



Continental Stage Discernment Responses

February 9, 2023

From: North American Synodal Participants who gathered two times in January 2023 to read and reflect on the Continental Stage Document

To: North American Writing Group

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Dear North American Writing Team Members:

Thank you for your work in preparing the Continental Stage synthesis document for North America that will be submitted to the Synod of Bishops in Rome by March 31, 2023. We recognize the importance of your work in capturing the faithful responses of Catholics in the United States and Canada so as to inform the writing of the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the October 2023 Synod gathering.

From Synod communications we understand that the Continental stage encourages local groups to deepen the synodal process by reflecting on the Continental document, formulating new questions, and praying on how the insights offered might suggest new paths forward for the church.

Approximately 150 Catholics from the United States and Canada came together for two gatherings in January 2023 to pray and reflect on the Continental Stage Document. These responses were offered after two evenings of prayer, listening to Scripture, a review of the Continental Stage Document, small group discussions, and written



reflections. The participants were guided by the three questions posed in Part IV of the Continental Stage Document. From these synodal gatherings, we are submitting, for your review and consideration, our prayerful reflections.

Introduction

We are Catholics, lay and religious, who are deeply committed to ensuring that the Catholic Church will gracefully and lovingly “enlarge its tent,” so that all may share in the joys and challenges of spreading the Gospel in our world. We hope our efforts will enrich the Continental Stage of the synodal process as well as contribute to becoming a “learning Church.” In this way, we will walk together the path of “continuous discernment to help us read the Word of God and the signs of the times together (100).”

Promise and Hope

Participants expressed heartfelt gratitude for the synodal process and felt a powerful connection to their Catholic family around the world as they absorbed their joys, sufferings, and hopes captured in the Continental Stage Document.

This document is really extraordinary...a quality report that includes quotes from around the world so we can hear the voices of the faithful. I appreciate the tent imagery – flexible, open, even portable (participant comment).

Despite geographical distance and cultural differences, many of the sentiments and concerns expressed mirrored those of North American participants. The rich imagery of a people “in exile” returning to their homeland rang true. The promise of a synodal church where discernment and decision-making are a shared path was wholeheartedly welcomed with its promise for “new life.”

Concerns about representation

There was nearly unanimous concern among participants that as the synod process advances and the field of decision makers narrows, our bishops, in giving greater direction to the process, will diminish or eliminate the voices of those whose faith and experience have previously been marginalized, shunned, dismissed, or excluded –



voices the Church urgently needs to heal our wounds, generate new life, and find renewal. There is anxiety that this sacred journey -- toward a church that seeks to “enlarge its tent” and be in communion with all of God’s beloved people -- will be compromised, or worse, crushed.

Regarding issues to be discerned, participants noted that in several cases, the full range of Catholic experience and discernment was not reflected, especially in areas that focus on renewed understandings of sexuality, gender, contraception, invitro fertilization, maternal mortality, and reproductive health. As the synodal process moves forward some participants expressed the desire for safe, sacred synodal places where authentic and honest conversations about these critical life issues will find a space of profoundly deep listening, respectful dialogue, and honest discernment.

Responses to the Three Questions

Please find below a summary of the responses of our synodal participants to the three questions posed in the Continental Stage Document. Also included is an addendum that offers a fuller sampling of the responses.

Question 1: After having read and prayed with the DCS, which intuitions resonate most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent? Which experiences are new or illuminating to you?

The intuition that resonated most strongly with other Catholics around the world was the renewed optimism and hope for the future of the Church as the synodal process gets underway. There was a palpable sense of joy as Catholics found their hopes, joys, and concerns shared by others a world away and reflected in the Continental Stage Document.

One participant remarked, “What resonates with me is the universality of the hopes and dreams for the future of the Church.”

Participants who had gladly taken up new roles of responsibility in a Vatican II church and who felt the promise of that movement of the Holy Spirit slipping away, expressed appreciation for Pope Francis and the Synod leaders and staff



who are organizing this momentous effort.

An elder among our participants wrote, “I remain engaged in the process because my hopes and dreams after Vatican II have still not been realized and I am in my 75th year.”

Another expressed gratitude for the opportunity. “I find joy and hope in the process! I'd like them [synod leaders] to know! THANK YOU for this opportunity!”

And, as alluded to above, while the hope and joy are clearly present, there are unmistakable concerns that the voices of those who, previously, have been excluded or diminished will not be fully and adequately represented as synodality advances.

As we move forward through the Continental Stage and beyond, we need to include priests, deacons, lay men and women, consecrated men and women, and, most importantly, Catholics from the margins who views and faith experiences have not been well represented nor honored.

Another participant spoke about the remarkable nature of the synodal process and warned that without synodality even greater numbers of Catholics will disaffiliate.

What is new is just how remarkable this synodal process has been and how radically different it is from ‘business as usual’ in our parishes and in our diocese. The average layperson like myself may be doing a lot of work in our local church, but with little prospect of being heard. The same is true in our Diocesan synodal process – little interest, little publicity, no support from clergy and the bishop. It is clear to me that without this type of engagement, Catholics will continue to leave the Church by the tens of thousands. The flock is moving on – whether or not clergy and hierarchy realize or understand.

Still, another shared hope and despair that seemed to resonate

I have a mixture of hope and despair. I lived through the days before Vatican II. I saw how much the Church needed reform before and how the Church was blessed by the gifts of John XXIII and theologians like de Lubac and Congar. When I am experiencing moments of despair, I realize I am not in charge, that the Spirit of God is in control.



In order for synodality to evolve and the Church to grow, participants strongly emphasized the need to:

- **Affirm women’s call and gifts:** There is a call from all over the world for equity and equality for women in Church leadership, decision making, ministry, and governance.
- **Prioritize accountability in cases of clergy sex abuse:** Worldwide, Catholics want to see transparency and accountability in addressing clergy sex abuse and its cover up. We need to do much more by way justice and healing for victims.
- **Make inclusion the norm:** Participants strongly identified with the worldwide call to become a radically inclusive and welcoming Church for LGBTQ+ people, divorced and remarried Catholics, disabled Catholics, single mothers, and all Catholics who have disaffiliated because they were undervalued, judged, shunned, shamed, or hurt.
- **Reform the clericalist church:** Beginning with seminary formation, we need ordained ministers who see themselves as collaborating co-equals and co-partners with women and laity in carrying out the Gospel mission in the world.
- **Include laity in deliberative ways**, especially those whose voices and faith experience have been excluded, **in the development of the final Continental Synthesis report and in the synod process** as it moves forward.
- **Prioritize racial and reparative justice.**
- **Prioritize justice and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.**
- **Update Canon Law early** in the process to support an authentically synodal church.
- **Provide robust training for bishops, priests, seminarians, lay and ordained ministers, catechists, lay persons, and other in teaching positions and positions of authority in the Church** so all may learn the skills needed for listening, dialogue, and communal discernment.
- **Make Catholic Social Justice a priority** addressing poverty and the lack of food, adequate housing, healthcare, childcare, and education for people who are forced to the margins of society. One participant noted, “We need to focus on our mission to the poor and marginalized.”
- **Encourage and welcome cultural diversity**, differences and influences in our parish and church settings.
- **Address environmental justice and human harm to the Earth** following *Laudato Si*.



- **Develop transparency** in decision-making at all levels.
- **End the political partisanship being proclaimed in our Church by priests and bishops** and focus on the message of the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching.

Question 2: After having read and prayed with the DCS, what substantial tension or divergences emerge as particularly important in your continent's perspective? What are the questions or issues that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?

Nearly every Catholic who participated in these synodal sessions expressed deep concern about the substantial tension surrounding Pope Francis' quest for synodality and their bishops' and priests' commitment to the work. The bishops and priests' ability to contravene the clear direction of Pope Francis is often on full display and many clerics seem indifferent or openly hostile.

One participant, a woman religious who has spent a lifetime teaching adult and university students about the Second Vatican Council expressed the concerns of many:

I am disappointed that, based on the research I have done, there is a lack of enthusiasm for the Synod here in the United States. More than a lack of enthusiasm, I see a resistance, specifically on the part of some clerics, pastors, and members of the hierarchy. I feel [the resistance] is Vatican II, all over again. Because of my passion for Vatican II, I have read widely about the Council, and it pains me when I remember reading what John XXIII went through during the preparation stage for Vatican II. We see the same harsh resistance to the Synod. Only this time, the criticism from Francis' brother bishops is PUBLIC.

Another participant from Canada noted a similar concern:

As lay person in the Church in Canada, I am discouraged by the minimalist, top-down synod process in my Toronto diocese. I find hope in the synod process at the Vatican centre, in the encouragement it gives to church reform groups and in the Spirit who I feel present in this process.



Other tensions noted by participants include:

- **While most Catholics agree that women’s full and equal partnership in ministry, decision-making, and governance should be centered in this work toward synodality, many ordained churchmen do not fully appreciate, and in some cases, openly reject women as co-equals and as co-responsible** for ministry, leadership, and governance. When priests and bishops do support women’s co-equal partnership, they are often afraid to speak out. As one participant wrote, “There is a tension between the long history of exclusion of women and their enormous gifts from church leadership and ministry and today’s need to hear committed Catholic women themselves share their gifts, calling, and wisdom.
- **There is a tension between the need to build trust in order to become a synodal church and the legacy of pain and mistrust of clergy Catholics have because of clergy sex abuse.** These abuses, crimes, and the coverup of clergy sex abuse against children and vulnerable people must be eradicated and those responsible held accountable at every level if we are to heal and build enough trust to become authentically synodal. Catholics have witnessed their clergy protecting church assets and clerics’ reputations rather than protecting children. Victims’ needs and rights must become an authentic priority. One participant captured the heart of it, “We need to honestly address the sex abuse issues and coverup, no matter what the cost.”
- **Clericalism is an obstacle to a synodal church and a source of tension with clergy vs. laity .** Too often, ordained leaders view themselves as superior to the laity. This has a debilitating affect when working to build a radically inclusive, welcoming, and synodal church. We need reform in seminary education and ongoing formation and development for ordained ministers and all those who hold positions of trust and authority in our parishes, dioceses, and in Vatican dicasteries. We also need to educate lay Catholics in our parishes on the dynamics of clericalism and to encourage them to take up their baptismal call to be co-responsible for the work of the Church and the spread of the Gospel.
- **A synodal church offer the promise of justice and inclusion for all Catholics. Yet, there is a tension between the promise of synodality and**



the current unjust treatment of people of color, indigenous people, women, LGBTQI+ people, disabled people, and laity, in general, as second-class Catholics is devastating to the People of God, to the hope for synodality, and ultimately, to the credibility we have as the Body of Christ in the service of the Gospel. We need to fully integrate these gifted, faith-filled, and committed Catholics into every level of ministry and governance so that the Good News is shared widely and injustices in our societies can be addressed more effectively.

A participant noted several interrelated injustices that are not adequately addressed by the U.S. bishops.

There is a lack of a strong, unified, public voice speaking up for our common humanity: Blacks, Asians, Queer, Disabled. The USCCB rarely makes public statements in support of the marginalized. One bishop might, but we dilute our power by not speaking as a conference. Another issue that needs addressing is the shameful treatment of our LGBTQI siblings. Where is the welcome, the love, the mercy? And why do most bishops stay silent when one of their own says and does things that are clearly not consistent with the Gospel and with Canon Law?

- **The tensions and divisions in the U.S. Church are deep** and mimic the catastrophic political polarization in the country. Along with the strong divide between Catholics who are Democrats or Republicans, there are divisions between Francis Catholics and John Paul II/Benedict XVI Catholics; between Catholics who want the Latin Mass and Catholics who are nourished by Vatican II liturgy. There are Catholics who are single issue pro-life Catholics and those who believe an authentic pro-life posture involves embracing a complex range of social justice teachings. There is a great divide between Catholics who embrace profit driven capitalism and those who seek a just society where economic, social, and political structures focus on the common good and lift up the poorest and most marginalized.



Question 3: After having read and prayed with the DCS, looking at what emerges from the previous two questions, what are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with other local Churches around the world and discussing during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?

Having read the document prayerfully, participants noted that the following issues need priority attention at the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023.

- **Inclusion of women into the diaconate.**
- **Inclusion of women as equals** in all levels of ministry and governance.
- **Inclusion of women and lay persons in preaching** at Mass.
- **Making changes to Canon Law** that support synodality and the role of laity as ministers, catechists, decision makers, etc.
- **Keeping parishes open by appointing qualified trained lay persons** to lead and care for parishes.
- **Examining and revising our Lectionary and liturgical texts so that the language is inclusive and properly representative of women's contributions and roles throughout our history;** removing texts that degrade women or misrepresent them.
- **Create more honest, authentic, and sacred listening spaces with women at the center** to discern the role of contraception in planning families, the care needed for mothers who are pregnant or whose life may be in danger because of a pregnancy, and other reproductive issues in the lives of Catholic women and families.
- **The selection of Bishops** should have input from all within a diocese.
- **Reaching out to young adult Catholics** and others who have disaffiliated.
- Discussing the value of base ecclesial communities and ways to encourage their existence.



Thank you again for your commitment to a synodal church.

A comment by a participant is fitting as we close this letter.

I have such faith, hope, and love that this clericalist church will finally be changed and returned to the People of God by this Synod.

Thank you and with heartfelt gratitude in Christ,

Your companions on the journey in North America who gathered on January 23 and January 31, 2023 to read, pray, and discern the integrity and completeness of the Continental Stage Document.

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Enclosure: Addendum of Participant Responses

cc: USCCB Synod Office, Synod of Bishops office, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, CCCB Synod Office, FutureChurch synodal participants

Addendum: Below is a representative selection of the responses received by Catholics participating in FutureChurch's Continental Phase Discernment sessions to the three questions posed in the document.

Question 1

After having read and prayed with the DCS, which intuitions resonate most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent? Which experiences are new or illuminating to you?

Intuitions that resonated strongly

- The general agreement that there is resistance among clergy to the synodal process and the call for renewal of seminary education.
- The agreement that we need to open all ministries to women as well as men.
- The Earth is being recognized universally in the CPD as a critical focus right alongside the most urgent needs of people.
- The preponderance of people who are suffering from these same issues with the institutional church and recognized the hypocrisy of the institutionalized church.
- The power of listening to all the People of God, especially at the peripheries resonates with me.
- What resonated with me were the issues of sex abuse crisis, fundamental disrespect of women, priests and bishops telling people how to vote and pronouncing judgement on individual politicians by name.
- What resonates is the need to reach out to the disaffiliated.
- What resonates strongly is a) that the laity must take a more central role on being Church, b) issue of clericalism, c) rejection of women as equal participants, d) exclusion of marginalized groups: LBGTQ+, divorced Catholics, single mothers, etc., e) on-going sexual abuse, f) the need to face our past with humility and apologies e.g., treatment of Indigenous people, racism.
- The need for more openness for inclusion in all aspects of the church's life. I was encouraged to see how many people responded in the same way.
- The shared notion that the Church needs to be more inclusive, more active in the areas of social justice and permit full access to everything thing to women, ie, priesthood, governance and so on. The lack of full empowerment of women in all dimensions of the church and the imperative to change this
- The recognition from other Catholics that it all rests in the participation of women. We must, must get this right. This document, the DCS, really is extraordinary. Artwork, clear writing. Quality of the report. Choice to include quotes from around the world. To have voices of the faithful be heard. I appreciate the use of the tent imagery, as flexible, open, even portable.
- I resonate very strongly with the insight that male domination in the Catholic Church, our Church, which I love dearly, is destroying our sense of communion/community. My wife, a life- long Catholic refuses to go to Mass because of the insults she has received from our priest.
- The understanding that we mut learn from and understand Indigenous people.
- The general recognition that many of the baptized are awakening to their missional co-responsibility.

- That Catholics recognize that more has to be done to welcome LGBT+ .people.
- I resonated with the pain expressed around the 1) abuse crisis not yet healed; 2) LGBTQI considered "disordered," 3) second-class membership for women. "
- Catholics seem to recognize that the People of God need to be a community of equals and that the People of God need to find the living Word in scripture.
- These reflections resonated for me:
 - The call from all over for the voices of women to be added to the discussion at all levels.
 - The call from all over for the voices of the marginalized to be added to the discussion at all levels.
 - The call for radical inclusion
 - The need to address the underlying factors (Poverty, lack of healthcare/childcare, etc.) in abortions and raise their priority from the Bishops as a way of reducing the number of abortions.
 - The call to meet people where they are and move forward.
 - The call to honestly address the sex abuse issues and coverup, no matter the cost
 - Concern about the overwork and isolation of Priest.
 - A greater focus on the laity taking on tasks and responsibilities in the parish to free the Priest to do things that only he can do.
- I'm excited that there are Catholics who support my love for the Church but share the disappointment I feel in how it doesn't follow the way of Christ in its practices. The Church in N. America is divided and has lost its way. We need a new way of being Church, and a culture of synodality and encounter should guide our actions. We need:
 - Co-responsibility of the People of God with the bishops
 - Inclusiveness of all
 - Women as co-equals
 - End to clericalism
 - Focus on mission to the poor and marginalized
 - Small faith communities
- There was a widespread recognition of the importance of culture and cultural diversity in our church. This seems to be in agreement with No. 40 cultural differences ED Bolivia; no. 50, 53 ec Cambodia Laos, ec North African Region-CERNA , 54- Zimbabwe, Archdiocese Luxembourg, 55 Contribution of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 57. CE Argentina; 58. 60, 61- ec Korea, , 62-ec New Zealand, 63, 64-ec Brazil, 65, 66-ec Mexico, 85, 91-ec Ethiopia, 99... we listen to each other each week. But, members of over two decades, three of our weekly bible study ask with their permission I share what was shared with me on Monday, January 30, 2023. Our Caribbean Sea Culture based now in SE Florida bible study members lamented that on Saturday, January 28, 2023 at staff of the Archdiocese of Miami, Florida Archbishop Thomas Wenski's parish authorities at a meeting in the parish demanded the role as Eucharistic Ministers will change. This pastor, an Irish missionary priest, who initiated the parish in 1985, set down the demands for those Eucharistic ministers practicing this role for decades, a new dictate at this Eucharistic Training. The burden of clericalism was not only delivered by the hierarchy but defended when challenged. The ministers of communion are not allowed to make signs of cross, sway, or have an expressed emotion or spirituality involved with the role of Eucharistic Minister. "It is all black and white." Weaponizing the Sacrament of Communion is painful, hindering the right relationship these

faithful women have with God or with each other. WE are “Not puppets”. Our baptismal right claims the “freedom to praise & worship with joy (example raise our hands during mass)” and these movements “should not be judged by clergy as if we Catholics... worshipping as protestants”.

- From my perspective, the chasm between traditional leaning Catholics and Vatican II practicing Catholics has been difficult to bridge and move forward.
- The widespread recognition that seminary formation is perpetuating a top-down culture with conservative clerical male dominance to the exclusion of women. Outdated Canon Law propping up this system. Many Bishops and Priests resisting synodality and fearing inclusive transformation within the Church as promulgated by Vatican II. Bishops and priests disregarding Laudato Si and the preponderance of disengaged youth and disenfranchised women.
- While most all the issues resonated with me, I was especially pleased to see the need to reform clericalism, put women in leadership and work on justice issues.
- The recognition that hierarchical, authoritarian, clericalism is a central problem at all levels of the church and across all regions. There must be a consistent effort in seminaries, in service formation, orientation of new bishops and lay formation, to form patterns of behavior at all levels that will work to lessen that clericalism power. It is not service. It is self-aggrandizement.
- The worldwide expectation that the Church should practice transparency in decision-making at all levels.

What was new and illuminating

- What was new for me was that women deacons would be helpful in they could hear confessions - some penitents would feel more comfortable talking to a woman and the same applies to hospital ministry.
- The hope we become a synodal Church is illuminating to me.
- Lived experiences as important.
- What was new to me was asking ourselves whether we can be better Christians by leaving the church and simply going on our own or joining the “Nones” working for social justice.
- I was pleasantly surprised at how fully the document reflected my experience of the Church
- Being from Canada, what is new to me is the extreme partisanship that you are experiencing in your Church in the U.S. Also, the worry of the formation of new priests. They seem to be moving backwards, away from Vatican II and ignoring Pope Francis's messages that we need to return to the Jesus of the Gospel.
- It was illuminating to see many understand that the response of the US church seems to be somewhat tepid because so many of the US Bishops have not promoted participation in the Synodal process.
- There is great recognition that those who are in the fold (laity, parishioners) have so much spiritual strength and power that is not always tapped into by the church. Congregations are pulling together as churches are being consolidated and numbers of participants are shrinking. In these difficult times, we are sometimes disrupted and displaced. This is difficult, yet also very much an opportunity for people to increase their activity and leadership in their communities and build their own strengths together.

- It was illuminating to see how the exclusions of the marginalized is very evident in our US Church. There is a willingness of people to speak their truth about the issues that make them feel excluded and not heard.
- The People of God need to be a community of equals. The People of God need to find the living Word in scripture.
- Substantial placement of women in ministry will help the Church immensely to deal with important problems -- 1) in hospital ministry, as deacons, providing last sacraments to dying patients, 2. As women deacons, hearing the confessions of both women and men, allowing women to confess woman's matters to someone who can relate to their concerns, 3. enabling parish ministry to demonstrate the full possibilities of assistance, representation, and decision making.
- What is new is the recognition that Canon Law is ""antiquated"" and needs a complete overall. Are we willing to do that work and accept the outcomes?"
- A great need to renew the seminaries and church leadership style to be more pastoral. To live in an inclusive parish in the future.
- New or illuminating to me is the desire to include more cultural influences.
- New to me is the example of the welcoming tent -- a welcome picture of the church where patriarchy, clericalism, and misogyny are points of tension.
- In our parish right now, we are seeing lay leaders initiate what Church is and how we can better be church by sharing, praying together, and working together to call others to come back to church, to have all from the youngest to the oldest to be welcomed and valued. This is brand new as we have been in many parishes and never found the level of caring and sharing and living the Gospel message together as we do now.
- What is illuminating is the general understanding that there is a disconnect between the way seminarians are formed and the needs/interests/concerns/reality of the laity, particularly women. The need for women to be included at all levels of governance, leadership, service, discernment, and ministry. The need for changes in canon law to insure equity/equality/inclusion. The call to justice for the earth, LGBTQ+ individuals, the poor and marginalized.
- The level of understanding the harm of clericalism is new to me. It is a model that is unsuited for our times... the church is behind... way behind in recognizing women - and has become cancerous from within because of it.
- How alienated people of God are to authority. I'm not sure that our people can name what is needed locally and universally.
- New/illuminating: Catholics acknowledging being voiceless for so long and finally given a stage/platform to speak their truth and consciously engage in synodality. Conscious awareness that those in poverty are unconsciously left out of this synodal process; the need to hear them, to intentionally seek out their voices. Awareness that youth need a synodal platform, not just for them to hear each other, but for the whole Church to listen to them. Their voice is missing in this synodal process and documentation.

Question 2

What substantial tension or divergences emerge as particularly important in your continent's perspective? What are the questions or issues that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?

Substantial tensions and divergences

- The call for outreach to minority cultures for fuller participation and the lack of appreciation, suspicion, and suppression of culture by the European Western Church.
- More involvement in decision-making process on a local level up and against the typical top-down decrees.
- The tension caused by patriarchy, the "original sin" of our clerical hierarchy. We need the Pope to add women to the Synod so they constitute 50% of the assembly.
- I experience tension and concern that the initiatives of the Bishops in the US appear to be focused on ritual in the Eucharistic Exposition and money for Catholic schools while doing so little to address the serious issues identified in the Document and elsewhere. They seem to be focusing on what separates Catholics from others, rather than seeking ways we can work together to build up the Kingdom for the common good.
- Tension: between those (clerics and laity) doggedly holding on to a perceived changeless tradition and those (clerics and laity) who seek change, evolution, transformation, and newly engaging life within the Church as promulgated by the official teachings of Vatican II.
- Question: Is there any 'narrow gate' through this tension as a universal church towards a more united church? Or do we remain fractured at all levels, indifferent to unity, choosing separate pathways? Do we want unity? Are we afraid of change, transformation, evolution?
- An important tension is between those (on all levels) in the Church who ignore the cries of the Earth community and those (on all levels) who are listening and paying attention to the teachings of *Laudato Si* and are acting in new ways (with youth and with the wider global community), finding solutions together to protect the earth community.
- There is tension between those who want to quash Vatican II and those who hope for encouraging the return to the Gospel values proposed by Vatican II.
- Encouraging synodality at all levels of the Church is important to me. Clergy, from seminarians to bishops, as well as laity need training in listening carefully to others -- and really hearing.
- The tension between the long history of exclusion of women and their enormous gifts from church leadership and ministry and the lack of understanding of the call for women ordained as deacons--it is justice for the entire Church and a means to increase the people in ordained ministry--for the People of God!
- The divisiveness in the Church that mirrors the divisiveness in our country. The Church should lead the way by truly following and using Catholic Social Teaching as our guide to how we use our voice and how we act.
- How do we embrace pro-life in an inclusive way rather than just one issue. We need to use our voices against racism, discrimination of LGBTQ+, death penalty, anti-immigration support.

- The world has embraced the equality of women in all things, yet the Church still holds on to a male dominated power structure. Give women and equal voice and role in the Church. Would Jesus keep a woman from preaching His message?
- Many have complained that the priests and hierarchy show little interest in listening to the laity. I feel this should not discourage us. We the laity are the Church, and we need to listen to each other and follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The priests and hierarchy are also members of the Church, and they will either follow our lead or not. They only constitute about 3% of the Church membership. We the laity should not stagnate because the hierarchy is preoccupied with hanging onto power and not risking moving with the Spirit of God. God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that we could hope for or imagine by His power working in us, according to our brother Paul. God uses us to build His Kingdom of justice and peace. We must cooperate, not stifle the Spirit.
- Something must be wrong in our understanding and value of Eucharist if it causes division. Seems to me that we should talk about this more.
- We don't know how to talk to people who don't share our views.
- Current practices in seminarian teachings and experiences have to be restructured and in accord with the principles of Vatican II.
- There are prominent tensions between old Latin mass and current liturgy; between communion deniers and those who want communion for all; between pro-life and pro-choice Catholics. Next step: consider what changes to canon law would help a more united and inclusive church to go forward in Christ.
- Clericalism is dividing the People of God. Dialogue requires equality and mutuality inclusivity and equal respect, a welcome for all, whoever comes - but parishes I know are not like that. There are issues of trust that divide the People of God - clergy sexual abuse, white supremacy, misogyny and subordination of women, climate change as a spiritual and moral issue. Our theology is impoverished and worn threadbare; it is sexist and exclusive.
- We need to address the disunity in the church -- among theologians (dissenters and supporters of Humanae Vitae), clergy factions (JPII and Vatican II priests), disunity over access to contraception and emergency contraception as well as early abortion procedures, and disunity from other political matters brought into church.
- Tensions include the re-ordering of power and responsibilities in the church. Right now, as understood and practiced by most bishops, the pastor is the person solely accountable for anything and everything that goes on in the parish. As lay people take on more responsibilities, we need a governance that has clear reporting and accountability lines. Corporations have figured this out. Look to the best practices that will call forth the gifts of everyone and relieve the pastor of being accountable for everything. We need increased role and responsibility of women.
- We need conversion of heart at all levels in the church. We need a commitment to dialogue rather one-way pronouncements from the hierarchy.
- Steps to change canon law - to become a church of the people.
- A primary tension is the clergy getting involved in partisan politics.
- There is little to no sharing between people who are pre-Vatican II and those who are trying to live out the gifts of Vatican II. There should be acceptance of each other as our sister or brother.

- Tensions that need to be addressed: the role of women, clericalism, formation of seminarians, current priests, and all the people training in the synodal process itself. The structure in canon law parishes with councils with real authority. The development of small faith worship communities.
- The biggest tension I perceive is the power struggle. Being a People of God Church or a Synodal Church means sharing power. Why after 60 years have we not implemented this call of Vatican II? It was a lot easier to change the liturgical rites so they got implemented to some degree.
- The superiority of the clergy over the laity is a major problem. The lack of importance given to the primacy of conscience and lack of respect for each person's journey in faith.
- The primary tension revolves around clericalism and the enormous gap between the male clergy/hierarchy and everyone else. They have lost touch with the laity as a whole - but especially with women, with the marginalized and poor, with people of color and of different sexual orientations/gender identities. This doesn't even touch the hundreds of thousands of Catholics who have left the Church in the last generation or two. And in turn, the people (especially all those mentioned above) have lost any faith in the male clergy/hierarchy.
- Without heavy-handedness, there must be a way to insist bishops and priests give this an honest good faith effort. After 40 years of working in local government- it is inconceivable to me that leaders in an organization can ignore initiatives and priorities from the leader. A question to priests and bishops: Are you part of the global church or not? And synodality is how we conduct our business - there is no other way, the church and even the local parish or school is not yours - it is Gods'. Therefore - synodal is not a passing fad, but - in the words of Rafael Luciani in his book on Synodality, 'a constitutive way of being church.'
- Will we be heard? Are the clergy able or willing to listen to us? Will they release their grasp on power that is an affront to the church that Jesus formed? One tension that remains is what will happen to a Spirit-led church if the clergy don't flow with that same Spirit. We can simply NOT return to business as usual. So dear clergy members, do you see us? Do you hear us?
- Substantial tensions seem to be the a) tension between supporters of Pope Francis and those who would demean his papacy, b) tensions between those who would prefer the Church revert to a pre-Vatican II state and those who embrace Vatican II and would continue to move forward in the vein of that Council.
- Dissension will always exist, but we can learn to compromise with each other and accept our differences. We need more non-dualistic thinking.
- The tension between clericalism and lay leadership, e.g., how to have diversity within the unity of our core faith beliefs and at the same time become more inclusive in accepting the gifts of women and non-ordained men.
- We in the U.S. Church seem to reflect or contribute to the polarization where one side is "right" and one "wrong." As paragraphs 30 and 19 state, we must live the Christological paradox: boldly proclaiming its authentic teaching while at the same time offering a witness to radical inclusion and acceptance through its pastoral and discerning accompaniment.
- The divisions which exist in the Church are the same that exist in our USA society. We must LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN to one another in communion and participation for the whole Church. It makes no matter where we are on the spectrum of faith or politics, we have to be willing to be open to the Spirit speaking through each and all of us.

- Tensions exist in clericalism and patriarchy versus the laity. Clergy (male clergy) is viewed as "more important" or exclusive. Yet as baptized Catholics we all have a role and possess importance.
- Tension is believing the level of reform needed will be seriously addressed by Bishops and clergy
- Representation of diverse communities & the marginalized at synodal events now & in future must be transparent & achieved not by top-down selection but by bottom-up selection processes.
- Recognizing the various groups in the Church as valid-having changes implemented, not just written about or mentioned.
- One main tension is that in the process going forward, women, people of color, LGBTQ, marginalized people may not be adequately heard.
- There is a tension between patriarchy and women as equals in the Church. Patriarchy is key to maintaining the toxic clericalism of the Church that accounts for so much failure in teaching and leadership. Women must be accepted as equal in all, especially the key responsibilities of ministry and governance. There is considerable common concern that the DCS has identified issues that the bishops may now fail to address.
- One tension, or fear, is that the Synod will be a great experience for those participating but will not continue and grow to include many more people.
- One of the tensions is the seminary training and formation of our priests who have the power image that our bishops model. If we are to be a synodal church, the shared leadership and ministry of Jesus' gospel must be part of the formation of clergy. Bishops are interested in power and money, not the people of God. Priests are called to serve the people, not subject them to their personal whims.
- How to really embrace and listen to the needs of the parishioners: Change of hearts, minds, actions...There is a need for real dialogue and understanding of the parish needs.
- I am troubled by polarization in the Church. I hope and pray that the synod on synodality will find ways to be a synodal church in which we all respect each other, listen deeply to one another and grow in our love of God and neighbor. We are on the same path, but we don't have to be uniform to be united in deep ways. Help us all to be welcome and invited to love and service.
- How to empower the laity to be presbyters among the people of God so that Word and Sacraments can be celebrated where needed and, in a way that is meaningful to those who participate as well as strengthen their faith and social activism.
- The document is quite clear and so many respondents agree. This is a strong sign of the presence of the Spirit. The disagreement seems to be between the reality and the dream, or perhaps between the speakers and those who declined to participate.
- The tension between an "wider tent" and keeping folks deemed unworthy from Communion - Who are we to judge?
- Loss of confidence in moral authority of the priesthood due to the sexual abuse scandal.
- Too much Them and Us duality.
- There is a tension over power - its use and abuse. We need power with each other, not over each other. And, instead of rules, we need to love Jesus, really. So much becomes a non-issue when we learn to love.
- The US bishops do not resonate with Francis' hopes; many stifle their communities and laity
- There is a distinct tension about the dominance of the hierarchy at this next level of synodal discernment.

- How to ensure that the changes proposed and sought actually get implemented. Lack of confidence in the willingness of the leadership of the church as a whole remains a concern.
- There is a fear that Catholics will not be heard - or the documents will end up on a shelf.
- In a Church that has not promoted this adequately, we need every baptized person to realize their authority and responsibility for living the gospel.
- No.9 states "What emerges is a profound re-appropriation of the common dignity of all the baptized. This is the authentic pillar of a synodal Church and the theological foundation of a unity which is capable of resisting the push toward homogenization. This enables us to continue to promote and make good use of the variety of GIFTS that the Spirit with unpredictable abundance pours out on the faithful."

Questions or issues that need to be addressed.

- The call for outreach to minority cultures for fuller participation.
- More involvement in decision making process on a local level and fewer top-down decrees.
- A fuller participation of religious and laity in the conversations.
- The role of women and the marginalization of people of color; the LGBTQ community
- Encouraging women to present homilies and to integrate catholic social values more emphatically in homilies
- A mature and science-based understanding of sexuality.
- Let's talk about clericalism, racism, the treatment of women in the church. Are we going to honor Vatican II, or continue to regress as a Church? Are we going to stop "fighting" Pope Francis, as he tries to lead us forward?
- How will we address what concerns youth and young adults, especially those who have left the church?
- Politicization of liturgy, sacraments, and moral/social issues. The American Church sounds like a subsidiary of the Republican Part not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Role of women. A few token women (mostly religious) does not equality make. Lay women need more roles of prominence, in order to be role models for our daughters of a Church that values them and their gifts.
- We need a better understanding of the Eucharist
- My questions are: Who are you called to be? Who are you called to serve? What changes can we make as a Church community to better live out the answers to the first two questions?"
- How do we enter a 'beloved community' listening, welcoming and taking decisive action to implement what is needed?
- What kind of a church do we want to be? welcoming, caring, seekers of justice, diverse.... Can we be that kind of church?
- A preeminent issue is getting rid of the predators. The bishops' preeminent issue better be ensuring it is safe to set foot in a Catholic Church. I left the Catholic Church when I got sick of the continual death threats from the clergy. The Vatican and USCCB have created an organization that is physically toxic to 80% of its' membership.
- We need to address clergy sex abuse. I went to Mass 3-4 X/week for 50-year plus-- a cradle Roman Catholic watching the pedophile crisis in horror, especially when the previous pope compared women who want to be priests to pedophiles.

- How can we learn the heart-language of love and welcome??"
- The issue of clericalism is central to any reform. The formation of new priests MUST change to reflect a different role and relationship with the laity. They need to understand that being on a pedestal is no longer acceptable. A priest must be with his flock not gazing down on it.
- With reform, women priests, married persons etc. will become less of an issue and seen as inevitable if we are to survive as anything relevant for today and the future.
 - A return to both married and celibate priests
 - Ordination of women deacons, priests"
 - A greater voice for women and all laity should be incorporated into all dialogue with the hierarchy in the Church.
- We need to discuss patriarchy, which is at the root of colonialization, environmental degradation, sexism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, etc. etc.
- We need to talk about inclusive language. God is not a boy's name. Let's use inclusive language in prayer and worship so we grow into an all-inclusive image of the Divine Holy.
- We seem to be asking the wrong question: instead of ""What will we do without priests?"" rather ask ""What do people need?"" and go from there.
- A recognition that the monopoly of male celibate teaching authority on matters of gender, sexuality and reproduction is a dismal failure and they need to find another path.
- The rights of all people regardless of gender, race, status or wealth to have/seek their "own" relationship with God enriched by fair and just guidance of a loving church.
- Question: How can we all (conservative and liberal Catholics) foster the teachings of *Laudato Si* and also work hand-in-hand with youth to protect Earth in our local areas and support the efforts of the indigenous and rural poor of impoverished lands for the regeneration of those lands? This would also bring a 'church of relevance' to youth!"
- Address the abortion issue in a wider context of understanding why women choose it and the changes needed in terms of economic equity and equality, support systems etc.
- Address conflicting attitudes regarding Pre-Vatican and Vatican II liturgy
- Homilies are out of touch with people's lives
- Training seminarians to be servants; training regarding sexuality that creates healthy relationships in ministry and policies.
- Open ordained ministry to women, married persons, LGBTQI persons.
- End the firing LGBTQI employees; reinstall those who have been fired.
- Liturgical reform that integrates the new cosmology.
- Liturgical reform that eliminates readings that promote violence, denigrates women, condones slavery.
- Integration and acceptance of women from all social and ethnic backgrounds in the decision making and leadership of the Church.
- Small faith communities included as official part of Church structure
- Social justice given greater emphasis.
- Far greater inclusion of young people.
- There is so much discussion of "Who can preach?" "Who can lead?" meanwhile, the pews are emptying out. There were very few young faces in our discussion. My own adult children have left the church and won't be returning. We are arguing over who gets the deck chairs on the Titanic.

- Attention to young adults. I was sad to see this last on the survey! I feel strongly that they are waiting for belonging and we “gray heads” are focused on the leadership. Questions: What can I do to encourage young adults?
- Welcome must include LGBTQI and divorced Catholics. Ask the younger generation.
- Women deacons & priests & other equality issues. Respect & Renumeration. Existing Canon law conflicts with the change needed so they need to be updated. End clericalism. Need a transitional program preparing clergy for synodal church. A disconnect between clergy and laity regards synodality. Clergy remaining uninvolved. Inclusive laity with deliberative powers & ministerial roles. Equality. Hold bishops accountable for covering up sexual abuse; an alienating, dehumanizing, justice issue. Change church structures & organization. Transparent decision making. Priests free to marry. Outreach, respect & inclusiveness of youth. Build welcoming inclusive communities. Ongoing, informed, formation of children, youth, priests, bishops, others. Healing of the laity from institutionalized passiveness, alienation, felt rejection, and sexual abuse issues etc. Care to Listen to the Holy Spirit avoiding humanism. Compassionately address why people are leaving the church or not joining, particularly the youth and the huge tension with the LGBTQ issue. Address quality, relevance, and variety of Liturgies. Youth & children give homilies at school, youth & Sunday Masses. Priest formation with understanding of married life. Train in secular university with the best educators, live in a family home to learn more about the difficulties of family life. Inclusivity and radical inclusivity issues. Healing of the laity from institutionalized passiveness, alienation, felt rejection, and sexual abuse issues etc. Inclusivity and radical inclusivity issues
- Questions: Who are you called to be? Who are you called to serve? What changes can we make as a Church community to better live out the answers to the first two questions?"
- We have not addressed clerical sexual abuse and episcopal coverups and bankruptcy very well. This is an open wound that cannot be ignored. Racism and white superiority are also issues that need to be addressed.
- Married priests and ordination of women must be addressed. More education on Catholic social teaching.
- A look at the parish structure which is not working for everyone
- Homilies and courses offered on the Social Teaching of the Church
- Truly to enlarge our tent by equal and just treatment of women, people of color, LGBTQI, married and divorced Catholics, people of various faiths working together for common causes --peace, gun control, respect for each other and the common good of all -- people with disabilities and our indigenous people
- An updated understanding of sexual ethics - gender identity -contraception

Question 3

After having read and prayed with the DCS, looking at what emerges from the previous two questions, what are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with other local Churches around the world and discussing during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?

- Recurring themes include:
 - Expanding the role of the laity.
 - Inclusion of all God's people.
 - Insist that lay women & men be installed as homilist at Mass and women be ordained as deacons.
 - Inclusion of women in all aspects of Church life.
 - Address clergy sex abuse. First, the people are suffering from the church's legacy of abuse (sexual and other); the wounds are fresh. Second -what we are not talking about: the high percentage of religious who violate their vows of celibacy on an ongoing basis (with consenting adults). If this is how half of the ordained live (according to published research) then we ought to consider A. ordaining women and/ or outsourcing priestly duties to women deacons and B. reflecting on whether our teachings about human sexuality have put the emphasis in the wrong place. What have we done by emphasizing guilt and convincing people, including children, that they are going to hell?
- Priorities to be addressed are:
 - Seminary reform: If we train the few that enter to be princes, we perpetuate clericalism.
 - Leadership credibility: An open, honest acknowledgment of our faults and demonstrated commitment to reform has to come, before evangelization has any hope of being effective.
 - Recurring themes are: The Church should be open, apostolic and inclusive. Move away from our history of racism, sexism, patriarchy, and homophobia. Welcome all of God's people and their many gifts.
 - Ecumenical call to action: Care for Creation, Gun Control, an end to Capital punishment, care for the poor, those with disabilities & mental health issues, & other social justice issues."
- Our priorities should be:
 - equal participation for women in ALL ministries
 - becoming a demonstrably inclusive church
 - social-justice oriented mission
- Priority issues include: Both married and celibate priests to remedy the worldwide priest shortage. Woman ordained once again as Deacons and priests.
- Rather than repeatedly acknowledging how the Church as an institution moves slowly in issues that are important to the lay faithful... more significant and concrete change could impact a diminished Church.

- The synodality was well intended and much needed. It has allowed the people of God to reflect and voice their views together with others. My deepest concern is that most of the process has dealt with the changes at the institutional level. Very little has been emphasized about the need, means and support for conversion at the personal and social levels of the Church.
- "A universal, fully engaged (at all levels) dialogue on the official teachings of Vatican II and Laudato Si and their implications for
 - canonical and structural reforms,
 - direct action for protection of Earth and impoverished humanity
- In the process, we witness a transforming Church, a new depth and understanding to Jesus' words: 'I have come that you may have life - and have it more abundantly.'"
 - need for continued dialogue
 - need for continued education
 - need to continually enlarge the space of our tent both individually and as a community, using the ropes and pegs we've been given. "
 - Reconciliation and restorative justice for the harm the church has done
 - adopt and advocate for civil and ecclesial rights of LGBTQI persons
 - advocate against violence toward women
 - provide ways to have civil conversations regarding politics, racism, church policies
 - change decision-making policies in the church to include voices of membership that are now excluded.
 - be leaders in Laudato Si efforts and other collaborators regarding climate change.
 - Advocate for and model peaceful ways to resolve conflict, not the use of weapons and other forms of violence."
- A priority theme is that the church must become a listening church. All people are children of God. All matter and have needs as well as wisdom.
- In order to be a truly welcoming Church, we need training and encouragement to listen to everyone so that the charisms of all are brought to decision making -- not just those of the clergy. Focus on true Gospel values, put women as well as men in positions of decision making, and train ALL Catholics in synodality, including bishops.
- Strategy needed before we begin: Need skilled expertise for the listening process. Need at least formation and guidance for facilities. Without this, the differences are in danger of blocking the holy listening needed for fruitful sessions.
- Women need to be respected worldwide, and the Church's refusal to restore women to the ordained diaconate underscores the attitude that women are "second-class citizens."
- Reform Canon Law to support synodality and inclusion of all (women, LGBTQI, divorced Catholics).
- Formation of our religious men towards collaboration, listening, synodality, Catholic Social Teaching.
- Bring women into the full participation of the Church.
- Co-responsibility shared by the People of God with the bishops.
- Need for structures/formation/spirituality in synodality.
- Women's equality is a priority issue for discussion.
- Emphasis on revision of canon law.

- Emphasis on welcome, inclusion, diversity.
- The reformed Church should welcome all people, treat woman as fully equal and lift the judgment of LGBTQI people. It must take the lead on Climate Change and resist partisan politics. It has too many ties to one party because of its sole emphasis on abortion. We need the Church to emphasize Catholic social teaching more if the Church is to be relevant.
- We are whom we have been waiting for. It is time to act by loving and speaking the truth to one another, joining with our sisters and brothers in the work of acting like the Body of Christ which we are.
- Women's role must be a priority.
- I think we should talk about Theology of Eucharist if it's a source of division instead of communion.
- These are the issues that deserve priority:
 - Female bias issues: Including allowing woman deacons and priests, & women equally represented at all levels of decision making & ministries, respect for their skills and fair remuneration and care including for nuns.
 - Clericalism eliminated: Shared decision making. Make pastoral councils at the parish and diocesan levels mandatory, deliberative, and representative of whole community. Extend to all ecclesial bodies. Replace the hierarchical church structure with a synodal structure. Change Canon laws accordingly. Transparency in decision making.
 - Youth issues: Formation, inclusion, participation, activities, and outreach with respect for their developmental level, needs, interests and views. Support existing, effective, youth programs.
 - Freedom for priests to marry.
 - Small Christian Communities made part of church structure.
 - Better formation for all including synodal training, baptismal rights & responsibilities and trainee priests living with a family.
 - Church community building including forming fully inclusive community councils with shared deliberative powers. Culturally diverse Masses.
 - Inclusiveness & outreach issues with particular attention to the LGBTQ, and the hurting. Eucharist for the divorced and Christians from other denominations. Unresolved sexual abuse issues to be addressed - holding to account Bishops who covered it up, Parish apologies and truth telling.
 - Empower all according to call and giftings. Eliminate structural & attitudinal barrier.
 - Liturgy issues – music, homilies, lay and youth to give homilies, biblically informed clergy with content in homilies relevant to today context and the audience etc.
- We will need more education of the people of God that the synod is a process - we are only beginning; more education is absolutely needed for the essence of spiritual conversions, Vatican II documents, learning skills of listening, dialogue, discernment both private and communal are essential.
- Deal strictly with abuse in the church and to take care of the victims.
- Learning to talk to those who have different points of view.
- Enlarge the tent. Welcome all Catholics and then work on ecumenism.

- It will be important to ensure the participation in the Continental Assemblies of bishops, priests, deacons, lay men and women, consecrated men and women, as well as people capable of expressing the views of those on the margins.
- Concern over the business as usual seemingly coming from the majority of the USCCB.
- Can bishops be made accountable for the implementation of whatever is decided as a result of the Synodal process?
- What to do if your Bishop is apparently not interested in widening the tent?
- Investigate the dark money of Opus Dei and put an end to them meddling in US politics. Forbid them from sending priests under 40 to Rome for the summer so that they can be steeped in the beliefs of Opus Dei. They are not the same when they return from having been indoctrinated.
- Go back to the early Church - ordain women as deacons.
- We say we are ALL created equal.... Act upon this belief. If we believe this, we must also ordain women priests. Dogma was determined by men. Tradition changes over time. Seek the truth and act upon it. This also goes for the LGBTQ Community. They should be included in ALL levels of Church participation and possibilities.
- All within a diocese should be able to recommend the persons to be made Bishop...called from among the people. And affirmed by Rome. Be honest and not influenced by others in the hierarchical circle that exists. Be led by the Spirit.
- On regard to the payments of the Church to victims of clerical abuse. Do not allow mediation as a way out. My Diocese is offering a total of \$2million to settle. If mediation takes place victims do not get enough to justly help them; those priests {or bishops} who have been accused do not get their day in court to defend themselves. Both totally unjust.
- We live in a society that says innocent until proven guilty. Can we not expect the same of our Church? Render to Caesar that are Caesar's. The Church is not above the law. Truth will always win in the end and the Church should not be afraid.
- Canon law must be revised.
- Inclusive language must be used in our liturgies and the Scripture edition for all countries. Inclusivity is to be part of the universal language of the Church.
- Can we give full inclusion, including sharing the Eucharist, to all who attend mass and desire unity with Christ? I don't think we are viable for the future unless we truly welcome all. As a priority, consider what we would have to do for that to be a viable path forward for us.
- Let's get together to talk about climate change and how we can take care of our environment. Let's address the injustice of treating women as second class or of race relations in North America, or the causes of poverty, etc.. Let us learn from the gospels the values of non-violence in every aspect of life.
- How can we become a global church respecting equality of all people and cultures? How can the Cardinals and Bishops open up to be more pastoral? To deal with the abuse issues?
- We need conversion of heart at all levels. Re-ordering of power and responsibilities in the church. Increased role and responsibility of women."
- Increase the voices of women, the poor, the young, the marginalized in the process both at the Synodal Assembly and in parishes.
- Formation for the Clergy (from the priest on up) in letting go of the reins of power inside the parish so that they can focus on leading the faithful in worship. Formation for the laity in

picking up those reins of power and building their parish in the image of Christ to answer the call of what is necessary for their parish as it is the laity that is in the community the most and thus should know where the need is greatest. Acceptance of each person as they are, communication and acceptance of differences, expecting the best of each other.

- Continue the call to including women in all aspects of church leadership. Creating a new focus in seminarian training and retraining from Cardinals down to deacons & laity in Vatican 2 theology.
- Reform seminarian training.
- Have laypersons preaching --social justice preaching.
- Unless this basic question is answered - about the willingness to change to being a synodal Church then everything else will have little chance of being implemented.
- Breaking down the hierarchical structure of the church, which is not life-giving to the person in the pew. Inclusion of women in clergy, inclusion of LGBTQI persons and those who have been historically disenfranchised from the church.
- Reform governance, reform seminary training, open all roles and ministries to all the baptized. Open the tent to listen to the wisdom of all, whether Catholic or not -
- Better seminary education and personal skills and humility are needed to be able to work with and respect all people.
- Truly reforming Church structure, ministry, and administration to be totally inclusive.
- Opening the door to women preaching and women deacons.
- Revision of seminary training in line with Vatican II.
- Need to open the doors to married clergy.
- Need full participation of women in governance and clergy.
- The word of God from the pulpit must be heard through the voices of many, male and female, and the spirit within the laity must be acknowledged during the Mass, not just the priest.

- Overhaul Seminary training, place more diversity among the faculty, make sure that they are heavily involved with social justice issues. This would be a big help in ridding our Church of clericalism.
- We need men and women in the priesthood and diaconate, along with married priests, men and women, while still preserving the very real gift of celibacy for those who are called to it."

- We need to discuss ordaining women...adult formation (catechesis)...reform in seminary formation...and ending clericalism.
- Important themes and calls to action include:
 - An end to patriarchy and clericalism in the Church
 - Inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the Church
 - Equity for women at all levels of the Church
 - Teaching on the culture of synodality
- Base communities need to be centers of our faith out of which we live our faith.
- A basic question and challenge is - are we going to be that Body that shows the world God's dream and our ultimate destiny, that is, to be gathered as one; as the scriptures describe God's mystery hidden and now revealed? so - can we overcome political differences, 'liberal vs conservative' labels, trad rad vs Vatican II, closed vs welcoming, traditional priest role vs

empowerment of women - to at least be able to discuss and discern and move forward. this is our moment to live our faith - and demonstrate that God, not us, is what is most important!!!! journey together! listen to the Spirit! humility and mercy!

- We must discuss: a) women's leadership, representation, and inclusion as ordained members of the church; b) a global initiative for all diocese to address sexual abuse of minors and other vulnerable adults, particularly women's religious orders, c) how to hold church leaders accountable when the Synod is complete and its becomes time to start adopting the synod?
- We need more adult education so our people can stand their ground theologically. We need to promote committed marriage and healthy sexuality and encourage vocations to marriage not just to the priesthood and religious life and advocate for just issues not just anti- abortion rhetoric. Many see our bishops as weak and lacking moral courage and authority.
- We need to discern greater roles for women. We must discuss the role of the laity in church governance. We need young people leading change and Catholic social teaching as a road map for living a Catholic life.
- Radical inclusion; embracing culture as a primary element of one's faith life for all the People of God; Full welcome and participation of women, married clergy, trans persons.
- The recurring priorities include:
 - reformation of clerical education
 - Complete involvement of women in decisions, liturgy, preaching
 - Justice and catholic social teaching
- Formation for the People of God; education; giving us all the courage, the knowledge to stand up and accept our responsibilities in helping to lead our church. Vatican II is no longer an option. Is schism a totally unacceptable idea?
- We need decentralizing of Western European and ownership of Institutional.
- Open the tent and welcome all!
- A recurring theme is the need for collaborative leadership, inclusion of and recognizing gifts of ALL, and living the social justice gospel. Resisting Christian nationalism.
- Building welcoming communities that talk to each other. Some changes must be implemented immediately to give people hope.
- We must LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN to one another in communion and participation for the whole Church. What comes out of our listening can be the blueprint for future action.
- Unity and reconciliation must continue to be a priority. Enlarge the tent: expansive but not homogeneous, capable of sheltering all, but open, letting in and out and moving toward embracing the Father and all of humanity.
- The deaths we must experience are not annihilation but an emptying of oneself to be filled by Christ through the Holy Spirit, a process by which we receive richer relations, deeper ties to God and each other.
- There is a need for the development of small communities for breaking open the Word...how to live today in and for the world. The need to look at giftedness...and especially how the different gifts can work together. Need to look for leaders trained in group dynamics, dialogue etc... how to listen to others and respect others. The challenges are many...working in smaller communities will make the difference. The followers began as small communities, their local area need to return to this. Need to reach the middle-aged adults...not just the

younger ages. The vision and dream of Jesus is key...for this is really the good news for the future of humanity and the cosmos.

- The recurring themes are the call of all people to share in the ministry of the Gospel, the call to listen to the cries of the earth and the disenfranchised poor to make a difference in our world. We have a tradition of social justice but not from the hierarchy but from the Gospel of Jesus-everyone is gifted, welcome, loved, accepted, and supported. What a witness to God's People and to our world. What a difference that would make-the Gospel alive, flourishing, and changing peoples' heart and the world.
- The need for an all-inclusive church. A church that is centered on its mission, the mission of Jesus, discerning together through 'spiritual conversation' and a contemplative listening.
- The model of synodality should become the permanent listening structure of the church at all levels. Bishops should no longer meet as bishops' conferences alone. Their meetings should include small group discussions that include clergy and lay women and men, as has been done at recent synods of Bishops in Rome. Ecclesial Assemblies should replace meetings of bishops. Even if bishops get the final vote at the end (as in the synods in Rome) they are changed by the process of listening and discussing with laity, religious and clergy.
- There is a recurring theme of the need for leadership roles in the Church for women and women's ordination. The Church should not take political sides but should emphasize the unconditional love of God as INCLUSIVE to all without judgements or exclusions.
- Synodality must be recognized and adopted as a cultural change supported by necessary structural changes - consultative/participatory (decision making) at all levels of Church activity with a full acceptance of subsidiarity. No change will be successful without the elimination of patriarchy and clericalism.
- We need reforms in seminary education, married clergy, ordination of women to priesthood, recognition of baptismal rites, involvement of laity in all decision making and governance in all levels of church, education re: social justice
- Respect for all people of God.
- Willingness to listen. Willingness to change and reach out to others.
- Getting to know the Lord of the Gospels and in community.
- Recognition of the gifts of the laity.
- Outreach and integration of women of color in decision making and leadership roles in the Church.
- Lay persons should take part in the synod meetings or at minimum there should be a strong presence of lay observers listening and encouraging formal participants in the synodal gatherings. How can we work at becoming synodal churches, listening and encountering each other and those whom Jesus came to embrace? How can we work for justice
- Women bring to people a mother's heart.
- Priorities: conversion of heart; love himself/herself as Jesus love us. Listen with the heart, welcoming people, create communities of Love and care to each other. These priorities/changes need to be from the top of the church, bishops and priests.
- I am involved with the world-wide *Laudato Si* efforts and find that very encouraging, as well as other efforts to promote nonviolence and inclusivity and protecting our common home. These are the areas where I see the Catholic Church having a great potential to be a prophetic voice in our world and to be interactive with other religious groups. I find some of our young

adults not seeing this dimension of church leadership and seeking a spiritual life journey elsewhere.

- I agree education of Bishops, priests and laity is necessary. Language forms minds and hearts therefore revise how God is named and reform the Lectionary. And finally recognize the call by God of women to priesthood.
- Equality of all in Christ through Baptism needs to be seen as fundamental to mission and ministry of church.
- Deep and current spiritual education social justice as constitutive of the Gospel. This should be required in the seminary as well as opportunities for annual directed retreat.
- Call for regular, broadly inclusive diocesan synods to build on synodal path after the Synodal Assembly is over.
- Synodality must include discernment about the role of women in the church, inclusivity, seminary education and ongoing education for all adults and youth in the church.
- Women must be recognized and must become active, ordained leaders and decision-makers along with men.
- Youth and young people must be enticed to participate as People of God by seeing a more welcoming, inclusive, nonjudgmental institution that acts on the problems in society i.e., regarding social justice."
- One important call to action is incorporating Catholic social teaching in our decision making. Acknowledging it as a guide to what it means to be Catholic.
- Religious women, brothers and lay men and women should be given a voice in the Church along with the ordained clergy.
- There will always be a need to have core communities where people can study and deepen their knowledge of the scriptures, liturgy and social teachings. But these communities must never become exclusive, always reaching out and welcoming the stranger. This requires a fine balance of faithfulness and hospitality.
- Open the voting body of the 2024 Synod to include representatives of the wider church, religious, lay men and women along with the Cardinals and bishops of the world.
- In Christ we are all equal woman and man, rich and poor, LGBTQ, Indigenous , Two -Spirited , all are welcome in the Cosmic Christ. Whatever is done to the least man or woman, child or youth is done to Christ.
- End of clericalism, women in leadership, reaching out to youth, acceptance of marginalized groups, LGBTQ community.
- Women must push to be listened to. Men should get into the mind set of listening and cooperating rather than being bosses. We need both men and women, clergy and lay to be church and to make decisions that are open and according to the Spirit!
- To look carefully at the common good and participation. To welcome anyone into church. Many people want to be part of the church and cannot, such as persons in the LGBTQI communities.
- The role of women as leaders in all walks of life. The gentle quiet voice of Mary, the mother of Christ, who calls us to love one another must be heard in the voices of the women today.
- Call to engage all baptized into full participation in the Church.

- Important themes for clergy:
 - The Church and clergy need to recognize and respond to the many injustices in our society.
 - We need homilies on Catholic social justice teachings.
 - The clergy need to take a firm stand against racism.
 - The priests and bishops, especially the USCCB, need to listen to one another to find a better way to be Church."
- Priority issues include:
 - Women's leadership in the church
 - Attention to youth and young-adults absence in the church and listening to their concerns.
 - Training of clergy in social justice and sharing of decision making with laity.
- Do as Jesus did- include women, the poor, the marginalized. Love. Heal. Find ways of working in our needy world that allow the faithful to find unity.
- Allow women to listen to their calling and ENTER the priesthood!
 - Welcome ALL (LGBTQI) to the table!
 - Outreach to and engage youth and young adults in our faith addressing the issues that are relevant to their lives"
- Where is the contemplative tradition in our formation on all levels? What makes us different, we who profess to be followers of Christ? We each need a felt sense of God in our life. This tradition, by and large, is not represented or taught and we are all the poorer for it. Change cannot happen if our consciousness doesn't deepen.
- We should strive in affirming that women and men, female and male, are all equal by the sacrament of baptism; a female is not baptized in a different way than a male. We are all equally called to serve with the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit.
- "Respect for women and marginalized, equal roles in the church.
- Deal with the scandals that clerics have created and realize they have pushed people away.
- Our church, our societies are in need of the spirituality of the feminine.
- My sense is that we learn what 'pastoral caring' means in our families, local churches and a world that waits for our ministry. There are many opportunities available e.g., Marshall Rosenberg's teaching on non-violent communication where we bypass judgement and blaming to name what we need and find out how we can get what we need appropriate.
- Having laity, especially women play a more active and respected role. Level the field.... raise the marginalized, lower the mountaintop. Make it an inclusive church, Jesus welcomed AL
- Emphasis on local small groups of the Body of Christ focusing on Catholic Social teaching. Reform of Canon Law to incorporate these values.
- Communication and educational/ spiritual formation of both priests and laity are going to be critical as this process moves forward.
- Role of women in all aspects of church life including ordination to priesthood.
 - Substantial change to Church structures to add diversity in every way.
 - Formation of Church leaders ""together"" not in separate silos.

- These words from the DCS are critical:
 - #60 “A critical and urgent area concerns the role of women and their vocation, rooted in our common baptismal dignity, to participate fully in the life of the Church.”
 - Universal: This “registers” all over the world, #64 “Almost all reports” raise the issue of full and equal participation of women. “Universal.”
 - Active role in governance, decision making, preaching, sacramental ministries, female diaconate.
 - #61 Women relegated to the prophetic edge (#61) where we have much to share and access to the peripheries; yet backbone, majority of participants.
 - Sexism in decision-making and Church language.
 - #65 powerful presence of women, ability to break new ground in solidarity, black, brown, indigenous, alliance to address key social issues. (from the Union of Superior Generals).
 - Exclusion from meaningful work and pay #64.
- The Church must be much more pastoral. They are hurting people who are lost lambs. People who are hurt cannot listen to/hear theological reasons because they hurt too much. There must be love and respect. They must first be listened to before they can listen.
- Plan and formation to transform world culture to respect ALL persons and creation. Synodality is one tool to help humans ponder the action of the Holy Spirit in all of our liv
- Hope for a revised participation of the Synodal assembly.
- Full discussion of ordination to the priesthood of women.
- Women and married priests, involvement in social justice issues and increased inclusivity.
- To continue the process of synodality, to widen the tent, and to openly deal with the ongoing impact of the sexual abuse crisis.
- Changes in Canon Law and other church instruments necessary to alter embedded structures. Actions on the parish level to spread consciousness of the changes, why they are needed, and how to best bring them about.
- Totally integrate LGBTQI people and women.
- We must listen to marginalized voices and people of color, the poor and their experiences actually integrating beatitudes of Jesus ministry in all areas of life affecting people.
- We must discuss greater laity input and power with women in all levels of ministry and governance. We must discuss electing our own bishops.
- Formation at all levels----basics, basics, then move on. Comprehensive faith formation and the best theological formation lead by those who are both orthodox in the best sense and grasping the mission of Jesus.
- Encourage more discussion and dialogue on the local/parish level so that the depth of the people's desires can be listened to and respected. A commitment on the part of the Church's hierarchy to follow through and implement the needs and desires of this process.
- End clericalism.
- Focus on our young adults - meet them where they are.
- Discern ordination of women as priests.
- Role of women and laity in the communal discernment.
- Responding to the cries of the earth and its peoples.

- Emphasize the rights/responsibilities of baptism. Demolish clericalism and become the people of God.
- "Looking at questions 1 and 2, the call to action is to (Number 26 reference) join preparing the necessary elements to enlarge the tent.
 - Spread out a bigger piece of woven fabric of many diverse interfaith fibers (no. 33 Poland).
 - Ropes fibers braided, holding the hanging, rainbow colors of fabrics, furs, lichen nets, hairs, skins (no. 29 Ireland), "balancing the tensions" with creative conflict management and mind/body medicine skills, practiced to keep the "tent from drooping with softness." Ropes of repair of the soul allow for expansion and stretching of consciousness, creating more oxygenated sacred, brave, safe containers of thin veils of the Holy.
 - Pegs of living, mitigating coastal forests including mangrove prop roots and cypress stands with knees reminding us of the Nature Design Solution Systems encircling us, provided by God's abundance of creativity through the powers of the Holy Spirit given to us by Jesus , the Incarnate One, connecting webbing of mycelium networks 7 miles below of un revealed aspects of the Wood Wide Web, like the pathways of design mimicked in the Tokyo Japanese Airport based on pathways of slime molds policies of dynamic , fluid, ready to perceive, transform and become as soil regenerates, atmospheres are restored for life, with back-up generators of adaptations to prevent the horrible deaths of the most vulnerable and yet accepting , we may have to go home another way . Listen to creation. (No. 36 - lack of listening).