



Disciples on the Way

A PARISH GUIDE FOR SYNOD IMPLEMENTATION

Saint Vital
CATHOLIC CHURCH

BACKGROUND

Between Pentecost 2016 and 2018, the Archdiocese of Winnipeg held a Synod in order to determine how to best form missionary disciples, able and willing to influence the culture in an increasingly secularized society. Over the course of these two years, members of every parish, service group and affiliated organization, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, collectively proposed 42 actionable items with a very high consensus of agreement. The Proposals were determined to fall into three Overarching Themes. Under each, three priorities were identified as needing to be addressed as soon as possible. The themes and priorities are as follows:

1. Forming the baptized as missionary disciples:

- a. Ongoing training for clergy and lay leaders to equip them to provide formation for the people they serve;
- b. Formation of the laity in missionary discipleship;
- c. Initiatives to proclaim the Gospel message and invite all to follow him.

2. Passing on the faith to the next generation and others:

- a. Support the vocation of marriage and family as a domestic church;
- b. Create welcoming, listening and merciful parishes;
- c. Youth involvement in parish life and leadership.

3. Reaching out to others especially those in need and those on the peripheries:

- a. Create welcoming, listening, parish communities;
- b. Assist and advocate for the most vulnerable;
- c. Discern social and environmental issues.

Having reached a consensus as an Archdiocese, it is now time for each parish to determine how to best respond to these issues in their own community. Each parish leadership team is therefore being asked to consult with its membership in order to put forward a plan that will address at least one priority under each of the three overarching themes. The information that is gathered will become the content of a pastoral plan that will guide their parish for the next five years. Parish Pastoral Plans are to be reviewed annually to encourage communities to celebrate completed initiatives, determine where work is ongoing, and add new projects drawing from the remaining 42 Proposals.

STAY TUNED TO FURTHER INSERTS FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE SYNOD PROCESS AND HOW ST VITAL PARISH PLANS TO RESPOND TO THIS CALL.



PHASE ONE OF SYNOD IMPLEMENTATION: HEARING THE CALL

“Lord, help me to hear and respond to your invitation.”

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Introduce the whole community to a process of renewal
- Become familiar with Synodality
- Unpack and internalize Disciples of the Way
- Teach and incorporate lectio divina as a regular part of parish life
- Host a parish Listening Session

SYNODALITY IN THE LOCAL PARISH

At the Synod sessions hosted by the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, delegates from the various parishes expressed a desire to carry forward the form of consultation they had experienced as our normative way of “being Church”. A synod seeks “the sense of the faithful”. In some measure, synodality is already taking place in our parishes. Although the pastor is the shepherd of the parish, he seeks and receives the counsel of the people of the parish through such groups as the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils. What is being asked in this exercise of Synod implementation is that each parish cast a wider net of consultation through a Listening Session.

WHAT IS A LISTENING SESSION?

The focus is discerning the will of God communicated to each person, through the Holy Spirit, who was sent to guide the Church. It is not an occasion to voice personal agendas or “seek support for my ideas and projects.” Rather, it is a special time to pray and listen together, trusting that the Holy Spirit will lead us to a strong consensus about future directions of the parish, while at the same time respecting the different perspectives and opinions which are present in all parish communities. This consensus, and the unity that goes with it, is an indication that the Holy Spirit has guided and shaped our deliberations.

A Listening Session is an opportunity for parishioners to come together to offer their input on a particular topic. By gathering the thoughts of the greatest number of parishioners, the pastor, together with the Parish Pastoral Council, can get a sense of what the Holy Spirit desires for the local Church.

In our case, the Listening Sessions are being called to consider how we might transform our individual parishes so that they are better able to form and send out missionary disciples.

MORE INFORMATION ON PHASE TWO TO COME

WATCH FOR YOUR INVITATION TO ST. VITAL PARISH'S LISTENING SESSION



FIRST OVERARCHING THEME FOR OUR PARISH LISTENING SESSION

- FORMING THE BAPTIZED AS MISSIONARY DISCIPLES -

THE SYNOD'S THREE PRIORITIES FOR THIS THEME

1. Ongoing training for clergy and lay leaders to equip them to provide formation for the people they serve.
2. Formation of the laity in missionary discipleship.
3. Initiatives to proclaim the Gospel message and invite all to follow Jesus.

The findings of the Archdiocesan Synod show that formation of our Laity is a priority that will enable them to effectively fulfil their mission in the world, to live out their rightful vocation and carry out true leadership in the Church. This formation includes many factors. Spiritual formation in discipleship is fundamental along with a good catechetical education appropriate for today's world which has many challenges to the faith. In fact, the Synod encouraged our parishes to become permanent places of formation in discipleship.

The Synod made reference on a number of occasions to the current crisis relative to the vocation to marriage and family life, priesthood and religious life. It pointed out that this crisis in vocations is at least partially due to the loss of effective formation in discipleship and discernment and in understanding the call to be missionaries of the Gospel in the world. Preparing the baptised to meet and discern their vocation requires that they be formed as true servants of and companions with others, especially the weak and the marginalized.

The letter of St. James presents a challenge to the Baptized as missionary disciples:
"But someone will say: 'You have faith and I have works'. Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith" (James 2:18).

**WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION AND
YOUR INVITATION TO ST. VITAL PARISH'S LISTENING SESSION**



SECOND OVERARCHING THEME FOR OUR PARISH LISTENING SESSION - **PASSING ON THE FAITH TO THE NEXT GENERATION AND TO OTHERS** -

THE SYNOD'S THREE PRIORITIES FOR THIS THEME

1. Support the vocation of marriage and family as a domestic church.
2. Create welcoming, listening and merciful parishes.
3. Youth involvement in parish life and leadership.

Pope Francis encourages that the new evangelization, this passing on of the faith, be done with “enthusiasm and vitality”. The Synod stressed that this is our local responsibility. In our multi-cultural society today, we can articulate three areas of focus for the New Evangelization:

- the community of disciples who already participate;
- the baptized who are no longer active in the Church, and;
- those who do not know Christ

Every parish, as an evangelizing community, needs to be a place: “...where everyone can be at home, a place of permanent formation, a church which builds a common story of hope, and a church willing to extend to the farthest reaches.

Passing on the faith to the next generation and to others demands that attention be paid to the following:

- Catechesis - focusing not only on the tenets of our faith but also on how we are called to live as Catholics;
- Education - welcoming faith as a way of life as expressed through a systematic curriculum of education, particularly in our Catholic institutions;
- Formation - recognizing that the experience of daily life either contributes to being formed in Christ or impedes it.

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THIRD OVERARCHING THEME FOR OUR PARISH LISTENING SESSION
OUTREACH TO OTHERS ESPECIALLY THOSE IN NEED
AND THOSE ON THE PERIPHERIES

THE SYNOD'S THREE PRIORITIES FOR THIS THEME

1. Create welcoming, listening, parish communities.
2. Assist and Advocate for the most vulnerable.
3. Discern social and environmental issues.

There was a clear call during our Synod to be disciples who honour and respect the dignity, value, and equality of all human life, by reaching out as Jesus did, to the poor, the marginalized and the lost regardless of their human condition.

With such thoughts in mind, the parish community needs to be a place where all are welcome just as the Lord welcomed sinners and ate with them (Luke 15:2). Our communities of faith must allow for education and awareness of social justice issues which impact us locally and in the wider world as well. This formation in social justice must lead to support for initiatives which affirm human dignity, the sacredness of human life and respond to environmental concerns.

The Synod spoke about the need for education and cultural awareness along the path leading to greater engagement with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. We are also called to deepen our understanding of the spiritual, moral, and cultural values found within Indigenous and Metis traditions and work towards a spirit of prudent and charitable dialogue and collaboration.

In our communities, whether large or small, we must be docile to the Holy Spirit so as to discern where we are to go and what we are to do in outreach. As Jesus sent out his disciples, so too we are sent in Christ with God's help. The Synod states that the going out not only includes an outreach to those in need of material help but also to our neighbour who may not be physically poor but is broken and wounded through illness, loneliness, addiction, alienation of one kind or another, advanced in age, mental illness, or spiritual emptiness.

Our Lord states in Matthew: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40).

**WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION AND
YOUR INVITATION TO ST. VITAL PARISH'S LISTENING SESSION**



ST. VITAL PARISH LISTENING SESSIONS

FRIDAY, MARCH 13TH - 8:00PM - 9:30PM

SATURDAY, MARCH 14TH - 10:00AM - 11:30AM

WHAT IS A LISTENING SESSION AND WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

A Listening Session is an opportunity for parishioners to come together to offer their input on a particular topic. By gathering the thoughts of the greatest number of parishioners, the pastor, together with the Parish Pastoral Council, can get a sense of what the Holy Spirit desires for the local Church. Because we believe that the Spirit speaks to and directs each person through their intellect, there is a necessity for each person to be aware of, and open to, the Spirit's presence and guidance. Because of the spiritual nature of this exercise, the Listening Session is different from a 'Town Hall' where views and opinions may be guided by one's particular interest or agenda.

In our case, the Listening Sessions are being called to consider how we might transform our individual parishes so that they are better able to form and send out missionary disciples. *All members of the parish are invited, as well as those involved in ministry and the various organizations that serve our church.*

WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS ROLES DURING THE LISTENING SESSION

Pastor: The pastor convenes the Listening Session and leads the participants in an opening and closing prayer. The pastor is there to listen and will not respond to questions or comments. Once the session has ended and all comments have been gathered, the pastor works with the Parish Pastoral Council in discerning new priorities and goals for the community.

Facilitator: The facilitator offers a brief overview and then leads the group through a series of pre-determined questions keeping track of time to ensure things progress as scheduled. As well, the facilitator controls the open microphone part of the program to ensure people speak briefly about their main points so that the evening stays on track with respect to time.

Scribe: The scribe's job is to maintain a written record of the main points raised during the discussion and how many times that essential thought was repeated.

Moderator: The moderator's role is to ensure that everyone in each of the individual groups has a chance to speak and that no one person dominates the conversation.

Participants: The participant listens to each question and spends a moment in prayerful reflection before recording a response on the paper provided. The participant first shares his thoughts during a table discussion before addressing the pastor, during the open microphone portion of the evening.

**STAY TUNED FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON
PREPARATIONS FOR OUR PARISH LISTENING SESSION**