

Name of parish or group that the report is being submitted on behalf of:

St. Joseph's Parish, Ottawa, Ontario report to the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall

Please describe the context of your group discussions, including number of participants and aspects of diversity.

St. Joseph's is an inner-city parish adjacent to Ottawa University. It is a parish of choice for many parishioners who come from the suburbs and beyond seeking an adult spirituality. The parish supports many ministries in the areas of Liturgy & Music, Community Building, Faith Formation & Initiation, Pastoral Care and Social Justice. The St Joe's Supper Table and Women's Centre which are funded by parish donations, grants and the City of Ottawa.

The parish Synod sessions took place online as the city was slowly opening from COVID restrictions with a facilitator and a note taker at each session. Sessions involved 54 people, representing about 10% of the parish, in twelve groups including focus groups for staff and for the LGBT community. (Most groups had two 90-minute sessions. A few non-parishioners joined the discussions.) University Students were unable to take part because meetings were held after the final semester.

In your group's discussion, which points of view seem to be held in common on the experience of Church? Include other points of view mentioned less but are noteworthy.

- Parishioners are positive about St. Joe's parish, finding it welcoming, non-judgemental and supportive, as contrasted with experiences elsewhere.
- Many are sad that friends and adult children no longer attend Mass. The language of the Liturgy can be a stumbling block for some. We heard calls for more catechesis, teaching masses, liturgies targeting children & young adults, and more opportunities for interaction, participation and non-traditional liturgies.
- Some newcomers find it difficult to volunteer in parish ministries and the progression to belonging is unclear.

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

Despite our joy in worshiping together, we express to our Church our pain, our grief, and our frustration.

- People want to belong and fully participate in the life of the Church. Many do not feel accepted or included. Catholic Theology on Sexuality and Family Life harms people who are divorced, women, and people who identify as LGBTQ+.
- Women expect to have a voice and be treated with respect and equality. Women expect to participate in all areas of the Church; for some this includes ordination.
- The Church has much to learn from other faiths and traditions. Listening, engaging and forming relationships is key to ecumenism becoming a lived reality.
- We want to see strong leadership from the Bishops in the areas of reconciliation and healing with Indigenous Peoples and care for creation.
- Authentically involve both the laity and clergy in Church governance at all levels.
- Many support married clergy.

Through listening to the dreams, desires, and aspirations for the Church expressed by participants and through discernment, in what ways is the Holy Spirit guiding the Church to grow in synodality.

- Those who joined in our sessions loved the opportunity to give to the whole Church. They appreciated being asked these questions and so, spoke from their hearts. They also listened and felt transformed.
- Through encounter with others, we are converted to a deeper sense of God and are hopeful for church to be meaningful.
- We recommend that Synodality become the heart of our community life.