

St Barbara Parish Synod Report *submitted to Archdiocese of Los Angeles*
April 20, 2022

Speaking and Listening

1. We want to be a model of welcoming, inclusion, hospitality, and to focus on God’s love for all—that will take learning to listen and speak out.
2. While we have respect for Vatican orthodoxy and dogma, we are deeply disturbed by divisions in Church and the inconsistency in the teachings of the Church that seem ” judgmental without grace in regard to marriage, homosexuality, divorce, and abortion”.
3. Because we all know people who were excluded because of divorce, sexual orientation, or homelessness, we feel disheartened and threatened by the judgmental and exclusionary practices by the Church. (We heard from a divorced woman who was told that “there is no place in Catholic Church for you” by a priest who came to her house.)
4. ”I have had friends that have left out of frustration and righteous anger at injustice in the Church. I continue as if out of spite, despite fervent disagreement. After all, I belong here.” 5. Confronted by responses by the Church that are not transparent or honest about the sexual abuse scandal, many of us struggle to leave judgment to God on the individuals involved while believing that the Church has “not sufficiently apologized or let the people speak and be heard”.
6. We are concerned that the sexual abuse controversy caused a chain reaction in which the Church retreated from interactions with children resulting in the lack of a successful, concerted effort to educate children in the faith, decreased social functions with families in mind, and reduced opportunities for families to grow in faith and community--all leaving parents feeling unsupported in raising their children as Catholics. “Raising my kids in the Church has been great but more difficult as there has been less of a family focus—have felt left out a lot”.
7. We would like to see more listening sessions.

1. While technically a minority view, the comment “I struggle with the patriarchy and conservatism of the Church” quietly captured the views of many participants. In the future, we foresee a need for a larger role for the laity and women in the Church as the number of priests declines.
2. With respect to the sexual abuse scandal, the minority views were “people in the Church are not infallible” and “Love the sinner, hate the sin.”

Celebrating

1. We appreciate the Franciscan charism that places love at the center and delivers homilies that are intelligent and inspirational . . . centered in love and integrity. “The Franciscans . . . saved my faith.”
2. We recognize the importance of rituals and traditions that provide the stability that allows us as Catholics to feel at home in a world community of faith and give us guidance for the future rooted in the strength of the past.

3. We have a deep love for the Eucharist, going to Mass, rituals and the role of the sacraments that for many of us have been an important part of our lives since childhood.
 4. We appreciate the centrality of the Eucharist in our identity as Catholics individually and as a community.
 5. The liturgy and music are very important to our spirituality.
 6. We look for a more integrated approach to community that includes worshiping and praying together integrated with opportunities to study and perform service together.
 7. We believe that steps should be taken to make young families and children feel more welcomed at Mass.
 8. We need more Scripture and Bible study to enrich our understanding and appreciation for our faith.
1. The minority viewpoint was a return to the pre-Vatican church reflected in two calls by individuals for Latin Masses, one for Extraordinary Rites, and one to bring back the kneeling rails/allow all to receive kneeling and on the tongue.
 2. A second minority view was that the liturgy should be put into historical context.

Going on Mission

1. We want our lives to be consistent with Catholic social justice teachings.
2. We believe we are called to service to live our Catholic values through our actions that demonstrate Christ's love and care.
3. We need to develop more service opportunities so we may grow in our faith and as a community.
4. We believe that service is an effective form of evangelization.

A minority view was "Let people leave—heal ourselves, seek virtue first.

Dialoguing

1. We are eager to engage in dialogue with other parishes and faith communities.
2. We look to the Church to help us see the face of Christ in others, be tolerant and inclusive, and to help us learn how to talk with people who are different than us.
3. We want to work with other faith communities and to listen and learn from them.
4. We want to dialogue with diverse members of the community of all traditions and join in on political conversations.
5. In the future, we want to create outreach groups that engage with other faith communities.

No minority viewpoint.

Leading and Deciding

1. We are grateful for the consistent and loving guidance of the Franciscans at our parish.
2. Many of us are inspired by the joy in the Sisters, including the Poor Clares, who we admire for their humility and service. We have also known wonderful priests who love children and provide positive reinforcement.
3. We need to discern the reasons for division in the Church, take action to heal them, and honor the Pope who is trying to bring us together.

4. We are disheartened to believe that clericalism in our Catholic leadership damaged the Catholic community when the “clergy lording it over the laity” and a “lack of transparency” resulted in a failure to produce “contrition” in handling the sexual abuse scandal honestly.
5. “Young people cite sex abuse as a reason to leave.”
6. We believe that “the best future is a Church that invites and encourages heart. Lead by love, not indoctrination, [sic] fear.”
7. Despite the sexual abuse scandal, we have stories of clergy like the priest who “Stood by me . . . at bad times” and “wonderful priests at CYO who loved children and were supportive”.
1. Our minority position is that the bishops are consistent to the Word of God and true to the Gospel.
2. One person commented that she/he “appreciate[d] the confessional where the priest is more forgiving than the laity”.

Growing in Synodality

1. We want to be a model of welcome and God’s love rather than indoctrination and rules.
2. We want to grow together as a community through worship, prayer, service, study, and play, fostering real community in parish and Church life that demonstrates Christ’s love and care.
3. We believe that we can re-energize our Church by re-envisioning education (scripture study, Bible study, catechism) and the role of the laity—children, parents, families, and adults.
4. We want to learn how to listen and talk with others about divisions. One of our youth said: “When conservative Catholics feel out of place, they dig in. When liberals do, they leave. A healthy Church needs both to thrive.”
5. As a Church, we need to have a discussion about sexuality and navigating challenges and differences as a Vatican II Church in the modern world.
6. We want to focus on delivering social justice, support for families, and service to the homeless, marginalized, homebound, and sick.
7. We need to nurture the inner journey of each Catholic.
8. We would like to see more listening sessions or other interactive engagement on Church issues.

We had one person express the view that the Synod was one of the worst Church events he had ever experienced.

Comments Not Categorized into Themes:

Attendees at the Synod was not a representative sample of Parish of over 700 households. The Synod provided a snapshot of the thoughts of over 60 parishioners who responded to the Pastor and the Pope's call by spending a Saturday morning engaged in conversation. Many were active in ministries. Participants greatly missed their Parish community during the pandemic. They have a deep nostalgia for family-rich Catholic community. They fear that the satisfying life of lifelong friends made in Catholic school, unquestioned rituals and traditions, the unassailable trustworthiness of confident priests, and more, has been lost for the next generation. A critical element of being a lay or clergy is community life beyond Sunday Mass.

Additional Context About the Listening Sessions:

The session occurred right after the mask mandate was raised in Santa Barbara. For many it was the first time they had been together in community in almost two years. Attitudes were positive and constructive. The room was full of sharing. We broke the group into 10 tables for group discussions, followed by report outs in a General Assembly and lunch.

Demographics

Total: 63

Female:	38	Male:	15
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AGES OF PARTICIPANTS

14-17:	18-25:	26-39:	40-55:	56-74:	75+:
0	2	0	1	31	20

ETHNICITY:

Asian:	Black or African American:	Caucasian:	Hispanic or Latino:
3	0	36	5

Native American:	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	Other:
1	0	8

Active Catholic since birth:	Inactive Catholic:	Catholic Convert:	Returned Catholic:	Non-Catholic:
34	1	11	7	0

MASS ATTENDANCE

Never or Rarely:	A few times a year:	Once/twice a month:	Almost every week:	Every week:	More than once a week:
1	1	2	6	22	22