

DWC SYNOD LISTENING SESSION – FEBRUARY 22, 2024
MARTINSBURG VICARIATE – ST. LEO, INWOOD
36 participants – 6 round tables of 6 participants
Facilitated by: Dr. Bernadette Kime, Diocesan Director of Worship

Round 3:

- **Education and Formation:** for the laity, priests, families, etc.
- Education that focuses on scripture and the broad spectrum of social teaching
- Education that teaches all Catholic believers what is the “Mission” of the Church
- Help all Catholics to witness to that “mission in the world.” In other words, to know what we are selling.
- **Lay involvement in the life of the Church:** Even priests need to learn that it is not “my” parish or bishops shouldn’t say it is “my” diocese rather it is “ours”. Priests and bishops are just stewards.
- Mentor among families
- More reverence within the Church
- **Gift Discernment:** For youth and all of us. In other words, what are we good at?
- We need “joyful” priests
- Involvement of laity at all levels of decision-making
- The Diocese needs to be a resource and at the service of the parishes
- Church leaders need to have courage
- Social Ministries are growing and thriving: need to capitalize on that
- Clericalism is a barrier to involvement
- Honest Transparency of Leaders
- Share our resources
- Parishes need better communication among themselves
- Take “politics” out of Church
- Listen to people’s ideas to inspire new ministries
- **Sponsor a variety of activities:** including spiritual, fellowship, crafts, etc. that bring people together
- **Centering Jesus:** Looking at all the activities of the Church in light of Jesus and his teachings
- **Intentional about getting to “know” one another:** Perhaps through initiatives like Small Christian Communities.

Question 1: Successes -

- Parishes are experiencing growth with young people. Churches with young adults engaged in ministries and leadership are more vibrant. Those young adults involve their children in Church activities.
- Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy are being pursued by parishioners.
- Social Ministry in a parish following the mantra: See the need; fill the need. This includes: visits to homebound/hospitalized; Feeding the hungry; providing Catholic counselors to those in need; working together with folks from different faith traditions, etc. It was noted that the one pastor had handed the administration duties over to the laity and focused his time on pastoral duties, his leadership made all the difference in revitalizing the social justice ministry in the parish.

- Parishes are growing. Ministries and events are growing.
- Immigrant population (Latinos) are bringing vibrant life to the community.
- Social justice issues are being promoted.
- Lots of new and young families have been coming to the parishes, especially in the Eastern Panhandle.
- Young people are attracted to Traditional Latin Masses.

Distresses

- The Diocese doesn't seem to have a plan to deal with the diversity of the State and the exponential growth in the Eastern Panhandle. There is a need to decentralize the diocesan offices and focus more regionally. The central office needs to come to us.
- Confusing messages from the Vatican on issues, doctrine, (says different things), etc. The messages from Rome are sowing discord and confusion.
- The voice of the youth is not being heard.
- Lack of transparency by Church leaders.
- Overall, the diocese is in decline instead of experiencing growth.
- Lack of resources in the area of education. There is a lack of Catholic Schools in this area. The need for formal religious education for catechists on a digital platform. The. More money needs invested in Catholic education.
- Lack of communication among parishes and in the diocese overall.
- Lack of courageous strong leaders who are not afraid to shepherd the Church. Need priests who walk the walk.
- Lack of people who are “joiners” (join K of C and other parish groups)
- Difficult for people to sign up for liturgical ministries: lectors, etc. Seems like many of them are just going through the motions. How to motivate people to see the awesomeness of what they are doing?
- Lack of young people involved in the Church.
- The training of seminarians geared toward a Pre-Vatican II sensibility rather than looking to the needs of the future.
- Church seems to be stuck in the 1980's. We haven't moved closer towards the realization of Vatican II
- How to involve people who are not volunteering? It is hard to find volunteers.
- Parishes in the Eastern Panhandle feel disconnected from one another.
- Specific parishes feel alienated from the Diocese.
- Lack of common ground found among different parishes.
- Alienation of those who are divorced and remarried.
- The mission of evangelization is not congruent with the structure and organization of the church. We have not been formed to focus on building the Kingdom of God together.

Question 2:

- The need to involve young people in the Church.
- Lay people need to be involved in decision-making.
- Parishes that are more traditional and those who are more progressive should meet together and talk about commonalities and differences.
- Utilize social media to reach the youth. For example, Bible studies, prayer, and religious education, modes such as FORMED.

- Form Small Christian Communities within the Church to welcome new members and put together people in similar circumstances who can support each other.
- Laity should be involved in choosing the next Bishop.
- Discernment dinners
- Encourage gift discernment activities to promote the laity's active responsibility and role in the mission of the Church.
- Restore the order of the Initiation Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist. Confirmation should not be seen as a "graduation".
- Mentoring program should be established. Young families being paired with other families in the parish.
- Be intentional about bringing people back to the Church.
- Bring Churches together to share resources.
- Homilies need to relate to today and liturgies shouldn't be about "entertainment".
- Better communication.
- Proper catechesis on the role of baptism.
- Priests need to be joyful about their ministry.
- Being intentional about getting to know people. Even if that means wearing name tags.
- Fellowship is so important. Fellowship often happens through service.
- Finding ways not to rely on the personality/charisma of the pastor to keep the parish going.
- The need to totally overhaul the approach to faith formation of laity and clergy.
- Restructure the organization of the church based on the recognition of the common dignity of all the baptized; enabling all to share in our mission of evangelization.
- OCIA should be run by the laity with full support of the clergy.
- Focus on Jesus – The WORD.