

**Summary of Synod Discussion for Our Deanery ¹
At Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary & St. Stephen Church, the Diocese of Brooklyn,
Evening of February 16, 2022**

April 8, 2022

Dear Parishioners and Neighbors,

At Sacred Hearts St Stephen let us strive to *Be the Change We Want to See*. Please join us in this important conversation in the coming weeks and months as we present and invite discussion of the responses of our fellow parishioners to the Synod survey and the opportunities and challenges we face as a Church. Through participation in these conversations, and in the words of Pope Francis, help us plant dreams, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, warm hearts and give strength to our hands.²

On the evening of February 16, 2022, laypersons and clergy from across the Deanery gathered to discuss themes arising from Synod listening sessions, signs of life within the Church, and opportunities and challenges facing individuals when walking in apostolic faith in the 21st century.

Below is a summary of key messages conveyed by participants, which, along with our own Parish's responses to the Synod survey, we will discuss as a Parish. Please join us for this important discussion.

- **The need for greater inclusivity**, particularly for women, divorcees, LGBTQ and low-income individuals. Openness and acceptance not as good as it could be. Examples include precluding LGBTQ individuals, and divorced individuals from communion, and rules pertaining to marriages outside of the faith. Less focus on rules, and more on compassion and understanding was a common plea.
- **The Church continues to be marred by scandal**, even as it accomplishes so much good. Participants are worried that all the good done by the Church will never be recognized. Public relations (PR) improvements are needed to reclaim the Church's reputation.
- **Disconnect between the greater institution of the Church and the local Church**. Some don't identify with the greater institution.
- **Shortage of priests**. Allowing Priests to marry, and ordaining women were two suggested remedies.

¹ Our Deanery is comprised of St. Charles Borromeo, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Boniface, Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary & St. Stephen, St. James Cathedral-Basilica, St. Mary Star of the Sea, St. Paul and St. Agnes, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

² 2021-23 Synod Preparatory documents

- **Generation being lost** and tradition of the Church not being passed down, including the sacrament of Baptism. Concern over the longevity of the Church.
- **Lack of transparency.**
- **Petition for more education** (E.g., Canon Law).
- **The right to life conversation** and stance needs to extend beyond abortion (e.g., to the death penalty).
- **Covid provided some opportunity** to deliberately establish community transcending physical boundaries.
- **Loneliness** is not being addressed.
- **Perception that Church has been largely silent** in relation to recent race-relations issues and politics. Regarding environmental issues the Church should do more.
- **Reticence around whether positive change will ever occur.** Parishioners are frustrated that they're not being heard regarding issues identified above. Individuals enjoyed the Synod conversation and appreciated it, though are wondering what the result of these efforts will be and where to go from here. Information does not seem to flow easily from the bottom up, according to participants.