



St. Joseph on the Rio Grande Parish Synod Report to Parishioners

In response to Pope Francis worldwide request and the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, St. Joseph on the Rio Grande held its first Parish Synod in March 2022. Three scheduled meetings were attended by a representative group of interested parishioners. Each consultation session consisted of small, facilitated groups charged to answer the following questions: How is the Church moving together? How are we a synodal Church of Communion, Participation and Mission? What steps is the Spirit inviting us to take as we journey into the future? What can we do to journey together better as a synodal Church?

Following the small group discussions, the groups gathered and presented each of their group's insights to the questions. The answers were recorded and synthesized into a final report. The responses from the groups had common themes and ideas. The report reflects the major intents discussed in the groups. In April, this parish report was sent to the Archdiocese Synod Committee to be included in all comments collected from throughout the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. A synthesis report will be submitted by Archbishop Wester on behalf of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe to the U.S. Conference of Bishops by June 30, 2022.

We are grateful to all those who participated and shared their time, experiences, and insights. A special thank you to our facilitators and to all who offered their prayers for a successful grace filled Parish Synod. The report is as follows:

Top 5 insights from the question: How is the Church moving together? How are we a Synodal Church of Communion, Participation and Mission?

1. At this point in time there is division, dissent and separation within the Church that is affecting its growth. The pandemic and the appropriate response caused a physical separation that must be addressed and reversed.
2. Teaching about the Catholic Church, Scripture and the catechism to all generations must occur if the Church is to grow.
3. **Communion** - The Mass is the focal point of the Church, providing a common and familiar cultural experience during which Scripture and Church teachings are related to real life and within which fellowship and faith support occur.
4. **Participation** - The Church needs to study and address current societal demands that women be included in leadership roles, even as deacons/priests; that married priests be optional; that LGBTQ persons be accepted; and that divorced persons who have

remarried without annulment be readmitted to the sacraments if inclusivity as an ideal is to be attained.

5. **Mission** - Ministries exist in the Church and are effective in the work they do. They are a vehicle for fellowship and building community. Determining the need for a ministry and identifying committed persons to lead and sustain it are the difficult tasks. Communication to the entire community must occur for the ministry to thrive.

What steps is the Spirit inviting us to take as we journey into the future? The Holy Spirit is inviting us to be open to change. The top 5 insights from the question: What can we do better as a synodal church?

1. **Ministries/parishioner membership.** Post Pandemic, it will be necessary to re-ignite past relationships and to develop new relationships within and outside of our community to be more welcoming and inclusive. We participate in mission through ministries. The expansion of existing ministries and the development of new ministries should consider the needs of the parish and the community. However, the sexual abuse scandal makes it difficult for some people to attend the Catholic Church.
2. **Youth.** Learning opportunities to better understand the Mass and the Catholic Faith would serve to inspire youth and increase their participation in the Catholic Church, as well as make it more relevant and approachable to them. It would be beneficial to provide other mentorship, outreach, and service programs to the youth.
3. **Perceived Exclusionary Practices.** Some people are frustrated with rules in the Church which they perceive as being exclusionary or judgmental and therefore they leave the Church. Some simply object to the notion of sin. There is a need to evaluate the position of the Church considering changing societal attitudes regarding the role of women, LGBTQ individuals, remarried Catholics, contraception etc.
4. **Technology/Virtual.** At the present time due to Covid, the technology to broadcast the Word of God and Mass is utilized more and is much appreciated as a way to connect with both the Church at large as well as one's own parish. However, virtual Mass raises the concern of loss of communion with one another and not receiving the Eucharist. Technology should also be a means to reach out to the youth to evangelize and for catechesis.
5. **Public Relations.** The Church needs to make more effective use of the media to promote positive image of the good work that it does in the local community and worldwide to include such media as local church bulletins, social media, on-line forums, TV, and radio, etc.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Human life needs to be discussed more. Life starts at conception.