

Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie



Diocèse de Sault Ste-Marie

June 10th, 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The following is the Synthesis or the final report of the synodal consultation phase of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie.

The synthesis is a compilation of thoughts and opinions of the participants of the synodal consultation. Therefore, it contains comments and views that do not necessarily reflect the teachings and doctrine of the Catholic Church. The task at hand was to provide a summary of the observations expressed by the respondents.

Dioceses were given precise instructions regarding the preparation and writing of the synthesis. We were limited by the number of pages and the synthesis had to respect a particular format. These requirements created great challenges to the team who had the colossal task of bringing together the hundreds of responses received, into the prescribed format for the synthesis while respecting everyone's point of view.

I wish to take this opportunity to extend to Sister Alice Greer, CSJ, and to her colleague, our expression of utmost gratitude for undertaking this enormous task and delivering such a complete and accurate report.

The syntheses of all the dioceses will be coalesced into one document which will eventually be sent to the Vatican in preparation for the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of the participants for their participation and contribution in this important journey together in our Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Roch Martin
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia
Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie

Synod 2022 Report

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie selected ten questions designed to guide participants through the Synodal process. A covering letter explaining the Synodal process along with the questions were sent out to all the parishes, the Directors of Education of three Roman Catholic School Boards, three Roman Catholic Health Care Facilities in the Sudbury area, the English and French Women's Religious Congregations in the Diocese, as well as the University of Sudbury. In addition, individuals, specific Church groups such as the CWL and the Knights of Columbus etc. were invited to participate. A total of 123 responses were received.

A synthesis of the responses was achieved by applying a four-step process. First, all responses were reviewed. Second, all responses were categorized using ten designations: Listening, Forming Ourselves in Synodality, Companions on the Journey, Speaking Out, Celebration, Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission, Dialogue in Church and Society, Ecumenism, Authority and Participation, Discerning and Deciding. Third, key responses within ten designated questions were then merged with three specific headings: Spiritual Dimensions, Difficulties, and Points that are Considered Important. Fourth, in order to complete the synthesis, concise statements representing a synopsis of responses were formed. Some responses are recorded in more than one of the ten designations and consequently in the merged headings. Recurrence of data is likely due to a participant's interpretation of the question.

1 Listening: How are laity listened to, especially women and young people? Limitations?

Spiritual Dimensions

It appeared as though polarization surfaced in the Spiritual Dimension of Listening. Some responses championed practicing Mass in the Latin rite, a laity-based church and upholding tradition and the authority of the Magisterium while others expressed views associated with women becoming deacons and/or ordained Catholic priests, connecting with other faiths and searching for common ground among other faith traditions. Additional comments promoted the importance of respect for all which was contrasted with speaking the real yet unpopular truth of the gospel regarding abortion, gay rights, divorce etc. These responses were tempered with such suggestions as not to express an attitude of "winning" in a discussion, the best way to make a change is to be part of the change and, priests need to ask for suggestions, feedback and encourage input regularly. Many expressed concerns for the loss of young people in our churches stating that young people are detached from the church – There is an outflow of young people – Young people do not have a relationship with God - The church needs to fund positions in music and youth ministry. Several responses recommended the use of technology, social media and interactive presentations saying these may bring young people back to parish life.

Difficulties

Women are not allowed to be priests, present exclusivity, women and young people are often not consulted, male dominated, authoritarian hierarchy that promotes a privileged status of ordained clergy over that laity, women being ordained as priests is against the Catholic tradition are all versions of comments expressed. There appeared to be a belief that there is no evidence that the laity are listened to and there is nothing to show that opportunities are created to change this. Many advised that change

might occur if bishops, priests and deacons were allowed to get married, arguing that the vow of chastity is against human nature and noting that this would change the fact that some priests are divided between four parishes because more would consider the priesthood. It was noted by a few that Catholic schools seem to now have little if any contact with the parish and religion isn't talked about at home. Questions arose: What does the church actually teach about faith and morals? When the Church is challenged, related to current issues that call for change, a common fallback position appears to be "that was the precedent set in the Gospel".

Points that are Considered Important

Parishioners are searching for honesty, transparency regarding funds that go toward lawsuits, support for victims and their families and help for abusers. Many requested that when a letter of concern is written it should be answered in writing, adding that it is time for the church to be open to new views. There were repeated comments concerning the Church involving women in a more meaningful way, positioning women in leadership and recognizing the impact of language by updating and applying inclusive language. Other considerations focused on religious teaching connected to contemporary situations, action through effective homilies and more connection with the priest. It was recommended that the Diocese make the minutes from the Diocesan clergy meetings available to anyone and to post the results of this Synodal information-gathering process on the internet and in a written report.

#2. Forming Ourselves in Synodality: How does the church community form people to be more capable of "walking together," listening, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue?

Spiritual Dimensions

The Spiritual Dimensions concentrated on the importance and power of prayer by promoting Rosary groups, online prayer groups, Taizé prayer, devotional habits', contemplative practices, and novenas. Some were concerned that we not make the error of letting modern society dictate what is true. Attention was also paid to the importance of family life as evidenced by such comments as "We need to re-ignite the family nucleus of faith at home". "Our schools act as church for many of our students."

Difficulties

Dependence on an insightful and contemporary homily was a major focus. Some felt that most homilies are detached and don't relate from week to week, while others stated that the teachings are good but the presentation is a painful experience. Others thought that the church always seems to be looking for "the next best thing" to engage people, participation in mission is another foreign subject and formation dialogue is lacking. As for "walking together" some fear coming to church and hearing unwelcome comments when others attend church only on the occasion of Christmas and Easter. Many are trying their best and are willing to work to mend what they view as a broken and divided church. Healing might be possible if annulments were more available, minority groups were accepted and those on the margins welcomed.

Points that are Considered Important

Several forms of education and training are included in the following: Many recommended a yearly Catholic youth conference, lifelong learning, developing tangible lessons from the scriptures to put into

our faith into actions, theological education, more formal education opportunities, the necessity for clear moral teachings and, a mentor program whereby youth have older role models. Some suggested that bishops, priests and diocesan staff should be collecting certificates and other credentials to show they are deepening their knowledge regularly and recommended that people in leadership roles are educated and trained in the specific areas in which they are involved. Receptivity to changes, ongoing learning participation, leading by example, share responsibilities, recognize that lack of communication and make changes were also offered as ways to “walk together”.

#3. Companions on the Journey: How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left in the margins?

Spiritual Dimensions

Two specific suggestions took centre stage in this section, the first promoting a seven day a week faith commitment as opposed to only on Sunday and the second welcoming individuals and families to church and those who have left, back to church, through community events designed to bring people together and evangelization. Other spiritual approaches included prayer partners, sending out prayer remembrance cards, telephone ministries, all churches should offer adoration weekly, arrange catechism classes that are designed to teach various levels from children to teens to adults and, Communion for all the house bound. Many expressed their concern for members of the parish and suggested that parishes consider highlighting families and an individual person each week or month and pray specifically for them.

Difficulties

Many stressed the importance and duty of the church to pay attention to and acknowledge the marginalized. The list included: LGBTQ, indigenous, separated and divorced, same sex couples, the disenfranchised, street people and, the poor (financially, spiritually, physically, socially). There was not unanimous agreement, some did not support LGBTQ, same sex couples and separated and divorced being part of this list because they believe such groups/individuals stand against Catholic Church teachings. An area that appeared to cause tension between individuals/groups related to the subject of volunteers: some were thankful for such clubs and committees and others viewed these as cliques, having the ear and favour with the priest without timeframes or mandates. The question of “How are we called to grow as companions?” did not produce any clear answer but rather statement conveying points of view: “Other world religions are seen as a threat and therefore kept at arm’s length.”, “We struggle to be a welcoming church.”, “There is a gap and bridging it will be difficult”, “The rule of celibacy has been damaging to the Church. The apostles were married.”, “We seem further apart from those who do not attend regularly.” “The Church is far too structured, it is not a place for children, because children have difficulty sitting for an hour.” “Priests are not visible in the RC schools so there isn’t any connection between church and school.”

Points that are Considered Important

Two statements that appeared to have summed up all statements in this section. “Get out of the four walls and integrate into community activities.” and “Get rid of the “silos” and focus on what each Christian church holds in common.” Supporting suggestions were to provide same sex couples with a public blessing of their union, reinstate General Absolution, create a Diocesan vision to work hand in

hand with our three school boards, priests need to live and work close to the parish not just visit on Sunday and, we need to find solid ways to bring back and welcome those who left the church due to conflict or disillusionment.

#4. Speaking Out: Who speaks out on behalf of the Christian community and how are they chosen?

Spiritual Dimensions

The desire of some was to designate all forms of “Speaking Out” to Divine intervention stating that “Those who are reborn in the Holy Spirit are anointed by God to properly interpret and transmit His word/message to the world.” Supporters of this view expressed “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the authority in the Church.” Others noted a different spiritual approach when they suggested that “Speaking Out” requires acts such as Spiritual and Corporal works of mercy, living the Beatitudes, offering different prayer forms, the creation of a Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie television broadcast as well as using YouTube and Facebook to encourage prayer and promote the church, simplify the readings at mass, public processions were also mentioned as a way to get the church message out to others.

Difficulties

Most contend that the bishop and priests (to a lesser degree) speak for the Christian community and they support this arrangement. However, some took issue with this because they see bishops and priests as being individuals who come from a highly selective and brainwashed segment of the human race. A view appears to exist that those who seem to be “progressive” have all the say in the parish while the less outspoken do not. Two concerns were expressed the first being that the wisdom of senior members of the church is disappearing and that it’s hard to connect with the parish priest when he doesn’t live in the area. When coupled with the notation that letters, notes or emails regarding concerns do not receive replies from the bishop or priests, each of these points suggests a lack of exchanges between essential groups.

Points that are Considered Important

The section “Speaking Out” resulted in a number of questions: Wouldn’t it be great if the people of the parish were consulted first and asked what sort of pastor they would like to have? Why not allow parishioners to speak and give the homily at mass? Suggestions were also expressed: Parishes need to be operated by the laity, allowing the priest to be responsible solely for the spiritual needs of the parishioners. If the bishops and the priests are in an administrative position, that is all they think about. Their focus should be pastoral. Parishes may need a mediator to resolve conflict.

#5. Celebration: How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy?

Spiritual Dimensions

Individuals and groups certainly provided an assortment of ideas for ways to promote active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy. Here is an extensive summary: Encourage meditation, provide a moment of reflection after the homily, outdoor processions and masses, focus on good music, provide meaningful 10-minute homilies, read universal prayers by members of the assembly from their pews, replace the homily with soft instrumental music for a time of reflection, enable members of the assembly to prepare and participate in the homily, form small faith sharing groups, provide formation

programs for animators and priests, allow parishioners be involved in selecting the passages so they are more meaningful to everyone, congregational singing, the exchange of the sign of peace, opportunities to socialize after Mass, being lectors, ministers of the eucharist, offering a breakfast program and, volunteering to be hospitality people, open the church 30 minutes before mass and keep it open for 30 minutes after mass for those who wish to have some quiet reflection time, there should not be any exclusions from receiving communion, we should copy how other religious faiths have a “Home Church” with resources for families to get together and pray, there are mature students who are able to serve at Mass, do the readings, sing, play an instrument, be Eucharist ministers or, be ushers, offer mass online and on the radio, the liturgy must be linked to our current reality, improve the children’s liturgy, use a microphone and pass it around during Mass to people in the pews, then participation will begin and lastly, liturgies need more participation and conversation where people share their thoughts and ideas. Some groups contributed specific ideas: Our liturgies are prayerful and by the book, we should be kneeling before Communion and never accept Communion in the hand; communion should only be received from consecrated hands, we should not be restricting liturgies like the tridentine mass or practices like receiving communion on the tongue, we should have Novus Ordo mass and the traditional Latin mass.

Difficulties

Many provided suggestions, points of view and comments from a spiritual perspective. Conversely, expressions of difficulties related to celebration and participation were few. Difficulties focused on opinions around priests not being equipped to preach, that the church should not deny communion to anyone who approaches the altar with a sincere heart and disposition, other faiths are not readily accepted and, we live in a secular culture. Some replies connoted a feeling of being powerless when they reported that it is hard to recruit when there is no interest in participation and they believed that the Church has an intergenerational problem and it has lost trust and credibility in society.

Points that are Considered Important

Actions that may bring about positive and lasting change included recommendations: to explain the different parts of the Mass and what takes place at the altar, arrange to produce a video explaining all the parts of the mass including how to prepare for Mass and how to discern the word of God. Include technology in our liturgies. Use PowerPoint presentations, music videos, words of meditation, Flocknotes, streaming mass, put more Catholic information in the bulletin, collaboration and coordination with community partners, get a solid program for enculturation of priest who come from different cultures. All the while, hospitality of all members of the parish should be at the forefront. The building structure of the church itself was also offered for consideration by some saying that the congregation should sit face to face or at least in a semicircle not behind one another...this would encourage conversation and build relationships. We don’t visit one another in our homes and sit one behind the other.

#6. Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission: How is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church? Hinderances? Areas of neglect?

Spiritual Dimensions

This section may well be summed up in four statements: We are all held to “preach the Gospel to all nations”. More people might frequent the Church today if it was viewed as a sanctuary for searchers, for the confused, the wounded, the broken, and the non-religious. Encourage members to get involved in soup kitchens, meals on wheels, jail ministry and hospital visiting. We need to attend to the poor, shut-ins, single parents, children, teens and those who have left the church. A number of groups with the Church believe the way to participate in the mission of the Church is by having regular occasions when the liturgy of the hours, vespers, matins, Eucharistic adoration, Benediction, Taizé prayer and other devotions are offered.

Difficulties

Some consider that the breakdown of the family is at the core of many problems related to every baptized person’s call to participate in the mission of the Church. Others view a hindrance to participate came from priorities families have such as jobs, family commitments (caregivers). Others assert that some families are dedicated to the “church of hockey or curling” and not coming to the real Church. Couple these comments with a hindrance to mission comes from a lack of pride, knowledge and inspiration and the claim that some parents “did” the sacraments with their children, but never brought the children to church again.

Points that are Considered Important

There is likely value in having regular reviews and evaluations of the mission of the Catholic Church in order to renew and update its mission. In addition, the message needs to be modernized along with how the message is communicated. For example, refresh parish web sites and keep the sites current. Sharing responsibility for a common mission also includes involving everyone without exclusion. Consider having women priests. Allow those who choose religious life to have partners or be married. General Absolution is a healing and welcoming way to invite people back to the Church.

#7. Dialogue in Church and Society: What are the places and means of dialogue within the local Church?

Spiritual Dimensions

Open the church doors and let in some much-needed fresh air. Expand the spiritual concept to include building community with parishioners through social activities such as coffee after mass, sports, pot luck suppers, playing cards, exercise classes, winter and summer gatherings, parish picnics, help with trades, parenting classes. The parish should be a community centre, not just a place to attend mass. Encourage a broader use of the church hall by having faith sharing, family events, wedding shower, anniversary celebrations. Arrange help for newcomers: chauffeur them to job interviews and shopping etc., assist with government issues, donate financially if possible. Motivate priests to host bible/catechism studies for adults by offering to assist with activities. Offer retreats, youth encounters and weekly prayer for unity and reconciliation.

Difficulties

An invitation to dialogue is long overdue. This is the first time in far too many years that I have been asked to dialogue. Some admitted that they don't experience any form of dialogue and don't know of any meetings or places in the church for such. Others claimed to have no clue as to what is going on in the Diocese. Has dialogue moved to Tim Hortons and the grocery store?

Points that are Considered Important

Three major points for consideration were detailed: First, the Church must create and implement ways to compete with worldly distractions. Second, the Church must cultivate a firm and deep-rooted relationship with our source schools and parental community. Third, young people need a safe place to gather and dialogue about Church teachings in addition to having time to enjoy social gatherings such as weekly movie nights, dances, games night and, take part in mentorship activities.

#8. Ecumenism: What relationship does our Church community have with other Christian traditions and denominations?

Spiritual Dimensions

Invite others to come to mass, prayer groups, spiritual retreats and participate in discussions/debates may prove profitable. Volunteers of all denominations work together in assisting organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army and Food banks.

Difficulties

We often think we (Catholics) are better than other denominations (the one true Church). Ecumenism is bound to fail because of our arrogance. A major stumbling block is our denial of Holy Communion to Protestant Christians when they visit our churches. It seems as though churches have become Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant "private clubs", as a result integration is difficult. What happened to the inter-church council?

Points that are Considered Important

Many suggested that perhaps religions should organize common moments together from time to time. Such activities might enhance everyone's ability to learn from other religions. Furthermore, from a practical point of view, every church should allow other churches to use their buildings when possible. We could be sharing our space and expenses related to heat, maintenance, administration and support services. It would benefit many if RC schools included World Religion in classes.

#9. Authority and Participation: How is authority or governance exercised with our local Church? Teamwork? Co-responsibility? Lay ministries?

Spiritual Dimensions

The priest should explain one ministry/committee each week in order to promote participation of the laity in the parish. Sunday intentions should include an intention for those who volunteer to help in each parish.

Difficulties

This section suggested that some pastors seem to be the sole decision maker and authority and any attempt at collaboration or consensus does not exist. In addition, they would not define the current structure as a co-responsibility or co-leadership model. The hierarchy rules. There is NO leadership from the clergy. A lay apostolate formation program would be welcomed. Concern was expressed associated with the shortage of priests when shortages are filled by priests from other countries because these priests may not be able to relate to women due to different customs.

Points that are Considered Important

The Church needs to change and embrace a more inclusive structure. When we need professional assistance, we should seek answers from experts to enlighten us. We need to move from an administrative-oriented church to a church focused on energizing our faith. When time and energy is required for committee work it would be good for all parish committees to report on their meetings. The parish priest is pastor as well as administrator. The latter of which is extremely time consuming and takes time from the former. In other denominations, there are more administrative staff. Concerning the Synodal process: all respondents want to be sure that Church authority share, online results (censor free) of the process. Transparency is key.

#10. Discerning and Deciding: What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability?Spiritual Dimensions

Spiritual discernment is not possible without silence and prayer. If someone is not accustomed to a discernment process then it is incumbent upon us to teach them. Retreats are worth considering; we must pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and enlightenment for the fundamental truths of our faith are essential. We gather together as one body in Christ. Each part of the body is equally important. Realistically, if a parish has not had a Baptism, has not welcomed newcomers in years, that's a sign it is in decline. Use this as an example of applying a discernment process when making a decision. The whole parish could be part of this process. Such gatherings might include evening prayers for guidance followed by a discussion group. It may also be advantageous of parishes to promote opportunities to meet with other Catholic parishes and learn for similar experiences.

Difficulties

Four statements identified concerns associated with discerning and deciding: Aren't enough priests – the answer is not to bring them from other countries...this often brings about more problems. There is confusion at all levels of the Church's hierarchy. There is sometimes a disconnect between Catholic schools and parishes. There needs to be some serious change or the Church will not survive

Points that are Considered Important

This process should become integrated, regularly, into the life of all parishes. We need honest listening and transparency – full disclosure – an opportunity to see the answers submitted during this process along with a time to dialogue. It is time the Catholic Church allowed married priests, women's ordination, same sex marriage and the acknowledgement of divorced and re-married Catholics. The

Church must use every resource possible to connect with parishioners – Facebook, Instagram, Email, telephone and even letters. In addition, the Church should be more open and accepting of new ideas, beliefs, opinions, and lifestyles. It is essential for members of the church to learn more about the lives of the priests and nuns in order to understand their vocation choice and support them. Accountability – Understanding of the parishes financial situation by providing books and all financial statements will assist with transparency. Some suggested that it may be necessary to start closing parishes which are struggling and strengthen other parishes to continue. A yearly visit from the bishop to the parishes would be appreciated.

Conclusion

The fruit of the Synodal Process has unfolded a wide range of ideas that merit the reception of greater attention. Specific themes emerged as opinions were shared. Therefore, our goal was to attempt to present the central themes that seem to resonate in the hearts of so many.

The need for transparency in the Church

The faithful desire to be more involved in pastoral planning. They suggested more dialogue and discussion occur between the laity and the clergy. In many situations, the Church does reach out for the help of experts to assist the Church in moving forward with certain pastoral and temporal affairs. However, a perceived lack of openness and consultation, on the part of the Church, was viewed as a common factor preventing collaboration and cooperation between the laity and the Church. The Synodal Process has awakened the need for greater consultation and transparency.

The need for better knowledge of our Church

The process of defining the experience of being a member of the Church has raised the need to better understand it and appreciate it. It has become essential to understand the Church's position when faced with contemporary issues raised in the world. The need for better knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the teachings and history of the Church, the Sacraments, etc. was repeatedly expressed. This may be achieved by offering a forum associated with ongoing formation and instruction in order to cultivate a foundation of knowledge for all to better grasp the truths, teachings and treasures affiliated with the Church.

The need for ongoing formation

The world is evolving at a faster pace than ever, and many have expressed concern that the Church should be more connected to the reality of evolving contemporary matters. The clergy may benefit from receiving ongoing formation in order to be in tune with the assorted realities facing people in their daily lives. It was suggested that a well-informed clergy will produce homilies that offer meaningful insight concerning the application of the message of the Gospel in our contemporary world.

Furthermore, the Church would benefit of a broader presence in the virtual world. The use of social media would serve greatly in offering the world the saving message of the Gospel. The use of online services has become quite familiar to the world during the pandemic. These newly explored avenues need only to be utilized further to offer more opportunities for people to pursue ongoing formation.

The need for the Church to reach out to the marginalised

Many felt alienated by the Church, even though they consider themselves members of the Church. There were requests for the Church to be more welcoming and open to groups who are considered to be at the periphery of the mainstream faction of believers.

It was recommended that the Church make an effort to be more directly involved in local societal challenges and activities by stepping out of the parish confines and having a more hands on approach in dealing with social needs of the community at large.

Many respondents express concern over the seemingly lack of acknowledgement of the historic and current contribution of women and their role within the Church. Some questioned the Church's stance associated with women's ordination.

Concern was also expressed regarding the youth in the Church. This topic raised multiple questions in an effort to offer explanations and solutions to this worrisome trend. Some responses suggested ways to encourage the younger population to be more engaged in the Church. This matter needs to be given serious reflection since the succession of the Church depends on the rising generations.

In our diocese, we have an exceptional opportunity to reach out to the youth and their families through the Catholic schools. Comments received by teachers and other respondents express the invitation to the clergy and other members of the parish community to be more involved in the Catholic schools. The Catholic schools welcome a greater partnership with the parishes. Catholic schools are a blessing that deserve our utmost attention and care.

The need to feel welcomed was clearly a key requirement. The notion identifying the lack of welcome as being the source of the feeling of alienation was frequently pointed out. Investing in a proficient welcoming ministry team would reap many fruitful benefits enhancing tremendously the development of a sense of community while greatly improving a positive image of the Church.

The need for a haven in a chaotic world

Society has left very little space for people to grow spiritually. The Church is the place where people can take refuge from a world constantly drawing our attention in many different directions. The challenges of today's daily lives take a toll on many levels in everyone's lives. The signs of this adverse effect are numerous. The family nucleus has shattered in many cases. The youth are disillusioned. The common foundation holding communities together has eroded in our pluralistic world. The Church has the crucial role of offering a foundation of stability that all are currently searching for and striving to find.

Opportunities for people to come together to build community would serve as a great beginning to help people create connexions and find support in one another. Such activities would assist many to find the sanctuary that will lead them to Christ. The request for meaningful liturgies embedded in the sense of the sacred received great attention. The need to have access to the churches was highlighted as a way to offer a haven for people in search of God.

God is truly calling all his children to Him. The underlying message that seems to rise above all the opinions and thoughts shared by so many in this consultation phase of the Synodal Process is summed up by the belief that we are all on the same journey together with Christ leading us to His Father.

Obviously, the perspectives vary tremendously. But the common denominator that unites the many respondents of this process is the desire to know God and to learn how to open our hearts to Him. As such, God's grace will enable all to grow and become who we are called to be, the sons and daughters of an ever loving and merciful God.

Appendix

The context of the local Church consultation

The consultation for the Synodal Process took place in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie. The invitation was sent to the Catholic faithful as well as to all who wished to participate.

The population of the entire diocese according to the 2021 Census is a little more than 387,000. The Catholic population of the diocese is 151,670. The diocese covers a large area of 265,000 Km² along a portion of the Trans-Canada Highway 17 and includes three urban centres, Greater Sudbury, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie, and several towns and villages dotted throughout the diocese. The diocese has 91 parishes composed of families of Indigenous, English, French, Italian, Polish, Asian and African origin, among others.

The Diocesan Synodal Committee received 123 responses. Some of the responses were from individuals, while others were a summary of a group of participants who held the consultations as a group.

Most respondents were members of a Catholic parish community.

Religious Congregations participated and sent in their responses, as well as Catholic Health Facilities.

We received responses from many organisations of the diocesan Church, including the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Women's League and the Daughters of Isabella, as well as faith sharing groups, among others.

We also received responses from Catholic School Boards, from both English Catholic School Boards and French Catholic School Boards.

Considering the pandemic measures that were in place during the consultation phase, the participation was substantial.