

This is a summary of the Parish's responses in the Synod Process. I (Fr. Hans) have taken the liberty of combining similar responses for the sake of space, and categorizing them for the sake of ease of reading.

<p><i>Question 1 - What in the Church fills me with life? How is the Holy Spirit working in my life to deepen my faith and inspire me to be a better disciple and witness of Christ's love to others?</i></p> <p>The two most common responses were "The Mass" and "Community." There were also a lot of "Personal Prayer" and "Works of Mercy".</p> <p>The Mass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to Mass and understanding the homily • The homilies give me my homework for the week to keep God's word fresh in my mind • Liturgy, singing, chanting • Communion with Christ during Mass <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sense of inclusion - across cultural, economic, social backgrounds - everyone is on equal footing, everyone has the same purpose as everyone else • The church welcomes me where I'm at • It's the community that holds me • I may not agree with others, but they give me hope and joy 	<p>Personal Prayer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning my will over to God • The Holy Spirit gives me opportunities to examine the roles I play in my life • The Holy Spirit keeps me from giving up and to keep searching on how best to live God's word <p>Works of Mercy (Corporal and Spiritual)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching the faith to our children • Being the face of God to each person I meet • Participating in many church ministries does more for me, but I hope that it helps others too • Needing to care for our planet <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sacraments/homilies/music fill me with life • The Church represents an intense simplicity • Holy Spirit with the guidance of the priest, helped me to come to grips with trauma • Learning more about my Catholic Faith • It just makes sense
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<p><i>Question 2 - As a community of believers, what experiences of the Catholic Church have brought joys or revealed wounds? And how can these experiences help us grow together in faith and offer the hope and healing of Christ to the greater community in which we live?</i></p> <p>The often-repeated responses for "Joys" included Community, Confession, Works of Mercy, and the Mass. For "Wounds" by far the most common response was the history of sexual abuse by priests (I condensed a lot of responses together), and the handling of it by the bishops. Also getting significant repetition was the exclusion of various groups including LGBTQA, women, divorced, etc.</p> <p>Joys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreats • Our culturally and ethnically diverse community reminds us of the global faith community • The opportunity to serve and the gift of creating service opportunities for others • Family Promise, St. Vincent de Paul, Faith Cafe, etc. • The uniformity of the Mass as I travel reminds me I am always home • The simplicity of Jesus's example to us - "love one another as I have loved you" • The Sacraments, Baptisms and Weddings, Eucharist • Confession brings a freeing feeling • Participating in RCIA, and the Easter Vigil, and witnessing joy in joining our community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community brings me joy and makes faith a part of who I am and easy to speak about my faith • Faith sharing groups offer chance to share and heal • Seeing the Church survive in trying times • Charismatic prayer services • Popes Francis, JP II, John XXIII all brought joy • Canonization of saints who can serve as role models • Learning to forgive others and ourselves • Coming to church feels like family, a second family <p>Wounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth leaving the Church because they feel they are being told "how to live", and the history of sexual abuse and male only leadership • Exclusion - real or perceived - of LGBTQA, divorced • Abuse by priests and how it was handled • Division between the Eastern Rites and Roman Rite • Church structure, especially male domination • Women had leadership roles in the early church, and now women do not feel included or invited • Lack/slowness of speaking out against abominations like the Ukraine war • Perception of people who are non-traditional including those who are gay and divorced • The greatest wound is the abuse by priests • The Crusades, the abuses of Native American children in the name of education, rejections, and persecutions of anyone who is different
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Question 3 - As a Catholic community, we are expressly enjoined to invite others into a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ. When we dream about how to best accomplish this, what steps is the Holy Spirit inviting the Church in western Oregon to take?

A huge quantity and variety of ideas came up in our discernment of what steps the Church in Western Oregon should take. The most common responses fell into the categories of “Faith Groups”, “Evangelization”, “Eliminating Condemnation”, “Vulnerability”, “Private Prayer”, and “Catechesis”.

Evangelization

- Open eyes/ears/heart in western Oregon
- Evangelization effort like the “I Found It” campaign
- Be visible as a church through plays, music, concerts, podcasts, videos, feast days, special occasions, in our neighborhoods, and streets
- Not be afraid to be a Catholic and to show respect for all people and religions
- Lead by example and share our faith
- Invite friends and family to Mass
- Formal but relaxed plans through the Archdiocese
- Dispel the false information on the Church, and provide the truth of our Faith
- Do a better job of “advertising”

Eliminating Condemnation

- Focus on simplicity - this is the shortest path to eliminating judgmentalism in Church
- Downplay the “no” - celebrate the “yes”
- We need to eliminate judgement within the Church - the reality or perception of the Church excluding some based on “not being fit” for inclusion
- we need to eliminate the perception that the Church is a life of ticking a list of rules - we should desire community with all, not be obligated by rules to portions of all
- For the Church not to have a place for LGBTQA in our community is a major issue
- We must take a message of inclusion into our surrounding communities
- We need to be welcoming without judgement
- Celebrating the Christ within each person
- Affirm positive, life-giving aspects of our faith, and get away from the laundry list of “bad”

Faith Groups

- Support not only prayer groups but all groups that gather in faith to be able to connect and help others grow in their faith
- Have bible studies for adults, we often go to mass and hear the gospel but do not know how to read the bible or understand the message
- It needs to be community effort - provide a range of opportunities (Legion of Mary, Knights of Columbus, etc.) so that everyone can find a “faith” home
- The rituals of family and community

Private Prayer

- True interpersonal intimacy should be our goal in the Church
- Surrender novena is powerful and recommended
- Catholics need to increase in their individual prayer
- Adoration of the Eucharist
- Refocusing and allowing time to Listen to God

Vulnerability

- Show vulnerability
- Be willing to see all as a work in progress
- Be less comfortable with where we are as a church and be willing to ask questions and make changes
- Recognize our weaknesses and forgive ourselves
- Learn from others, pay attention to others, because other churches and secular sources have great ideas
- Be open to where the Holy Spirit is leading us

Catechesis

- Have materials like workbooks that will help us learn more about our faith
- More adult catechesis and encourage adults to participate more
- More and better young adult catechesis
- My former parish is very Sacramental and catechism based, and Here at SJD I feel it is too relaxed

Other

- Women and married priests should be options
- Make Sunday matter—parental apathy will affect the next generation
- Homiletics should be better
- Decide on a single purpose (homelessness, hunger, etc.) that the entire Archdiocese can support
- Engaging our youth is essential to building a strong church

As you can see, there’s a lot here to digest, a lot to pray about, and a lot to integrate. This was the first step of the Synod. We brought this to the vicariate discernment session on May 14th, and over the next few months the Archdiocese will prepare a 10 page summary to then pass on to the worldwide Synod in 2023.

For myself, this process and this summary are very helpful for my own discernment about where the Holy Spirit is leading our parish. I see no definitive answers here, but I do think I have a much better sense of what is most important for our parish at this time. Thank you to all who participated in this process!