



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY SYNTHESIS OF ONLINE SURVEY & LISTENING SESSIONS



**DIOCESE OF SCRANTON, PA
OCTOBER 2021 - JUNE 2022**



Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In October 2021, Pope Francis launched the ‘Synod on Synodality,’ a two-year process of prayer, listening, dialogue and discernment regarding how the Church can better engage and evangelize all the People of God. The Diocese of Scranton, under the direction of Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, responded to the Holy Father’s request to participate in the first phase of the Synodal Process by conducting a listening phase in local churches. The Diocese’s three-prong approach to the Synodal Process included:

1. All people in the Diocese were invited to participate in an online Synod survey from November 2021-April 2022. Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding ten themes of journeying together in synodality. The invitation was made known in parish bulletins, through the Diocesan website and newspaper, Catholic Television and social media. A total of 3,265 individuals participated in the online survey and contributed 9,943 written comments to the various questions asked.
2. All parishes in the Diocese were strongly encouraged to hold in-person or virtual listening sessions. In addition, community groups and organizations were also invited to participate. In total, 87 listening sessions were held with 1,551 individuals participating. Furthermore, all Catholic School students in the Diocese (between Grades 6-12) participated – adding the voice of hundreds of area youth into the overall analysis.
3. On Pentecost Sunday, June 5, 2022, Bishop Bambera convened a Pre-Synodal gathering, known as an “Afternoon of Listening,” with parish and community representatives. Every parish and multiple community organizations were invited to send a representative to have their community’s voice heard directly by the Bishop.

There were a wide variety of opinions and ideas expressed throughout this local Synod process. While many expressed their joy and love of the Church, others voiced their concerns, pains and frustrations. In all, 49 themes emerged after analyzing all in-person listening reports and all online survey comments. These themes are now being presented back to the Diocesan community.

In our best effort to make this report understandable and actionable, the Diocese of Scranton’s report is organized around the ten different themes of synodality that were the centerpiece of both in-person listening sessions and the online survey. In addition to highlighting the responses that emerged most consistently, many participants offered suggestions for the future, which are also included under ‘Possibilities for Action.’ All responses and ‘Possibilities for Action’ are taken directly from respondents and we hope this allows for appropriate levels of follow-up, learning and action.

Throughout this Synod process, the goal of the Diocesan Synod team was simple: to offer opportunities for all people to be heard. We hope this process has been an opportunity for people to learn from one another and to see things from other points of view – especially as it relates to God’s plan for the Church here and now and going forward in the future.

Respectfully submitted by the Diocesan Synodal Team, June 30, 2022,

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COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Through its online survey, 70-percent of respondents either agree or strongly agree that the Diocese of Scranton is inclusive, meaning every person has the ability to participate as equals. Through its parish and community listening sessions and 1,280 written comments on this theme, the following have been identified:

1. The Diocese of Scranton must continually work to offer support and outreach to youth and young adults, including young families.
2. The Church (globally and locally) must work at welcoming **ALL** people including:
 - **Women:** Numerous respondents expressed they do not feel women have an equal voice in the Church because they cannot become priests or deacons. In contrast, a small number of respondents indicated that the priesthood and diaconate should remain open only to men.
 - **LGBTQIA+:** Numerous LGBTQIA+ Catholics expressed feeling excluded, marginalized and made to feel less-worthy of Christ's love. Many heterosexual respondents expressed a desire to make sure persons with same-sex attraction and gender identity issues feel included in the Church.
 - **Divorced and Remarried Catholics:** Many expressed pain at not being allowed to receive the Eucharist. The need for more education about annulments was expressed as well as ministry for those impacted by divorce.
 - **Seniors:** Numerous seniors expressed feelings of exclusion and indicated challenges with transportation as an obstacle to participating in parish life. They indicated a desire to use their talents and wisdom to help others.
3. Numerous traditional Catholics, who find connection to God strongest at the Latin Mass, expressed feelings that they are being pushed to the margins without any dialogue, undermining the notion of synodality.
4. Our church, our parishes and our people need to reach out into the communities in which they are located to a greater degree. We need to get out of our pews and move out past our church walls to serve and engage people – particularly the unchurched and the growing number of “nones” (people who do not identify with a religion).
5. The Diocese, parishes, priests and parish leadership must make intentional efforts to disband any “cliquish” atmospheres where there could be perceptions of “insiders” vs. “outsiders.”



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

Many people, including Catholic school students and young adults, feel strongly that the church should engage in more service projects and fun activities to build a sense of community and connection to a parish family. Many others expressed a desire for more fellowship before and/or after Mass. Social activities, such as Theology on Tap, were suggested many times as a way to engage the faithful.

Respondents expressed a need to address a “chasm” between the Diocesan Chancery and the people. They offered suggestions that include the Bishop celebrating Mass each weekend in a different county or community so that he can “get the smell of the sheep.” Some people suggested a special liturgy welcoming those that feel excluded (specifically the LGBTQIA+ community) while others encouraged parishes to be thoughtful of working professionals and overbooked families when scheduling daily Masses and other events.

Other possible action items include needing more priests/parish leaders who speak the languages of those in our Diocese, when churches consolidate making intentional efforts (via phone calls and personal contact) to make sure all parishioners join a new church, considering disability training for parish leaders and not overlooking single individuals in the pews when inviting someone to bring up the gifts at Mass.

Through its online survey, 56-percent of respondents said the Diocese of Scranton does a good job of listening to all people. While many comments from the first theme reemerged in answers here (including how the Church and Diocese listens to women, traditional Catholics and LGBTQIA+ individuals most frequently), through its parish and community listening sessions and 1,079 written comments on this theme, the following have also been identified:

1. Members of the faithful expressed skepticism that their voices are truly heard, particularly at the Diocesan level, in regards to mergers or closures that may be needed in schools or parishes. Specifically citing the Called to Holiness and Mission process prior to 2010, but also changes that have taken place since, many feel decisions are made without significant consultation with impacted individuals.
2. In parish communities, numerous individuals indicated a feeling that some members are listened to “more” if they have money, influence or status in the community. Oftentimes, those respondents used phrases like the parish having an “inner circle” that has the attention of the pastor or priest.
3. While many individual pastors were lauded for their openness and willingness to listen, synod respondents viewed other pastors as an obstacle in helping a parish to flourish. When this is the case, parishioners feel they have no recourse. Additionally, synod participants indicated the feeling that the Diocese doesn’t listen to what people want or need in pastoral changes. People who have left the Church indicated this is a significant reason that drove them away.
4. Some respondents expressed thoughts that the Church (from the Diocese to its parishes) makes decisions based only on financial issues, not on parishioner needs. One respondent indicated they feel “more like an envelope number than a person.”



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

Listening is one of the most powerful and deeply human experiences we can have. The act of listening respects and validates the voice that is being heard. As one synod participant explained it, “the church has a microphone but not a headset.”

A large number of respondents (via both online survey and in-person meetings) indicated the Synod process is a good first step and needs to continue. Many expressed an eagerness to continue to participate in the process at either the parish or Diocesan level. Many expressed a desire for forums for discussion, general meetings or other opportunities to provide feedback to both their parish and the Diocese. Many said they would like to see the Bishop take part in these efforts. Many said that is especially important on decisions affecting the closure of churches and schools.

Other respondents encouraged the Diocese to work on implementing changes in policy and tone. They are encouraging the Church to reach out and listen beyond the aging, conservative white male demographic that runs the church, by listening to women, non-white, young, LGBTQ community and others. As one respondent put it, “the church bemoans declining attendance but doesn’t really try to understand why, it just closes more churches.”

Through its online survey, only 25-percent of respondents felt they did not have the opportunity to speak candidly with their parish priest or bishop. Through its parish and community listening sessions and 1,111 written comments on this theme, the following have been identified:

1. Many respondents feel they can speak honestly and dialogue with their pastor. Many used the word “approachable” in describing their pastor. Some clergy were acknowledged for actively encouraging parishioners to reach out with comments and questions, even providing their cell phone numbers to the faithful. In contrast, respondents did indicate feelings that some priests are not approachable and open-minded. There was also a general feeling of disappointment expressed when questions, calls or emails were not responded to or acknowledged.
2. With a declining number of clergy in the Diocese of Scranton, many faithful acknowledged that priests are busier than ever. With some leading two, three or four parishes, in addition to funeral Masses, hospital visits and other responsibilities, respondents expressed a general concern that their priest or pastor is “too busy.” They feel “direct interactions” with parishioners may be an ongoing casualty of this situation.
3. While many people feel they can speak openly with their parish priest, many did not feel they could speak openly with the Diocesan bishop. Many people said they would appreciate an easily accessible way to speak with the Bishop, even if the opportunity was virtual. Synod respondents in parishes outside of the greater-Scranton area expressed a desire to have the Bishop visit their communities more, not just for the celebration of Mass, but other community events.
4. A number of individuals indicated apprehension about speaking out/speaking freely on issues if they opposed church teaching. These individuals have the perception that their priest or bishop would not want to hear their candid responses to hot-button topics. Within that same regard, multiple people expressed the need to stick with the tradition and truth of our Catholic faith.
5. Distressingly, a number of people provided examples of being treated rudely when they did speak out regarding issues or concerns in the Church. Some parishioners described being yelled at, disrespected, discriminated against, or even threatened by a priest or pastor. Many indicated that made them leave a specific church in search of another place to worship.



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

While acknowledging this Synod process is the first time many have been asked about their concerns and hopes, many expressed a desire for different outlets for casual questions to be answered by either their pastor or bishop. Some suggestions included a box to submit compliments or concerns on the parish level as well as publication of how to contact the Bishop on a regular basis.

Even though his responsibilities are numerous and his time is limited, numerous people encouraged the bishop to visit rural communities more frequently to have face-to-face discussions. They also wanted these opportunities to be publicized well in advance via bulletins and other communication methods.

Synod participants also encouraged the bishop to utilize all communication methods available – virtual meetings, televised call-in shows, social media – to connect with the faithful. While one-way communication efforts are always appreciated, many stressed the importance of getting to know and have a personal connection with their Diocesan shepherd.

Through its online survey, an overwhelming 90-percent of respondents feel that the celebration of the Mass inspires them toward a more joyful and holier life. In fact, the largest majority, 57% of survey participants, said they “strongly agree” with that statement. Through its parish and community listening sessions and 1,094 written comments on this theme, the following have been identified:

1. Many people describe the celebration of the Eucharist as foundational and critically important to their lives. Individuals say the reception of the Eucharist sustains them through the week while caring for others. They describe the Mass as a source of strength and joy. In addition, many expressed a deep love for the Rosary as a powerful way to grow closer to our Blessed Mother and see the face of Jesus in all His sorrows. Just like in responses to prior questions, there were individuals who expressed a wish for more Latin Mass opportunities.
2. Many respondents expressed a desire for homilies to be more inspiring and relevant to daily life. Individuals say when a homily is from the heart, well prepared and connected to the Gospel message, they are able to take that message beyond the walls of the church.
3. When asked to discuss the active participation in the Mass, some individuals, including children and young adults, indicated they felt the Mass was repetitive and/or boring. Some dreamed of modernizing the Mass while others said it might help if the meaning behind the different Mass parts was better explained to all. Oftentimes, those who described the Mass as repetitive or boring, often did so in connection with comments regarding poorly planned/delivered homilies.
4. Many Synod participants said it was painful to have churches closed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Many others acknowledged the difficulties of mask wearing, temporary limitations on singing and other health protocols. In contrast, others praised the diocese for working to protect the safety of all. Individuals critical of the health and safety efforts instituted feel the message that was sent is that Christ, the Church and the Sacraments are “non-essential.”
5. Synod participants expressed a sincere appreciation for the efforts that parishes made to begin livestreaming Mass during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many also praised CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton for its Daily Mass broadcasts. While acknowledging that the continuation of livestream Masses may cause attendance numbers to not fully rebound, many who are homebound, elderly or disabled say the services are a blessing for them.



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

Those who recognize the importance of every single Holy Mass suggest utilizing members of the laity to hold “Evangelization Events” where they (not just priests) speak on how they have been enlivened by their faith. In addition, people expressed a desire for greater publicity on Reconciliation, Eucharistic Adoration and other spiritual opportunities.

People of all ages appreciated when their parish would hold a Children’s Mass/Family Mass, and hope that pastors consider that idea to draw in younger families. Many individuals also acknowledge that after Confirmation and/or graduation from high school or college, many young adults stop attending Mass. Many would like to see this issue addressed in some way.

Through its online survey, respondents were asked to reflect on ten ways the Diocese and its parishes serve the faithful and the community. The areas of mission where the lowest scores were received were “Educating People of All Ages in the Faith” (30-percent disagree or strongly disagree the Diocese is doing a good job) and “Caring for the Environment” (20-percent disagree or strongly disagree the Diocese is doing a good job). Through its parish and community listening sessions and 1,219 written comments on this theme, many of which were positive, the following have been identified:

1. Many expressed the need for more and better quality faith formation for all ages. This also includes re-educating adult Catholics who don’t know the basics of their faith. Many believe the formation of parishioners must be life-long and adult faith formation should be the core of parish efforts. Respondents say many Catholics don’t have the knowledge needed to talk about (or in some cases defend) their faith because they don’t know and understand the Catechism of the Catholic Church. One respondent noted that if the Church was succeeding in leading people into a deeper relationship with Christ, “attendance at Masses would be skyrocketing.”
2. Additional communication is needed on many levels – including on what the Diocese and its parishes do and what activities are happening across the parishes/diocese. This became apparent as many synod participants acknowledged they do not fully understand how our Diocese welcomes immigrants, refugees and newcomers or shows compassion to those in prison. Participants also expressed a need for more effective marketing to tell the Church’s story in the greater community since many old media options mainly address those already in the pews. They also stressed using new, emerging forms of media.
3. About promoting Pro-Life issues, 86-percent of online survey respondents believe the Diocese does a good job. Many comments on this topic centered around two themes. First, the Church should talk and advocate more for the unborn. Second, others feel that too much emphasis is placed on the unborn and not on pro-life issues like the death penalty or gun control.
4. There is a critical need to actively and directly invite all to serve – including youth and young adults specifically – which must be addressed in a better way. Clergy/parish leaders should embrace those looking to serve to the greatest extent. Many pointed to the success Evangelical and some Protestant denominations have in this area as compared to the Catholic Church. Parish life needs to expand more into communities, especially in service to those in need.
5. Some synod participants expressed the Diocese should work harder to make more financial aid available to families who want to send their children to a Catholic School.



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

As baptized Catholics, we are all called to be missionary disciples. Many synod respondents provided areas of opportunity for mission: offering rides to seniors to get to Mass, mental health and grief ministries, outreach programs to non-Catholics, helping those who are battling addictions or living in long-term care facilities.

Respondents acknowledged when there is a lack of “community” in a parish, there is often a lack of outward engagement that does not allow the faithful to fulfill Christ’s command of service to others.

Through its online survey, respondents were asked if Catholics in the Diocese of Scranton are provided opportunities to discuss, debate and dialogue about the future direction of the church. Forty-nine percent of respondents agree, 36-percent disagree and 15-percent had no opinion. Through its parish and community listening sessions and 966 comments on this theme, the following have been identified:

1. Many survey participants willingly acknowledged that the Church has never sought their opinions prior to this Synod undertaking. Several individuals in their 80s, including priests, were appreciative for the synod process, which they described as the first time they can remember having the opportunity to be a part of the future of the Diocese and the Church.
2. Calling the synod process a “good start,” many participants acknowledged the need to continue the dialogue and synodality process. Many expressed skepticism that their comments (especially if critical) would be read and thoughtfully analyzed. Responses indicated a hopefulness that the laity, priests and bishops would become even more engaged over the next decade.
3. The hierarchical model of the Church was described several times as being “top-down.” Many feel top level decisions are made more and more by men with no families. Many believe these older single men cannot be properly empathetic to the realities of life for people with other experiences.
4. Many participants expressed seeing the value in Parish Pastoral Councils that exist in the Diocese as an opportunity for dialogue. People stress that all members of a parish community should have the ability to discern if a role on a Parish Pastoral Council is appropriate for them (instead of being simply being selected by a pastor). Parish Pastoral Councils should seek and reflect diversity and a broad representation among the faithful.
5. There was an acknowledgment that too often the combination of the church and politics causes rancor. Some people want more separation of church and state, others want the church to be more vocal on moral and social issues. This issue was highlighted numerous times by the difference of opinions expressed by many United States Bishops in regards to giving the Holy Eucharist to politicians who openly support abortion rights.



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

Many of those responding to the synod process that took place acknowledged they are already involved in their parish and/or Diocese. They stressed the need to continue to dialogue with the “Nones” (people who do not identify with a specific religion) and those people who have left the Catholic Church. Further, they acknowledge the need to continue dialoguing with fringe and marginalized groups. While individuals believe doctrine should remain constant, the Church must develop a better approach of engagement.

Numerous comments were heard about holding more in-person gatherings in each county of the Diocese, including open forums where church issues could be discussed. Younger participants encouraged the Diocese to use all emerging forms of technology – including Tik Tok – to reach people where they are.

During the synod process, the Diocese released a booklet to all parishes regarding its Vision 2030 Pastoral Planning Process, which highlights a declining number of parishioners and clergy throughout the Diocese. Most people, with a few detractors, said the document was important to explain the realities our local Diocese is facing when it comes to priest retirements and more.

Through its online survey, 65-percent of respondents said it was a priority of the Catholic Church to work with other faith communities in promoting the well-being of all. It is also notable that 17 percent of those participating said they had no opinion, mostly because they were unaware of activities that may be taking place. Through its parish and community listening sessions and 745 comments on this theme, the following have been identified:

1. There was a sharp divide among synod participants regarding the topic of Ecumenism. Many responded that the Catholic faith should be promoted as the only, one true faith that originated from Jesus and the Apostles – and we need not interact with other denominations – other than to lead them to the Church itself. In contrast, many others stressed the need for more interaction with other faith traditions, noting we should be open to speaking about Christ and His teaching in a way that promotes love, not division. This group believes the Church needs to do better in seeking cooperation and building relationships with other faith communities, particularly in providing service to those in need.
2. Many synod participants expressed that they do not know anything that parishes in the Diocese are doing to work with other faith traditions. Others indicated that in the past, their parishes had participated in ecumenical activities but that was no longer the case – whether because of the COVID-19 pandemic or other unknown reasons.
3. Of those familiar with ecumenical activities ongoing in the Diocese, many lauded the partnerships underway in many communities to tackle social issues, like Ecumenical food pantries helping those who are in need of food or assistance.
4. Some synod participants noted that interfaith collaboration only seems to be highlighted after a tragedy, such as the synagogue attack in Pittsburgh. The individuals believe faith leaders should strive to build bridges by promoting interfaith activities on a regular basis. Many noted activities held in January for the “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,” but expressed thoughts that there should be more than just one week to focus on Christian Unity.



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

As noted above, there is no consensus among respondents regarding Ecumenism. Greater communication on this topic would help since many are uncertain of activities on both a local and/or Diocesan level. As noted in an earlier theme, many believe the Church should be doing a better job of leading all people to a deeper relationship with Christ. That is why many believe the Church of Scranton should focus more on the Catholic teachings of faith before worrying about working with other faith-based groups.

Others provided numerous ideas on how they would like to see interfaith study and collaboration, which they believe could enrich our own faith and highlight common beliefs. These ideas include, but are not limited to interfaith discussion groups, bible study groups, vacation bible school activities, community gatherings, public open houses, joint community service projects, music ministries, joint meals, holiday events, clothing drives or book/food sales.

Some synod participants expressed the belief that many people have left the Catholic Church to join other non-denominational churches. They suggest the Church be more actively engaged through media to reemphasize Catholic teaching and/or determine why they left – in an effort to determine what might need improvement.

AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

Through its online survey, nearly 75 percent of respondents feel that all Catholics, including young people, lay men and lay women, are challenged to use their gifts and talents in the life of the Church. Through its parish and community listening sessions and 799 comments on this theme, the following have been identified:

1. While many acknowledge the Church extends an invitation to participate, many people, particularly young people, are not responding. Synod participants note that young adults are drifting to other start-up churches because they fail to see how engaging Catholic parish life can be for people of any age.
2. People are willing to serve the church but desire a sincere feeling of being “welcome.” Many participants note that pastors/parish leadership can be a hindrance in this regard because of “cliques” that exist in a parish community. One individual noted, “I personally have felt invisible in my parish despite attempts at joining different activities.”
3. While some respondents acknowledge that announcements in bulletins and other media sources are enough to spread information regarding participation, many people say they prefer to be personally asked to be involved. Participants feel this person-to-person outreach helps others understand their neighbors more.
4. Noting a declining number of clergy locally, numerous participants expressed the need for more training to develop lay leadership within the church. Participants say in the future these individuals may need to take on more administrative functions of the church. While the notion of ordaining women and married men again surfaced here, there was more concern in these discussions of empowering lay leaders to govern the church with those who are ordained.
5. Many expressed a hesitation or unwillingness to participate in the synod process because they feel certain it will be a waste of their time and nothing will come from it. These individuals believe the hierarchy of the church does not ‘truly’ care and is not listening. Sadly, many offered personal commentary on how they offered their time or talent to their parish community but were rejected or never received a response to their inquiry.



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

Synod participants recognized that we are all called to play an active role in the Church and each have gifts and talents given to us by God. While there are opportunities for participation, many feel a more direct invitation is required. Individuals stress the need for this invitation from pastors is extremely important.

In regards to young adults, there was common consensus of the need to make sure young adults remain a part of the church community past the age of 14 or Confirmation. Many expressed the need for open and honest dialogue and listening to young people about their concerns. Some feel that the church should stress its community service as a way to focus on the youth – because through service projects they can be shown the benefits to their community of faith. Other participants noted that their parishes do not even have an active youth group. In regards to ways that the church can be more active in reaching out to those who are not involved, some participants noted success in ministry fairs held in parishes. Others noted that some parishes have sign-up sheets for various ministries and service groups in the pews of their parish on a regular basis.

DISCERNING AND DECIDING

The Christian faith is accessible to everyone. Because the mission of the Catholic Church belongs to the Church's members, every voice has a right to be heard. Through its online survey, respondents were almost evenly split when asked if the Diocese is transparent and accountable in its decision-making processes. Forty-five percent of participants strongly agree or agree, 39 percent strongly disagree or disagree and 16 percent had no opinion. Through its parish and community listening sessions and 834 comments on this theme, many of which were positive, the following have been identified:

1. There is a broad demand for greater transparency from our church leadership, in all matters of importance and especially in financial matters.
2. Synod participants acknowledged the painful reality of closing parishes and schools both in the past and up to the current time. Overwhelmingly, respondents said there was insufficient dialogue with the faithful regarding these situations. The vast majority feel that parishioners find out only after a decision is made at the diocesan level.
3. The sexual abuse scandal involving clergy locally – as well as internationally – has eroded public trust in the Church enormously. While some might consider this an issue dictated to the past, many respondents feel strongly that the church must continue to confront realities in the present. One survivor of clerical abuse said, “I was left in the dark as to any accountability.”
4. Respondents feel strongly that there needs to be more transparency regarding clergy assignments. Respondents described the process as a “mystery.” They note that a priest leads his flock in a direction and when the leadership changes, that can take either a positive or negative turn.
5. There needs to be a regular/constant communication avenue for the laity to express their hopes and concerns to the diocese and/or bishop. The Diocese needs to be responsive when engaged with questions and/or concerns.
6. Parish Pastoral Councils were seen as a possible vehicle for engagement but synod respondents stressed that information from those meetings should be made available to the entire church population in a timely matter. This also applies to financial information.



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

While noting many suggestions on how the Diocese and Church can be more transparent and accountable, it must be noted that many respondents expressed a belief that the situation is improving, especially following the release of the 2018 Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report. While a deeply painful and troubling time, people said the situation has led many to demand more from their church leaders.

Noting the lack of easy communication with the diocese itself, synod participants said there is a lack of a representative body of faithful at the diocesan level (to their knowledge) – where the lay faithful can have a regular and constant voice in the decision-making process. If such a body ever is developed, those in rural regions of the diocese pleaded for representation to be broader than the Scranton area. They also stressed the need for town hall or parish meetings prior to considering any parish/school closures.

While many see the importance of information printed in *The Catholic Light* (diocesan newspaper), some participants noted that not everyone receives that publication because it is primarily sent to those who contribute to the Diocesan Annual Appeal. Furthermore, others indicated a need to have standards on how financial information is distributed at both the parish and diocesan levels.

FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

The Church's tradition, received from the Apostles, carries the Christian faith through history. A Synod is meant to identify the needs, challenges and opportunities of the present moment. Through its online survey, 58 percent of respondents believe the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Scranton is responsive to the needs, challenges and opportunities at the current time. Through its parish and community listening sessions and 816 comments on this theme, the following have been identified:

1. There was a significant divide among synod participants regarding whether the church reflects (or even should reflect) modern times. While respecting tradition, a significant number of individuals believe the church is slow to change and must adapt more quickly to remain relevant, especially with youth and young people. An equally significant number of individuals expressed a deep love for the traditional aspects of the Catholic faith and believe focusing solely on those will help the church become stronger.
2. Respondents expressed a desire for the church and its leaders to speak boldly – and with consistency and clarity – regarding hot button moral issues even if the truth is difficult to hear.
3. Noting that the conversations and survey opportunities are a good starting point, many participants stressed the need to continue surveys, consultations and dialogue regarding all issues important to parish life.
4. The church must continue to offer welcoming opportunities to be involved. Many children and young families stressed the need for “fun activities” to draw them in and encourage them to be Catholic. Furthermore, many respondents said the church needs to meet today's youth and young adults “where they are,” whether it be online/social media or at community activities.
5. Church leaders must recognize the demands of society on young people and young families and should offer more flexible opportunities for Mass and other events to better meet modern scheduling needs.



POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

One millennial synod participant said, “The Church is an amazing thing and the youth need to hear about it!” This individual noted that they see few young people attending Mass and expressed a desire for the church to continuously reach out to young adults outside the four walls of the church building.

While this synod process was conducted on the diocesan level, numerous participants hope that pastors and parishes will continue the process of synodality on the local level. Many believe this could be another avenue of communication and dialogue between parish leaders and the laity.

In addition to focusing on youth and young adults, many expressed a desire to see greater instruction and assistance for parents with school age children regarding the rich tradition of our faith that has been handed down through the ages. These individuals stress that if parents cannot live the faith through being an example for their children, then the children are likely to not understand the love of Jesus.

Throughout several themes, synod participants also expressed a desire to see greater collaboration between the diocese and its parishes, especially smaller parishes. As the Diocese continues to face a declining number of clergy, respondents feel this relationship will only need to grow stronger. In some cases, where parish leaders still have a “top down” ministry mentality, some feel training on listening/dialoguing would be helpful.