

Summary Report
St. John The Evangelist Parish – Attleboro MA
Global Synod on Synodality

“For A Synodal Church – Communion, Participation and Mission” was launched by Pope Francis in 2021. The purpose is to listen to all members of the Body Christ and to discern, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what God is saying to the Church today.

St. John the Evangelist parishioners participated in the Global Synod in a series of meetings early in 2022. Our input was incorporated in a Fall River Diocese Summary and a North American Summary.

The following is a summary of what was heard during approximately 20 “focus” groups including parishioners of all ages, members of the Spanish Community, youth from religious education classes, retirement home residents and parishioners serving on parish councils and committees.

What We Heard:

There is broad respect for the Church and its leaders, particularly Pope Francis and our pastor Father Craig Pregana.

Across all participants, the desire for the global Church, the diocesan Church and St. John’s parish to “Welcome All” was loud and clear. This included multiple references to being more welcoming to LGBTQ individuals, divorced and remarried, immigrants and those who have been alienated for a variety of reasons. In welcoming all, many participants suggested greater accommodations especially for divorced and remarried

Concern was expressed for the number of people and families no longer active in the Church. The continuing negative impact of the abuse scandal and the pandemic were cited as contributing factors. Suggestions included the need for more transparency and applying Church teaching to current day issues

Focus on Christ rather than rules was a recurring theme when discussing how the Church teaches. This included the need for love and mercy; and a return to the basics; and addressing misconceptions around things such as divorce. Many participants expressed the desire for the church to be more accommodating, particularly to the divorced and remarried.

On issues that need to be addressed and discussed more openly, participants spoke of end-of life, life after death, human sexuality (cohabitation, gender identity, same sex

attraction, etc.), divorce, remarriage and care of the planet. There was a desire to put the rules in context, connecting to both scripture and life circumstances.

The need for the Church to be influential in upholding, reinforcing and defending Christian values in the broader community was mentioned, but tempered with the admonition against clergy at all levels becoming political.

Roles in the Church were addressed by many participants. Greater authority for the laity and women, in particular, were mentioned. Several people expressed the opinion that pastors need not be responsible for the day-to-day financial and facilities operations in the parish. Women should be given more responsibility and authority. Some suggested this should include women deacons and priests. All agreed that youth must be more involved in the Church.

Youth in the Religious Education program noted that the many obstacles (school, sports, work, family gatherings) make it difficult to attend Mass. The pandemic had a mixed effect. For some it gave them time to think about their faith. For most, it disconnected them and made them more anxious. The youth are looking for more support from the parish to help them grow in their faith and life. This includes more discussion of relevant issues, support in dealing with life and opportunities to gather socially.

Members of the **Spanish** speaking community spoke well of the growing Spanish population within the parish but noted the need for even greater emphasis on family and support services since many are new to the area and came to find work. At the same time, other Christian churches are reaching out with support.

Many participants were skeptical, but at the same time hopeful, that the Synod process would lead to any real action within the Church.

St. John's Parish

Generally, a satisfaction with the direction of the parish was expressed, balanced by the desire to see much more activity going forward.

These were some of the comments related specifically to St. John's:

- Welcome the "one parish" attitude. Encourage mixing of nationalities, etc.
- Continue to welcome all – recognize Christ in everyone
- Create a "welcome center" where people can drop in at any time.
- Encourage all parishioners to evangelize and give witness.
- Create different groups to encounter different people – youth, adults, children etc.

- Develop more activities to bring adults, families and youth together encouraging social interaction and a renewed sense of purpose.
- Form a Youth Group.

- More outreach to the elderly, homebound, sick, divorced, lonely, those in pain, those in crisis.
- More outreach to the community – regardless of denomination.
- More social networks in the community.

- More shared leadership with the laity.
- Delegate more responsibilities to lay people.
- More parishioners volunteering
- More specific ministries
- Support groups that are knowledgeable on annulments, divorce misconceptions.

- Synod meetings are pointless, if we don't do anything.
- Demonstrate that you have listened to us through frequent communication and actions.