

FINAL REPORT AND APPENDICES

Synod for a Synodal Church

Diocese of Davenport, Iowa

June 29, 2022

1. “Love one another as I have loved you.” At the opening Mass for the Synod, Bishop Thomas Zinkula described the Synod as a way of following Jesus’ command to love. He described the behavior of people who love each other in terms that he connected with the three themes of the Synod that were given to us by Pope Francis. When we love someone, we spend time with them (Communion), talk with and listen to them (Participation), and walk together (Mission). Bishop Zinkula stated that every member of the diocese would be invited to speak and to listen as we explored our experience of the Church. During the following months, members of the diocese prayed, met, spoke, and listened. The question that provided a focus for our reflections was this: “Based on your personal experience, what breaks your heart and what fills your heart about the Catholic Church?”.

2. Responses to the question comprised nearly 14,000 comments. Reading through all of them, members of the synthesis committee agreed that eleven themes stood out: Liturgy, Welcoming/Belonging/Inclusivity, Leadership, Youth and Family Engagement, Polarization and Politics, Church Rules, Community, Church Teaching/Tradition, Prayer and Spirituality, Outreach and Evangelization, and Image of the Church. It also was noted that certain topics, comments, and keywords appeared under more than one theme. Comments were divided according to those themes and topics before being reviewed again for key ideas. The following report is intended to present an overview of comments that emerged within the diocesan reflections.

Liturgy and Spirituality

3. We are a liturgical tradition and one of the most frequent themes addressed by respondents to the Synod question was the liturgy. Over 1600 comments related to the theme of liturgy. Of those 72% fell under what fills hearts. Many see value in the liturgical tradition, in the availability of the sacraments, in the repetition and familiarity of ritual, in its continuity across both time and place. The sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are highly regarded as central to our faith and to the life of the church. The data from all the liturgy theme comments attested to the importance of the Eucharist and other sacraments in their lives.

4. Among those aspects that filled their hearts, people listed the gathering of the community in common worship and the universality of the liturgy throughout the world. They also found meaning in such things as music, processions, candles, incense and holy water, which help emphasize the meaning of the liturgical rites. What breaks some hearts is the sense that there is, even among those who attend church regularly, a loss of faith in the Real Presence in the Eucharist. A survey that made news some years ago contributed to the respondents’ sadness. Some are also upset because they see members of the congregation behaving in ways that seem to them to show a lack of respect for the sacraments.

Parish experiences

5. In several areas, the diversity of people's parish experiences and preferences was manifest. Some said they heard inspiring homilies, while others listed poor preaching as something that breaks their hearts. Participants appreciate homilies that connect to their lives, have a positive message, and provide something to think about during the coming week. On the other hand, homilies that are devoid of content, unengaging, judgmental, or disconnected from the lives of listeners are lamented. With regard to specifics, peoples' expectations diverge. For example, some would like more jokes and stories to hold their attention while others desire more educational content and believe that the jokes and stories can be overdone. Music was another area that appeared among both "fills" and "breaks" comments. Some are inspired by music that is uplifting, lively and beautiful, while others are concerned about poor music that drags and does not invite congregational participation.

6. While large numbers of participants appreciate the liturgy, a small number said they find it too repetitious and "boring." It seems to some overly formal with "rote" prayers, unfamiliar terminology, and gestures whose meaning is unclear. A few participants mentioned their experience of churches of other denominations that have practices such as offering babysitting and projecting the words of readings, which can help some experience fuller participation in the service.

Pre-Conciliar Rite

7. A final area of disagreement has to do with the pre-Conciliar rite for the Mass. Sixty-seven comments mentioned the "Latin Mass." The comments were nearly evenly split between broken and filled hearts. There are strong feelings on both sides. Some hearts are filled by the opportunity to experience the older rite, which they describe as "feeling holy." Their hearts are broken by restrictions on the celebration of the "Latin Mass." Others rejoice that the Mass has changed to allow much greater participation as well as understanding. Some of those hearts are broken by what they see as a divisive attitude among some who want to attend or would like all to return to the pre-Conciliar liturgy.

Covid

8. Undeniably, the experience of the pandemic affected participants' feelings about the Church's liturgical practices. Many spoke of missing the sacraments. Some accused church leaders of depriving Catholics of the sacraments just when we needed them most. Others said that after having to do without, they experienced a renewed appreciation for the beauty and grace of the sacraments and of being with the community. Those who have returned to Mass can't help noticing that others are slower to do so. Many are saddened by the sight of empty pews.

9. On the other hand, during the pandemic, parishes began to do things such as livestream Masses. By continuing this and other practices, the church can reach people who are homebound, thereby helping them feel they are still connected with the parish as well as with the larger church.

Spirituality

10. Catholic spiritual traditions other than the sacraments received fewer comments and seemed not to be controversial, although there were comments in both the “fills” and “breaks” columns. Hearts are filled by a variety of experiences – from preached or directed retreats, Cursillo, and Christian Experience Weekends to Eucharistic Adoration, Stations of the Cross, and Marian devotion, especially the rosary. Things that break hearts include a perception that, especially since Vatican II, many don’t know or participate in the rich Catholic spiritual traditions. A few commented on an apparent loss of the custom of family prayer due to busy schedules or to changing priorities.

Church Teaching

11. Many respondents expressed strong feelings about Catholic teaching and Tradition. Here again, responses show differences of perspective that at times amount to division or polarization. Some fault the church for failure to keep up with the times while others call for greater efforts to resist the temptations to give in to the prevailing culture. On the one hand, the Tradition is described as a firm foundation, a source of stability that can sustain us in an unstable world. Its perseverance for over 2,000 years gives testimony to the truth and to our fidelity to the teaching of Christ. A theme that was prominent among comments on church teaching was a love for the universality and constancy of doctrine. Among the beliefs that fill hearts are the sacramental worldview, forgiveness, life after death, redemption in Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the sanctity of marriage and family life, and Catholic social teaching.

12. On the other hand, some view Church teaching as rigid and out of touch with the realities of life today. They cited in particular teachings on divorce and remarriage, clerical celibacy, prohibition of women’s ordination, birth control, and LGBTQ+. A number of respondents use the term “hypocrisy” in relation to church teaching. Others, especially young people, described church teachings as elitist or inhospitable.

Particular Concerns

13. Specific teachings that garnered comments included divorce and remarriage, LGBTQ+, issues of race and culture, and immigration. In most cases, both sides of the issue were represented in the comments. Ninety-seven percent of comments on divorce appeared under “broken hearts.” People feel that the annulment process is too difficult and “lacking in love.” Many, especially the young, thought that church rules on divorce showed that the church is “close-minded” and drive people away from the church. A few thought that the church just needs to help people reach a better understanding of the rules and of the reasons for them. Concerns around LGBTQ+, race, and culture focused on the sense that church teachings and/or the way those teachings are understood or expressed lead to those groups feeling excluded from the community.

14. Of 42 comments on birth control, 41 told of broken hearts. The church’s teaching was described as outdated and an intrusion on personal rights. A much smaller number expressed that the church needs to do a better job of explaining the harm birth control can cause.

15. The 14 comments regarding God and creation were primarily divided between the view that the church doesn't put enough emphasis on care for creation and the view that the church gives it too much attention. Comments on immigration illustrate some of the polarization over "political issues." Some are unhappy with the church for "endorsing illegal immigration," while it fills the hearts of others to see the church reaching out to meet the needs of immigrants.

16. A number of responses indicated individuals' grave concern about Catholic politicians who take public stands opposed to the teaching of the church and about church leaders who have not stood up to the politicians.

Faith Formation and Catechesis

17. Closely connected with feelings about the teachings of the church are those having to do with catechesis. A number of participants said their hearts were filled by their own experience of Catholic schools. A few of those think that students currently enrolled in Catholic schools are having similarly rich experiences, while a larger number said that those teaching religion today are not sufficiently prepared. Around twenty responses pointed to cases in which they felt church teaching was being misrepresented by someone in a teaching position.

18. Quite a few people, including both younger and older people, expressed a wish for more opportunities to learn about the faith. Some bemoan the lack of religious education for those who are past the age for confirmation. Young Catholics long for more time to discuss not only what we believe but also why we believe as we do. Several respondents described adult Catholics today as ill-equipped to explain or defend their faith.

19. On the positive side, many people have found that on-line and other media sources do provide ways to learn about the faith. By making use of recorded or televised lectures, Catholic podcasts, and on-line courses, one can learn about Scripture, spirituality, church history and Tradition. And one can fit the material into the busy and unpredictable schedules that characterize life in today's world.

Community and Belonging

20. Experiencing the church as a welcoming, loving, and active community came up in almost every listening session for the Synod. This is vital to the life of the church. The comments received included over 1300 related to community and over 1800 related to a sense of welcome or belonging. Furthermore, comments related to other themes and topics such as women and LGBTQ+ also addressed the need to feel welcome within the church. Hearts are filled with joy when we gather for worship, when we learn and work together, and when we reach out together to meet the needs of the wider community. Respondents asserted that if we are to keep moving on our own faith journey, we need one another. Responses from Confirmation classes and from students at St. Ambrose University in particular demonstrated that for young people, community and belonging is a central value.

21. While there was overwhelming agreement on the importance of community, respondents' experiences of the church varied widely. Some of the diversity seems to be related to differences among individual parishes. Some spoke of seeing people hurry away after church,

not taking time even to greet others. Some parishes have customs such as offering refreshments after at least some Masses in order to encourage members to stay and converse. Some parishes seem to do a better job than others of welcoming new members.

22. A significant number of young adults described the church as failing to welcome all. In fact, reviewers noted that among young adults the number of those with heartbreaking concerns far exceeds the number of those who say their hearts are filled by the church's welcome. Most of their comments referred to the whole church rather than to a particular parish, and often included the term "judgmental" in the description of the unwelcoming attitude. The inability to share Eucharist with Christians of other denominations or with those who are divorced and remarried was one area of concern.

Youth and family engagement

23. Perceptions of the church as rigid and as closed to certain groups appear to be one factor when youth and families are not engaged in the church. Another perceived factor in their absence is a culture in which church and faith are not a priority. Still other responses referred to a lack of catechesis and to parents not passing on the faith to children.

24. Synod participants noted that numbers of young people and families at Mass as well as in religious education and youth groups are small in comparison with the number of young people and families who are registered in the parish. One person lamented seeing "so many empty pews." Overwhelmingly, those who commented longed to see families and young people at worship and at other parish activities. Many stated that they are inspired when they see young people in church, when new families join the parish, and when they hear about young members going on mission trips, or enjoying such activities as the National Catholic Youth Conference and retreats. Comments included a clear message that the church needs to pay more attention to young people and make better efforts to serve their needs.

Welcoming all

25. Along with a significant number of young people, members of other groups feel marginalized in the church, no matter what age they are. Divorced people, even those who are not remarried or who have completed the annulment process before remarrying, said they have felt unwelcome and/or judged by church members. While that situation may be improving, additional progress is needed. Single people in general and especially single mothers seem to feel more welcome in some parishes than in others. Immigrant workers mentioned ways in which they felt excluded while also expressing ways that their experience of the church fills their hearts.

26. Both church members of European descent and those of other racial or ethnic groups stated that we have a long way to go in appreciation and integration of diverse cultures in our worship and community life. Some parishes do have bilingual liturgies or liturgies in languages other than English. Some have events that express cultural traditions other than Anglo, but not enough of that is happening.

27. Ninety-four percent of over 300 comments related to LGBTQ+ persons were broken heart comments. Most of these comments were about the church failing to welcome LGBTQ+ persons. On the other hand, Pope Francis, Bishop Zinkula, and some parishes were commended for their efforts to be more inclusive.

Polarization and Politics

28. A major threat to community within parishes as well as in the church at large is polarization. Synod responses included 500 mentions of the issue. Overwhelmingly, the polarizing issues have to do with politics – either the same political issues that are polarizing the nation, or issues of parish/diocesan politics. It was noted that even the bishops seem to be at odds with one another at times. The good news is that the divisions break people’s hearts. We long to overcome them but seem to feel at a loss as to how to do that.

29. Respondents mentioned seeing the church as divided or polarized particularly on five topics: priests, abortion, sexual abuse and the lack of an adequate response to that issue by church leaders, COVID, and women’s leadership in the Church. Regarding abortion, comments were divided among those who thought church should do more to oppose Catholic politicians who support “abortion rights,” and those whose hearts are broken by the fact that some Catholics insist that abortion is the only issue one should consider when casting a ballot. Comments about the church’s COVID response were primarily laments about the deprivation of sacraments and community.

Church Leadership

30. Church leadership at all levels received a great deal of attention during the listening sessions. As with many other topics, responses included a mix of positive and negative comments. Some insisted that the hierarchy in general is out of touch with people and does not listen. The feeling is that too many priests and bishops lack the humility, empathy and courage that is required for leadership. Some find our leaders, including Pope Francis, bishops in the United States, Bishop Zinkula, and some pastors to be excellent role models, while others named specific areas for improvement.

31. Pope Francis was lauded for his efforts to reduce clericalism and to open up channels of communication in the church. He was described as “more approachable than other Popes.” A few asserted that we need to build on his popularity in our efforts to build up the church’s reputation. On the other hand, a few found the pope to be too concerned with “political issues” such as climate change. With respect to local leadership, Bishop Zinkula is described as “a kind and thoughtful leader,” with a good sense of humor.

Priests and Parish leadership

32. When it comes to comments about priests, responses fall into at least two categories: concern about the shortage of priests and comments about the training and behavior of priests. A large number of people believe that changing the rules to allow ordination of women and/or of married men would at least help alleviate the shortage. Whatever the cause of the shortage, its effects on parishes is breaking many hearts. We are losing parishioners due to the assignment of

priests who come just to say Mass, but we never see or hear from them the rest of the week. We are at a breaking point where the shortage of priests is resulting in the closure of parishes and the death of the Catholic faith. The priests we do have are so busy they are unable to socialize with the laity or even learn their names. Closure of parishes is seen as especially hard on rural communities where churches are distant from one another and where the parish has been a social center for generations.

33. Some respondents' hearts have been broken by negative encounters with certain priests. Some priests are described as arrogant or as insisting on having everything their own way. Some respondents to the Synod believe that poor seminary training leaves young priests isolated from the realities of life and fails to address issues of mental and emotional health, leaving young priests ill equipped to relate with people or to handle the pressures of parish leadership. Some seminaries hire conservative professors and train men who are unprepared or unwilling to promote Vatican II values. Another perceived problem is the long history of patriarchy in the church. Some lay people did not believe they could challenge a member of the clergy in any way.

Sex abuse scandal

34. Naturally, the phrase "breaks your heart" brought many comments on the sex abuse scandal. A small group of respondents said that the church has responded well, albeit too late, and were glad to see the kinds of assistance offered to victims. A far larger group feels that not enough has been done. Hearts are broken by the damage done to the reputation of the church in general, especially given the kind of media coverage given to the scandal. Many say that their faith as such has not been affected by the scandal, but others are questioning or have left the church because of their own experiences or the experiences of family or friends. Some believe that the scandal is a major cause of the general drop in church membership and participation.

35. The scandal has had further negative ramifications. The large number of priests who were not involved in the scandal suffer because of the damage to the reputation of the church and of clergy. Many commented that the laity are paying a high price for the scandal, not only financially, but in additional training and paperwork that is required of all church employees and volunteers.

Financial issues

36. Church leaders also drew criticism with regard to financial policies. There was a great deal of criticism of what is regarded as "materialism:" spending too much on buildings, adornments, and extras rather than on helping the poor. Parishioners sometimes feel pressure to give more money even when they themselves are in need. Some also see a kind of favoritism in some parishes and in the larger church toward those who donate more money. On the opposite side, people rejoice when the church does reach out to those in need both within and beyond the parish. A common response was that we need more transparency from the church when it comes to money collected and how it is spent.

37. Although the last capital campaign (2009-10) resolved the financial issues caused by bankruptcy, which resulted from clergy sexual abuse cases in the diocese, there is still a perception among some that the current campaign is to replace monies lost during the bankruptcy. Some comments referred to “lies, secrecy, cover-ups and lack of transparency.” The current capital campaign is for priests’ retirement, seminarians’ education, and parish projects. Comments about finances, which were applied to our own diocese and the larger church, highlight the importance of transparency in financial matters.

Women’s Leadership

38. A large number of Synod participants feel broken-hearted about leadership roles in the church being closed to women, including ordination to the diaconate and/or priesthood, and about the treatment of women in the church. They state that women are treated as second-class members of the church. They “are not treated as equals by our priests and deacons.” Additionally, women are not supported, but must navigate heavy moral burdens such as birth control, and balance work and family, by themselves. Women have many gifts to offer the church and the church is losing out because they are not given the chance to serve in leadership. Prayer services led by women were described as including excellent messages from which the whole church could benefit if women were allowed to preach at Mass.

The Image of the Church

39. The lack of women’s leadership and voice is viewed as a major factor harming the image of the church in society and thus our effectiveness in mission. Young people especially ask how women and people in general would be attracted to an institution that is so out of line with a society in which women are found in more and more prominent and powerful positions. Other factors that detract from the church’s attractiveness include the sex abuse scandal, polarization, and judgmentalism. Some describe the church as hypocritical because it claims to stand for justice while injustices persist within the church itself.

40. Church teachings are cited sometimes in a positive and other times in a negative light. Some view the stability of church teaching as attractive; others speak of a failure to adapt as off-putting.

41. What most enhances the image of the church, according to responses received, is the witness of the people of God. Other positives include the church’s stand for social justice, the persistence of the church throughout history and all over the world, and the sacraments.

Our Mission of Evangelization

42. The church exists not for itself but for mission. Synod participants in the diocese expressed diverse feelings about efforts at outreach or evangelization. Respondents expressed a deep desire to live out the faith by reaching out to others both within and beyond the parish. Well over half of comments received in the diocese related to this theme were from people who are happy with the outreach efforts of their parish and/or of the diocese. Respondents spoke to four areas of outreach: to all individuals within the church, to those with particular needs within and beyond the parish, to the larger local community, and to the global community.

43. All individuals need to be invited to be involved in the activities of the parish. They also need opportunities for life-long faith formation as a necessary link between what we profess and what it means for our lives. Only when Catholics are engaged in a lifelong process of delving more deeply into our faith will the church be both a vital community and a sign that attracts others. In order to accomplish that goal, the church needs to make use of contemporary media and invest in the necessary staff and equipment to do so.

44. Broken-heart comments in the area of evangelization and outreach touched on several issues. Some spoke of uneasiness with the call to evangelize. Some spoke of disappointment with the parish or diocesan response to a particular need. Some said that we do a poor job of letting even our own members know about the good things that are happening. Others expressed frustration with unchristian behavior and judgmental attitudes.

Conclusions

45. At the end of their reflections on the Synod questions, one participant commented “Thank you for this opportunity to express my opinions and I hope they make some kind of impact other than just being something checked off the list.” The Diocese of Davenport is taking the Synod seriously and is committed to allowing the Synod process to have an impact. Some projects were already underway prior to the Synod but perhaps now are receiving additional impetus and direction based on the responses. Those efforts include the establishment of an office of evangelization; listening to members of the LGBTQ+ community and to other groups on the margins; planning for Eucharistic renewal through prayer, study, and action; searching for ways to provide education for those who teach religion in schools and in religious education; and participation in the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform. New efforts may develop in light of needs identified or clarified through the experience of the Synod.

46. Several comments indicated confusion about some teachings of the church or a fear that teachings were being incorrectly or inadequately presented. This, along with the number of comments that reflect a longing for more faith formation opportunities for people of all ages, support diocesan efforts to expand opportunities for informative and enriching lifelong faith development.

47. The wording of comments about division or polarization within the church demonstrate the urgency members of the diocese feel around the sense that church unity may be threatened. The fact that in a number of areas, what broke some hearts filled others, along with the fact that some comments revealed deep feelings of anger or hurt, urge us to seek justice and means of healing. We need to continue to listen to one another, especially to those whose experiences and perspectives differ from ours. We also need to continue “reading the signs of the times,” as we are called to do by Vatican II, in order to discern how to live and bear witness to the Gospel in the 21st century.

48. As church, we are members of the One Body of Christ. We are called to be a sacrament of communion for the world. If our differences are allowed to become divisions, we will be ineffective in our mission. We pray that through our reflections and prayers, and through our responses to the information that the Synod sessions have provided, we will make progress in

living out Jesus' call to "Love one another as I have loved you." May more hearts be filled by experiencing Christ's abundant love, mercy, and understanding within our faith communities and the larger communities that we serve.

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Appendix A Synod Timeline

The following timeline reflects our Synod activities from October 2021 – June 2022

October

- Publication of [Homily Prompts](#) for Sundays, 10/24/21 – 2/27/22 (Oct 13)
- [Mass for the Opening of the Synod](#) and the [virtual Synod Kickoff Meeting](#) (Oct 17)

November

- 3 Zoom training sessions for local Synod representatives
- Diocesan leaders participate as panelists on [Synodality: A USCMA Webinar](#) (Nov 16)

December

- [Diocesan Synod Guidebook](#) published (Dec 17)

January

- Publication of [Homily Prompts](#) for Sundays, 3/6/22 – 4/24/22 (Jan 10)
- The Scriptures and Synodality – A Panel Presentation on the Synod of the Word of God [[webinar video link](#)] (Jan 23)
- Publish [graphic designs](#) for use to promote the Synod (Jan 31)

February

- Diocesan leaders participate as panelists for the Catholic Climate Covenant webinar, *Together on the Journey: The Synod, the Laudato Si' Action Platform and the Eucharistic Revival* (Feb 10) [[link](#)]
- Distribution of 10,000 coasters for the 58,000 Cups of Coffee initiative

March

- Publication of a series of 6 [videos](#) to promote the Synod (Mar 2)
- Launch of [#SynodVoices](#) initiative (Mar 24)

April

- Deadline for submitting listening session reports (Apr 30)

May

- A 34-member synthesis committee reviews all report comments, discerns emerging themes, and organizes comments for the purpose of drafting our 10 page synthesis report

June

- Publication of [draft synthesis report](#) for comment by the People of God (Jun 2)
- Submission of final synthesis report to the USCCB by June 30

Appendix B

How We Implemented the Synod

Through the Synod “we are encouraged to create a local process that inspires people, with no one excluded to create a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel” (Vademecum, 2.3). This appendix summarizes how we pursued the creative vision of the Synod.

Our unique question for the Synod

The main question for consultation for the Synod is this:

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

The committee responsible for visioning the Synod was comprised of chancery employees in areas of pastoral ministry. This group discerned that it was best to adapt the Synod question into everyday language, resulting in our Synod question:

“Based on your personal experience, what fills your heart and what breaks your heart about the Catholic Church?”

Through this question we hoped to hear people’s concrete, personal, lived experience of the Church. Our second, and equally important hope, was to facilitate genuine encounter between persons. This questions was the basis for the three ways we listened for the Synod.

Three ways we listened for the Synod:

(1) Listening Sessions: Sessions were coordinated by parishes, Catholic schools, religious communities, and other entities across the diocese. Specific efforts were made to listen to Confirmation candidates. Of special note is the participation of St. Ambrose University and the Iowa City Catholic Worker for their proactive participation in the Synod.

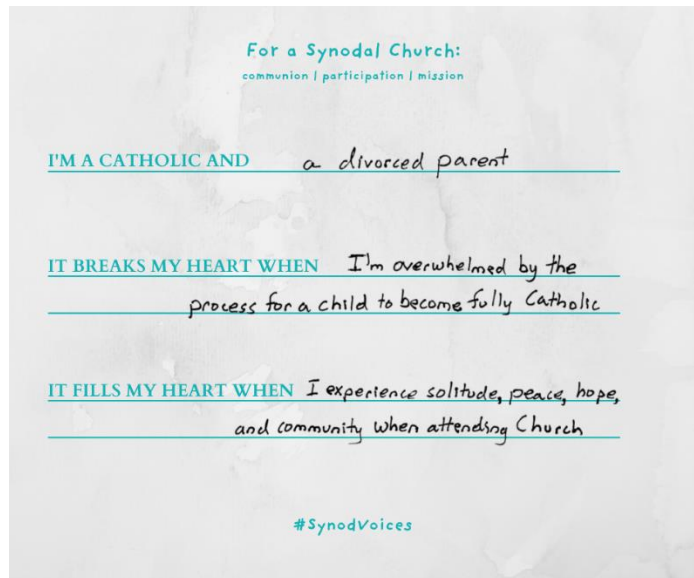
(2) 58,000 Cups of Coffee: The October 2021 annual Mass Counts results were 19,399. This is just over 60% of the 2019 Mass Counts, pre-pandemic. Two things are true about this: 1) no one is content with this reality, and 2) everyone can do something about it. If we multiply the number of people currently in our pews by three (19,399 x 3), we get just over 58,000.

With this initiative, we invited everyone who is currently in our pews to have at least one synodal conversation with:

- 1) one person who is already in our pews,
- 2) one person who used to be in our pews but hasn’t been since the pandemic, and
- 3) one person who has either never been a part of a faith community or stopped practicing long ago.

To promote these conversation, 10,000 coasters were distributed to parishes and schools.

(3) #SynodVoices: With permission from Grotto Network, we adapted their #GrottoVoices series to create #SynodVoices. Through this initiative we hoped to capture the experience of people who may benefit from anonymity, enjoy the ease of submitting responses online, or be attracted to a media driven expression of sharing one's experience. Here is one #SynodVoices submission:



Local leadership for the Synod:

We encouraged the selection of 1-2 lay Synod representatives to function as communication point-persons and leaders for implementing the Synod in their context. Over 100 local leaders from parishes, Catholic schools, religious communities, and other Catholic entities served to implement the Synod in their setting. There was an initial Zoom training session to orient leaders to the purpose of the Synod on October 17th. This was followed by Zoom training sessions in November on how to listen as the Synod calls us to listen.

Synod Guidebook and Homily Prompts

We published our [diocesan Synod Guidebook](#) to help implement the Synod. This document concretized what was called for in the Synod documents from Rome for our local context. Homily Prompts for Sundays were provided to preachers for every Sunday through the listening session phases of the Synod (Set #1: [10/24/21 – 2/27/22](#); Set #2: [3/6/22 – 4/24/22](#)).

Multi-media promotion

To promote the Synod we:

- Regularly posted about the Synod to diocesan Facebook and Twitter accounts
- Created [graphic designs](#) for use to promote the Synod
- Published a series of 6 [videos](#):
 - 58,000 Cups of Coffee: Coming to a Church near you... [0:42]
 - Bishop Thomas Zinkula – Synod Thoughts [3:26]
 - Bishop Thomas Zinkula on the 58,000 Cups of Coffee initiative [1:55]
 - Fr. Thom Hennen on the Synod on Synodality [6:58]
 - Ryan: 58,000 Cups of Coffee Testimony – Synod on Synodality [3:14]
 - Barb: 58,000 Cups of Coffee Testimony – Synod on Synodality [2:14]

Appendix C Participation Statistics

Cumulative Data

6,802 participants and 13,832 comments across all three forms of listening

	Sessions	Participants	Comments
Listening Sessions	474	5,906	11,815
Parish	304	3,623	8,504
Catholic Schools	44	1,014	1,367
Religious Communities	3	53	157
St. Ambrose University	32	361	893
Iowa City Catholic Worker	63	600	-
Other	28	255	894
58,000 Cups of Coffee	-	288	835
#SynodVoices	-	608	1,182

Parish Data

304 sessions, 3,623 participants, and 8,510 comments

All parishes were invited to hold at least one Synod listening session

- Number of parishes in the diocese: 74
- Number of parishes who held at least one (1) listening sessions: 61 (82.4%)
- Number of parishes that held:
 - 20+ sessions: 2 parishes
 - 10-19 sessions: 6 parishes
 - 4-9 sessions: 20 parishes
 - 2-3 sessions: 22 parishes
 - 1 session: 11 parishes
 - 0 sessions: 13 parishes

Catholic School Data

44 sessions, 1014 participants, and 1,367 comments

Elementary schools were asked to hold listening sessions with the highest grade in the school.

High schools were asked to at a minimum hold one session per grade level, with a request that they consider hosting a session for each class.

- Catholic Schools invited to host listening sessions for students: 14
- Catholic Schools that held at least one session for students: 11
- Student sessions and participants: 36 sessions; 847 participants
- Faculty/staff sessions and participants: 5 sessions; 142 participants
- Number of Boards of Education sessions: 3 sessions; 25 participants

Appendix D Response Statistics

Cumulative Data

Total comments: 13,832 (52% Break; 48% Fill)

Thematic and Topical Data

These charts do not offer an interpretation of comments. Rather, they give a sense of the frequency with which a theme or topic arose. The work of interpretation is in the synthesis report. The paragraph numbers in the 5th column of these charts indicate where the theme or topic is discussed in the report. Themes and topics are listed in order of frequency.

Thematic Data

The following themes emerged from the synthesis committee reading the 13,832 comments in listening session reports. This chart reflects macro data about those themes.

Theme	# Comments	# Fill (%)	# Break (%)	Paragraph no.
Leadership	1825	507 (28%)	1318 (72%)	30-38
Welcoming / Belonging / Inclusiveness	1819	844 (46%)	975 (54%)	20-27
Church Teaching / Tradition	1738	1061 (61%)	677 (39%)	11-16
Liturgy	1674	1204 (72%)	470 (28%)	3-10
Community	1359	1006 (74%)	353 (26%)	20-27
Youth/Family Engagement	1120	402 (36%)	718 (64%)	23-24
Outreach / Evangelization	955	607 (64%)	348 (36%)	42-44
Prayer / Spirituality	897	653 (73%)	244 (27%)	10
Image of the Church	815	224 (27%)	591 (73%)	39-41
Church Rules	734	35 (5%)	699 (95%)	13, 32
Polarization / Politics	500	13 (3%)	487 (97%)	28-29
Other	396	129 (33%)	267 (67%)	-

Topical Data

We searched for keywords to read comments related to specific topics. The words in parentheses are examples of terms that were searched in this process.

Topic	# Comments	# Fill (%)	# Break (%)	Paragraph no.
Abuse (scandal, cover-up)	432	10 (2%)	422 (98%)	29,34-35,37,39
Women (deaconess, ordain women)	363	34 (9%)	329 (91%)	12,20,38-39
Covid (masks, vaccine)	310	82 (26%)	228 (74%)	8-9,29
LGBTQ+ (trans, gay, orientation)	304	18 (6%)	286 (94%)	12-13,20,27,45
Social action (justice, CST, homeless)	302	162 (54%)	140 (46%)	11,41,45
Divorce (annulment)	187	6 (3%)	181 (97%)	12-13,22,25
Finances (budget, capital campaign)	136	23 (17%)	113 (83%)	36-37
Abortion (pro-choice)	126	13 (10%)	113 (90%)	12,29
Priests (shortage, celibacy)	117	1 (1%)	116 (99%)	12,32
Left (alienated, left the Church)	94	3 (3%)	91 (97%)	23,34
Pre-Conciliar (Latin, TLM)	67	28 (42%)	39 (58%)	7
Immigration (migrant, border)	52	24 (46%)	28 (54%)	13
Ecumenism (Anglican, Jewish, Muslim)	47	20 (43%)	27 (57%)	13,15
Conception (NFP, birth control)	42	1 (2%)	41 (98%)	12,14,38
Caring for Creation (environment, earth)	14	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	15

This indicates the % of sessions where an age group raised comments which fell into a **theme**:

Themes	# and % of comments during sessions	# of sessions during which theme arose	Grade school	Middle school	High school	College Age / Young Adult (19-25)	Adults 26-44	Adults 45-59	Adults 60-75	Adults >75	
	sessions present:		14	37	60	55	171	239	256	94	
Leadership	#	334	8	26	43	50	145	208	224	84	
	%	82%	57%	70%	72%	91%	85%	87%	88%	89%	
Church Teaching/ Tradition	#	331	12	28	54	51	140	201	208	81	
	%	81%	86%	76%	90%	93%	82%	84%	81%	86%	
Welcoming/ Belonging/ Inclusiveness	#	313	9	30	48	45	130	189	194	75	
	%	77%	64%	81%	80%	82%	76%	79%	76%	80%	
Liturgy	#	310	10	30	47	39	134	193	202	84	
	%	76%	71%	81%	78%	71%	78%	81%	79%	89%	
Community	#	302	12	30	41	43	128	181	190	75	
	%	74%	86%	81%	68%	78%	75%	76%	74%	80%	
Youth/ Family Engagement	#	288	6	27	40	42	30	174	190	72	
	%	70%	43%	73%	67%	76%	18%	73%	74%	77%	
Outreach/ Evangelization	#	260	10	22	36	45	109	153	157	60	
	%	64%	71%	59%	60%	82%	64%	64%	61%	64%	
Prayer/ Spirituality	#	228	5	25	39	41	91	135	140	61	
	%	56%	36%	68%	65%	75%	53%	56%	55%	65%	
Image of the Church	#	214	6	18	39	38	94	130	135	64	
	%	52%	43%	49%	65%	69%	55%	54%	53%	68%	
Church Rules	#	211	3	19	33	38	83	128	134	54	
	%	52%	21%	51%	55%	69%	49%	54%	52%	57%	
Polarization/ Politics	#	192	5	13	24	34	88	123	124	52	
	%	47%	36%	35%	40%	62%	51%	51%	48%	55%	
Other	#	113	5	13	13	27	43	58	58	23	
	%	28%	36%	35%	22%	49%	25%	24%	23%	24%	
Key	Average:		54%	63%	63%	75%	59%	65%	64%	70%	
		90% and greater									
		80% and greater									
		70% and greater									

This indicates the % of sessions where an age group raised comments which fell into a **topic**:

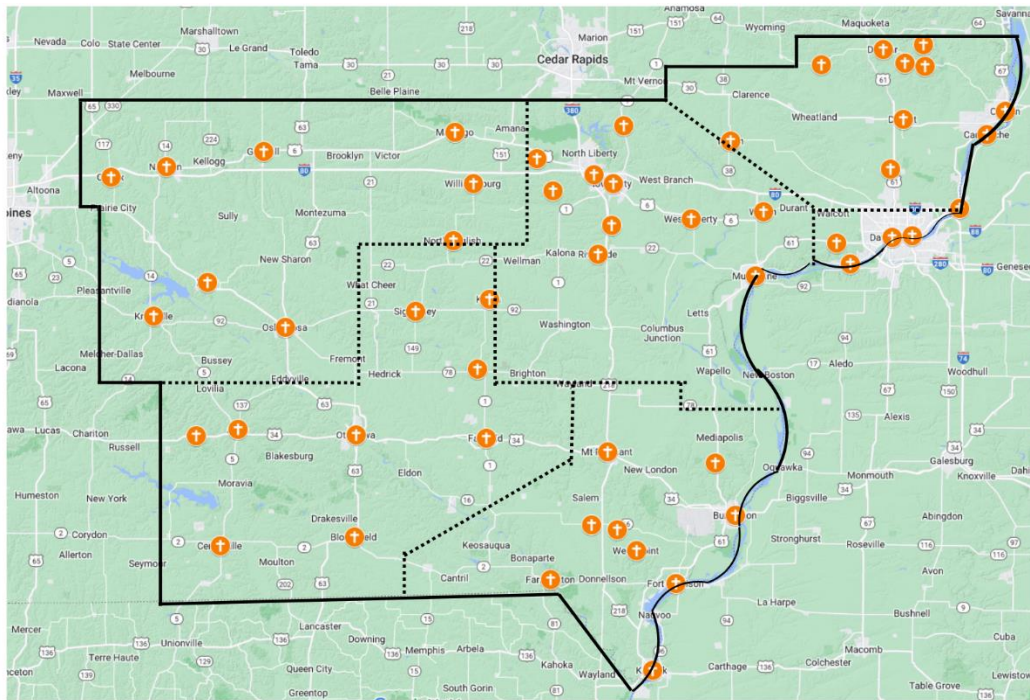
Topics	# and % of comments during sessions	# of sessions during which topic arose	Grade school	Middle school	High school	College Age / Young Adult (19-25)	Adults 26-44	Adults 45-59	Adults 60-75	Adults >75
	sessions present:		14	37	60	55	171	239	256	94
Abuse (scandal, cover-up)	# 174	3	6	12	29	86	118	126	57	
	% 43%	21%	16%	20%	53%	50%	49%	49%	61%	
Women (deaconess, ordain women)	# 145	1	20	26	43	126	176	183	85	
	% 35%	7%	54%	43%	78%	74%	74%	71%	90%	
Covid (masks, vaccine)	# 145	4	13	37	39	140	179	212	88	
	% 35%	29%	35%	62%	71%	82%	75%	83%	94%	
LGBTQ (trans, gay, orientation)	# 134	0	23	37	41	95	128	133	61	
	% 33%	0%	62%	62%	75%	56%	54%	52%	65%	
Social action (justice, CST, homeless)	# 114	3	10	22	48	102	158	143	59	
	% 28%	21%	27%	37%	87%	60%	66%	56%	63%	
Divorce (annulment)	# 93	2	7	15	34	70	102	108	53	
	% 23%	14%	19%	25%	62%	41%	43%	42%	56%	
Finances (budget, capital campaign)	# 69	5	14	14	21	49	68	73	39	
	% 17%	36%	38%	23%	38%	29%	28%	29%	41%	
Priests (e.g. shortage, celibacy)	# 69	2	7	8	15	55	68	84	40	
	% 17%	14%	19%	13%	27%	32%	28%	33%	43%	
Left (alienated, left the church)	# 63	3	8	8	16	47	62	62	34	
	% 15%	21%	22%	13%	29%	27%	26%	24%	36%	
Abortion (pro-choice)	# 61	1	8	10	21	40	62	65	34	
	% 15%	7%	22%	17%	38%	23%	26%	25%	36%	
Pre-Conciliar (Latin, TLM)	# 37	1	1	4	6	33	38	51	38	
	% 9%	7%	3%	7%	11%	19%	16%	20%	40%	
Caring for Creation (environment, earth)	# 37	0	3	6	8	22	32	30	16	
	% 9%	0%	8%	10%	15%	13%	13%	12%	17%	
Immigration (migrant, border)	# 28	0	1	1	3	14	23	28	13	
	% 7%	0%	3%	2%	5%	8%	10%	11%	14%	
Birth control, NFP	# 25	0	5	5	4	15	17	17	9	
	% 6%	0%	14%	8%	7%	9%	7%	7%	10%	
Ecumenism (Anglican, Jewish, Muslim)	# 22	0	1	4	5	15	20	25	14	
	% 5%	0%	3%	7%	9%	9%	8%	10%	15%	
Key	Average:		12%	23%	23%	40%	35%	35%	35%	45%
90% and greater										
80% and greater										
70% and greater										

Appendix E Who Participated and Where

This appendix reflects demographic and geographic information to give a sense of “who” and “where” the Synod was lived out.

Geographic data

The diocese is split into 6 deaneries. City locations where listening sessions were held are indicated in the map below:



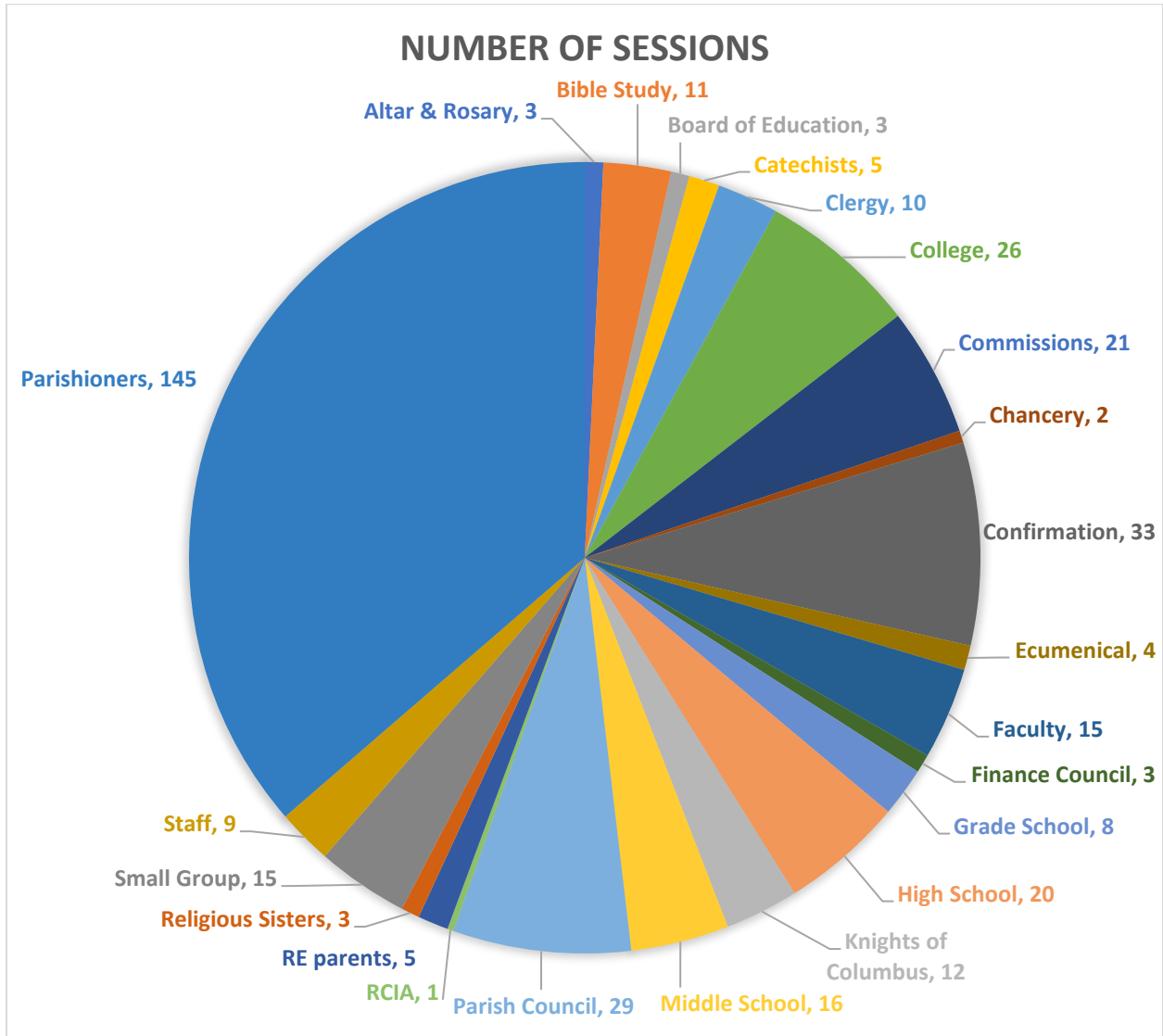
The following chart indicates parish participation:

Deanery	# of Parishes	# of Parishes that held sessions	# of Sessions	# of Participants
Clinton	13	11	55	873
Davenport	10	10	69	684
Grinnell	12	9	49	586
Iowa City	17	12	70	760
Keokuk	10	9	25	321
Ottumwa	12	10	36	399

Demographic Data

Our demographic data is in some ways limited and in some ways quite useful. Where a survey could ask specific questions about age, ethnicity, and denominational affiliation, when listening sessions took place we asked facilitators to capture approximate demographic information. This

means, for example, that we do not know the exact number of Hispanic individuals participated in listening sessions. What our data does tell us is the kinds of organizational and ecclesial bodies that participated in the Synod. For example, we do know how many sessions were held for Confirmation candidates, Finance Councils, and Bible Study groups. This information is summarized in the following chart:



Appendix F

Insights from the 58,000 Cups of Coffee Initiative

“I am certain this is a worthwhile ministry and despite my feelings of inadequacy for the task, I am being called.”

“He was able to have an honest conversation about the church for the first time in decades. It was great for our friendship and helped him understand why I stand with the church on some things. It was a holy time to talk about the loss of his dad through the lens of faith.”

Background

As part of the Synod we encouraged Catholics across the diocese to share in one-on-one conversations for the Synod. The October 2021 annual Mass Counts was 19,399. This was just over 60% of the 2019 Mass Counts, pre-pandemic. Two things are true about this: 1) no one is content with this reality, and 2) everyone can do something about it. We saw the Synod as an opportunity to respond.

If we multiply the number of people currently in our pews by three (19,399 x 3), we get just over 58,000. We invited everyone who is currently in our pews to have at least one synodal conversation with:

- 4) one person who is already in our pews,
- 5) one person who used to be in our pews but hasn't been since the pandemic, and
- 6) one person who has either never been a part of a faith community or stopped practicing long ago.

The Grace of Personal Encounter

As part of the online form, respondents were asked the following prompt:

As you reflect on your experience of the conversation, what graces did you experience in the conversation or since the conversation? We can experience grace both in joy and in sadness. This question is about naming the ways you recognize the Holy Spirit through the experience of the conversation.

Select responses have been grouped as follows to indicate commonalities that emerged:

The power of conversation

- “It hurt to hear his story, as I was one of the parishioners that failed to notice he was not attending, although I continued our friendship as usual. That, I hope, makes me more interested in those sitting in the pews around me as people and not just faces in the crowd.”
- “Just through the act of starting the conversation I feel like it maybe helped this person consider and think about things related to the Catholic Church that they probably haven't thought about in quite a while. While some of the answer brought me sadness I was

happy to be able to have the conversation. Maybe it will lead to more conversation down the road.”

- “We need to continue these kinds of conversations post-Synod. We found many points of similarity in outlook and it built a bridge. The Church has often lived in too much of a bubble and perhaps been afraid to ask others how they perceive us.”
- “She was wearing a cross necklace. She definitely believes in God, so I know the Holy Spirit is at work. I saw her a sheep without a shepherd. I did invite her to a women's church study group. She told me that she might be interested in coming to that. I see personal invitations as the strongest way to get people involved. I see how I can help people.”

The power of simply offering to listen

- “They are even beginning to explore what it might look like to be more attentive to ritual in their lives. Most importantly, their stories once again remind me of the importance of respectful listening to those who are “other.” Growing up, they both were excluded by “church” people – and that has had a life-long effect. Pope Francis’ offer to listen intrigued and attracted them, and perhaps cracked a previously shut door open a bit.”
- “I received the graces of a fellow lover of God who lives her life in service of God's people in a myriad of ways and in worship that is meaningful in her relationship with God and God's people. The Holy Spirit allowed her to be open and honest and allowed me to just listen, without trying to defend or explain in response to her understandings and feelings.”
- “The person spoke from her heart/mind and spoke with gratitude for the opportunity to share her experience and that she was heard. No anger. A rewarding experience for both her and me.”
- “Conversations about religion is not easy/comfortable for me, so this question is a conversation starter that will hopefully make the topic easier for me in the future.”

The power of hearing the witness of others

- “It was a powerful experience to see the Catholic Church through the eyes of “an other” – especially one who had such positive things to say! I came into the conversation expecting a laundry list of what “broke” her heart – and received the opposite.”
- “I am moved by his sadness at not being able to attend Mass because of others' lack of care; I am moved by his faith that still cares. Others would just simply walk away. The grace of his witness is a real gift to me.”
- “I was touched by the candor of this young couple. They have had positive experiences of Church - but the negative is also taking its toll. They have not given up (yet), but without better support from priest and parish they will find it easier to stay away than re-engage.”

Recognizing and honoring diversity in experiences

- “The Holy Spirit calls us to be tolerant and forgiving even though we are in different places in our life's journey.”

- “Thanksgiving for the exchange and ability for all to discuss the question. Sadness for them and their experiences over the years. I pray that the Spirit comforts them and that these comments will make a difference in some way for good change. Humans are difficult and change is slow.”
- “Sadness for the little bit of discussion and the clear rejection of the Catholic church based on the neglect of we the parishioners toward them.”
- “After this honest listening session, I can honor another person's journey to build a relationship with God. It's different than mine, but it's still valid and purposeful.”

Relationship as the context for growth in faith

- “This was not scheduled, totally incidental/impromptu. Holy Spirit connected us. She was in tears about missing mass/faith. He led me to her, to invite her back. To offer her a seat in my pew. To reassure her the door is always open. And to make her feel welcome alone, even without her family.”
- “I appreciate the honesty and frankness of the speaker, and felt a stronger personal connection between us.”
- “I see a grace that Holy Spirit works among us to bring us together as a God's family and opens our hearts and minds that we can love and help one another.”
- “It was a grace-filled conversation in terms of our friendship and going deeper than just talking about our kids, their school, etc. It opened the door for talking about some painful personal things but also the way God has used those things to make us more compassionate towards others. I learned things about her and she learned things about me.”
- “The conversation brought more joy than sadness. I've known this individual for years, but this was the first time we had discussed matters of faith. We both learned more about each other. Hearing about his family, I came to appreciate that my own faith convictions were partly a reflection of my parents' devotion to their respective faith communities (Catholic and Presbyterian), and I'm grateful that they modeled different forms of devoutness. My friend allowed that he might explore faith communities again, although he wasn't sure if/how/when that might occur. I told him that uncertainty was ok-- that with these kinds of questions God often helps us find a good path. His sense of possibility and openness to this was inspiring-- an expression of the Holy Spirit that connects all of us to each other.”
- “I grew in my relationship with this person in a way that I wouldn't have otherwise. I'm grateful to have experienced this sharing of life together.”
- “The Holy Spirit nudged me to ask for a conversation with someone I care about who has been away from Mass for a long time. My conversation partner and I had a wonderful bonding experience. I felt as if we had entered a sacred space. I pray daily that he and his family will return to Mass. That's watering the seeds that have been planted.”

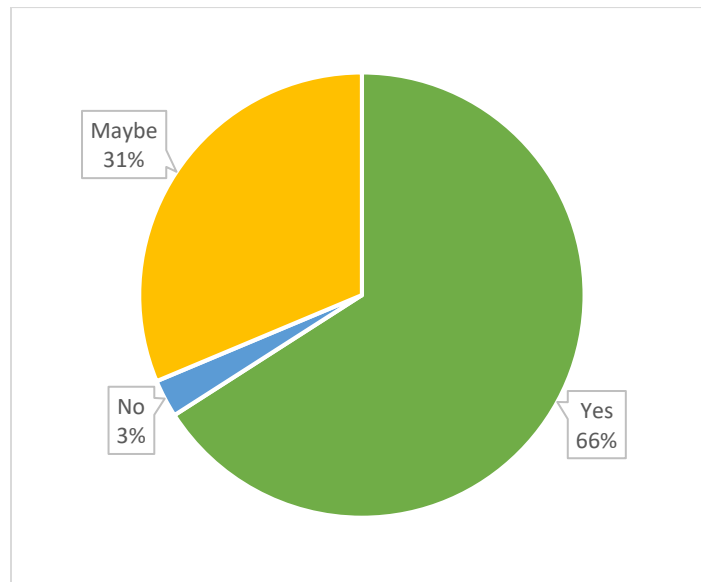
Naming Grace

Recognizing and naming grace is vital to the life of faith. There is a need to support people in this practice. For one reason or another, in many instances this box was left blank.

One respondent wrote the following: “I can’t say I feel I experienced graces. I saw it as a neutral exercise.” This comment is an honest reflection of someone’s understanding of their experience. And yet, the Church can give people the vocabulary to more readily recognize every moment as graced.

Openness to follow-up conversations

As part of the form we asked respondents: “Will you follow-up to continue the conversation with this person?” Here is what they said:



Even though we may experience hesitance to invite someone into a personal conversation about faith and their experience of the Church, this data seems to suggest that having a single experience of this kind of conversation opens the door to further conversation.

Anecdotally, several participants indicated that they were thankful for the opportunity to ask someone about their experience of the Church. They frequently expressed that they needed a “reason” or an “excuse” to reach out to a friend, adult child, or colleague who had stopped going to Sunday Mass during the pandemic and hasn’t returned, or who had left the Church long ago. The Synod, and the 58,000 Cups of Coffee initiative in particular, gave them just the reason to reach out.

Appendix G The Synthesis Process

Having received nearly 14,000 comments for the Synod, it was important that we develop a synthesis process that would result in a summary report that accurately reflected what people shared about their experience of the Church. A 34-member committee was developed to execute three basic tasks:

- 1) Read a set of comments and identify themes that were emerging from these comments
- 2) With a finalized list of themes, read a new set of comments and categorize according to themes. This included a distinction for primary and secondary themes.
- 3) Read a new set of comments organized by theme or topics (based on keyword searches), discern what was emerging from within that theme or topic, and write a summary report.

It is from the summaries written in step 3, along with comments shared during a committee meeting, that the draft report was written. This report was shared with the People of God for a two week period of public comment. These public comments were reviewed and taken into account to finalize the report submitted to the USCCB.

Synthesis Committee

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Nicky Gant
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Glenn Leach
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Tammy Norcross-Reitzler
Ken Novak
Sharon Roling
Sue Schmitt
Fr. Drake Shafer
Dc. Mike Snyder
Fr. John Spiegel
Fr. Dave Steinle
Francesca Tatad-To
Fr. Jim Vrba
Bishop Thomas Zinkula

In addition to synthesis committee members, we would like to extend special thanks to all the priests, deacons, religious, and laity who lead, participated, and lived out the Synod in parishes, schools, the wider community, and at the chancery.

Appendix H

Synod Stories in *The Catholic Messenger*

[Diocesan synod begins with liturgy](#) (9/16/21)

[The church of the third millennia: evangelization and the upcoming synod](#) (10/7/21)

[A Family Synod | Persons, places and things](#) (10/21/21)

[Synodality: we are on this journey together](#) (10/21/21)

[The meaning of the Synod: the work of the Church belongs to all of us](#) (10/28/21)

[Let the Synod's themes – communion, participation and mission – reign in our hearts](#) (11/4/21)

[Rediscovering Sunday, the Synod, and 58,000 Cups of Coffee](#) (1/27/22)

[Exploring the Word of God and the vision for a Synodal Church](#) (2/3/22)

[What fills and breaks my brother's heart about the Catholic Church](#) (2/3/22)

[58,000 Cups of Coffee initiative fuels Synod conversations](#) (2/10/22)

[Together in the journey: Davenport Diocese praised for its approach to synod and other initiatives](#) (2/17/22)

[A listening Church: Every voice matters!](#) (2/17/22)

[Two Peas in a Pod: Evangelization & Synodality](#) (3/3/22)

[Youths, adults offer input during synod process in Long Grove](#) (3/10/22)

[Cathedral Synod mobile expresses thoughts about the Catholic Church](#) (3/24/22)

[Lessons for the Synod on Synodality from our 22-month-old](#) (4/7/22)

[#SynodVoices – another tool for evangelization](#) (4/14/22)

[Learning from our evangelical brothers and sisters](#) (5/12/22)

[Themes emerge from Synod listening sessions](#) (5/12/22)

[Synod encounters with Pope Francis and Bishop Zinkula](#) (5/12/22)

[Draft report of Diocesan Synod is ready for review](#) (6/2/22)

[Forming ourselves in synodality](#) (6/29/22)

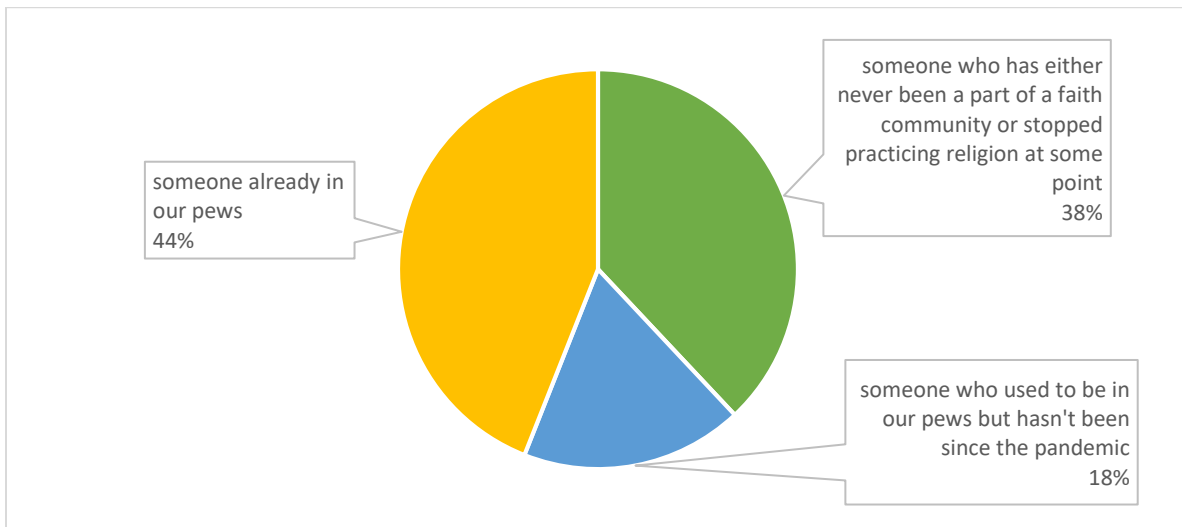
Appendix I

The Difficulty of Reaching Out: A Major Learning from the Synod Process

While the Synod explicitly calls for the Church to hear all people, the process of the Synod brought into focus how difficult, or out of the norm, it is for many faith communities to reach those not already in the faith community. The very structures and habits of ecclesial life often exhibit an inward focus. This was a perceived tendency prior to the Synod, and the experience of the Synod affirmed this understanding.

There was much discussion in the diocese about how to hear from those we don't normally hear from. Lists were provided in our diocesan Synod guidebook to aid local communities in their discernment of who they might listen to, and where that listening might take place. Yet, we discovered that it is much easier to listen to those who are already in our pews.

While this was generally a difficult task to accomplish within the structures of the Church, individual persons were able to do this with greater success. While a relatively small portion of listening sessions took place with those outside the Church, many one-on-one Synod conversations occurred with people who are not practicing Catholics through the 58,000 Cups of Coffee initiative.



As indicated by the above graph, 56% of those heard through the 58,000 Cups of Coffee initiative are not regularly in our pews or in our pews at all. Reaching out to those who are not practicing Catholics occurs most naturally in the context of individual relationships.

In its mission of evangelization, the Church must be outward-facing at both institutional interpersonal levels. Our inward-facing structures must nurture outward-facing habits, and newer outward-facing structures need to be cultivated. The people of God have a great ability to reach out to those who are not already in our pews. The institutional Church must support them in these efforts.