

## 1. LISTENING

Give an example of our Church being a “listening” Church. What factors might hamper the Church in listening to her people? What does it mean to you to be listened to and be heard?

### Key Learnings:

- What was mentioned most for why people felt the Church didn’t listen included:
  - Not enough priests.
  - Lack of being heard and understood.
  - Lack of response from the archbishop and hierarchy on important social issues.
  - Small parishes are not heard adequately.
  - Fear of being judged on some issues makes some hesitate to engage in open discussion.

### Key Insights:

- The variety of responses indicate some people feel they are not being listened to. However, this is a common conclusion by some who disagree with Church teaching on various issues such as family life, Holy Matrimony and sexuality. A deeper explanation of why things are done a certain way with full disclosure could show the Church is listening. Silence on issues creates negative feelings of not being heard.
- The interpretation of how the Church stands on all issues is something that needs to be expressed with respect, love and accuracy according to the teachings of the Church.
- Priests are overworked, spread too thin, especially in rural areas, and they need help to minister to the parish. Permanent deacons have been very helpful.

## 2. SPEAKING OUT ABOUT OUR FAITH

What factors help make forthright and heartfelt communication—speaking the truth of the Gospel in love—more likely to occur? How might our parishes be places where all feel secure in sharing their thoughts and concerns? How prominent or effective is the voice of a Christian worldview in news, entertainment, sports and social media? In our local Church and community, when and how do we say what is important to us regarding our Catholic faith?

### Key Learnings:

- In general, the Christian voice is diminished in society today and not all Catholics do a sufficient job speaking out about the faith in the world, making the Christian worldview neither prominent nor effective at this time in history. Those integrating their Catholic life (for example, Philip Rivers and Harrison Butker) are powerful examples but too few

and far between, and most are not willing to speak out due to (1) lack of confidence, (2) fear of criticism or retribution, or (3) the cancel culture. While there are some good resources that exist in the media (podcasts, EWTN, National Catholic Register, Holy Family School of Faith, Catholic Answers, etc.) they are not fully utilized by enough of the faithful.

**Key Insights:**

- The church should provide ongoing catechesis to find a loving and positive way to relay difficult messages to help Catholics understand the “why” behind our Catholic beliefs and help them feel confident in the faith and provide the ability to answer criticisms of the Church and her teachings with love. Greater use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church by all the faithful would contribute to this catechesis. The church also needs to be more open to listening to all viewpoints with respect and providing a forum for people to share and be honest, even with contrary views, without fear of retribution or criticism by the community; this can help foster greater understanding and discourse. Controversial issues should be more commonly addressed from the pulpit, with a balance of welcome/encouragement to conversion while not diluting or misrepresenting Church teaching.

**3. DIVINE WORSHIP**

How do prayer, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, other liturgical celebrations and pious devotions inspire and guide our family life and mission in our community? How do we promote prayerful, reverent and active participation of the faithful in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and other liturgies? In what ways does the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist nourish us and equip us for carrying out the Church’s mission in our parish/school/ministry and in our local community? How can we help people come to a deeper understanding of the Real Presence of our Lord’s Sacred Body and Precious Blood in the Eucharist?

**Key Learnings:**

- The benefits of private and family prayer and Holy Mass are creating good habits, transforming us to be more “Christ-like” and less worldly, and guiding and anchoring our lives in a turbulent world, making us more community minded. The number one reason is...to keep the family together, united in love of our Lord Jesus and His Church.
- Prayerful, reverent and active participation of the faithful in our liturgies requires formation toward a greater understanding of what Jesus is accomplishing in each liturgy, formation which is augmented by the Church's clergy during (and even after)

the liturgy, further enlightening the faithful regarding the saving work of Jesus that is being accomplished. Divine worship must be directed heavenward, vertically.

- The Eucharist unites the Body of Christ, nourishes us and strengthens us that we may grow in likeness to Christ, overcoming our sinfulness, and assisting us in growth towards a life of holiness.
- The Eucharist is our strength, our anchor, our challenge to imitate, the source and summit of our lives.

### **Key Insights:**

- Suggestions in order of frequency starting with most frequent: catechesis on the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist; more traditional, reverent liturgies; more education on the Holy Mass; more music with emphasis on traditional forms; more Eucharistic adoration; more catechesis on how to pray; increased emphasis on keeping Sunday holy and the obligation of all Catholics to attend Holy Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
- Formation in liturgy encourages the faithful to be physically present for the liturgy, to engage more deeply internally in prayer, and externally in song, heartfelt worship, and fellowship, and to be better prepared for the liturgy so that we may receive the grace God offers.
- Knowing that Jesus is actually inside of us when we receive His Body and Blood in Holy Communion gives us the strength and the wisdom to live our lives and carry us through the trials and tribulations of daily life.
- The Eucharist is the most intimate act of love possible.
- Knowing, learning and understanding the matter of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist needs to be highlighted constantly.
- Teach about Jesus' Real Presence in classes, homilies, small groups, bible studies, etc. with good, solid teaching.
- Teach on Eucharistic miracles.
- Promote the Real Presence of Jesus with Eucharistic adoration/benediction/public processions.
- Sound homilies and promoting active participation at Holy Mass.

## **4. EXERCISING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR CHRISTIAN MISSION**

How is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of Christ's Church? What hinders the baptized from being active in this mission?

### **Key Learnings:**

- Many respondents repeated the question but did not seem to know what the mission of the Church is precisely. Temporarily suspending public worship during the pandemic sent the message that Holy Mass and the sacraments are not important to the life of the Catholic; it appeared to some that Church leadership was overly concerned with what the government suggested rather than what the mission of the Church mandates.



**Key Insights:**

- The lack of leadership was pointed out many times. We need stronger, clearly Catholic leadership from our priests and bishops. Lack of knowledge of our faith is clearly hindering the lay faithful. We need better education programs, eliminating overly basic, workbook-based religious education, and bringing the faithful into the mystery of the Truth, Beauty, and Goodness that is the Church.
- Another hindrance that was mentioned was that families are too busy and have too many distractions. They have many priorities other than living out their faith and are not spending enough time in daily prayer, individually and as a family.
- Finally, a lack of the use of the Sacrament of Penance means that our personal sins are holding us back from fully participating in the mission. Pastors should be encouraged to offer plentiful opportunities for the sacrament, and at other times rather than merely on Saturday afternoons, if possible.

**5. INCLUSION**

What groups or individuals can you think of who may be unchurched or often forgotten, not evangelized, or not listened to? What steps do you suggest for the Church to be more accepting and welcoming?

**Key Learnings:**

- The list of those whom we need to more proactively engage is long; parishes will have to focus their efforts in order to find the best return on their outreach efforts.
- Those mentioned most often as needing increased attention include married couples, families, single parents, unwed couples, divorced people, high school students, adult children of Catholic families, widowed parents, homebound elderly, homeless people, victims of domestic or childhood abuse, the imprisoned, same-sex attracted individuals, special needs/disabled, minorities, immigrants and victims of clergy abuse.

**Key Insights:**

- Research needs to be undertaken to determine how best to attract and engage non-Catholics and nominal Catholics.
- Church leadership should be more open to conversations at all levels on the key issues, better educating both practicing and non-practicing Catholics on Catholic teaching and the reasons underlying our beliefs.
- Parish strategic planning with lay leadership is necessary to provide direction and focus.
- The role of women in the Church should be highlighted and promoted.

## 6. PARTICIPATION

How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? How do advisory bodies function in our parish or ministry (i.e. pastoral council, finance council, parish committees, school council, etc.)? How can we foster better collaboration?

### Key Learnings:

- There is a desire for greater transparency and broader involvement in lay leadership and decision-making within parishes.
- There is a desire for more open and honest communication within the Church, which will require us to “open our ears and hearts to one another.”
- While some members of the faithful expressed a desire to be more involved in parish leadership and ministry, others felt the weight of other parishioners not stepping up and getting more involved.

### Key Insights:

- The Church should encourage enhanced collaboration and communication between clergy, the laity and among parish groups.
- The Church must also listen, and not just teach.
- The Church should make increased efforts to promote lay ministries.

## 7. DECISION MAKING

What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? In our decision-making do we pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and listen to the faithful? How are transparency and accountability promoted at our parish or local ministry?

### Key Learnings:

- Decisions are most often made by various parish councils and staff. Additional input is sought from parishioners when appropriate. A final recommendation is presented to the pastor who makes the final decision and is ultimately responsible for overseeing its implementation and impact to the mission.
- Most often prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit is invoked; listening to the faithful is also helpful.
- Overall financial transparency is done through a variety of communications, such as periodic financial statements published in bulletins, featured online, or mailed to parishioners. The diocesan annual financial statement is featured in *The Leaven*.

**Key Insights:**

- Guidance from the Holy Spirit should be sought through prayer each time a decision is to be made.
- When it is appropriate, input from all parishioners should be solicited.
- Once a decision has been made, the reasoning behind it should be explained.
- There are concerns and needs regarding transparency in what is being taught in public schools and colleges.

**8. FORMATION**

How does our parish or ministry help form and encourage people to be better disciples of Jesus, participate in the Church's mission, and engage in the work of evangelization? How are we equipped to respond to the dynamics of the culture in which we live with Jesus' message of truth and love?

**Key Learnings:**

- Success has been realized with small groups and life-long learning opportunities (e.g., scripture studies, Christ Renews His Parish, Spiritual Mentorship, Legion of Mary, Knights of Columbus).
- Integration and coordination of parish schools, religious education, parish missions, youth programs, dedicated parish staff (evangelization and adult formation), promotion of the domestic Church (family life) and retreat opportunities are bearing fruit in the work of evangelization.
- There is a strong influence of Catholic social teaching, homilies, social media presence and emphasis on the sacraments in our archdiocese.
- We must be more intentional in getting our youth involved, engaged and educated in the Catholic faith.

**Key Insights:**

- Despite a large number of programs to equip parishioners about Catholic discipleship, they feel ill-equipped to fight the onslaught of secular culture and need support especially when it comes to addressing social issues (divorce, family formation, lack of catechesis on lightning rod topics).
- Catholic moral teachings must be taught and reinforced even when the message is unpopular.
- Of key concern is how to be open and inclusive to all while not losing the Gospel message (prayer, scripture and sacraments are foundational to this effort).

## **9. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How are differences of thought or conflicts and difficulties addressed?

### **Key Learnings:**

- We have not kept pace with advancements in methods of communication. People tend to use the bulletin and pulpit announcements and make less use of social media, text messages, or parish/archdiocese websites.
- There is a significant lack of communication between parishes in the same region or deanery.
- Numerous family issues exist – kids falling away from the one, true Church; how to deal with conflicts in the family; financial planning/retirement planning.
- Parishioners who have family members in the hospital or nursing home should be more intentional about notifying the parish office so that pastoral care may be extended as appropriate.

### **Key Insights:**

- There is a need to understand how to better communicate with people under 30 to 40 years of age.
- There is a need to communicate to other parishes the opportunities to share resources for things like RCIA, adult education, youth group, fund raising events, etc.
- It is important to promote better communication and collaboration when any or all of the following occur:
  - Each ad limina visit
  - Upcoming change in episcopacy (retirement or co-adjutor)
  - Quinquennial Report (every 5 years)
- There is a need to have a formal program to address family faith, economic, or stress issues.
- There is a need for more information on how to inform the parish of parishioners who have been admitted to a hospital or placed in nursing care.

## **10. OTHER COMMUNITIES OF FAITH**

What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers who belong to other ecclesial communities or those who have no religious affiliation? What relationships does our parish have with members of other ecclesial communities? What beliefs do we have in common?



**Key Learnings:**

- There is a fair amount of cooperation among the respondents regarding inter-faith activities such as areas of pro-life, homeless shelters, addiction programs, feeding the hungry, and reaching out to the marginalized or those in need.
- Most respondents did not define “dialogue”, nor specifically mention beliefs we have in common. Those that did specifically respond, answered somewhat generically, for example: common belief in God, Holy Trinity, respect for all human life, etc.

**Key Insights:**

- Some lack of dialogue and coordination seems to exist in addressing the needs of the community; those working towards the needs of the community should have direction and coordination to enhance dialogue and those efforts.
- Understanding the Archdiocese covers a large geographic area and includes a diverse group of leadership and the faithful, in the future it would be helpful to have a clearer definition of “collaboration and dialogue” as well as a list of best practices for enhancing inter-faith relationships.