

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Synod on Synodality

Synthesis of the Diocesan Phase

Executive Summary

The Diocesan Phase of the Synod on Synodality in the local Church of Philadelphia was a significant opportunity for encounter. This synthesis seeks to respond directly to the prompts provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Holy See, but no single report can fully honor the passion and variety of contributions from among the faithful. It was stated frequently at the outset of archdiocesan and local sessions that perhaps the greatest fruit may be in the relationships that were strengthened and blessed during the synodal conversations themselves. However, it is also the sincere hope of the Archbishop that these efforts mark the beginning of a new chapter of life in the Church of Philadelphia, one that is defined by a continuous openness to the Spirit of God “working in us, through us, and sometimes despite us.”

The Diocesan Phase in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

In terms of the process of the consultation, what were the main steps taken in the diocese? What were the main questions posed?

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia commenced the diocesan phase with a Eucharistic Holy Hour on October 17, 2021. Subsequently, the priests of the diocese were briefed on the preliminary plans for the synodal phase on October 4-5, 2021. The Archdiocese, with Msgr. Brian Hennessy serving as the Archdiocesan Coordinator for the Synod, partnered with Catholic Leadership Institute, a lay association of the faithful headquartered within the Archdiocese, to provide logistical and facilitation support throughout the diocesan phase. There were three primary strategies outlined for the diocesan phase. The first involved a widely distributed survey to the faithful regarding their journey with the Church and how the Church and their parish accompany them in their Catholic faith. Concurrently, parishes, religious communities, diocesan offices and Catholic-affiliated social service and academic institutions were invited to nominate local facilitators. Close to 300 local facilitators were then invited to participate in training and asked to host local sessions between March 1 and June 1. Lastly, 31 Archdiocesan-hosted sessions were scheduled in-person throughout the five-county region, virtually through Zoom sessions, and for special communities who often feel on the margins of the Church (e.g. young adults, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community). These sessions were facilitated by diocesan leaders and/or facilitators from Catholic Leadership Institute.

The format for each session was intentionally consistent. It began with a welcome and the prayer for the synod. Participants were gathered in small groups averaging between 4-6 people. Those small group members introduced themselves to each other and began their dialogue with a *lectio divina* of the “Road to Emmaus” (Luke 24). Following a period of silence, participants introduced themselves to the table and shared their reflection along two main questions: *What word or phrase spoke to you as you heard this scripture? Where do you find joy or hope in this scripture?* After the reflection, the facilitator framed the three topics (six total questions) for the synodal discussion and invited participants into individual reflection followed by restating the first topic and questions. The process repeated for the second and third topic. At the conclusion, the facilitator thanked participants for their contribution and asked the table/small group scribes to provide their notes from the conversation. The topics and questions posed to participants were the following:

Topic 1: Joys and Concerns about the Church from the people of God

1. What fills you with joy about the Church?
2. What concerns do you have about the Church?

Topic 2: Listening Aspect of the Church

3. In what ways or moments has the Church encouraged you to speak up? How does the Church listen to you or hear what you are saying?
4. How can the Church create greater opportunities for people to be heard?

Topic 3: Accompaniment/Journey

5. How can the Church help you and others to grow in your relationship with Jesus and your relationship with the Church?
6. What can the Church do to support people on their faith journeys?

Additionally, fourteen institutions of higher education in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia--all of the area's Catholic colleges and universities and several Newman Centers--answered Pope Francis' invitation to participate in the global synod. More than 40 faculty, staff and student facilitators and nearly 400 student participants shared their joys, concerns and hopes for the Church through these listening sessions. A highlight during this time included a gathering of more than 50 college students and nearly 50 administrators from across the Archdiocese of Philadelphia at La Salle University for a cross-campus listening session. The gathering focused on six major themes: journeying from exclusion to inclusion; journeying from fragmentation to wholeness; journeying from discord to unity; journeying from performance to integrity; journeying from broken trust to accountability; journeying from being led to leading.

What was done to engage as many participants as possible and to reach out to the peripheries?

Among a multitude of strategies that were employed, the most significant efforts were leveraging the Disciple Maker Index survey as a primary tool for wide consultation. This survey was made available in 22 different languages and also converted into braille for the first time. Invitations to participate in this survey and the various synodal consultation sessions were also made through a video message from the Archbishop, leveraging social media, and featured articles on CatholicPhilly.com, the Archdiocese's primary source for news. Additionally, local facilitators were equipped with sample bulletin inserts, homily notes, flyers and frequently asked questions in both English and Spanish to aid in the local publicity of their sessions. Through the leadership of the Archdiocesan Office for People of Disabilities, adaptive synodal materials were created to welcome those with different needs, including larger-print text, pictures, graphics, and closed captioning in virtual sessions.

Approximately what proportion of people in the diocese participated in one way or other?

Just over 33,000 individuals completed the survey distributed throughout the Archdiocese in 12 different languages. More than 250 local synodal sessions were held in over 100 parishes and several religious communities, with close to 4,700 people participating, inclusive of the institutions of higher education mentioned previously. Additionally, more than 500 individuals participated in one of the Archdiocesan-hosted sessions. Participants represented a rich diversity across the Archdiocese, including seminarians, elementary-aged children, residents of long-term care facilities, superiors of local religious communities, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and recent immigrants, among other communities.

Were there any groups of people whose participation was especially noteworthy?

The participation of those with disabilities and the efforts to hear from young people and those in the Latino community were particularly noteworthy. The Deaf Apostolate and Office for People with

Disabilities hosted a combined nine sessions in addition to another 10 sessions hosted by Catholic social service agencies. The effort on the part of the local institutions of Catholic education was also extremely intensive.

Were there specific groups of people who did not participate for any reason?

While every effort was made to invite and encourage participation from the full diversity of Catholics across the Archdiocese, ultimately, the participation still skewed toward more mainstream communities within the Archdiocese – those directly involved in their parish, those who are Caucasian, over the age of 40 and primarily English-speaking.

What was most significant about the whole experience of the consultation?

There were two significant “firsts” frequently highlighted by participants throughout the Archdiocese which spoke to the important fruit of this synodal experience. Despite years of involvement and connection to the Church, it was the first time that many individuals shared their journey of faith with others in as vulnerable or open a manner. For many, it was the first experience of reading Scripture outside of Mass and sharing insights about the passage. There was a repeated sentiment that conversations rooted in Scripture, grounded in the Spirit, and based in a true desire to listen and receive the stories of others without judgment or the need to respond was a practice by which the Church would continue to be blessed. Secondly, in addition to listening to one another, it was the first time that many lifelong Catholics could remember receiving an intentional invitation from the Church to share their voice.

While some hinted that it was “too little too late,” for far more it was experienced as a source of great hope and possibility for the future of the Church. It raised the expectation on local and diocesan leadership for continued dialogue and for a response and acknowledgment of what has been shared through the process. This concern was present among the survey respondents as well. Only 21% of the respondents strongly agreed that their parish involved them in decision-making. A little over a third believed their parish was providing transparent financial information and less than a third said their parish followed up with them when they expressed interest in getting more involved.

What were the high points and low points, or the consolations and desolations?

Despite a consistent format and questions, each synodal session had a unique dynamic that was for the most part a source of consolation and joy. Participants regularly communicated a gratitude for the time spent in prayer and reflection on Scripture, the opportunity to be heard, and the spirit of openness embodied by the facilitators and fellow participants. The ability to sit around a table with strangers and share joys, concerns, hopes, suggestions without intense debate or fear was encouraging and motivating to many. “This isn’t what we usually do as Catholics,” said one person. And in fact, that comment is reflected in the larger survey data. Almost 60% of the 33,000 Catholics surveyed confess to rarely or never answering someone’s spiritual question. In a minority of experiences, some individuals dominated the dialogue within small groups or insisted that a particular issue or item was the only issue or only path. Although these dynamics were less fruitful, they are nonetheless important expressions of where the Catholic community finds itself at this time.

What dispositions, attitudes, or feelings were notable?

There was a spirit of openness that overwhelmingly permeated the gatherings of the synod. Many confessed that they weren’t exactly sure what they were attending when they arrived, but expressed a gratitude for the opportunity to participate. “After 66 years, I’ve finally been asked for my input!”

expressed one participant. Repeatedly in the submitted feedback there was a request to gather in a synodal way more frequently in the future, to “not have to wait 5, 10, 50 years to do this again.”

There was a disappointment among some that there weren't even more sessions, that the opportunity to participate was uneven across parishes and that the Archdiocese and individual organizations didn't do more to promote and invite individuals to participate. Generally throughout the Archdiocese, a little over half of those who responded believe their parishes are providing information about the Church in an accessible way; only 43% feel as though their parishes are leveraging digital communication effectively. Several synodal participants did not feel the synod received enough attention.

What tensions or disagreements emerged from the listening process? What topics or issues gave rise to diverse points of view?

Perhaps the greatest source of tension or disagreement from the listening process was between the clarity and charity with which the Church speaks and teaches. Reflecting the polarized society in which we live, there was a near split in the number of participants demanding the Church speak with more unity and uniformity with respect to teachings on the sanctity of life and the Church's teaching on sexuality, with an equal number of participants yearning for the Church to strive to reduce rigidity, to “get with the times” and be more inclusive of different viewpoints, lifestyles, and societally-accepted norms.

Universally people wanted greater unity and consistency among their bishops and their pastors, though with a completely different emphasis on one part of the Church's tradition and teaching over another. This was manifest most concretely in praise or concern related to His Holiness, Pope Francis. There was frequent gratitude expressed for the Holy Father's convening of the synod, and for his pastoral and “non-judgmental approach.” These comments were juxtaposed with an equal amount of concern for the Church's teaching being “watered down, overtaken by socialism and secularism.”

Another interesting tension was among people's feedback related to the priesthood. Participants spoke frequently of a need to minimize clericalism and a priest-centric focus in parish life and in Church leadership. There were frequent suggestions of opening the priesthood to women and married men. At the same time, there was a real yearning to spend more time with their priests, to welcome them again into their homes, to have them be more accessible and present in the lives of the people. There was a frequent dichotomy – some responded that the priesthood is for the most part “closed off and out of touch,” while for many other respondents the only person in their Church who they felt wanted to hear their voice was their priest.

Overall, what were the fruits that the Holy Spirit has brought about through this experience?

There was a recognition by many of those who participated in the sessions that the fear of engaging in dialogue was perhaps unfounded. While issues weren't resolved and consensus wasn't achieved (which was not the intent of the synod), there was value in simply listening. There was value in being heard. With some intentional silence, with the presence of Scripture, there was an opportunity to reflect and not react. There was an opportunity to be blessed by hearing someone else's story and an opportunity to understand one's own story a little more fully in light of the experience. One comment that stood out from the gathering of college students spoke to the possibilities of a future that included growing in synodality: “Can we learn humility through this experience – that we don't agree on everything? My hope is that we won't be traditionalists versus progressives, but one Catholic Church, united ourselves with Christ on the cross. Can we crucify our own agendas, love each other, have our ideas come from a place of love? Can the Church embrace a spirituality of humility?”

Among the feedback from the local meetings, what was particularly significant, surprising or unexpected?

Among the most significant and surprising feedback was a near universal perception that the Church rarely listens, doesn't want to listen, and discourages the faithful from speaking up. It was included in almost every local submission form. There was a tacit acknowledgment that some pastoral councils exist, but often participants indicated that they didn't know who sat on their parish's council and that they didn't believe that their councils met regularly or frequently enough. One participant said "I don't know how or where to speak up." Universally, the historical and current perspective on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia as an institutional entity is that it is uninterested and unresponsive to the voice of the people with perhaps only passing lip service given to requesting feedback or conducting listening.

What new perspectives or new horizons opened up? Which particular stories or real-life experiences were especially moving and why?

One of the most moving themes found across many local and archdiocesan submissions was the important power that the community and universality of the Church held for so many individuals. Despite its many flaws and challenges, the Church as "a home," the Church as a place of refuge anywhere in the world, in whatever language is spoken, was shared time and time again as a source of great joy and comfort. "You're never abandoned," one participant said gratefully, "in every parish you can find a community."

Also shared time and time again in the feedback was a deep gratitude for the sacramental life of the Church, especially the opportunity to encounter the Lord in the celebration of the Eucharist and the gift His Real Presence is for the Catholic community and the world. "Life can be full of disappointments," said one participant, "but the Church helps us to understand that there can be joy in these.

Which points of view seem to have strong resonance? Which points of view were mentioned less but are interesting and noteworthy?

The most frequently mentioned and specific suggestion from among the entire body of participants was the presence of a suggestion box. Often it was stated as directly as that. Occasionally, it was suggested as both an opportunity virtually and physically at the archdiocesan and local parish level. One might observe that in a synod on synodality, on the importance of being known and dialoging with each other, the idea of a suggestion box might emphasize a community that doesn't feel comfortable speaking up, that feels intimidated or ill-equipped to engage in conversation. At the same time, there was a consistent call to host more synodal opportunities at the local and archdiocesan level. Participants encouraged requiring regular parish town halls and listening sessions to ensure that opportunities for dialogue were made available to all people, not just for those in parishes where priests were comfortable receiving feedback. Building up the synodal muscle of the Church was a top priority among those who participated.

In alignment with the topic of feeling heard by the Church, a less frequently mentioned but noteworthy point of view was that the Church provides more opportunities than most Catholics realize and it is a lack of awareness, engagement, and participation on the part of the people that is the primary reason their voices aren't heard. "Many Catholics seem to lack enthusiasm, bordering apathy, for their faith. Being Catholic requires a devoted heart and hard work, while society today seems to not want to commit or be held accountable." People in the Archdiocese mentioned the Man-Up Conference for men and Walking with Purpose for women as examples of ongoing synodal experiences that have been in existence for years. However, according to the Disciple Maker Index, 54% of survey respondents have

never participated in a small faith sharing group. How people prioritize their relationship with the Church among the other relationships in their lives was a challenge offered by a minority of participants.

Overall, what has the Holy Spirit inspired the community to see regarding the current reality of synodality in the local church, including the present lights and shadows?

Below the surface of many comments was an underlying desire for greater accountability in general, but specifically as a support to promoting greater synodality among the hierarchy and lay faithful. People reporting feeling a lack of urgency in cultivating synodality and insist that it must be imbued from the top – on the part of the Archbishop and the pastors of the archdiocese. “It shouldn’t just be encouraged, it should be required,” wrote one participant. Despite good intentions and valiant effort, there is still a strong perception that Church leadership is “an old boys network,” where decisions are made before consultation takes place, where people listen but do not hear, and where the needs of the whole community are second to those with money and authority. As one college student mentioned, “It shouldn’t be a rare occurrence to hear from youth and young adults in a church setting, but it is and that’s what made the synod gathering so powerful. The calls for inclusion, authenticity, wholeness, and community get to the heart of what it means to follow Christ more fully.”

Among the present lights in what the Holy Spirit inspired the community to see is a hunger to grow in knowledge and understanding of the faith. While many participants wish to see the Church change its teaching and approach to issues such as the ordination of women, the acceptance of gay marriage, and the way parishes are led, the same number professed a need for all Catholics to be better formed in “the why’s” of the faith, to be more focused on salvation and the complete message of the Gospel. “The Church, its beliefs, and its reputation is being defined by voices outside the Church. Too often, the secular world is defining what the Church is or is not. What the Church believes or does not believe.”

One impassioned participant encouraged fellow Catholics, “You know that 100 things are true, you may not be sure about the 101st thing, but trust that 101st thing must be true; the Church unites truth and love, a haven of safety, the Noah’s Ark in today’s ocean of the secular world.”

However, most survey respondents wouldn’t confirm that last quote. Less than half (48%) believe in the teaching authority of the Church. A greater majority (57%) do believe in Jesus’ moral teachings as taught by the Church. The juxtaposition of these two beliefs speaks to a common theme in the feedback, especially but not exclusively from college students. Namely, is the Church and Her leadership speaking, teaching, leading from a place of congruence with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ? One college student expressed this perspective, “There is some lack of faith in the religious leaders, whether laity or clergymen, as they are believed to oftentimes be more focused on advancing their own political agendas than staying true to the faith.” Interestingly, students on both sides of the political spectrum prefer the Church to be less political in its messaging, and more focused on the Gospel message of Jesus.

Some students expressed that it is difficult to know the truth, especially regarding challenging or controversial topics, but they expressed a desire to engage in these conversations. They perceived a reluctance of Church leaders to preach or engage on these issues. Some students felt their experience of catechesis was misinformed, primarily around “Truth,” because the “why” of teaching was not given.

What did participants have to say about areas where the Church is in need of healing and conversion, in its spiritual life, culture, attitudes, structures, pastoral practices, relationships, and missionary outreach?

One of the areas most in need of healing is a restoration of trust that exists among the people and the institutional leaders of the Church. This manifested itself in many dynamics. The most pressing in the feedback was a strong, lingering wound around the abuse of power and the physical, emotional, spiritual abuse of the most innocent in our community. It was evident in the feedback that this hurt and mistrust remains despite the many efforts the Church has undertaken to try to make reparation and protect the most vulnerable going forward. There was also a recognition that this pain has had a compounding effect on priests and lay ministers' willingness to develop closer relationship with the people they serve out of fear of misinterpretation or false accusation.

Decision-making in big and little topics was also an opportunity for healing and conversion. "Treat us like adults," one respondent said. There was a desire for greater transparency and consultation in decisions related to changes in pastoral practice, parish structures, pastoral assignments. There is a need to delineate between consultation (asking for feedback and making a decision) versus consensus (making a decision together). Both may be necessary, but more synodality is desired in both.

There was a near universal concern for the next generation. The increasing absence of young people in the pews was raised as a primary focus for missionary outreach. How is the Church modeling Her relevancy to the Millennial and GenZ generations? What are we doing to help engage young parents at the start of their parenting journey and even before? What new means and new methods are we employing to leverage the good found in advancements in technology and the best practices of other fruitful churches?

In listening to the extensive feedback submitted from the institutions of higher education, students shared pain at feeling unwelcome or being told they do not belong because of who they are, or how or what they believe. Students also shared dreams of building a more integrated, inclusive and unitive Catholic community - acknowledging struggle and being with people in the midst of struggle, as well as talking about topics on which we have too long been silent, such as sexism and racism.

In what ways is the Holy Spirit inviting the local church to grow in synodality?

Participants in the diocesan phase desired more consistent and authentic opportunities for synodality at every level of the Church. However, the tone of the conversation trended more heavily towards the notion of synodality as "The Church and her leaders need to hear *me*" rather than "You and I as the Body of Christ rejoice in the opportunity to hear *each other*." Rather than being an either-or prospect, the full picture of synodality strives to incorporate both statements. There is great opportunity for local leadership to demonstrate an authentic response and understanding as to what has been shared, as well as to demonstrate and model continued communal discernment and dialogue. At the same time, there is great opportunity for the faithful to stretch their understanding of synodality and honor the deep value of the person-to-person communal sharing in its own right.

At a local level, synodality could be strengthened not only by listening, but first by invitation. We can grow in listening, but if we are not extending our outreach to the broadest expression of our community, it may foster a self-referential and insular perspective. For example, several respondents at the sessions held for those with disabilities not only confessed to rarely being invited into the life of the Church, but quite the opposite: "We've been asked to leave a church during a Mass – not just by formal leadership but by parishioners." College students likewise shared personal experiences they have had with priests who they felt disrespected them in word or by action due to their identities or backgrounds (race, sex, gender, marital status, connection to suicide). These types of "small" but significant encounters do just as much to build up or break down synodality as does any official decree or program.

What dreams, desires, and aspirations for the church were expressed by participants?

As participants conversed about what fills them with joy about the Church, a beautiful collective picture emerged of all that the Church has been, and all that the Church can be. They described their delight in experiencing the fullness of the Sacraments and teachings of the faith, the comfort and inspiration that comes from being part of a close-knit community which is at the same time universal, the richness and diversity of the gifts, talents and perspectives of the people of God, and the awe that comes from experiencing an authentic encounter with the Lord. In expressing their joys, participants were also expressing their dreams and aspirations for the Church to embrace and share the best it has to offer.

Given the preponderance of participants over the age of 50, some spoke about their joys and concerns with deep longing, framing their comments as “what has been lost or what we need to regain.” This was more than just nostalgia. There was both a deep fear and mourning for a way of life. At the same time, connected to many of these sentiments was a desire to forge a new path, to offer a compelling witness of the faith to those who are distant, marginalized, or apathetic to the Church and religion in general. “Let’s get curious about why people who aren’t involved aren’t involved,” said one individual. “Make a pathway for them to engage.”

College students echoed this sentiment in their gatherings. “Offer opportunities for learning and sharing around a variety of WHYS - about WHY the church holds the positions that it does, about WHY young people stay or leave the Church, about WHY people feel/believe the way they do. “

There was a consistent aspiration for the Church to be *where* people are and *how* people are. This was expressed in the aforementioned calls for the Church to be present to young people, to extend invitations and mitigate a judgmental reputation to communities who feel excluded, such as those who are divorced or are gay. “Walk the journey of support to those that feel damaged and unworthy,” requested one participant. “It is sad that we have to IMAGINE a church where all are welcomed because we long for connection,” voiced one college student.

There was a strong desire to see leadership be a reflection of the people – especially to have women not only working behind the scenes in our parishes, dioceses, and ministries, but also held up as visible leaders in the community. College students encouraged the creation of new advisory boards or councils of young people so they can contribute to program development, implementation, and decision-making - so they can develop themselves as faith leaders. One participant shared, “The Church can do better when it comes to diversity and helping diverse communities feel represented; even in things like Church art, iconography, music. Church leadership and key voices could be more diverse.”

There was also a common thread for people to come to a fuller understanding of the richness of the faith. Greater formation, catechesis, and accessible application of the faith was a deep desire. “Teach us why the teachings are what they are; why we do what we do,” came from one respondent. The same sentiment was captured almost verbatim among the college students gathered. One respondent described this as “a plea for direction and even correction from the Church to the people,” and another urged leaders to “use relatable language for ordinary people, not theological jargon.” One submission summed it up beautifully: “Focus on awakening and empowering the laity to evangelize through formation, training, and resources.”

Based on their feedback, what steps does the diocese feel called to take in becoming more synodal? What are the next steps forward for our diocese on the path of synodality, in communion with the whole Church?

Archbishop Perez has articulated three primary priorities for the future. First, we must move as a local Church from crisis to hope. The past several decades in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, like much of the rest of the country and the world, have been marked by scandal, decline, difficult decisions, and painful loss. There is no way to fully protect against future sin and suffering, but there is a desire to prioritize the gains we can still make versus the losses we have experienced. For the Archbishop, and in alignment with a primary concern articulated by the synod experience, youth and young adults will be a particular area of focus. The Archdiocese has restructured and is rebuilding its outreach to youth and young adults. It is promoting and welcoming apostolates such as Young Catholic Professionals and the Culture Project.

The second priority is rebuilding the resources of the Church. Concrete, realistic, and reasonable suggestions that came through the feedback such as adding staff for the Deaf Apostolate, providing formation for people or leadership training for clergy are in the developing plans of the Archdiocese but they do require time, talent, and treasure. The Archdiocese is committed to redoubling its efforts to tap into existing talent within and outside the local church, to engage the philanthropic community in creating resources for mission, and also to discern ministries or structures that no longer serve the mission and perhaps need to be refocused for the future we need to build. As an example, the Archdiocese's partnership with Catholic Leadership Institute who helped to facilitate the diocesan phase of the synod was philanthropically subsidized. This partnership will continue with workshops in the fall for parishes on continuing synodal discussions and implementing actions at the local level, as well as providing leadership development support to priests and lay leaders.

The third priority is probably the greatest commitment to the feedback shared – creating a culture of missionary discipleship. This is the lifelong, perennial mission of any local Church, but the Archbishop hopes and plans that this diocesan phase of the synod is a launching point for a greater renewal in the Church of Philadelphia. The feedback from the synodal sessions and the Disciple Maker Index survey, combined with research from around the country in best practices in evangelization, will become the springboard for action beginning immediately. At their May 2022 convocation, the priests of the Archdiocese gathered to engage in dialogue. The Archbishop asked all those gathered (including and especially himself) to recommit to their priesthood and to identify individual renewal opportunities for their ministry. They were offered coaching and leadership training support. With the creation of a new committee for Priestly Life and Ministry, there will be a renewed and coordinated effort to bolster a commitment to ongoing formation.

Likewise, the Archbishop asked every parish to discern the feedback from this synod and the survey, and to develop with the support of the Commission for Missionary Disciples, as well as other apostolates and resources, three local priorities for building a culture of missionary discipleship. The Archdiocese will be working to gather these priorities from each parish by Christ the King (November 20, 2022). These priorities will serve as a focusing tool for what additional resources the Archdiocese can create or secure to help equip local leaders. Additionally, the Commission will be sponsoring kerygmatic retreats open to leaders who wish to experience a deeper encounter with the Lord and to grow in their faith, as well as "Schools of Missionary Discipleship" in both English and Spanish that will be an opportunity for people to be formed to form others out in the mission field of our parishes and ministries. These efforts will begin with training key leaders over the summer of 2022 and begin piloting in the fall of 2022.

Beyond these significant next steps, there is a desire to continue the conversation and break open some of the more complex or controversial topics raised by the synod feedback. While still in discernment, the Archdiocese is considering facilitating ongoing conversations about topics like the role of women in the Church, not with the goal to change a policy or teaching (especially ones that are not within the Archdiocese's ability to change), but rather to deepen understanding of the various dimensions of a given teaching or topic and to continue to build comfort, confidence, and competence in engaging in meaningful conversation as a Church.

Conclusion

No report, especially one that is limited to ten pages, can adequately capture the collective wisdom, passion, and experience of faith of the more than 5,000 individuals who took the time to share their journey and receive the journey of others. Ultimately, the experience of synodality was an important orientation to a larger way of life for the Church worldwide and in Philadelphia. Building strength in synodality in the local Church of Philadelphia will be more about developing a discipline and building a culture than executing a series of activities or programs. The Holy Spirit continues to bless the Church of Philadelphia with faithful disciples who seek to walk the synodal path in building communion, participation, and mission.