

## **Our Lady of Lourdes + St. Anne Pastoral Council**

January 20, 2022

6:30 to 8:00 PM

Virtual

In attendance:

Annmarie Cook, Doug Doyle, Bob Dutt, Karen Gerew, Joe Haefner, Terri Kwiatkowski, Alana Nuth, Dennis Permoda, Tom Walsh, Father Gary Tyman, and Deacon Bill Rabjohn

Agenda:

1. Prayer
2. Call from Pope Francis for Synod 2021-2023
  - a. A Synod was a fundamental instrument of governance in the earliest centuries of the Church. It was a prayerful, consultative, collaborative gathering of bishops. Over time the centralizing of power in the Church resulted in synods becoming less important and effective in the life of the Church. By the twentieth century collaboration and consultation had been replaced by a top-down approach. The Pope told us what God wanted and the message was passed to the cardinals, bishops, priests and finally the laity. During the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) the Catholic bishops of the world were inspired to seek to revive the ancient model of synod as a way to continue the spirit and work of the Council. Since the council ended in 1965, synods of bishops have been held regularly (not with all the world's bishops, but with representatives from the various regions of the world). The discussion at these synods has been strictly controlled by the Vatican.
  - b. Pope Francis has focused on the original intent of the synod, encouraging collaboration, speaking freely, and listening to what may be contrary views and perspectives. In synod, we discern in prayer where God is calling us.
  - c. The 2023 Synod is a grassroots initiative in which all Catholics are invited to speak and share. Each diocese will create a report which will be shared with the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The USCCB will then share their findings with the Vatican.
  - d. The Synod is very much about creating a culture. It's not intended to be a one-time occurrence. It's an invitation for the church to gather in prayer, share, listen, and discern in prayer what the Holy Spirit is telling us. The Synod is meant to be a prayerful process with input from everyone. We may find that for some items, more time, more prayer, and more thought is needed.
  - e. OLOL + SA has until the end of March to submit our input to the Diocese of Rochester (DOR). The DOR will write their report in April and May and share the report with the USCCB. The USCCB's final report is due in June.

- f. What does discernment mean?
  - i. A frequent term in religious circles, especially by the Jesuits. It means prayer, openness, considering different points of view, listening, compassion, understanding of other points of view, and listening to God. In this context, it means to look for avenues of openness and communication.
  - ii. Discernment means to let God lead and to place ourselves in a position of listening. Think of the Israelites in the desert, leaving Egypt and letting God lead them to the Promised Land even if they did not know where they were going (Exodus). It's a state of continual openness. Think of a stained-glass window. Each pane is a different perspective and together, we can see the whole picture.
- g. What is our role in the Synod?
  - i. Based on what Father Tyman and Deacon Bill learned at the Diocesan meeting about the Synod, we have a lot of flexibility in how we solicit input and respond using the online form.
  - ii. We can provide input as a pastoral council. The different groups within the church can also submit input. Individual parishioners and families can share their input.
  - iii. We do not need to respond to all 10 themes.
  - iv. The online form can be submitted by anyone (an individual or group) and is open to all, even people outside the Catholic Church.
  - v. More information, guidance, and a roadmap are offered on the DOR website which ties back to the information provided by the Vatican on the Vatican website for Synod 2021-2023.
  - vi. The cluster does not see the responses to the online form. The responses go straight to the DOR.
- h. Further discussion about the Synod:
  - i. How are we as a Church, Parish, Cluster? How are we as a Catholic Church, Diocese? How are we doing as individuals?
  - ii. We do not need to respond to all 10 themes. What do we hear from God and the Holy Spirit? Which of the 10 themes draws us?
  - iii. The Synod is a call to be Church in a different way. It's not a top-down approach. While the hierarchy of the Catholic Church remains in place, the Synod is a collaborative process in which everyone has something to share. We are called to embed ourselves in the community and listen. The goal of the Synod is not to produce a final document but instead the goal is the experience and process to learn and think in a different way.
  - iv. Members of the pastoral council recall the last diocesan synod in 1993. Representatives from churches within the DOR met at the convention center for several days to discuss themes and meet members of other Catholic churches within the Diocese.

- i. Moving forward:
  - i. Selecting themes: as a pastoral council, we can discuss the themes that stand out the most to us. We can survey parishioners to see which themes speak most to them. It may be interesting to see which themes the pastoral council selects and which themes parishioners select.
  - ii. It would be extremely valuable to get the input of people who have moved away from the Church or no longer attend mass.
  - iii. Communication:
    1. In the current state of pandemic, communication will be a challenge as in-person announcements during mass may reach only a portion of parishioners.
    2. Possible avenues for communication:
      - a. Announcement during mass
      - b. Email blast
      - c. Weekly bulletin
      - d. Insert in regular mailing of the financial report
      - e. How to reach non-active members of the Church?
        - i. Use the Church Registry as a source for contact information
        - ii. Use our own social networks as we likely each know someone(s) who have moved away from the Church. (If we go this route, we have to be sure that we do not become defensive and instead must simply listen without judgement.)
    3. Further communication and engagement strategies:
      - a. Use graphics and images, reduce text in written communication
      - b. Instead of using the 10 themes provided by the DOR, consider our own questions that may be more open-ended to hear whatever people may want to share with the Church and the Pope:
        - i. What would you like to tell the Diocese?
        - ii. What would you like to tell Pope Francis?
        - iii. What are some of the challenges to being Catholic in the present day? (It's not easy being Catholic.)
      - c. Two tier approach:
        - i. Ask people to complete an index card with their response to a prompt. The index cards can be sent via mail, made available at mass, or Father Tyman could ask parishioners to complete an index card during the homily.
        - ii. Schedule more in-depth sessions (via Zoom or in-person) and ask attendees to engage more deeply in the questions posed by Pope Francis while

someone from pastoral council takes notes of the discussion.

iii. In this way, one of us would submit the responses to the online form.

iv. Possible questions:

1. If you could change one thing about the Diocese/the Church, what would it be?
2. What is one thing that you would like to tell Pope Francis?
3. What would bring you back to the Church?
4. For us - what are we trying to learn? The answer to that question will determine the questions that we ask.
  - a. How are we as Church? How do we grow?

j. Different approaches by different churches:

- i. Some churches are seeking input, compiling the input, and submitting a single response for the entire church. We are taking a much more open approach and do not need to synthesize responses.
- ii. Some dioceses are not being as collaborative in seeking input from parishioners, so we are fortunate that DOR is being intentional about following Pope Francis's call and trying to get everyone to participate.

k. Next steps:

- i. The Pastoral Council will meet on February 3 via Zoom at 6:30 PM to discuss our response and input.
- ii. Father Tyman will share index cards during mass and invite parishioners to respond to a prompt during the homily.
- iii. Father Tyman and Deacon Bill will schedule sessions in February to get input from parishioners via Zoom.
- iv. Father Tyman and Deacon Bill will encourage groups to get together and submit their input using the online form.

### 3. COVID protocols during Pastoral Council meetings

- a. For the February 3 and February 17 meetings of the Pastoral Council, we will meet virtually. We will revisit the option of meeting in-person for the March meeting in hopes that we can safely meet in-person.
- b. We do not have a means to host hybrid meetings (virtual and in-person) and ensure that everyone can hear clearly.
- c. When we do meet in-person, we can maintain social distancing using the St. Anne Social Hall. Acoustics may become a challenge but we will see. We can also decide whether we are comfortable removing face masks if everyone is six feet or more apart.

### 4. Closing Prayer