



Diocese of St. Catharines

Synod 2021 - 2023 Consultation Summary Report

The following Consultation Summary Report synthesizes the results of the many listening sessions that occurred across the Diocese of St. Catharines as part of the consultation phase of the Synod 2021-2023 on synodality. It is not a detailed chronology of participants' words but rather captures the flavour and experience of our interaction with a wide variety of people, Catholics and non-Catholics, active and not so active. Along with a description of our methodology and engagement data, the heart of our synthesis describes the tensions and significant themes captured within our listening sessions. Our narrative resembles the story of the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:17-35 NRSV) which teaches us the awakening power in a listening journey. We conclude on an optimistic note about synodality and that Christ is alive and at work in our journey as a diocese.

Methodology

- Diocesan phase of the Synod was officially convoked on Sunday, October 17, 2021 by Bishop Bergie during mass at the Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Catharines, Ontario; Synod Prayer shared widely so People of God will become more aware and begin praying for its success.
- Diocesan Synod Planning Team invited and met to discern the best path forward mindful of both provincial and local COVID mandates and diocesan protocols.
- Session with Clergy: Oct. 27, 2021 - Virtual Clergy Study Days session: What is Synodality? Share plan for local synod phase roll out;
- 4 virtual Deanery Gatherings: Dec. 8-12, 2021 - Review Clergy Guide to Synod with rationale, role of pastor within the sessions, sample schedules, common questions, the importance of good facilitation and request for facilitator names to be forwarded.
- Created Synod Banner and Resource Portal on the diocesan website. Resources to support the diocesan phase of the Synod including bulletins inserts and Prayers of the Faithful are developed and shared.
- Launched diocesan-wide Social Media Campaign: 12 Days of Synod (Dec. 2021) (repeated in January 2022)
- Dec. 2021-Introduced Flocknote as the primary communication tool for the diocesan phase of the Synod
- Circulated promotion materials to be used by pastors, parish staffs and facilitators
- Mandatory virtual training of Synod Small Group Facilitators took place between Jan - Feb 2022. Facilitators were required to attend one of ten offered sessions.
- Listening sessions held in-person, in small groups and used Spiritual Conversation focused on 7 identified questions. The listening took place in the parishes from

mid-February to Mid-May, 2022. COVID safety practices including masking and social distancing were enforced and adjusted as restrictions were eased. A few took place in virtual spaces.

- The suggested, common format to the Listening Session: either 3x 90-min gathered sessions, or 1 3-hour session.
- Other variations that did occur included 2 x 2 hour sessions, 7 weekly sessions following morning mass; 1:1 interviews by phone or in-person.
- Note taking was an important feature of every listening session. Notes captured the discussion from each session and were to be submitted. Parish staff and clergy were instructed to not edit any of the responses and were encouraged to take their copies of the results of the listening sessions to inform them of their strengths and weaknesses as a parish.
- Several special interest groups were invited to gather to listen, discuss and discern. These included: divorced and separated Catholics; young adults (including a separate group from the Brock University); parents of children enrolled in Niagara Catholic DSB; Student Senate Leaders in Niagara Catholic DSB; Religious Brothers and Sisters; Deacons and their wives; Priests; Ecumenical reps from Niagara Falls; Persons with Disabilities, their family members and advocates; Synod Facilitators; *often the questions used with these groups were different.
- An online SaintCD Synod Survey was launched on April 13, 2022 to invite more participation by the People of God and add their voices to the consultation phase. The planning committee intentionally delayed its release to encourage more people to join in the face-to-face listening sessions which they felt modelled synodality more authentically.
- All listening notes had to be submitted by May 13. The reporting committee began the task of reading, coding and identifying major, minor and outlying themes/topics at this moment in our local church.

Diocese of St. Catharines Synod Listening Session Questions

Fundamental Question:

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish?

How do we hear the voice of God? (*Listening*)

What enables or hinders us from speaking out? (*Speaking*)

What hinders people from being active in our parish? (*Sharing Responsibility*)

How does our parish use methods of listening and speaking to make decisions?

(*Discerning & Deciding*)

How do prayer and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist guide our parish? (*Celebration*)

Where have you heard the voice of the Holy Spirit in these listening sessions? (*Holy Spirit*)

***NOTE: these did change for special focus groups

Engagement and Demographics

144 facilitators were trained to lead small groups

80% of all parishes participated in hosting one or more Parish Listening Sessions

479 people attended parish in-person listening sessions

127 people participated in special Synod Listening Sessions

951 people completed the online Synod Survey

TOTAL=1557

The Survey breakdown:

Catholic and regularly attending: 215 (23%)

Catholic but not regularly attending: 446 (47%)

No longer consider themselves Catholic: 78 (8%)

Christian of another denomination: 162 (17%)

Non Christian: 50 (5%)

The Challenges and Joys of the Listening

The fact that the diocesan consultation stage of the Synod occurred during the pandemic created its own challenges. Often the committee had to rethink and pivot plans; this was especially true when all of the training for facilitators moved online and an online Synod Survey was developed and launched in April. Mindful that the survey somewhat contradicted the committee's conscious decision to hold in-person sessions that would provide authentic experiences of synodality, it did engage more people - especially those who were not regular or active churchgoers and other Christians and non-Christian voices.

The committee, as well as parish facilitators, had to adjust expectations and understand that this process, especially in a pandemic, was not about numbers. It was a difficult lesson when organizers reached out to the families of approximately 25,000 students within the Niagara Catholic District School Board to participate in an online Listening Session to engage parents and only 40 shared their voices, or when only one person attended the two virtual sessions offered for individuals with disabilities, their families and advocates.

The committee had the best intentions to engage the poor and their advocates from Start Me Up Niagara, SVDP and Harvest Kitchen Board of Directors, local indigenous voices and members and friends of the LGBTQ2+ community, but time and poor follow-up with the invited leads prevented this.

Overwhelmingly, most of the participants in the parish listening sessions were highly active people who were invested in their parishes. They love the Church and desire others to experience the joy and solace the Church has offered them throughout their lives. They gladly added their voices.

We now appreciate that the synodal way needs time with the Holy Spirit.

The Reality of COVID

The pandemic magnified both the joys and challenges within the Church as participants reflected on 'journeying together' in their parish. Though churches in the diocese were never closed, attendance limits of ten including the priest redefined the sacramental and parish life of the Church. Many ministries were halted. In many parish communities, new technologies were embraced, and Mass, prayer experiences, and lay association gatherings were offered online. This helped, but for committed Catholics, this did not satisfy their deep hunger for the Eucharist or their call to serve others as members of the living Body of Christ. Even as limits were lifted, liturgy had changed: there was often no singing, social distancing in the pews was mandated and new systems for Offertory and Communion were introduced. People could not gather for funeral masses. Sacraments that helped define parish life and its joy were postponed or delayed; few marriages, First Holy Communions, and Confirmations were celebrated. Many 'lukewarm' Catholics within parish communities began to question whether attending Sunday mass actually defined who they were as Christian-Catholics. As parishes opened, this group did not return. Loneliness and the isolation felt by many in the community, especially the elderly and the sick became amplified, as were the economic challenges felt by many families and individuals who had lost employment during the pandemic. Some parish communities answered the call to stay connected and provide outreach; others did not. Yet despite all of the struggles, many People of God found new opportunities in daily life to deepen personal prayer, to strengthen family bonds and rethink over-stretched schedules, to participate in online faith experiences, and offer comfort to neighbours who in the past, they may have ignored.

Our Synodal Experience: The Road to Emmaus

The story of the Road to Emmaus begins with sadness, loneliness and confusion:

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad (Luke 24:13-17 NRSV).

The reason the disciples looked sad was because they were prevented from recognizing Jesus. In our response to the synod discussion questions, we found that there were also hindrances today that keep us from recognizing Jesus and his work in our lives and in our parishes.

Fear: The strongest hindrance mentioned by participants in our synodal process was fear. As noted, participants mentioned fear of judgment, fear of looking bad, fear of embarrassment and fear of rejection. Participants were concerned about conflict and confrontation, and were afraid that people might hold opposing views. Related to this fear was also a concern about lack of theological knowledge or expertise. Participants often noted that they were reluctant to speak out because they would look bad for not knowing enough. Some parishioners reported feeling intimidated to speak out.

Hospitality: Participants also mentioned the importance of hospitality in speaking out and getting involved. Parishioners often felt they didn't have a voice: "Our parishes must become more invitational." If parishioners don't feel welcome or feel a sense of belonging, they will be reluctant to get more involved.

Communication and Collaboration: Another hindrance to recognizing Jesus as we journey together is the lack of communication and collaboration. If we return to our passage for a moment, we notice that the disciples were walking alone, on their own, away from Jerusalem, away from the core of the community, assuming as well that everybody in the world was aware of what was happening. Verse 18 continues:

"Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" (Luke 24:18)

Many of our participants wanted more transparent and open communication and collaboration. Participants were not always aware of what was happening in the local and universal Church and asked for more clarity on the Church's responses to controversial issues. Technology can boost communication, but those who aren't familiar with technology can feel lost or left out. One pervasive theme among our parishes was our lack of parish councils, even some without finance councils, and the lack of opportunity to discuss issues within the parish and to participate in decision-making. More lay involvement in the governance of the Church is essential. This inconsistency between parishes, as well as current diocesan procedures to review parish pastoral plans collaboratively and routinely need to be studied.

A serious issue raised at a meeting of diocesan priests, which also came up frequently in parish listening sessions among laity, was the inconsistencies of how certain priests celebrate mass and how certain diocesan procedures/policies, especially related to COVID, were followed. Our diocese is very clearly divided along pre- and post-Vatican II theological lines. This division is creating much confusion among the laity. As one person noted, "We understand the value of stability which a return to tradition begins, but we become confused when there are so many different liturgical styles." The use of the traditional elements of the mass in the Church was not seen by the majority of clergy responses as a positive development. We heard a call for clergy to be much more united in their ministry.

Changes in pastoral leadership styles when transferring pastors and associates can also damage a community, especially if done too often within a particular community. The parish feedback sessions mentioned that clergy themselves could be a hindrance to open communication, and some suggested that clergy needed to deal with questions and pushback from parishioners and needed to be accountable. Effective homilies directly linking the readings to daily life were frequently mentioned as a help to full participation. Priests and deacons who meet people frequently are effective communicators, as well as those who ask for feedback. However, regularly shared in the sessions was that it is most often only clergy who make decisions. The leadership style of the pastor is important because he can be too rigid, too demanding or closed to any new ideas. Also, participants called for married priests and female priests and deacons as possible solutions to the current shortage in priestly vocations.

In our passage, we reach a turning point when Jesus actually begins to explain things:

He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. (Luke 24:19-27)

Prayer: According to most of the participants, the voice of God is heard through individual private prayer including adoration, rituals, and devotional life. People also hear the voice of God in their connection to the marginalized, poor, and those in particular need of compassion. Conversations also included music and liturgy, silence, nature, and children. Participants also mentioned the value of communal prayer, the importance of the pastor and his influence in their spirituality.

Learning about the Catholic Faith: Like the disciples on the road, taking in all that Jesus had to say, the desire to learn more about scripture, about the parts of the mass, about the moral and social teachings of the Church was often shared in the synod sessions. Those from Young Adult groups asked for vetted resources that could be used individually or become part of a small group study. Faith formation and sacramental preparation resources and various learning opportunities need to be offered for every stage of the life cycle.

As Jesus was journeying with the two friends, they reached their destinations and did something that we also must do: They invited him to stay. And of course he did. And as he stayed, he broke bread with them, and it was at that point that they genuinely recognized him.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. (Luke 24:28-32)

Sacraments, especially Eucharist: Sometimes it feels like Jesus is moving on. But it is not only individual prayer and dialogue with Jesus that guides us along our journey, it is also in the breaking of the bread, where we truly recognize Jesus. Our participants referred to the importance and value of our Sunday liturgy and how meaningful it was to receive the Body of Christ instead of the Spiritual Communion shared during live-streamed masses. Regarding reconciliation, some participants mentioned a desire to bring back general absolution. Some commented about the inherent awkwardness of confessing to a priest and the lack of trust.

Participants shared they like to see and know who is coming into the community and reach out to integrate these individuals and families more closely into the parish. RCIA was mentioned but not as often as 'school' sacraments (ie. First Communion, Confirmation). Those participating in the Young Adult sessions called for changes within Marriage Preparation courses and the desire to have opportunities to network and share faith with other young couples and new parents.

The story of the Road to Emmaus does not end with the breaking of the bread. The disciples acknowledged their positive feelings of hope and ran back to Jerusalem. We may have started this journey in sadness, with two disciples wandering alone on the road, away from Jerusalem, away from the community that would embrace them and love them, but we end with joy. We read in the Luke's Gospel:

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:33-35)

The Holy Spirit: Most of the participants commented on how positively the synodal process impacted them: "We have heard the voice of the Holy Spirit here in this listening and sharing – the synodal path." They appreciated the honesty of the positive discussions that took place and the respect that was presented in a non-judgemental forum. Several people mentioned the value of the "spiritual conversation" method, where silence was used as a core and integral part of the reflection process, which took place in an atmosphere of comfort, calmness and peace: "Were not our hearts burning within us?" The opportunity to connect with other Catholics was welcomed, and there was a strong sense of appreciation for getting to know others in the synodal process.

There was also a desire to continue somehow the synodal process of journeying together; that action MUST come out of these sessions. In other words, we must run back to "Jerusalem" to meet the other disciples. There is a sense of renewed discipleship beginning to form, not only encouraging others to encounter Jesus as the disciples did on the road to Emmaus but that we are not alone and should not be alone, that we must somehow find a way to bring this synodal process back into the community.

Noteworthy Groups

One of the Listening Session groups from ***St. Therese of Lisieux Catholic Church*** decided to continue meeting after the three weeks. Their focus is a Bible Study group that uses Spiritual Conversations and synodality to discuss mental illness and suffering. One of the members has an adult son living with mental illness, and felt strongly the Holy Spirit was inviting the group to promote awareness and education in the parish, and discern its outreach to this particular group of marginalized individuals and their families in Port Colborne.

The Synod Planning Committee intentionally did not approach local Catholic Lay Apostolates to host Listening Sessions, hoping rather that their members would sign up in the parish. A group

of **CWL members from the *Star of the Sea*** who already meet weekly at Wednesday morning mass agreed to stay after mass to discuss one synod question over seven weeks. They exemplified how the gifts, talents and skills of the laity, especially women, are integral to the Church. Their creative action showed how Catholic lay apostolates and service organizations are important and can assist diocesan leaders in future consultations, communication, and implementation of long-term pastoral plans.

From the survey data, the **Catholics who did not attend regularly or who had left the Church completely**, voiced very loudly their concerns about the Church's participation in Indigenous Residential Schools, its handling of the clergy sex abuse scandals, and its treatment of the LGBTQ+ community. These issues, though brought up during parish listening, were not as significant as they were to this group who were disengaged from parish life.

The special focus gatherings of both **Religious Sisters & Brothers** and the **Deacons and their Wives** provided unique and telling insights for the Diocesan Synod Planning Team to consider. Each participant reflected on their vocation and call to service and justice beautifully. Their charisms and work, though varied - with the refugees, the elderly especially in long-term care facilities, the poor and homeless, in parish catechesis, in hospitals, in running retreat centres and soup kitchens was interrupted and often stopped by COVID protocols and mandates. Many felt a sense of isolation; many were grieving friends/family and deceased members of their religious community, as well as a loss to their own identity so strongly associated with their outreach. Though part of the diocese, within these groups you heard more clearly a connection to the universal church, the importance of self-knowledge, the benefits of cultivating a rich prayer life, and commitment to reading and learning from modern theologians. This group identified many, many issues within the Church, especially calling attention to the need for women in leadership and the priesthood, the danger and divisiveness of holding onto pre-Vatican II teaching (eg. "The Church cannot move forward by taking a step back" or "I lived through the Church of the 50s and I do not want to go there again.") and call for environmental justice.

The face to face Synod Listening of the **Young Adult Ministry** was featured on the first episode of the Salt and Light program, Step by Step: Synod Stories.

Both the **St. Kevin's and St. Helen's Facilitation Teams** went above and beyond the committee expectations, gathering to debrief their own synodal experiences and prepare their own parish summary reports with recommendations for actionable next steps. This reinforces that collaboration between pastor and the laity in parish decision-making is possible.

The Tensions within the Diocese of St. Catharines

- 1) Growing sense of polarization and division among stakeholders within the diocese (i.e. between clergy and People of God in issues related to some liturgical practices including

elements of Traditional Latin Mass, traditional clergy culture, COVID vaccinations, government/diocesan protocols, and supporting the flying of the Pride flag, etc).

- 2) Failure of Church leaders to immediately address and inform People of God on current issues reported in secular media (i.e. Indigenous Residential Schools and the path to Truth & Reconciliation, Sexual Abuse by Clergy, Finances & Transparency of use of funds, access to palliative care and hospice to combat MAiD)
- 3) Concerns that the People of God are not coming back to the sacraments and parish life after COVID and the overall declining numbers of active parishioners.
- 4) The comfort, familiarity and ritual of the parish versus the mission to go out to peripheries and offer comfort and care to those who are vulnerable and unaware of the love of Jesus Christ.

Summary of the Major Themes and Topics Identified by the Reporting Committee

Quelling Fear and Judgment

The session notes regularly identified fear as one of the main factors that people do not speak up or become involved in the life of the parish: fear of being judged, fear of not knowing their faith or parish/diocesan procedures, fear of offending someone who thinks differently, and fear of confrontation were often identified. This fear must be replaced by the unconditional love of Christ.

The Pastor/Bishop as Leader and Shepherd

As the bishop is the shepherd, teacher and spiritual leader of the diocese, the pastor assumes these essential roles within the parish. The inherent gifts and strengths of priests and deacons, their leadership styles, and ongoing formation and training for the many roles and duties they fulfil, must be attended to. The skill to prepare and present homilies that connect scripture and Church teachings to daily life, and the art of team building: to invite, inspire, engage, mentor, and manage conflict. Like the People of God whom they serve, their priestly vocation is one of life-long learning and deepening spirituality.

Improving Collaboration and Promoting the Laity (especially women) in Leadership

“This is our church, not the priest’s church.” Heard often in the sessions across the diocese was this idea - perceived or real - that the People of God were not consulted when it came to decisions and governance within the parish. This was also identified as a concern at the diocesan level, within the diocesan offices and the ineffectiveness of some of the pre-existing regulating and working structures for clergy (i.e. the College of Consultors, the Council of Priests, and the Deanery Meetings). The growing need for volunteers to serve in ministry and within lay apostolates must be addressed. Aging members who have given so freely and generously need to be replaced; ongoing training including certification programs (ie. Youth Minister; Master Catechist) must be provided.

Improving Communication

COVID forced many pastors and pastoral teams to learn and embrace new technologies and social media to connect to their community during lockdowns. The use of virtual meeting

platforms must continue, in conjunction with in-person meetings that promote relational ministry more effectively. Greater consistency across parishes regarding technology, better systems and procedures for sharing information need to be introduced and monitored at the diocesan level to allow for equitable access. All partners of our local Church need to ensure that the information they share promotes a Catholic worldview true to the virtues and teachings of the Church.

Need for Healing

Many participants voiced a sense of loss and grief; as life dominated by COVID seemed to have paused, there was no means to gather to share and comfort each other face to face as our tradition encourages. The time spent getting to know each other's stories within the synod sessions, in the respectful listening and sharing of Spiritual Conversation method allowed for the Holy Spirit to enter and begin this healing. Small group Healing and Hope services could easily be organized and become models of synodality in parishes.

Creating Parish Cultures of Welcome and Belonging

Over and over again in the local listening this idea of welcoming each other, especially newcomers joyfully, calling people by their names, and taking time after mass to chat contributed to building community in parishes. Having pastors and hospitality ministers who smile, greet people warmly, and offer assistance to those with mobility issues or children help set the tone and make people want to come back and join the parish. Personal invitations, especially by pastors and pastoral team members to become active in ministry and clear expectations regarding what is expected in the commitment, especially with time, is appreciated. Providing opportunities for people to pray and learn about their faith outside of mass and socialize at Coffee Sundays, Pasta Dinners, Parish Picnics promotes belonging.

Providing Opportunities for Evangelization, Catechesis and Discipleship

The Church needs to first understand where people are at in their life and faith journey, and walk with them with respect, compassion and gentleness. All those in Church leadership - bishops, priests, deacons, lay leaders - need to check their own assumptions and biases, and adopt an attitude of asking, "What do you need?" Pastoral care that connects people with similar lived experiences allows their witness to model what the Church and life in Jesus Christ can offer. After all, people don't know what they don't know. Access to appropriate and varied adult faith formation experiences and leadership training was one of the suggestions by the young adults who on their faith journeys had positive experiences with CCO resources and mentoring. This means that the diocese needs to organize more opportunities for ongoing formation, professional development, and certification programs for the People of God. Forming knowledgeable catechists, small group and ministry leads must become a priority.

Strengthening School - Parish Partnerships

Comments, both positive and negative, about Catholic Education and interactions with Catholic educators regularly appeared in the session notes. Pastors and parish catechists who were active and visible in the schools (i.e. who celebrate school masses, who pray the rosary, who help prepare students for the sacraments) are witnesses and do have influence to bring families to the life of the parish. School clubs which focus on faith, like the FIAT (Faith in Action Teams)

or Chaplain's Crew provide opportunities to learn about their faith and social justice outreach in active, fun and student-led ways. Teachers, using the ACBO approved Religious education and School Chaplains regularly include parents and the parish communities in faith-based projects.

Outreach and Ministry to Youth, Young Adults and Families

It was generally agreed that outreach to our teenagers, their parents as first teachers of the faith, and young adults is needed. Almost every session commented on their absence from regular participation in Sunday mass. From the Student Leaders, Young Adult and Campus Listening Sessions, commitments to building strong personal relationships and answering questions about their faith are very important. Identifying potential Youth Ministers, sponsoring their certification and arranging paid employment in clusters of parishes needs to be a budget priority. Young people want to be equipped with how to defend their Catholic faith and how to have better dialogue with people who disagree. They want to be prepared to live their faith and have access to quality resources to allow this learning to occur independently.

Bridging Division

Only in humility, with open hearts and minds, can listening and courageous conversations begin to build bridges between the different perspectives to bring a shared vision of the Church.

Conclusion: Synodality as a Way Forward

The disciples on the road to Emmaus and the participants in our synodal process recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread but this synod story does not end here. Yes, we need to improve, but, like the disciples, we need to run back to Jerusalem, back to the community to share what happened. The use of small groups and Spiritual Conversations modelled in this consultation phase helped to form personal relationships among participants and a sense of belonging that is a small lens into the larger parish family. Taking time to develop trust and safe spaces for listening, dialogue rooted in Christ and mission is an important part of pre-evangelization, a stage where many disengaged or faith seekers are. Participants heard the voice of the Holy Spirit very clearly in this synodal process itself, and they wanted more of it.

Where do we go from here?

Our plan is to share this Diocesan Synod Consultation Summary with pastors, listening session facilitators and through a summer series of 'Church Hall' meetings across the diocese. We will gather more formally in a Diocesan Synodality Summit on September 24, 2022 to prioritize and begin brainstorming goals based on this report and previous data collected pre-COVID to develop a new, multi-year diocesan pastoral plan.

Respectfully submitted on June 17, 2022

Diocese of St. Catharines Synod Planning Committee (synod2021@saintcd.com)

+Bishop Gerard Bergie, Co-Chairs: Fr. Paul MacNeil, Terri Pauco; Fr. Patrick Gilmurray, CPpS Margaret Jong, and additional members of the Review & Reporting Sub-Committee: Kailey Meehan, Theresa Murphy

Memories from our Synodal Journey



Parish Synod Listening Participants, St. Ann's Catholic Church, Niagara Falls, ON



Parish Synod Listening Session, St. Julia's Parish, St. Catharines, ON



Some of the resources developed to promote and support those involved in facilitating and participating in the diocesan consultation phase for Synod 2021-2023



Diocesan Synod Reporting Committee at work: L - R: Terri Pauco, Theresa. Murphy, Fr. Paul MacNeil, Kailey Meehan, Margaret Jong (photographer: Fr. Patrick Gilmurray, CPpS)