



**JULY 2022**

**RECURRING THEMES FROM THE SYNOD REPORTS IN THE DIOCESE OF JOLIET**

*(Note: Diocese of Joliet Chancellor David Salvato collected and synthesized comments from across the diocese from October 2021 to April 2022 for the Synod on Synodality. Thirty-five parishes conducted listening sessions, while remarks were also offered from the following populations: religious women, permanent deacons, the deaf community, the disabled community, women's groups, and nearly 100 lay people, including practicing Catholics, fallen-away Catholics, and other Christian denominations. The following themes recurred in the gathered remarks, and are listed in no particular order.)*

**Youth/Young families** – young people are leaving; the Church is missing a connection with them; we need to make the Church more suitable/engaging to them; Protestants are often cited as knowing how to engage the youth; use of technology could help.

**Marginalized** – elderly; people of color; LGBTQ; women (should have a stronger role; many asking why women are not ordained); divorced; mentally ill; immigrants; “traditional” Catholics; fallen-away Catholics.

**More Welcoming** – we need to meet people “where they are”; we must welcome and invite people to church, especially those who have fallen away.

**Education** – need formation/catechesis at all levels (children, teenagers, adults); emphasize tradition, teachings and symbols of the Church; there is a general lack of education; need to provide guest speakers, musicians or theological presentations at the parish level; emphasize the Beatitudes; emphasize the sacramental core of the Church.

**Liturgy/Eucharist** – emphasize the Real Presence in the Eucharist; emphasize beauty and improve the spirit of the Mass.

**Laity** – are not heard often enough; they should be able to help with administrative duties of the priests; leadership should not be restricted to priests; volunteers need to be encouraged among the laity.

**Priests** – emphasis should be put on their role as provider of sacraments and preaching the Gospel rather than fundraising and busying themselves with mundane parish issues that can be taken care of by lay employees; they should have ongoing formation, support groups and evaluations.

**Address the sexual abuse scandal** – many believe not enough has been done to remedy the scandals.

**Right to Life issues** – emphasize all “life issues,” not only abortion.

**Homilies** – relate Scripture to real life; they need to be more meaningful; they should consider the personal challenges of the parishioners; they need to explain the Gospels.

**Polarization** – society is polarized due to political/social issues, and this polarization is found in the same way in the Church, from the top down; the Church needs to provide safe/trustworthy forums in which people can speak without fear and judgment.

**Hierarchy** – Bishops need to speak with one voice; need to highlight the good the Church does; many have asked: *why can't priests get married?*; accountability: for instance, *where is the parishioners' money going?*

**Communication** – we need to be open-minded and listen with the heart and with empathy; more communication is needed at the local parish level between the pastors and the parishioners; there needs to be a safe place for parishioners to voice their concerns (some have suggested a ‘feedback box’ for people to anonymously submit comments or ideas).

**Action** – show faith through actions, not just “lip-service”; speak truth with love and mercy.

**Problems** – prejudice; religious freedom in peril; Church does not motivate; cliques within parishes (all committees and meetings should be open to all parishioners, not just a select few); the world has the wrong impression of the Church (many lies said about it); there needs to be less emphasis on money; “At times, the Church operates as a corporation, too worried about PR and finances.”