Synod Report - 2021-2022

St. Augustine Parish - Cleveland

Bob Duda, Parish Administrator, and Pat Takacs, MSN, parishioner

Preparation and Contacts

While engaging parishioners and encouraging them to join the Synod discussions being offered, either on Zoom or in-person sessions, these were reasons given for not wanting to participate. All of this input was face-to-face and verbal. (1) “We just had an in-person retreat in the summer with Fr. Bill, discussing the same questions. Why repeat it?” (2) “Does the Bishop realize that this is the holiday season and we are trying to arrange a safe way to meet with relatives? This takes a lot of time and preparation.” (3) “There is a pandemic going on, and we don’t want to meet in person, in groups.” (4) “Does the Bishop think all of can afford a computer, or have WiFi in our neighborhoods?” (5) “I am so disappointed in the Catholic Church! What exactly does he think we believe will change, if anything?” (6) “They could have waited until summer, and safety precautions were lifted, before holding discussion sessions.” (7) “Are they going to edit or ignore our real input to send to Rome and not what we really say?”

Because of some of these statements, we were able to come up with a format of questions on paper that parishioners could answer in writing and turn in to the parish anonymously. We also had special sessions for our Elderly, the Blind, and the Deaf groups, as well as included parishioners who live in St. Augustine Towers Assisted Living. They thanked us and said they are usually ignored. The deaf felt excluded because they were not invited to the training sessions, as no interpreters were listed as provided during training. Some parishioners did not want to be contacted by the diocese, so no contact information was given. Some did not even want their date of birth placed on the record, but were very engaged in the process. Those who attended provided very impressive input to the questions.
Demographic Information

Number of adults: 132  
Number of Children: 1  
Grades/Ages each child: 9  
Age Range of Adults (if provided): 35 – 90 years old  
No Data given at all: 5  
Gender - Males: 40  Females: 87  
Cultural self-identification:  
African American 12  Black 4  Caucasian American 89  
Hispanic American 1  Hispanic 5  Hispanic Mexican 2  
Puerto Rican American 1  No Data Given 17  
Name of Parish: St. Augustine Parish - Cleveland

Answers To The Questions

Q: What is your favorite memory of the Church?  
The most often stated three answers:  
• First Communion  
• Confirmation  
• Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

The most often stated about St. Augustine Parish:  
• “My children and I are deaf, but very accepted here (at St. Augustine). They have a deaf choir; on a committee where I meet new people; people giving food and clothing to the homeless”  
• “Help financially when we were down as a family”  

2.
• “Now the teachings are all about compassion and love. We are told God loves us! Not like before, always told to fear God”
• “Am not Catholic (four people), but grateful for the community I have here at St. Augustine. So much kindness and acceptance”
• “St. Augustine does a lot of forgiving and love for others”

Q: When was a moment you felt unwelcomed by the Church?

The most often stated answers:
• “we sometimes feel unwelcome: Single people, Divorced people, separated people”
• 6 statements about not feeling welcome due to being Black (except St. A’s)
• Volunteers in different Catholic Churches on committees and suggestions ignored
• Children refused Baptism as parents not married in Catholic Church but raised Catholic
• “Horrible job reaching out to victims” (6 people)

Q: What have you heard the Holy Spirit saying in the voices of the group?

• “Pray more often: for souls in purgatory; invite other people to Mass; more adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; small group discussions; Bible Studies”
• “Be united; never turn anyone away; treat people as you want to be treated; Do more for others but listen to what they need”
• “Continue to minister to all people, especially the disabled”
• “More compassion toward others; Love one another, don’t judge”

Emerging Actions:

The 2 or 3 we are being called to take to grow in synodality?

1. “We need to be comfortable in our Faith and where we’re at in order to reach out to others, especially the disadvantaged”

3.
2. “Keep welcoming everyone, even non-Catholics like some of us. Ask, ‘how is your load?’ “

3. Fr. Bill listens to us as we are all believers in God, so all are welcome here, “No matter what your present status in the Catholic Church, no matter your personal history, age, income, background, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or spirituality, or marital situation. No matter your own self-image of holiness or virtue. You are invited, accepted, and respected here at St. Augustine Parish. ‘Loving God, For all who feel on the margins, but who are at the center of your heart, we ask you to open our hearts. Help us to become a Church and a Nation where: All lives have dignity, All people are loved, And all are welcome. Amen. “

- **To what actions do we feel strongly called?**

  **In our Personal Life?**
  - Participating in the life of the Community around us, out side the Church, i.e. volunteer in local concerts, neighborhood clean-up, festivals, etc.
  - Take care of parents and grandchildren
  - Be more pastoral in our actions and words by sharing the faith
  - Mentorship for Mothers and Families

  **In Our Community?**
  - Continue Mass virtually to help the handicapped and aged
  - Get hearing people involved in learning Sign Language so we are more cohesive as a community
  - Pole parishioners more often to find out what hey think on all changes
  - Need Adult catechetical classes, more Bible Studies, etc.
  - Educate about homelessness and invite NEOCH to speak to us
  - Meet to pray with a homeless partner
  - More fellowship time after each Mass with donuts and coffee and sharing
As a Diocese?

- Improve Social Services by selling some art work and artifacts in these big churches so we can help all those with needs
- Need more accountability from Catholic Charities as some of us see it as a ministry, not a “program within a corporation”.
- Publish a directory of churches within the diocese so we can join together in our ministries, i.e., those who feed the homeless, those with food pantries, those who minister to our youths, those with family support groups, etc., and keep it updated.
- Teach more adult catechism in churches so that we are all together on what it means to be Catholic.
- Need more parishioners to minister to all these groups, i.e., mothers, families, Bible studies, prayer groups, growth groups, etc.
- Mentioned many times in every group, we need LISTENING groups. A place where people can go and just be heard. Mass is a lot of words, some time after to listen, but not enough. Need more after Mass fellowship time.
- The Bishop to reach out and have a Mass at the LGBTQ+ Center on Detroit in Gordon Square
- Continue the virtual Mass for the handicapped and elderly so they do not feel lonely
- Please help those homebound obtain and use computers and obtain WiFi
- Allow priests to marry as they do in the Catholic Church in other countries. Needs to be universal in the Catholic Church. This way, a priest can be more understanding with the needs of married people.
- Finally, at one of the Zoom discussions, a young father was present. We did an Examen based on the biblical walk, “The road to Emmaus”. In this Examen we took a walk at our beach near the lake. While we were contemplating talking to Jesus, the young father’s daughter, using “YG” for this report, drifted into the room where her father was on Zoom. YG began to draw and shared it with all of us present afterwards. In it, she had her father, with a trimmed beard, walking next to Jesus and a few other people. Then we sat on the rocks and she drew her dad sitting with Jesus.
At the top of the drawings, she drew her dad and Jesus doing Zumba. So touching! And a child shall lead them! She knew that Jesus accompanied her father in all that he did. On the other side of the picture, she drew, "The People of the Giving Community", referring to our Hunger Center. Such good parents that YG knew God was present in her father’s everyday life. We are truly blessed! Thank You.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Duda, Parish Life Administrator, and Pat Takacs, MSN, parishioner
The People of the Giving Community

Donations Please
Zumba Classes!!!