



A synodal Church is
a Church "going forth,"
a missionary Church
"whose doors are open" ...

MISSOULA DEANERY SYNOD LISTENING SESSION WITH BISHOP AUSTIN VETTER

Summary of the Missoula Deanery Synod Process Response with Bishop Vetter, March 21, 2022 at Blessed Trinity

Last March, approximately 125 persons participated in the SYNOD GATHERING, representing most every parish in the Missoula Deanery. The evening began with Vespers. Blessed Trinity staff developed the process for the consultation. Persons were seated in diverse groups of seven to eight at tables. A "group leader," selected by those at each table, recorded the individual responses and collated those responses for verbal presentation to the entire group and Bishop Vetter, who was present from Helena via video connection.

Each group leader from each table reported on each question. Bishop Vetter has collated all the responses from each Deanery in the Diocese and has submitted a report to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops who will submit a report to the Vatican. That report from the Diocese has not yet been provided to the Diocese of Helena Deaneries.

THIS REPORT is a collation of the responses from the Missoula gathering prepared by Blessed Trinity Staff. Similar comments have been combined into one statement. This report has not been submitted to the Diocese, since the Diocese of Helena recorded the responses of that gathering and has incorporated them into the Diocesan Report.

QUESTION 1: HOW HAS THE CHURCH ACCOMPANIED YOU WELL?

- The Church has been a place of rootedness, community and welcome, no matter where we've been. The Church is family – our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Sacramental life is basic to faith. Celebration of funerals, sacraments, and participation in the RCIA has connected us to community.
- The Church is a place for spiritual practice and growth.
- The Church has always been a part of our learning and living and our spirituality; it has been consistent in the teaching of Christ.
- The hospitality experienced since Vatican II brought fresh air, participation of the laity and community. All are at the table, not just the priest.
- The church has been a support in raising children, no matter the circumstances.
- The church supported many through divorce.
- The Cursillo movement has been a gift – a transforming lifelong experience.
- The mission of the Church is good and touches the lives of many through community building and social work. We feel proud to be a part of this mission. Mission and spiritual life are connected.
- The presence of Christ is experienced within the Church in many ways.

QUESTION 2: HAVE YOU HAD AN EXPERIENCE WHERE THE CHURCH FAILED TO ACCOMPANY YOU?

- Lack of collaboration in different parishes.
- Issues around marriage: place of marriage, divorce, failure of support in the annulment process, unevenness in marriage preparation (too much time/not enough time).
- Sexual abuse scandal.
- Financial cover-ups.
- Lack of women's involvement and participation.
- Inconsistency among priests re: funerals, marriage, availability for sacraments.
- Division between those who want to "go back" to previous practice and those who have embraced Vatican II. Pastoral councils being cast aside.
- Church is not speaking of the evil in violence.
- Many of the aging feel abandoned, including retired priests.
- Bishops are allowing the influence of large amounts of money from white/evangelical organizations.
- Lack of catechesis or lack of clarity in catechesis. Formation at the diocesan level for lay people has been lost.
- Failures of communication, care for each other, and reconciliation.

QUESTION 3: WHAT CAN YOU SHARE TO HELP THE CHURCH ACCOMPANY YOU BETTER?

- Broaden faith education and formation opportunities.
- Better communication/collaboration in parishes. Strive to find ways to work with other communities around common goals.
- Need to have a presence of those not like us in the church; i.e., ethnicity, disabilities, beliefs.
- Allow women to have decision-making authority in the church.
- Greater ministry to the divorced and remarried.
- Recovery of the mystical traditions of the church at the parish level.
- Address sexism, violence, the environment, racism.
- Continue to work hard to protect children and the vulnerable from abuse.
- Vatican II ideals move us to the future, not to the past.
- Homilies should speak to things that affect our lives today.
- New pastors in parishes and new bishops in dioceses need to go slowly and learn about the culture of their people.
- Do not use the Eucharist as a weapon.



***“Speak with authentic courage and honesty,
in order to integrate freedom, truth and charity.”***

Vandemecum #2.3