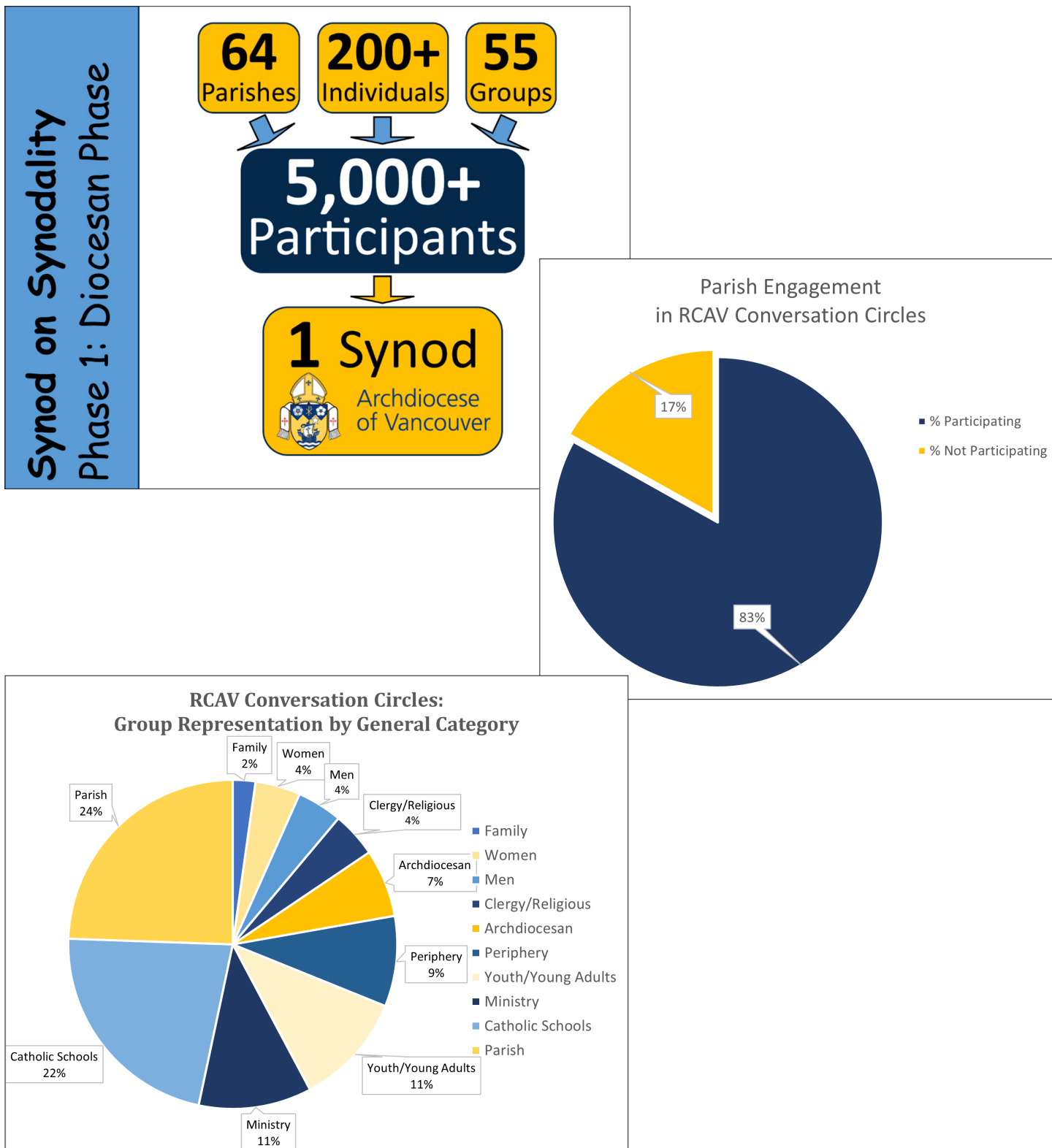
Keep an eye on your parish bulletin in the coming weeks to learn how you can participate in a Synod discussion.

For more information and to stay up to date with the latest Synod updates from the Archdiocese, visit rcav.org/synod.



APPENDIX D

Synod Participation Statistics



APPENDIX F

Synthesis Methodology

“We’re all learning together, and it will be a challenge. It’s a daunting task, but a necessary one” (Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, Homily, October 24, 2021).

Purpose: To develop a ten-page synthesis of responses from the synod “conversation circles.”

Overview

A team of twelve people, six from the synod steering committee and six from other departments at the Pastoral Centre, read through the responses from the conversation circles. A professional writer used the team’s consolidated material to produce a sixteen-page synthesis. An editing committee further organized the initial synthesis into a ten-page draft for submission to Archbishop Michael J. Miller, CSB.

Detailed Methodology

The 6,258 people who participated in the synod either individually or as part of a parish or group contributed to 322 submissions to the Archdiocese. Submissions resulted in feedback totalling more than 450+ pages. The process of synthesis continued when a team of twelve people, organized into four groups of three, read the responses in a three-day series of 2 to 2 ½ hour reading sessions. The sessions were mini workshops marked by prayer, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the words of Pope Francis, vivid imagery, and were completed within the liturgical season of Easter.

The readers focused more on deeply listening than simply analyzing. They thoughtfully and prayerfully hand-processed the responses of the individuals, groups and parishes line-by-line. The reading groups focused on the fundamental question of the synod, “How is this journeying together happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?” They wondered aloud how the obstacles noted by respondents could become opportunities, how the missing could become a part of the mission, how the proposed recommendations could become a purposeful roadmap, and how the highlighted issues could become hopeful invitations in the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

For the readers, it was a privilege to participate in those three days of listening, learning, and looking forward. The process was about the people in the room being open to the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit. These words from Pope Francis’ Pentecost 2022 homily illustrate this brief but profound experience:

We need to remember this: the Spirit rejuvenates the Church. Not us and our efforts to dress her up a bit. For the Church cannot be “programmed” and every effort at “modernization” is not enough. The Spirit liberates us from obsession with emergencies. He beckons us to walk his paths, ever ancient and ever new, the paths of witness, poverty, and mission, and in this way, he sets us free from ourselves and sends us forth into the world.

At the conclusion of the reading, the consolidated material was sent for a preliminary edit by a professional writer. When the written draft was prepared, an editing committee, including some of the readers, further reviewed and edited the document to meet the synod parameters, and capture the voice of synod respondents. The resulting draft was submitted to Archbishop Michael J. Miller, CSB, for final review in preparation for submission to the Regional Assembly.

Photographs from Reading and Synthesis phase



Sample PowerPoint Slides Created to Frame the Reading Sessions

Three Days
Two Questions
One Document

THE PATH AHEAD

ROSE: Dear brothers and sisters let's pray that our engagement with the synodal process [] will be a true season of the Spirit and a grace-filled initiative!

BARB: We need the creative breath of the Holy Spirit, who frees us from every form of self-absorption, revives what is moribund and spreads joy.

JOHN: May the Holy Spirit guide us where God wants the Church to be, not to where our own ideas and personal tastes would lead us.

CLAY: In the months and years ahead, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and on our brothers and sisters.

LISA: Together we are searching for the paths that the Gospel indicates for our times, so that we can bring Jesus to the world and the world to Jesus.

MARY JANE: Let us follow the path that the Lord wants.

Sr. MARY: Now [] we entrust the work of our synodal process to the maternal intercession of Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary.

ALL: *Hail Mary....Amen.*

ARCHBISHOP J. MICHAEL MILLER, HOMILY FROM THE OPENING MASS OF THE SYNOD, OCTOBER 24, 2021

Synod
Synthesis

RCAV
MAY 4, 10, & 18
2022

Synod
late Middle English:
via late Latin from Greek *synodos* 'meeting',
from *syn* 'together' + *hodos* 'way',
'together way'

Synthesis
early 17th century:
via Latin from Greek *synthesis*,
from *synathēnai*
'place together'.

So, it is in our process of synodality, Jesus likewise wants to hear our needs as individuals and communities. He wants us to talk about our lives in the Church, our real situations, painful or joyful as they may be, so that nothing is kept from him.

How important it will be for us to listen patiently and lovingly to one another when we come together, just as God listens to us and to our prayers, however repetitive they may be. Let's ask now for the grace of a heart that listens. ...

The Synod, then, offers us the opportunity to become **a listening Church** in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, to break out of our routine and pause from our everyday concerns in order to stop and listen.

Archbishop J. Michael Miller, Homily from the Opening Mass of the Synod, October 24, 2021

A synodal process has just been launched. Let us pray that it will be a great opportunity to **listen** to one another. Communion, in fact, is not the result of strategies and programmes, but is built in mutual listening between brothers and sisters.

As in a choir, unity does not require uniformity, monotony, but the plurality and variety of voices, polyphony. At the same time, each voice in the choir sings while listening to the other voices and in relation to the harmony of the whole. This harmony is conceived by the composer, but its realization depends on the symphony of each and every voice.

With the awareness that we participate in a communion that precedes and includes us, we can rediscover **a symphonic Church**, in which each person is able to sing with his or her own voice, welcoming the voices of others as a gift to manifest the harmony of the whole that the Holy Spirit composes.

Pope Francis, World Day of Social Communications, May 29, 2022

How is this "journeying together" happening TODAY in your particular Church?

May 4 Question #1: What helps or prevents your from being active in the Church's mission?

Question #2: What areas of the Church's mission are we missing or neglecting?

What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?

May 10 Question #3: What particular issues in the Church do we need to pay more attention to?

Question #4: What particular issues in society do we need to pay more attention to?

May 18 Question #5: How can we, the local Church, journey with our Indigenous sisters and brothers in a process of healing and reconciliation?

Question #6: From this time of listening, could you sum up in one or two sentences how the Spirit is calling us to grow in "journeying together"?

What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?

Where is the Spirit inviting us to go / grow in our "journeying together"?

Read
Reflect
Respond

TODAYS HOPE

Archdiocese
of Vancouver

*listening Church to a
symphonic Church*

How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church?

listening Church

- There has been from the start a desire on the part of the RCAF to hear all voices, especially those of people who have been **marginalized**
- Our goal was to hear from all voices, however, but when this process of listening is done in the context of hearing from those who have been most **marginalized**
- We have sought to hear from those who feel **marginalized** in the Church today

What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?

symphonic Church

- If we're going to **make music** that manifests the whole (as composed by the Holy Spirit) then we need to **mission to the margins** and gather those voices, too!

Question #1: What HELPS or PREVENTS you from being active in the Church's Mission?

Question #2: What areas of the Church's Mission are we MISSING or NEGLECTING?

"We know that the Church exists to evangelize, to go forth and to sow the seed of the Gospel in history. This mission can only be carried out if all areas of pastoral activity work together and, even more importantly, involve all the Lord's disciples. We must beware of the mentality that would separate priests and laity, considering the former as protagonists and the latter as executors, and together carry forward the Christian mission as the one People of God, laity and pastors. The Church as a whole is an evangelizing community."

POPE FRANCIS, MAY 2 2011, WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Question #1: What HELPS or PREVENTS you from being active in the Church's Mission?

Question #2: What areas of the Church's Mission are we MISSING or NEGLECTING?

I NOTICE :

- Frequent comments (critiques, concerns, challenges) about the experience of community within their local churches across all four columns
- More about Mass than Mission

IT MAKES ME WONDER :

- if the respondents interpreted the original questions without "mission" in mind? For example,
 - What helps or prevents you from being active in the church?
 - What areas of the church are we missing and neglecting?
- Did they confuse the path and purpose with the place?
- Difference between being AT / IN church, and BEING Church

IN OUR JOURNEYING TOGETHER :

- there is work to be done to improve the climate, culture, conditions of the local church such that people will (want to) mission (a requirement of the Church's catholicity).
 - How do we improve the one day (of Sunday) so that mission becomes a part of everyday (24/7)?


"Then too no human reality is foreign to the concern of the disciples of Jesus in their mission. Christ's Church will continue to "go forth" towards new geographical, social and existential horizons, towards "borderline" places and human situations, in order to bear witness to Christ and his love to men and women of every people, culture and social status. The Church must constantly keep pressing forward, beyond her own confines, in order to testify to all the love of Christ."

POPE FRANCIS, WORLD MISSION DAY, JANUARY 6 2022

Question #3 & 4:

What particular issues in the Church, and in Society do we need to pay more attention to?

WHAT PARTICULAR ISSUES IN THE _____		DO WE NEED TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO?	
<p>Q1: CHURCH</p> <p>1. LITURGY & SACRAMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homely • Music • Parishioner involvement • Education • Eucharistic devotion • Understanding of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist <p>2. HOLISTIC FORMATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual formation • Intellectual formation • Human formation • Accompaniment <p>3. YOUTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of engagement • Support • Accompaniment <p>4. EXCLUSIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcoming • Closedness • Clique mentality • Silos in ministry <p>5. ISSUES WITH PRIESTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clericalism • Formation • Developing/promoting vocations • Priestly support • Difficult with priests 	<p>6. RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our role in the past • Communication • Transparency <p>7. LGBTQ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support • Acceptance • Valuing <p>8. REACHING OUT TO THE MARGINALIZED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless • Refugees • Divorced • Special needs • Elderly <p>9. ABUSE BY CLERGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency <p>10. CHURCH DOCTRINE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to change • Lack of understanding • Tension with society <p>11. CHURCH'S IMAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency • Public relations • Own up to the past • Division <p>12. FAMILIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for young families • Access to Catholic education 	<p>Q2: SOCIETY</p> <p>1. MENTAL HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Depression • Loneliness • Addiction • Opioid, Drugs • Poverty • Family support • Homelessness • Suicide <p>2. SEXUALITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pornography • Gender inequality • LGBTQ • Same-Sex Marriage • Human Trafficking • Violence • Divorce <p>3. HUMAN DIGNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abortion • MAALD • Senior Support • Euthanasia • Beginning and End of Life <p>4. MARGINALIZED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Racism • Colonization • Indigenous • White Supremacy • Homelessness • Refugees • Immigrants 	<p>5. SOCIAL MEDIA / NEWS / POLARIZATION / TECH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics • Fake News • Cancel Culture • Influence of a Few <p>6. FAMILY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Parents • Housing • Divorce • Youth • Elderly <p>7. ENVIRONMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change <p>8. SECULARISM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualism • Consumerism • Materialism • Relativism • Greed <p>9. INCLUSIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of for People in the Above Groups <p><small>NOTES FROM THE "SOCIETY" TEAM</small></p> <p>(a) Where is the Church's stand on each of the above?</p> <p>(b) Busy-ness was conspicuously missing from above despite it being high on the list from Q1 and Q2. It is so close to people, so normalized as to be missed.</p>



THE INVITATION I SEE IN THIS ISSUE IS...

- How do we (re)claim our identity as a "catholic" Church?
 - including a wide variety of things; all embracing
 - from Greek katholicos 'universal', from kata 'in respect of' + holos 'whole'.
- How do we make the Church all-embracing in respect of the whole?
- How do we make the Church
 - the FLACE to be?
 - the place to BE?

What particular ~~issues~~ in the Church, and in Society do we need to pay more attention to?

"How far do human reality & design in the corners of the thoughts of Jesus in their mission. Christ's Church will continue to 'go forth' towards new geographical, social and ecclesial horizons, towards 'borderline' places and human situations, in order to bear witness to Christ and his love to men and women of every people, culture and social status. The Church must constantly keep pressing forward, beyond her own borders, in order to testify to all the love of Christ!"

Attention to Invitation		
I notice...	It makes me wonder...	"The invitation I see in this issue is..."

"Dear brothers and sisters, it is my hope that our meetings in these days will point out *new paths to be pursued together*, instil courage and strength, and lead to greater commitment on the local level..."

Question #5:

How can we, the local Church, journey with our Indigenous sisters and brothers in a process of healing and reconciliation?

PAPAL ADDRESS AND APOLOGY TO INDIGENOUS DELEGATES AT THE VATICAN ON APRIL 1

"Receiving the joy of the Spirit is a grace. Moreover, it is the only force that enables us to preach the Gospel and to confess our faith in the Lord" (Message to the Pontifical Mission Societies, 21 May 2020). The Spirit, then, is the true protagonist of mission. It is He who gives us the right word, at the right time, and in the right way.

Question #6:

From this time of listening, could you sum up in one or two sentences how the Spirit is calling us to grow in "journeying together?"

POPE FRANCIS, WORLD MISSION DAY, JANUARY 6 2022


Read the definition of either *communion*, *participation*, or *mission* from Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality.

Then find three (3) statements that best align with / echo the definition. Which three excerpts best illustrate processes that can help our local Church:

- to live *communion*,
- to achieve *participation*,
- to open Herself to *mission*


"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

John 15: 7-8

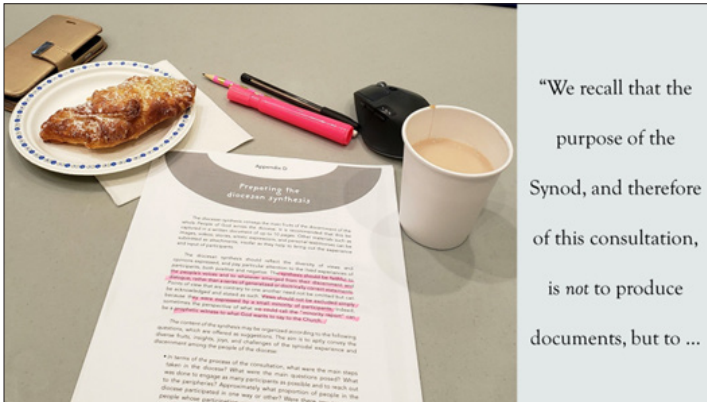


"... We are like the tiles of a mosaic. Each is lovely in itself, but only when they are put together do they form a picture. Each of us shines like a star in the heart of God and in the firmament of the universe. At the same time, though, we are called to form constellations that can guide and light up the path of humanity, beginning with the places in which we live. This is the mystery of the Church: a celebration of differences, a sign and instrument of all that humanity is called to be. For this reason, the Church must become increasingly synodal: capable of walking together, united in harmonious diversity, where everyone can actively participate and where everyone has something to contribute."

POPE FRANCIS, MAY 8, 2022, WORLD DAY OF VOCATIONS



We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, Who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.



“We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but to ...



“plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish,



inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships,



awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will ...



enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands.”

Synod

late Middle English:
via late Latin from Greek *sunodos* 'meeting',
from sun- 'together' + *hodos* 'way'.
'together way'

Synthesis

early 17th century:
via Latin from Greek *synthesis*,
from *synthithenai*
'place together'.

Symphony

via Latin from Greek *sumphōnia*,
from *sumphōnos* 'harmonious', from sun- 'together' + *phōnē* 'sound'.
'harmonious together'