

Newman Parish Eau Claire had a listening session as part of the Synod on Synodality preparation on February 8, 2022. Around fifteen members of the parish participated and three more members submitted written statements as they couldn't attend the meeting. We discussed the fundamental question of the Synod, the joys and challenges of our journeying together and how we could grow in our journeying together. This document will be a synthesis of the sharing that occurred attempting to group sharing according to joys, challenges, and areas for growth.

There were several joys that parish members expressed of our journeying together at Newman Parish. As we are involved in campus ministry at UWEC there is the joy of working with new students and having the new life they bring. It is also enjoyable to provide food and hospitality for the college students. Being in a small group and growing in faith with the other members has been a joyful experience. All of the service work that is done in the community through Community Table, Beacon House, Sojourner House, the Justice and Peace Committee among others is a source of joy. It is a joy to gather together for liturgy. Having dedicated catechists for religious education formation for youth is a source of joy. One person mentioned the joy of being part of the parish staff for a time and the ability to form more relationships. A college student mentioned the joy of all the growth and wonderful experiences during their college years through their involvement in Newman. It is a great place to grow in faith through Eucharistic Adoration, Daily Mass, and confession and hang out with friends so they can journey together as they strive towards Heaven.

There were also several areas of grief, anxiety, and challenge mentioned regarding our journeying together. There was a sentiment expressed that it feels like the Church is abandoning Vatican II, becoming less inclusive and ecumenical. Some expressed it was exciting to see changes at the time of the Second Vatican Council regarding mixed marriages, ecumenical relationships, and the involvement of the laity and it seems like this isn't being emphasized enough now. There was a sense of some broadcasting being biased politically and not fairly representing Catholicism. Concern over the division in the Church and sometimes how the message from bishops can be confusing and contradictory. There was anxiety over the Church's relationship with those in the LGBTQ community and how this pushes many young people away from the Church.

After we heard about the joys and challenges of our journeying together, we spent the second half of our listening session hearing about ways people think we could grow in our journeying together. Even though it was shared that Pope Francis didn't see the Synod on Synodality changing Church doctrine/teaching quite a few comments expressed a desire for Church doctrine/teaching to change specifically around ordination of clergy and Communion reception.

A desire was expressed for inclusivity to pervade the Catholic faith more. It was stated that inclusivity was central to Jesus' mission and that there was need for growth in the living of the faith today with regards to inclusiveness. A desire was expressed to be more welcoming to all persons. Also that the parish or maybe Church at large attracts a less broad group of college

students/young people. A desire for a place for people to be able to just come and ask questions.

There were a few comments around the area of desiring greater clarity. It was expressed that there could be greater clarity among the Pope and bishops, to have a more unified and consistent voice on issues related to faith and morals. The divergence of vision between some bishops and the Pope leads to confusion and a lack of confidence in their decision making regarding faith and morals. Also greater clarity from the Church for the laity and their role and mission. The hierarchy needs to trust the laity more and the contribution they do and can make.

An area of concern/growth that had several statements was around clergy. There was hope for single/married women to be able to be deacons and priests. Also that married men could become priests. Concern on future vocations to the priesthood and the number of priest retirements, that the sacraments might not be readily accessible in the future. Also that the current model of the Bishop choosing where a priest serves might not be the most helpful, that the priest and congregation should have more input.

An area of concern/growth that had several statements was around the reception of Holy Communion. There were quite a few comments from people finding it hard/difficult that only Catholics are able to receive Holy Communion at Mass. It was especially stated that at funerals and weddings it can be difficult that non-Catholics are not allowed to receive Holy Communion. People desired greater openness on this, that non-Catholic Christians or even non-Christians be invited to receive the Blessed Sacrament. Part of the confusion and frustration over this is that priests in the past did allow/invite everyone to receive the Eucharist. Some felt it makes it seem like we think only we are worthy of receiving Holy Communion.

There were also the following statements each made by an individual member. There was expressed that the Church has made some growth in adult faith formation opportunities which are helpful and provide for better conversations and should continue to grow in that area. Good music ministry can really enhance and help with the worship experience. A desire to be more open to ecumenical mission work, there are many churches and faiths we can learn from and partner with for the good of the Catholic Church. A greater concern for caring for the earth in the Church. A greater concern for justice around racism, ableism, sexism, classism, ageism, and homophobia. Increased transparency around finances at the diocesan level.