

St. Boniface Parish Erie  
Synodality Listening Sessions Parish Report  
April 2022

During the months of February and March, 2022, nine listening sessions were held at St. Boniface Parish to provide the opportunity for parishioners and others to answer discussion questions on a selection of ten topics given to us by the Vatican, and under the direction of the Erie Catholic Diocese. The fundamental questions we were to present were: *A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together."* *How is this "journeying together" happening in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?* Our facilitators adopted a vision of: *As God's pilgrim people journeying together, how can we more effectively bring the life-giving power of the gospel to a world so desperately in need of it?* Each individual session opened with a scripture reading and prayer to the Holy Spirit for guidance with our dialogue.

In addition to the live listening sessions, a paper questionnaire was also available for people to submit their responses anonymously. A total of 66 individuals attended the various listening sessions, with the largest group of 13 attending the last session, "Suds and Synodality." Only a couple of paper questionnaires were returned. The majority of participants were long-time, faithful, parishioners; although some younger parents, teens, and single young adults attended the sessions as well.

Taking into account that during this period that we held the listening sessions, we were just emerging from the most recent and worst outbreak of COVID-19, which by itself, hampered and delayed significant activities at our parish. Comments such as, "We used to do this" were common. Also, please keep in mind that "perception is reality." Every participant has a different background and faith journey that is real and valid to them, regardless of how well we think we've done things in the past. That said, all participants responded in a positive frame of mind where they wanted to be helpful in providing feedback. A small number of participants could not think of any opportunities for improvement, but spoke of their personal faith journeys and expressed wanting to continue sharing their faith with others in small groups. Our summarized words to describe the overall sessions were: Honest, Inspiring/Community-building, and Spirit/Faith-filled.

Themes and some suggested opportunities that emerged (either frequently or of agreed significance):

| THEME   | SUGGESTED OPPORTUNITIES   |
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| <p>Improve communication of goals/plans, activities and various ministries.</p>   | <p>Overall, ministries and planning groups need better communication of activities so as to eliminate duplication. Annual calendar, bulletin “Upcoming Events” can be utilized.</p> <p>Update website and directory with accurate information.</p>  |
| <p>We need to do a better job of working together—develop the spirit of true collaboration by merging paths of all ministries/groups.</p>   | <p>Various ministries to give annual reports at Pastoral Council and in bulletin.</p> <p>Connect similar themes among all plans. (Ex: Year of Healing)</p>  |
| <p>Parishioners do not fully understand parish vision/mission/values; most are not aware that we have a Parish Pastoral Plan (goals).</p>   | <p>Parish Plan and everything we do needs to come alive and be related to our mission/vision/values.</p> <p>Publish/review revised Parish Plan. Communicate progress in additional ways besides Pastoral Council minutes. Recruit new members for “Key Steps” task forces.</p> <p>Become a better listening parish “who responds to the changing needs of all families today.” (V3)</p> <p>Tie each ministry to our mission/values/plan.</p> <p>Have a brief “motto” for our parish that sums up our purpose/mission.</p> |
| <p>Parish Community-building: In many ways we do well, but we can do better with welcoming new/visiting parishioners, including them in activities. Even some longer-term parishioners expressed that they, or their ideas, still don’t always feel welcome. Some of the same people do most of the “work.”</p> | <p>Offer family fun activities open to ALL parishioners/families.</p> <p>Encourage parishioners to “go out of their comfort zone.”</p> <p>Continue some form of listening sessions (maybe by invitation of Fr. Marc and one or two simple questions relative to something we are working on?)</p>   |

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| <p>Faith Formation (children/youth/adult):<br/> Small group sharing, Cursillo, family-oriented, family-involved methods all lead to a more vibrant parish. We need to get away from the idea that practicing our faith is an <i>obligation</i>, and view it as a <i>desire</i> to know Jesus.</p> | <p>Intergenerational meetings for faith sharing.</p> <p>Involve preschool students and parents in parish liturgies/activities more.</p> <p>Offer a variety of opportunities to build spirituality, strengthen discipleship, come to know the “Joy of Jesus.”</p> <p>Children’s classes should be a fun, engaging way to learn about their Faith and build relationships.</p> <p>We can learn from some of our local Christian, non-Catholic churches.</p> |
| <p>Evangelizing: Build/strengthen relationships with marginalized parishioners, our neighbors and beyond. We offer a lot at the parish level and to our Greene Township community, but we can do more, go beyond.</p>   | <p>Broaden our ministries?</p> <p>Start with our own families and build from there.</p> <p>Multi-prong approach. Personal invitation most effective.</p>  |
| <p>How do we deal with trust issues due to COVID, history of clergy sex abuse, and perceived abuse of power by church hierarchy (clericalism)?<br/> Impacts evangelization.</p>   | <p>Communicate Vatican and diocesan news/changes in a positive manner in our parish.</p>  |
| <p>Liturgy: Mass and Eucharist are most important to all. Many scripture readings at Mass are difficult to understand. Music at Mass: Important to some more lively/modern music; some prefer traditional hymns. Some prefer the quiet. Sacraments strengthen faith.</p>                          | <p>Priest introduces readings at Mass to listen for a simple theme or message.</p> <p>Offer different styles of music at Saturday evening and Sunday 10:30 Mass?</p> <p>Offer more opportunities for liturgy participation.</p>   |
| <p>The pastor is the heart of the parish; he sets the tone. Fr. Marc is very much appreciated.</p>  |   |

Respectfully Submitted,

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