

Synod Parish Synthesis Report Form

GENERAL PARISH SESSION(S) INFORMATION

Parish Name * Our Lady of Grace and St. Joseph

Parish City * Hoboken

Parish County * Hudson

How many sessions did you host? * 2 LGBTQ+, Friends, Family, and Allies.

Date(s) of Session * 01.20.22

02.16.22

Were the sessions held in person or online? *

Online

Total number of people who participated * 24 ~ 01.20.22,

11 ~ 02.16.22

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Providing demographic information was voluntary for participants. However, we ask demographic questions because it is important to understand who participated. Whose voice does this represent?

Estimate the percentage of how many women attended. * 50%

Estimate the percentage of how many men attended. *50%

Age range for those who attended.

18-25

26-39

40-55

56-74

The largest percentage of participants were from what age group?

40-55

What was the race and/or ethnicity of those who participated?

X Caucasian

X African-American or Black

X Hispanic or Latino

X Middle Eastern or North African

What language groups do you have in your community?

X English

X Spanish

X Asian

X Polish

X Portuguese

Which of these language groups participated in a listening session?

X English

X Spanish

Other:

Help us understand more about those who participated.

X Youth

X Young Adult

X Single

X Married

X Separated

X Divorced

X Remarried

X Widowed

X Religious (priest, sister, brother, deacon)

Mass attendance of those who participated.

X Weekly

X Special occasions (holidays, weddings, funerals, etc.)

Tell us about the connection to the parish community of those who participated.

X Parishioners

X Campus ministry

X Faith sharing group

Did the participants in the session(s) represent a cross-section of the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity in your local community?

No

Did you reach out to people with disabilities or families who have members who are disabled?

Yes

Did you reach out to people who are marginalized?

Yes

Which group(s) did you reach out to?

LGBTQ+ friends, family and allies

LISTENING SESSION(S) OVERVIEW

Provide a brief overview of session(s) - (Limit to 2 paragraphs or about 500 words.) If you hosted more than one session, you may wish to highlight how these sessions were similar or different.

- **Two listening sessions were conducted via Zoom on 1.20.22, 2.16.22**
- Invites were contacted via email. Participants were invited to join if they felt or that their home parish would either not welcome their comments and input as **LGBTQ+, family friends or allies**, or that they felt more comfortable sharing anonymously.
- Attendees came from Our Lady of Grace parish. **However a majority were from from the Dioceses of New York, Brooklyn, Metuchen, and other Newark parishes.**
- Attendees were a mix of men and women and people in transition, religious and lay people. **About 50% of those of whom participated identify as LGBTQ+.**
- Age range 18-70+
- **Primarily caucasian.**
- **Primarily church-attendees.** However several participants had left the Church or considered themselves 'non-practicing'.
- As indicated above, **the majority of the LGBTQ+ listening session attendees where not from Our Lady of Grace parish, nor parishes of the Archdiocese of Newark, but from other dioceses.** We were able to contact invites through a connection with NY Metropolitan area parish LGBTQ+ Ministry group emails. I was frustrated that there was no ability to reach out directly to Newark diocese LGBTQ+ parishioners. Those who may not have an outreach group in their parish, or those who may be members of parishes that may not be 'welcoming' to listening to the voices of their gay parishioners.

Primary Issues.

- **Rejection of LGBTQ+ people by the Church** either locally, or Universally.
- **Church leadership ignorance of LGBTQ+ issues**, and its inability or unwillingness to sincerely minister to them vs. facile condemnation.

- **Church leadership should follow the words of Jesus** (i.e. Let he who is without sin....., etc) when addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ community.
- **Church's misogynistic exclusion of women** from the priesthood, diaconate, and general Church leadership positions.
- **Clericalism, secrecy, and the leadership's focus on maintaining power** at the expense of ministering to those in need.
- **Church's leadership poor communication** on the workings, goals of the Church.
- **Church's leadership's lack of transparency indicates a lack of veracity.**
- **Church's leadership's rejection of including the 'people in the pews' in decision making.**
- **Lack of a modern legitimate theology of sexuality.** Present out of touch teachings are based on medieval thought and science.
- **LGBTQ+ youth and 'Nones' are lost to the Church.** Directed Church outreach to them is nonexistent.
- **Divisive attacks on Pope Francis, and bishop's public bickering** emphasizes the divisions in the Church.
- **Support for Pope Francis** and what seems to be his sincere desire to reach out to everyone in the Church.
- **Support and appreciation for local parish religious** (where applicable) who risk admonition from bishops in their sincere desire to reach out to the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Suspicion of Synod Process.** Though attendees were anxious to share thoughts and comments, there was also a universal suspicion that the comments 'would not actually be read', but 'thrown in some waste basket'. And that none of the comments made would 'not really illicit any response or action' from the parish, diocese or Vatican.

In addition to the listening session(s), did you use an online survey to collect feedback? If yes, please provide information about what you learned from the survey in a separate report.

Yes

X No

CORE QUESTION ONE

HOW IS THIS "JOURNEYING TOGETHER" HAPPENING TODAY IN YOUR COMMUNITY? Share 3 examples of "walking together" in your community. (Pull information from the worksheet to complete these sections.)

Theme for Example #1 Hope that the Universal Church is moving in a progressive direction in relation to the marginalized i.e. LGBTQ+ people.

Description of Example #1 Recent comments by Pope Francis, statements from and actions by (non American) bishops in relation to LGBTQ+ people, partnerships, sexuality, etc give hope that the Universal Church may be slowly moving in a positive direction. On a local level truly welcoming parishes, inspired by welcoming pastors, that embrace and support the presence of all people can be found, though they are rare and not easily found. Naturally those rare welcoming parishes, clergy and religious women are inspirations and a true example of community and providing witness to and encouraging LGBTQ+ presence.

How often was theme #1 discussed? Discussed at each of the **two LGBTQ+ sessions.**

Theme for Example #2 Robust charity work, focus on social justice and caring for the environment.

Description of Example #2 The work of Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief services, etc. The Catholic Worker as an organization that is an advocate for human rights, and Pope Francis comments in Laudato Si toward caring for the environment and caring for our 'common home' are all strong examples of how the Church is reaching out to the world beyond the church doors.

How often was theme #2 discussed? **Discussed at each of the two LGBTQ+ sessions**

Theme for Example #3 **The rich Catholic faith and cultural tradition; value of and faithfulness to the Sacraments.**

Description of Example #3 The LGBTQ+ Synod participants agreed that even with the outstanding challenges to their attendance they remain practicing or identify as non-practicing Catholics because of the tradition of faith, and the value of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. And even though the catechism, certain bishops and priests outright reject their humanity, a majority of the LGBTQ+ participants said that they remain Catholics to give witness to the Church of their existence and value in spite of and as a challenge to the rejection by the leadership.

How often was theme #3 discussed? **Discussed at each of the two LGBTQ+ sessions**

What prevents us from “walking together?” What hinders people from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly?

- LGBTQ+ people are prevented from walking together with the Catholic community and are being kept separate from the Church, as the Body of Christ, **by the actions and words of the leadership of the Church.**
- This attempted separation championed by the Church leadership is within itself un-Christian.
- **This separation must end immediately.**
- The phrases ‘*grave depravity*’ and ‘*intrinsically disordered*’ used to describe LGBTQ+ people and their nature as used in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, are offensive, violent, erroneous by standards of modern scientific psychological understanding, and inspiring of hate and derision.

- These hateful words as propagated by the Church leadership, are within themselves, anti-Christian.
- **These words should be removed immediately.**
- The majority leadership of the Church seems unrepentant to the hateful actions and words directed toward the treatment of LGBTQ+ people in the past and present.
- **Apologies, and reparations must be enacted immediately.**
- Church leadership, and local religious, have demonstrated ignorance, willful or not of LGBTQ+ issues, sanctioning an inability or unwillingness to minister to them. LGBTQ+ people are children of God, and the Church leadership rejects them.
- This unwillingness to minister to and rejection of the children of God is within itself un-Christian.
- **Church leadership and local religious need to immediately meet with LGBTQ+ people to begin an understanding of their God given nature, and how they can be accompanied and supported on their quest for God.**
- LGBTQ+ people, simply because of their nature, are the only group directed by the leadership of the Church to assume a condition of life time chastity as a permanent state.
- This is unnatural to human nature in its imposition and application, thus un-Christian.
- **Church's direction on lifetime chastity for LGBTQ+ must be suspended immediately.**

CORE QUESTION TWO

HOW ARE WE "WALKING TOGETHER" AS A CHURCH, AND WHAT STEPS DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INVITE US TO TAKE IN ORDER TO GROW IN OUR JOURNEYING TOGETHER?

By our deep listening, what actions do you hear the Holy Spirit asking the universal Church to take?

What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the universal Church?

Leadership:

- **Suspend prohibitions of Out LGBTQ+ people from joining the clergy and religious order, as members or leadership.**
- **Remove the phrases ‘grave depravity’ and ‘intrinsically disordered’ used to describe LGBTQ+ people in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.**

Governance:

- **Open the conversation on a revised modern legitimate theology of sexuality.** Present out of touch teachings are based on medieval thought, science, and psychology, long since discarded.
- **Synod Feedback and Response to the attendees.** Though listening session attendees were anxious to share comments, there was a universal suspicion that the comments would actually be read, considered or responded to.

Inclusion:

- **Establish Vatican Office of LGBTQ+ Ministry and Outreach.**
- **Appoint Vatican Director of LGBTQ+ Ministry and Outreach**
- **Establish a ‘Synod for LGBTQ+ People’.** To include religious and lay people from around the globe a la ‘Synod on the Family’ to discuss issues and inspire education pertaining to the ministry of Catholic LGBTQ+ people.

LOCAL QUESTIONS

How can the Archdiocese of Newark support you in your local parish?

What are 3 steps we can take in our Archdiocese to grow more collaboratively for the future?

Step 1 Establish office of Archdiocesan LGBTQ+ Outreach and Ministry. Create a page on the Archdiocese website to contact the LGBTQ+ ministry for information and support.

Step 2 Appoint a Director of Archdiocesan LGBTQ+ Outreach and Ministry, to develop and establish goals and challenges of the ministering to the LGBTQ+ community.

Step 3 Celebrate 2nd LGBTQ+ Pilgrimage Mass in the Newark Cathedral this year. 5 years between Masses is too long to wait.

PARISH PLANNING

Refer back to Core Question 2. In your discussion of this question, participants were asked to offer specific actions for the local parish.

List 3 to 5 themes which you heard in the table discussions which will assist with your future parish with pastoral planning.

Theme 1 Maintain visibility and activity of LGBTQ+ Outreach Ministry and events. The presentation and visibility of LGBTQ+ exclusive events contribute not only to the OLG parish but also serves as an example, and as an aspiration for other parishes which may not be as 'welcoming' or inclusive.

Theme 2 Maintain bi monthly 'Zoom Conversations' on topics of contemporary social, cultural, and religious interest. Continue to reach-out to the parish community for ideas and discussion topics of interest for up coming discussion.

Theme 3 Establish ongoing 'Synod Style' listening sessions, for parish and clergy. Synod 2022 should not just be 'One great meeting', but an ongoing conversational process between OLG clergy and lay persons.

Theme 4 Response or Action by the Parish to Listening Session Comments and Concerns. Listening session legitimacy will be based on timely and sincere response to the comments made by the attendees.

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

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