

## **RECURRING THEMES FROM THE SYNOD IN THE DIOCESE OF JOLIET (2024)**

*Note: This is a summary based on two synod listening sessions held in the Diocese of Joliet during Lent 2024, as well as comments provided by email in response to the following prompts:*

- 1. Where have I seen or experienced successes—and distresses—within the Church's structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage or hinder the mission?*
- 2. How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy in Christ?*

*The ideas, comments, and suggestions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Diocese of Joliet and are not listed in any particular order.*

### **FORMATION / EDUCATION**

There was a call for the formation of priests to be fostered and improved.

It was expressed that there is a need for formation from the top, down – for the priests, deacons and laity alike.

There was a call to “go back to fidelity and truth, the Deposit of Faith”.

An emphasis was put on the need for priests to utilize the Mass and their homilies as a way to teach and reinforce the Faith.

Regarding politics: some believe that we should receive a “Catholic view point” on politics, while others believe that politics need to be left out of the Mass.

It was expressed that priests should emphasize the importance of the Eucharist and Confession.

### **GOVERNANCE / LEADERSHIP**

Some faithful expressed that small, rural, poorer parishes are overlooked.

There was a desire expressed for leadership, especially bishops, in the Church to be clear about the Faith and the Church's teachings due to the confusion created by the times in which we are living – some expressed that “we have lost our countercultural stance in the Church”.

By some, it was emphasized that the roles of laity and clergy need to be understood so that they are not confused. At the same time, it was suggested that, where there is a need, the Church could allow Lay Parish Life Coordinators to lead parishes (instead of closing them, for instance). It was suggested, “We need shared governance”. Some called upon the Church to “trust the baptized”. In this same vein, it was expressed that priests need to emphasize and spend more time teaching, preaching and on the sacramental life, rather than on the administration aspect.

There were some that asked for more involvement of women in leadership roles in the Church; some examples were: women pastoral managers; allow preaching, like from that of a Mother Theresa.

Some believe that priests should be allowed to get married.

Some have asked why are bishops not demonstrating more leadership on social issues and social justice?

## **YOUTH**

There was distress and concern expressed regarding our young people with emphasis that we must “engage and reach the young generations” because they “are being left out because of the modern world and how much has changed”.

Questions were asked, “where will we get vocations?”; “how do we build a church that is responsive to them?”. It was suggested to use social media in order to engage and teach the youth.

## **EVANGELIZATION / MISSION**

It was said that “The Faith should be a vehicle of evangelization”.

It was expressed that priests should be clear about the “mission of the Mass” and the “mission in the world”.

It was asked: “How does the Church bring back those who have been excluded, and give them a voice?”, i.e. sexual abuse victims, gender issues etc.

It was said that: “Times are changing and the Spirit is moving us”; “Let’s open the windows again like Pope John XXIII said”; “Let’s consider how everyone views their relationship with God”.

It was stated that “The Catholic Church is falling behind in its acceptance of people”, including the exclusion of other Christians from receiving the Eucharist.

One person said, “The Church has a gravitational pull like nothing else and we just have to get out of the way”.

Some emphasized that “Social justice/Gospel justice is why we do what we do”.

## **COMMUNITY / UNITY**

It was expressed that, despite political differences “we need to hold onto things that bring us together, not that separate us”. There was an emphasis that “we need to unify”.

There is a suggestion that the Church “has become insular” and that “there is a lack of community and relationships”.

There was an emphasis that “we need to work with each other” and that parishes need to be “welcoming, understanding and familial”.

It was also suggested that there should be more faith groups at the parish level.

There was a call for a “structure” in order to help build community.