

FutureChurch Synodal Sessions
March 2 - April 6, 2022

Over the course of six weeks in Lent, nearly 600 Catholics from the United States and around the world, took part in FutureChurch's synod listening sessions. Representing more than 170 Dioceses, they told their stories of faith and perseverance and shared their doubts, hopes, and dreams for a synodal Church. The report, "In Our Own Words," summarized the fruit of the gatherings and highlighted recurring themes.

Pope Francis has called for a new way of being church. Rooted in the principles of Vatican II, he is preparing Catholics all over the world to enter into a new paradigm of relating to one another and discerning the future. He is urging us to "walk together" as we shape our collective future by listening to and learning from one another. Most importantly, he and his synod leaders, Sr. Natalie Becquart and Cardinal Mario Grech, are endeavoring to make the voices of those who have been excluded heard.

Although the term "synodality" may be new, the Catholics who participated in this survey have been "walking together" in solidarity with marginalized sisters and brothers for most of their Catholic lives. They have listened deeply to the suffering of those excluded and, as faith-filled Catholics, they invest their God-given life energies to bring about a richer, more just and inclusive Catholic community and world. They attest that their faith is rooted in the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching. And to the extent we can grow into an authentically synodal church, these Catholics say "Amen."

The issues that were addressed were the priest shortage and subsequent parish closings, lay leadership in the Church, women's equality in the Church, faith and public life, and racism within the Church.

Participants were nearly unanimous on some issues:

- Ninety-nine percent strongly agreed or agreed that married men should be ordained as priests.
- Ninety-nine percent strongly agreed or agreed that women should be ordained.

Participants also indicated strong agreement (94 - 99%) on what Church leaders should do to enrich the Church and make justice a greater reality:

- Reverse "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis"
- Place women of color and women with diverse identities in positions of leadership, ministry and decision making.
- Open all ministries to women's full participation.
- Open synods at every level to women's full participation, decision making, and voting.
- Open governance, leadership, and teaching offices to women as co-equals so that they may be equally influential in the development of teachings, policies, canon law, etc.
- Open preaching to women and laity.
- Open the diaconate to women.
- Open the priesthood to women.

While most participants shared their difficulty in staying in the church, almost 90% still considered themselves Catholic and a more than 84% agreed that they are strongly committed to staying and renewing the Church.

Throughout the six week, participants shared their joys and sorrows, their heartaches and hopes, and their dreams for a more inclusive Church.

The eight hundred page report that included all the words our participants shared was sent to Pope Francis, the Synod office, the Apostolic Nuncio, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and individual bishops on Pentecost. We have received confirmation and positive responses from the Vatican Synod office and some of our bishops. We will continue to press forward to make these voices heard. One participant spoke for many with these words:

I wanted you to know how much this effort means to me and so many others. It is wonderful to gather together and know that our voices will be carried to the Vatican. ~participant

To see the full report go to: <https://futurechurch.org/justice-in-the-church/synod-report/>