

Synod on Synodality



A Message From Our Pastor

Hello Holy Spirit parishioners!

I wanted to thank you for taking the time to offer your thoughts regarding the parish last year during the *Synod on Synodality*.

Even though I wasn't your pastor then, I am happy to hear what you value at Holy Spirit, how we can go grow, and go forward to be better at what we do here.

God bless you.

Fr. Mark

Church of the Holy Spirit

Our Process - Activities

- Per the directives of the Archdiocese of San Antonio and under the guidance of our Pastor Father Antonio Gonzalez, we conducted Synod interviews/questionnaires in Spring 2022
- Independently read and captured the 96 pages of comments
- Coded all the statements to categories
- The statements were coded by sentiment as well
 - **Strength** if “we do this well” or “I like this”
 - **Neutral** for a general statements
 - **Growth Opportunity** if “We should do more...” or “We don’t do this...”
- Responses categorized into themes

Our Process – Listening Sessions

Fair Participation & Significant Data

5 Sessions, 16 Tables, ~ 150 participants

96 pages of comments

317 Comment item

259 Pattern codes assigned

Participants

- Ministry Leaders
- Ministry members
- Parish in general
- Spanish-speaking parishioners

Our Process - Limitations

- **Interpretation:** The categorization of comments has analysis “bias”
 - Participants in each listening session gave their best effort to respond to complicated/broad concepts provided by the Archdiocese of San Antonio
 - Scribes at the tables recorded data from their perspective in a rapid manner
 - The organization of data was based on analysts’ perspective and understanding of the main idea
 - The labeling of categories and patterns are subject to definition by reader
- **Filtering:** “The whole story” was condensed and simplified
 - Scribes recorded input as phrases captured during the sessions which minimized meaning
 - Participants were minimizing response for sake of time
 - Prioritized patterns by counts with minimal idea of nuance (positive/negative)

Introduction:

Themes in responses

How do I live as a Catholic in the 21st century?

- Living/Merging Faith in Everyday Life
- Schedule, Priorities, Understanding
- Politics and “Tough Issues”
- How do I experience “church”?
- Presence vs. Involvement
- Traditional vs. Change
- Online or In-Person
- Is something better than nothing?
- Who is allowed to join us and lead us on the Journey?
- Inclusion / Worthiness / Evangelization
- Women’s roles / Married Priests



Voice of the Parish

The BIG QUESTION – *How can we help Parishioners with their Journey?*

By providing a home for community organizations, the church is welcoming others to be a part and live the life intended.

Don't ever be afraid to show/live your faith.

Keep it simple, show your faith in your actions.
Be the face of Christ to people you meet.
Everyone has their own gifts. Use your gifts to draw others to Christ and the Church...

Personally, I feel like every time you acknowledge a fellow whether at church/Mass or out in the streets in daily life, that is the first step to minister and lead to "Gospel" and grow in togetherness.

If the Church can teach, facilitate and model true discernment then the Holy Spirit will move among the people and inspire us to work together into the future. God has planned for the world.

(Sp) By learning more about your faith, we are made aware that a good Catholic has the responsibility to cooperate and help in the programs and ministries that allow us to know the objectives of the parish...

Pattern Codes

Based on the Context of the Statement.

A single Statement might have multiple Pattern Codes.

Code	Pattern	Meaning
A	Administration	Access/Availability, Running of Parish, Requirements to be Priests
C	Catechesis	Teaching the Faith to those inside the Church
E	Evangelization	Sharing the Gospel with intent that others decide to join the Church
F	Fellowship/ Family	Feeling like Family, Sense of Belonging
H	Homily	Delivered by Priest or Deacon; Content, Style of Delivery
I	Inclusion	Left Out: Accessibility, Divorced, Widows, Single Mothers, Language, Elderly, Deaf, Incarcerated, Women, Family, LGBTQ
L	Liturgy/Prayer	Mass, Sacraments, Personal and Communal Prayer
M	Ministries	Service groups and activities for laity
O	Outreach	Reaching out, Connecting, Inviting, Welcoming
S	Scripture	Reading, Hearing, Studying, Learning the Bible
W	Worthiness	Not feeling Welcome at the table, Judging
X	Communications/ Internet Tools	Listening, Using Technology, Social Media, Online Streaming
Y	Youth/Children/ Young Adults	Inclusion/Catechesis/Ministries Specific to young parishioners
Z	Comfort Zone	Openness to Change vs. Tradition, "Hard Topics"
QH	Quick Hit	Ideas for Improvement/Suggestions

Pattern Counts and Distribution

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity (Based on Sentiment of Comment)

	Strenghts		Neutral		Growth Oppty		Total	
Category	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Administration	5	12%	13	32%	23	56%	41	100%
Catechesis	2	29%	5	71%	0	0%	7	100%
Evangelization	2	25%	3	38%	3	38%	8	100%
Fellowship/Family	7	10%	53	75%	11	15%	71	100%
Homily	0	0%	3	43%	4	57%	7	100%
Inclusion	0	0%	7	78%	2	22%	9	100%
Liturgy/Prayer	14	42%	15	45%	4	12%	33	100%
Ministries	8	22%	26	70%	3	8%	37	100%
Outreach	8	28%	18	62%	3	10%	29	100%
Scripture	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	5	100%
Worthiness	0	0%	0	0%	7	100%	7	100%
Communications/Internet Tools	0	0%	4	67%	2	33%	6	100%
Youth/Children/Young Adults	0	0%	2	20%	8	80%	10	100%
Comfort Zone	1	10%	6	60%	3	30%	10	100%
Quick Hit	1	25%	3	75%	0	0%	4	100%

Strength Areas

Scripture, Liturgy/Prayer and Catechesis

	Strengths		Neutral		Growth Oppty		Total	
Category	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Scripture	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	5	100%
Liturgy/Prayer	14	42%	15	45%	4	12%	33	100%
Catechesis	2	29%	5	71%	0	0%	7	100%

Scripture

Reading, Hearing, Studying, Learning the Bible

5
comments

3	2	0
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- My reading of Scripture and religious books help strength my faith.
- I've learned through ACTS and bible study and that has made an enormous difference in my seeking the Lord and my Catholic responsibility. Having more bible studies at various times (for working people) and in Spanish should also help.
- It is important to give yourself the time to let the Holy Spirit speak to you. Ask questions. Read the Bible.

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

Liturgy / Prayer

Mass, Sacraments, Personal and Communal Prayer

33
comments

14

15

4

- Masses are filling up again. Choirs are singing.
- Personally, the Holy Spirit inspires me to ... the word of the Lord. Attending Mass reinforces my belief.
- (Sp) Celebrate - If we go to the Eucharistic celebration every day, little by little we will realize that we need it, that it becomes part of our lives, it makes us feel accompanied by Jesus on a daily basis, and thus we will get closer to Him. Daily masses help us to understand and transform what we are living. That, together with the confessions, will give us a better appreciation of the liturgy.

- The journey is taking us toward a communal celebration of our faith. Unfortunately, there isn't a full participation and there seems to be a lack of understanding or knowledge of the Liturgy.
- Listening - We need more silent time through Adoration and meditation.
- Need to provide Missalettes for laity to read during Mass for better participation. Limit singing during communion to encourage "thanksgiving prayer".

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

Catechesis

Teaching the Faith to those inside the Church

7
comments

2	5	0
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- Teaching the children and new members the word of Christ.
- Deciding that I want to know why we do what we do at church, because I no longer want to just attend Church, but I want to take part and wholly participate in it.

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

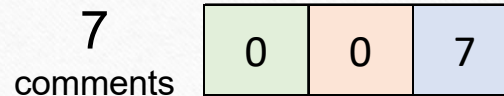
The Growth Opportunity Areas

Worthiness, Youth/Children/Young Adults, Homily, Administration

	Strengths		Neutral		Growth Oppty		Total	
Worthiness	0	0%	0	0%	7	100%	7	100%
Youth/Children/Young Adults	0	0%	2	20%	8	80%	10	100%
Homily	0	0%	3	43%	4	57%	7	100%
Administration	5	12%	13	32%	23	56%	41	100%

Worthiness

Not feeling Welcome at the table, Judging



- It is sometimes very difficult to discuss some topics because of the priests who are in charge and possible repercussions that might result, or you feel inadequate. Who do we really have in our parish that will speak for us other than priests!
- It is very important to speak out, but it does take courage. Speaking is sometimes hindered because the person might feel embarrassed, afraid of facing ridicule, or might feel that he/she is not being listened to in any way. Recent scandals have driven people away.
- On a personal level it is often fear of disapproval or being criticized that will prevent speaking up.
- Fear of over-stepping, being too pushy, fear of pride being hurt, etc. Many put a lot of weight on the priests. If they don't like the priests and the way they say Mass, they leave.

Youth/Children/Young Adults

Inclusion/Catechesis/Ministries Specific to young parishioners

10
comments

0	2	8
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- Young adults have no religion. They are breaking away from the Catholic Church.
- Youth ministries – there is nothing special for the young people and teens.
- (Sp) It is also necessary to pay more attention to young people, since in recent years their activities have decreased.
- Neglecting the youth/teens and young adults. It needs a more active organization from the parish "authorities!"
- We have no programs, events, or ministries for teens and young adults.

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

Homily

Content, Style of Delivery

7
comments

0	3	4
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- "Listening" - This is a tough one because I have a problem with not LISTENING. My mind is multi-tasking all kinds of thoughts even when I warn myself to be diligent to listening. At Mass, how do I pay attention to God when He is speaking to me? I am guilty of paying better attention to a priest whose sermons are lively with a personal experience spin to the homily. If a priest goes on and on, I start losing concentration and my mind wanders. Then I feel so guilty when prayers begin for presentation of the gifts and the Eucharistic Prayer, etc. So, it is time for me to go to confession!
- Although most people respect the thoughts and opinions of the priest, when we have a differing opinion, it is a challenge to bring that forward, not wanting to seem disrespectful. We need to feel more comfortable but, many times, our ideas are shut down, so we stop asking.
- Communications - Explain each part of the Mass - Evaluate Sermons - Does the sermon give a message to help the community "get to Heaven?"
- Classes on public speaking - Each sermon has to fit the message.

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

Administration

Access/Availability, Running of Parish, Requirements to be Priests

41
comments

5	13	23
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- Making an appointment with who you want to speak to definitely helps.
- (Sp) In matters of the maintenance of the parish, as well as in the use of economic resources, the pastoral council carries out a very good job, although fundamentally it only focuses on these two points.

Cont'd

- Pastoral Council/Finance/Building Committees exist but voices are not heard. People don't want to participate in councils/committees if the pastor is the only person making decisions.
- We don't have enough avenues to speak out either to our pastor or through our organizations. We need not be afraid to speak out but do need to be polite and responsible for what we want to say.
- Participation is also encouraged by transparency of the parish priests and leaders!! Parishioners need to be aware of what the parish is doing/costs/why!

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

Administration (Cont'd)

Access/Availability, Running of Parish, Requirements to be Priests

41
comments

5

13

23

- Recognize the importance of speaking out as needed for constructive suggestions. Be clear in the objectives with organized, well substantiated thoughts. Don't speak out to vent or state frustrations, be an ambassador of the church and its mission by clearly speaking out true, faithful teachings.
- Laity is not a threat, they genuinely love and care for their church and if they feel valued as persons, they will do anything to help. Build a sense of "partnership." Pastors don't need to work alone or with those that think like them. More collegiality.
- (Sp) 2) Fear of not knowing, pride, fear of not understanding. Many people leave because of the priests.
- We have no method or process in decision making. There is a council - unaware of how they are chosen. Little participation with Pastor or hierarchical structure. Rather powerless to know how to improve. Council members are not known - no way to contact them.
- Hindrances - no listeners. No responses to concerns or suggestions. Do not feel the freedom or encouragement to speak out. Discussion happens among different groups – Sometimes leading to people leaving the parish.

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

Remaining Areas

	Strengths		Neutral		Growth Oppty		Total	
Category	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fellowship/Family	7	10%	53	75%	11	15%	71	100%
Ministries	8	22%	26	70%	3	8%	37	100%
Outreach	8	28%	18	62%	3	10%	29	100%

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

Fellowship / Family

Feeling like Family, Sense of Belonging

71
comments

7	53	11
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- ✓ *We need to welcome newcomers again with a pre-COVID tradition of coffee/donuts every 2 months.*
- We have a vibrant community that gathers daily and/or weekly to praise God. I'm not involved with the school. I'm semi-retired, know few people. However, I consider everyone that worships here my family.
- Get in a discussion group. Everyone has a special gift, and it is important that you use and share your gift with other, whatever that may be.

- ✓ *Please reach out to those who've lost a/several family members!! We need a bereavement ministry.*
- ✓ *We need to listen to those who are grieving loss of a loved one(s). The parish grief ministry hasn't helped me.*
- ✓ *We haven't had any celebrations due to COVID! How can we bring people back to celebrate if they haven't come back to worship? Can we have a celebration(s) to "welcome back" those who haven't returned/every one???*

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

✓ Completed

Ministries

Service groups and activities for laity

37
comments

8

26

3

- The COVID pandemic has made journeying together different over the past two years, but some hopeful signs are emerging. 1. Ministries are beginning to meet in person to become reacquainted and reenergized.
- I am a co-committee chair for the beautification committee at Holy Spirit Catholic Church....We have had the opportunity to bring volunteers of all ages and abilities together to beautify our church grounds. I have used funds from work and my ... membership to help this ministry - have also had help from Knights of Columbus, Altar Society, and Boy Scouts with this inclusive ministry.

- ✓ *Currently, we are journeying together through various ministries. These organizations work independently and currently do not have effective coordination, communications, and focus. We are working to improve these efforts; however, we are just beginning.*
- ✓ *In order to promote more active participation in the liturgy, we have to call people into active service thru ministries. We always see the "same people" serving - open the invitation to others, be welcoming and accepting of others.*

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

✓ Completed

Outreach/Welcoming

Reaching out, Connecting, Inviting, Welcoming

29
comments

8

18

3

- We are helping our parish by provide services for the needy. Teaching the children and new members the Word of Christ.
- By providing a home for community organizations, the church is welcoming others to be a part and live the life intended.
- As a leader in our Scouting (Boy Scouts) community, we teach our youth to work together and live lives intended. The use of community organizations, open to all people of differing views and religions, will help us to walk together and better learn, love and listen to one another.
- If new parishioners feel "welcomed" they may be more enthused to participate in the mission of the church.
- (Sp) As a parish, we are just taking the first steps with other Christian denominations with the hope that it will bear abundant fruit. About other religions or people without religious affiliation, there is no dialogue or collaboration for now.
- There is a desire to be in relationship with other faiths; we can learn from one another. We may discover that people of faith seek and desire to foster a relationship with God and one another. We don't do this enough.

Strengths - Neutral - Growth Opportunity

“Quick Hit” Suggestions

Specific Ideas from Participants

"Quick Hit" Suggestions

Code	Suggestion
F	One good effort shown in the past which was very enlightening, and effective for me was when all the programs and organizations held a meet & greet & sign-up day in the banquet room, to educate the parishioners as what places or programs or services are available to them as a good first stop. Each Sunday, one or more organizations can have a talk in the foyer educating the parishioners. This can happen for many Sundays until all have had a turn. Personal contact, conversation, welcoming greetings, and an invitation to join, all have a greater impact than a flyer listing the programs, although that is helpful too. - Coffee and pastries on the front patio is a good idea for people to mingle and meet and greet. Even if it is only for the morning masses before the noon hours. By front patio, I mean the landing above the steps.
F	✓ <i>Add a bilingual mass to hopefully bring people together and be more inclusive instead of just splitting them up into 2 groups. - Need to establish parish socials for the elderly and the lonely. St. Francis had monthly lunch for the elderly.</i>
F	Older people need transportation for Saturday and Sunday Mass.
A	(Sp) How are divergent views, conflicts and difficulties dealt with? Although the church is trying to solve them through meetings with the leaders of the ministries, it is important that they be held more often and that a better representation of the community, specifically, Anglo and Latino, be involved.
M	Listening requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. Perhaps a listening course/lesson can be offered. At Adoration, I feel the Lord is listening to me but am I listening to Him???

✓ *Completed*

Some Thoughts and Ideas

Recommendations

- **Increase Communication to Manage Perceptions**

- ✓ *Update Website and App with Ministry Information and Activity News*
- ✓ *Involve Youth more visibly in all masses*
- ✓ *Recommend good external resources for Growing in the Faith (e.g. Catholic radio, TV, web sites, Archdiocese resources)*

- **Continue the Engagement**

- Have more Listening Sessions
- Focus Groups for How to Reach Out and Include those “Left Behind” (e.g., Divorced, LGBTQ, Homebound)
- Use Powerpoint before masses to provide updates on ideas and thoughts from Listening Sessions

✓ *Completed*

“LASTLY”

Themes in Responses

Putting It All Together

How do I live as a Catholic in the 21st century?

- Living/Merging Faith in Everyday Life
- Schedule, Priorities, Understanding
- Politics and “Tough Issues”

How do I experience “church”?

- Presence vs. Involvement
- Traditional vs. Change
- Online or In-Person
- Is something better than nothing?

Who is allowed to join us and lead us on the Journey?

- Inclusion / Worthiness / Evangelization
- Women’s roles / Married Priests