



ANTILLES EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE SYNOD SYNTHESIS

CONTENTS

MESSAGE - MOST REVEREND GABRIEL MALZAIRE

- President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference..... 3

INTRODUCTION

- Milestones on the Journey..... 4
- Turning Points on the Journey..... 5
- Spiritual Dimensions of the Journey..... 6

HOW ARE WE JOURNEYING TOGETHER

- Experiences of the Journey..... 7
- Joys of the Journey..... 8
- Difficulties and Obstacles Encountered..... 9
- Wounds Revealed..... 12
- Insights Elicited.....

HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDING US TO MAKE OUR JOURNEY BETTER

- Resounding Voice of the Holy Spirit..... 13
- Invitation of the Holy Spirit..... 14
- Points Confirmed, Prospects for Change, and the Steps
to be Taken? 15
- Consensus..... 16
- Discordant Points of Views..... 17
- New Paths..... 19

CONCLUSION..... 20

APPENDIX..... 22



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Dear People of God,

On the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15, 2022, the Church of the Antilles Episcopal Conference submits to the Synod Secretariat in Rome the fruits of several months of listening to the Holy Spirit and listening to each other to discern the resounding voice of the Holy Spirit for the Church of the Antilles.

This synod synthesis is like a fruit basket. It represents a collection of the joys, difficulties, wounds, anguish, hopes and dreams of the Caribbean Church. As with a fruit basket, there is diversity in the fruits - sizes, shapes, colours, and textures. It is amidst this diversity that the Church discerns the movement of the Holy Spirit.

I take this opportunity to thank the lay men and women, youth, religious, clergy, bishops, and persons on the margin who actively participated in this synodal journey. For those who did not participate for whatever reason, please be assured that the synodal journey has not ended. The journey continues, and there will be other opportunities for ongoing participation as we journey to becoming a more synodal Church.

Therefore, I invite parish communities, religious communities, lay associates, and ministries to prayerfully read and reflect on the Synodal Fruit Basket of the Caribbean Church, and discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us now.

May Mary, the Mother of the Church, continue to journey with us as we discern the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Faithfully Yours,

Most Reverend Gabriel Malzaire
President
Antilles Episcopal Conference



Synod
2021
2023
The 4. Synodal Church
Let's go!

INTRODUCTION

“This synod synthesis is like a fruit basket. It represents a collection of the joys, difficulties, wounds, anguish, hopes and dreams of the Caribbean Church. As with a fruit basket, there is diversity in the fruits - sizes, shapes, colours, and textures. It is amidst this diversity that the Church discerns the movement of the Holy Spirit.”

Milestones Along the Journey



- ✓ Reception of the Initial Synod document and the Vadamecum with its structure and invitation to journey. There was positive energy among our people.
- ✓ The launch of the diocesan process in October, 2021. A sense of moving on the journey.
- ✓ Transition from preparations for a Synod of the Antilles to THE Universal Synod. It was a moment of satisfaction, exhilaration, affirmation, and confirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Our Zoom meetings of diocesan representatives were phenomenal. We were inspired to move forward.
- ✓ The testimony of the diocesan representatives about their experience of the journey. The expressions of enthusiasm for the faith, being articulate and passionate about the faith and commitment to the Church. The confidence of a youth representative in her address to the bishops.
- ✓ A sense of unanimity of purpose among the bishops as they responded to the Holy Father's call and discovered our shared concern for our diocesan churches – we are walking the same road.
- ✓ The revealing of the enthusiasms of our people, especially in the special group experiences and their interest in real solutions.
- ✓ Those 'AHA' moments when we recognized that bishops can give the laity the freedom to express and to be themselves.
- ✓ The face-to-face encounter of the bishops in the diocese of St. John's-Basseterre, Antigua, to prepare the first draft of the synthesis gave flesh to collegiality and synodality with each other in deepening friendships.
- ✓ Moments of truth. The bishops discovered that the theme of social justice had not been a priority in the diocesan syntheses and were able to acknowledge our own deficiency in that regard leading to a deeper openness to our need as bishops for ongoing formation/conversion.
- ✓ The meeting of the bishops with Cardinal Grech was an experience of being listened to by the wider church.



Turning Points Along the Journey



The sitting of the CELAM Assembly took place with representatives hailing from countries within the Caribbean/Latin America region. However, many felt disconnected from the process. It produced minimal results.

The announcement of a universal synod by the Holy See and the subsequent presentation of the preparatory documents by the Vatican, defining the purpose of the synod, brought clarity and greater understanding to the process.



The planning and execution of the Synod Launch in each Archdiocese/Diocese to follow the universal launch by Pope Francis at the Vatican – grappling with the church documents; inculturation – songs, poems et al re Synod.

The selection of the Synod Team and the process that they underwent to examine and understand the importance and enormity of the work to be conducted. Grappling with the texts about synodality.

The implementation and the unfolding of the Synod Team's strategy to engage as many persons in the process as possible. When the process was underway there was a rippling effect with persons either enthusiastic to participate or disinterested.

The bishops felt great anxiety to receive the final Synod reports but were dejected on the first reading of the results. It raised many questions about the impact that the Church was having on its flock and the rightness or wrongness of its current *modus operandi*.

After more careful digestion of diocesan Synod synthesis, there was the realization that the faithful were actually voicing their aspirations for the Church because they had a deep and profound love for the Church and understood that it could be, once again, a channel of joy and peace.

This revelation was underscored, much to the surprise of the bishops at the AEC Synod Synthesis meeting in Antigua, when the opportunity for more thorough dissection of the reports allowed Bishops assigned to the task of finding the *Joys* expressed in the reports, to unearth that the faithful still believed in the message – *the Joy of the Gospel* – and that the Church can change.



In this context, the bishops are challenged to consider the following:

Are bishops and clergy willing to change the way of being Church or maintain the status quo?

Will bishops seize this opportunity to change the way of being Church by actively listening to the voices raised and engaging the faithful in bringing about a more joyful and happy Church?

Having listened to the people, the institutional church now has to make some hard decisions but, is there readiness for that?

Will the AEC deal with the real issues and exercise its choice to represent the voice of the faithful or offer a clinical, sanitized report?

Spiritual Dimensions of the Journey



- ✚ Renewal is both a gift and task to make the parish address the spiritual and communal needs of the faithful and pastors. The Church community must possess the caring values of family life. The domestic church must be restored within the family.
- ✚ Persons who had left the church were instrumental in contextualizing the challenges in the church.
- ✚ There is an expressed desire for a welcoming Church where persons are accepted and loved. Persons must not be made to feel unwelcome, excluded, and affected by social biases. Priests, those serving ministries, and lay leaders, need to be humble and to reflect biblical values.
- ✚ Spirituality must flow from faith and spiritual formation, nourished by celebration of the Eucharist, which involves inclusive preparation and execution, to avoid passive worshippers. Too many homilies are empty and have no context.
- ✚ Liturgy must accomplish encounters with Christ especially Eucharist and reconciliation, and para-liturgies for children.
- ✚ The clergy need better training to reflect the virtues of Jesus. They need to structure and prioritize their ministry, especially to understand their role for effective youth ministry, which must focus on human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation.



- ✚ The ministry of priests must be one of presence with the people to accomplish the injunction: *“My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me.”* Outreach ministries (Works of Charity) need to be an integral part of the Church’s life.
- ✚ The lay faithful’s role and competency in the life of the church, and as agents of evangelization, must be enhanced by improving doctrinal knowledge of church teaching accompanied by spiritual direction.
- ✚ The Church is too silent and must become proactive on public issues.
- ✚ Collaboration between clergy and bishop to reflect diocesan unity; fraternal care among clergy, the newly ordained and foreign priests is lacking. There is a need for effective communication at the Diocesan and parish level.
- ✚ The role in ecumenism needs to be addressed so that the misunderstanding of the sacramental relationship with other Christian communities can be made clearer.
- ✚ Consultation must encourage listening, not monopolies. Therefore, allow the Holy Spirit to inspire our parishes and pastoral mission. The use of technology and equipping persons for participation in mission are important.

HOW ARE WE JOURNEYING TOGETHER?

What experiences of our local church does this question call to mind?



Liturgical celebrations were identified as experiences that brought people together and gave a sense of identity, belonging and hope. They were seen as powerful and positive experiences through which persons felt supported, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Church groups and ministries were also seen as central to the journey. Additionally, spiritual and faith formation, catechesis for children, social events, Catholic devotions, and administration (with a focus on clergy) were other experiences mentioned.



A sense of identity was also experienced in relation to other churches and the wider society. The community spirit, evident in the groups, was seen to be alive. Some found a clearer sense of being church through images of the past - *nostalgia*.



Concerns/Tensions Articulated:

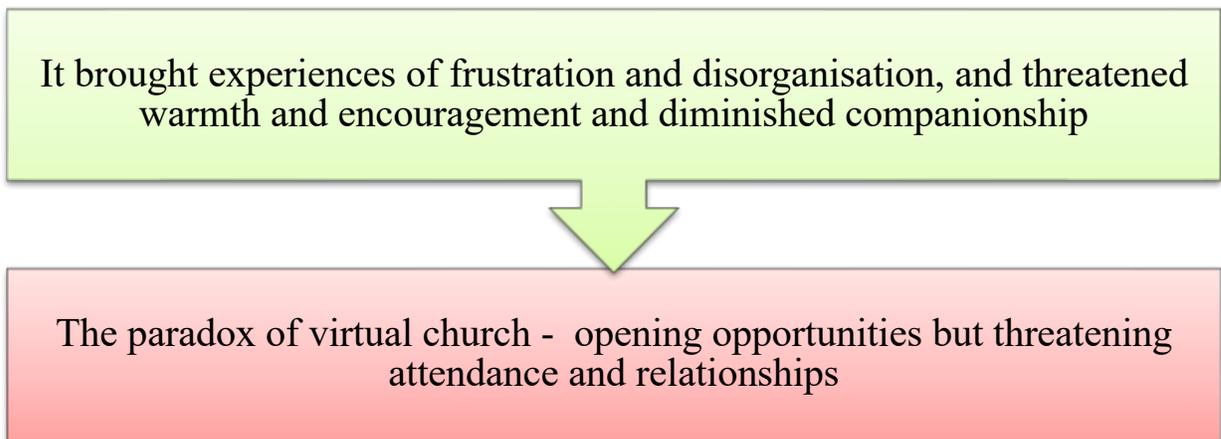
- Everyone is not journeying together due to social, educational (theological), economical and political differences



Synod
2021
2022
For a Synodal Church

- A sense of community and companionship is sought by many but seems to be lacking
- A call for the Church to be more vocal on social and environmental issues
- A hope that the Church would further relations with other churches
- Appearance of a lack of support from some clergy and the need for improved relations between priests, religious, and the laity
- The overall church environment seems unwelcoming, contributing to less engagement, persons being disgruntled and staying away from the church
- Some persons feel that their contributions are not valued
- Insufficient ministry to those in need
- A need to create opportunities to build relationships among people (church)
- Some members tend to be dominant which seems to deter others from participating
- There is a concern for youth, the role of women and the full functioning of the Body of Christ
- There is no concelebrating of the Eucharist with clergy of non-Catholic denominations. This can be a point of tension but also an opportunity to dialogue.

Noteworthy References to the CoronaVirus Pandemic:



There is a concerted effort to journey where the effort is greater than the tensions. Participants were pleased that space was created to listen to the voice of people, especially those who are vulnerable and those on the margins - who often expressed a greater respect and admiration for the Church than active members.

What joys do they bring? 😊

Our Caribbean tradition and cultural history make us unique. Our diocesan and AEC families are part of a bigger family - the universal Church - whose goal is for all of us to work together to become a listening church.



The Church as a family of all the people of God, comes together and is led by the Holy Spirit. We join with people of other faiths in dialogue, worship and beliefs, notwithstanding some limits. We reach out to those on the margins and the vulnerable with compassion, inclusivity, welcome and care. Our youth are a special joy as they help us live the present with hope.



This family of families comprises single people, married couples, priests, religious and consecrated lay persons who are dedicated. It is a special joy when they journey together in unity and mission. Encountering God awakens us to the truth and reality of God's love. Our vibrant Caribbean liturgies are the source of unity and nourishment of our family. The Word of God is our constant companion and place of encounter. Our popular religiosity and holy places are sources of constant renewal.

Our family gathers outside of mass for stewardship, worship, prayer, adoration and fun which creates a sense of community. Our ministries and new movements share the Good News with all people in a tangible manner. Our social media activities are a great source of joy which connects the family, invites and educates all. In addition, Catholic education has been a significant gift in the building of Caribbean civilization.



What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered?



1. **Clericalism** as an autocratic style of leadership stuck in the past: Leaders seem incapable of inspiring the commitment of all. This leadership consists of a monopoly of certain leaders who infantilize others, excludes them from decision-making, eliminates structures of co-responsibility, prevents the hierarchy from protecting the faithful from abuse, stifles participation and initiative, isolates and exhausts priests whose number decreases and prevents ministry, and organization from being rooted in spirituality and common prayer.
2. A **disengagement** of some lay people not cultivating a feeling of belonging to the Church and not understanding their role. This resignation seems to be rooted in a lack of formation in the faith; an absence of ongoing evangelization; and is the result of structures, decreased spirituality and an underdeveloped personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. **Dysfunction** of part of the clergy: the lack of availability for an empathetic listening of the sufferings; the inconsistencies between the message and the way of life; the scandals; the cultural disconnection of the foreign clergy; the inappropriate communication, the hollow



homilies that are long and unrelated to the life of the community or to the Word of God and the silence on social justice.

4. A feeling of **exclusion** of young people, misunderstood in their culture and language
5. An **isolation** of the faithful and the clergy within the community. Social classes and divisions of society are reflected in the church community. The Church lacks activities to nurture the spirit of brotherhood and communion.
6. The **marginalization** of a number of categories: the divorced, men, remarried divorcees, single mothers, non-Catholics married to Catholics, homosexuals.
7. **Incapacity** of families to form domestic churches capable of maintaining the faith and balance of their members, at times due to the absence of fathers.
8. A **negligence** towards the poor, isolated and fragile people resulting from the non-integration of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
9. A **disorganization** linked to Covid-19 has reduced the coherence of the ministry.
10. A **distance** exists between the pastoral agents and the faithful who do not feel invited.
11. An **imbalance** of the ministry caused by the predominance of women who are insufficiently recognized for their leadership. The withdrawal of men who do not find their place and too much clericalization of the established ministries.
12. A **misunderstanding** of Catholic worship causes a loss of sacredness and Eucharistic reverence. Also, liturgical additions that diminish spiritual benefit.
13. **Ignorance** of Church doctrine hinders mission. Having limited catechetical knowledge contributes to Catholics being ill-equipped to evangelize and to announce the Catholic faith as invigorating and transforming good news.

What wounds did they reveal?



Journeying Together with Clergy

- People in the ministry expressed fatigue and burn out even as they work out of the love for God
- Absence of priests as pastors of the people
- Church leaders (priests/deacons) are often silent on matters of social justice and morality which may cause distrust and skepticism about the message and the messenger
- The use of the liturgy by priests and deacons to air their personal grievances and issues
- The non-use of the sacrament of reconciliation and its unavailability



- Division among clergy

Journeying Together as Parish

- Islands in geographically dispersed island states felt removed from the rest of the Church and one another.
- Many social ministries are disconnected from the communities of worshippers.
- Persons feel disrespected and judged when they speak out, and not listened to by others for various reasons. The poor feel voiceless and the marginalized are victims of corruption and selfishness.



- Reconciling differences within the Church community is not easy. Members with strong personalities tend to dominate others who are never heard. This hinders the progress of parish life.

- Class systems within the church, where some are treated with greater respect than others.

- Persons do not experience care, consideration, concern, respect and understanding of each other's needs and therefore do not feel welcome.

- People are afraid because they do not

understand their role and may have contention with members who are already performing some duties.

- There is relationship 'noise' in the Church community among the poor and 'ordinary' people.
- Some youth express their struggle to feel accepted and welcomed by the adults. They experience being discounted, disrespected, and criticized unfairly.
- Some parishioners feel inadequate for parish ministry.
- The church community is not considered a safe community within which to share and be vulnerable.

Journeying Together as Universal Church



- Community involvement is needed and the Church must create opportunities.

- The Church is experienced as rigid (with rules and regulations), uncaring, inconsistent, and authoritarian.



- The Church has covered up some abuses and has not stood up for some victims.
- The child abuse scandal has resulted in a deficit of trust and is a major barrier to the mission of the church. It has injured the Church's reputation.
- There is no perceived safe space within the Church for socially excluded persons e.g., homosexuals, drug addicts and the divorced.

Journeying Together as a Parish and Journeying Together as Clergy

- We have lost the ability to listen with the heart and be non-judgmental.
- Parishioners have felt shut out and powerless to hold anyone accountable.



What INSIGHTS have they elicited?



God's people in the Church of the Antilles urge that the synod remains an ongoing process of listening and promoting a culture of dialogue and participation. This involves a two-fold process of openness to the inklings of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the People of God. In that regard:

- ✚ The Church is called to acknowledge her past mistakes, especially in areas of insensitivity on matters of justice and charity: We are also called to be more objectively open with others and conduct self-evaluation.
- ✚ Clergy are urged to be closer to the people and more present in the difficult moments of their lives. This may be achieved by better formation of the clergy in matters of culture, spirituality, leadership, and greater compassion for the flock.
- ✚ As the primary place of human and spiritual formation, the family should be encouraged to listen to each other, live the faith together and give witness to the wider community.
- ✚ The Church is called to be more involved with the different faces of those considered marginalized as previously stated such as, the:poor, migrants, indigenous people, illiterates, divorcees and drug addicts.
- ✚ The liturgy can be more creative and inculturated presently; homilies can be more inspiring.
- ✚ Evangelisation must be central to the mission of the Church in its varied dimensions: catechesis, evangelism, and apologetics, and to have appropriate training for the faithful to meet those needs.
- ✚ The youth require special attention; the need to feel a sense of belonging and deeper involvement. They feel lost and abandoned by the church. Their lack of interest in Church is



partly due to the lack of adult models. They seek a compelling vision of life to engage their commitment and help them discover and enhance their talents.

- ✚ Internal and external modes of communication, such as the proper use of social media, can become (in part) the hallmark of our Church's life, used for passing on the faith, developing spirituality, and stating moral positions.
- ✚ The necessity for better formation for the laity in spirituality is indispensable for a true encounter with the Lord, for evangelisation, and to protect them from the ravages of secular culture.
- ✚ Greater attention needs to be given to those who have separated themselves from the Church for one reason or another.
- ✚ The recurrent questions of married priests and of women deacons to be considered

HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDING US TO MAKE OUR JOURNEY BETTER?

Where in these EXPERIENCES does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound?

The Holy Spirit is inviting the Caribbean Church to continue the process of spiritual and empathetic listening beyond the preparation for Synod 2023. Listening to the Holy Spirit and to voices on the margins was emphasized throughout the diocesan reports. Spaces and opportunities for listening and sharing are essential on this journey.



A listening Church is a significant cultural shift from a telling church. In a listening Church, each voice and experience matters. The move to truly become a listening church is evidence of the action of the Holy Spirit. Persons who are in pain expect first that they will be listened to; they do not necessarily come seeking a response.

The Spirit is inviting us to listen actively to the voices of the youth and to take steps which demonstrate that their voices matter. We are called to establish a presence of caring, supportive relationships, where youths experience the Gospel concretely.



Synod
2023
2023
The A. Synodal Church

The voice of the Holy Spirit also resounds in calls to prioritize family life in the Church. There is a need to strengthen, support and nourish families.

Listening involves opening the heart without bias and judgment. It shapes the Church into a more loving community

What is the Spirit asking of us?

The Spirit asks us to:

-  Renew our parishes to create a caring, hospitable, and non-judgmental parish family. This renewal involves welcoming, caring for and accompanying those on our margins such as the poor, the elderly, youths, and LGBTQIA+ persons. Caring for each other is a key tenet of lived communion and the key to creating and sustaining community.
-  Be open to personal and communal conversion which flows from encountering Christ.
-  Always listen to the voice of the Spirit in every context. This involves learning about and practicing individual and communal discernment.
-  Prioritize the family and its role as a school of catechesis and evangelization. The parish community supplements what is prayed, learned, and lived in the home.
-  Form missionary disciples (evangelizers) who understand and live the Church's teachings and are open to being led by the Spirit.

WHAT HAVE WE HEARD? (Spontaneous “gut” responses and images)

- ✓ Expressions of interest and love in being church and having a desire to participate
- ✓ Expressions of hope
- ✓ Celebration of positive characteristics
- ✓ Awareness and naming of brokenness, limitations and voids without condemnation, despair or surrender
- ✓ Pertinent areas of correction - priests and laity
- ✓ The desire for something more
- ✓ Image of a volcano: rumbling, not knowing when it may erupt, deep energy present
- ✓ Prompting of the spirit; a call to conversion
- ✓ A body on a ventilator
- ✓ Image of a Caribbean woman giving birth, bawling loudly; there is pain but also hope and joy. The birthing process is one that facilitates and brings forth new life.
- ✓ Feelings of fear, of being overwhelmed as to how change can come about.



- ✓ True love is needed; there are cries for relationship and communication. Love of their priest by the people

What are the points to be CONFIRMED, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken?



Our people are asking that we move to a relationship-oriented pastoral ministry. This means that we are to journey together to learn to love God and each other in a deeper and more profound way. Hospitality is a keyword, understood not just as “meet, greet and seat” but “as a whole-Church experience.” This includes care and assistance for the poor, the emotionally and mentally challenged, the elderly, the sick, migrants, the homosexuals, and people of other vulnerabilities. Our young people have expressed “a desire for the Church to be welcoming to all and a place filled with the joy of the Gospel.” That is a family of families.

We need to know our people by name, and also know their joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties. This would mean being sensitive to generational, cultural and linguistic differences in our communities. We cannot wait for people to come; the church needs to go out to our people and meet them in their homes, social communities and in new spaces - the peripheries (evangelisation). The sick and shut-ins should always feel part of the family. We need to specially call our men to discipleship.

Since our young people experience a high degree of alienation, we need to make a preferential option for the young (comprehensive and updated youth ministry). When combined with hospitality, this option needs to be the orientation of the whole Church.

This aspiration would require a different model of church grounded on the belief in a God who creates, redeems and calls each of us to his/her unique vocation. Formation needs first to prepare all members of this family to answer God’s call

and to accept co-responsibility for the mission to proclaim, govern and sanctify. This requires a comprehensive formation approach—not just the content of faith, but the capacity to relate with active



empathic listening to God and the other. This will demand ongoing and dynamic conversion for all members of the family.

Our bishops and priests have to be intentionally formed to lead this family. Specifically, they need skills to:

PREACH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•reaching the heart, mind and religious imagination of our people, initiating them into the sacred mysteries;
OFFER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•liturgies that lead to full, active and conscious participation;
PROMOTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•justice and peace in our family and inspire the nation to be pro-life, from conception to natural death; and
PREPARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•our people spiritually to enter into the mysteries of God and humanity through meditation on the bible, and daily prayer to connect with the source of their vocation.

All this should lead the whole family to become spiritually intelligent. The tools of social communications will need to be employed to fulfill this mission.

Where do we register a consensus?

The laity warns of the danger of organizing the Church primarily on commercial principles that guide human institutions. The structure and governance of the Church must be infused with spiritual foundations and language. Preeminence must be given to the Eucharist as “the heart of ecclesial communion”, which also provides the principles for living the Christian faith, including conversion and forgiveness. Flowing from the liturgical experience we must form bonds and partnerships to support each other to give Christian witness in professional and socio-political life.

Pastoral Stewardship

The laity welcomes the synodal process with hope. It responds to the need to be listened to, and to participate in the mission of the Church. They expect the clergy to possess pastoral skills and to “know what is happening on the ground”.



The clergy must avoid an "every man for himself" mentality and foster fraternity as an ecclesial way of life (among the clergy, between clergy and lay people, and among lay people). "The common mission of the Church in this world is fundamentally a mission of love", therefore, discrimination must not characterize the Christian community.

There is a demand for co-responsibility, transparency, accountability and updates to keep stakeholders in the loop. Thus the laity desire participation in pastoral planning that

prioritizes the following: **(a) attention to youth, (b) outreach to lapsed Catholics, (c) programmes for young adults, (d) our ministry to the elderly, poor, shut-in, mentally ill, (e) addressing the welfare of church workers, (f) ministry to homosexual people and the circles known as "LGBTQIA+".**

In addition, vocation promotion must be intentional and wide-ranging to include religious life as well as the role of the laity, with attention and clarity given to the role of the males and females in leadership positions. Additionally, the faithful must learn to respect the role of the clergy, the Magisterium and the teachings of the Church.

There is a desire for profound understanding of the liturgy and catechetical formation.

What are the discordant voices of view or voices that are "out of tune" or marginalized?

Guiding the Universal Church

- No salvation outside the Catholic Church
- Ambivalence about the Synodal Process – Is being heard going to make a difference?
- More effort is required to hear (subtract) the voice of inactive members, who in fact comprise the biggest group. These consultations were just active members looking in the mirror.
- Don't change the Mass, change everything else.
- The Church should reconsider its position on in vitro fertilization.



Synod
2021
2023
The 4th Synodal Church

Guiding the Clergy



- If the priest has no enthusiasm, then their parishioners will not feel that their spiritual hunger is satisfied.
 - The Church needs to consider the possibility of married priests.
 - I dream of the church being a place where I can understand what the priest is saying. (12 year old)
 - From the Pope down to the priests in the parish should be baptized in the Holy Spirit
 - A new thinking that allows for differences is necessary. A type of radical, intolerable love that jolts

the psyche of the nation and the world. Leaders willing to get their cassock dirty with human stories splattered all over it.

- Leaders, do your self-work. Get it together quickly.

Guiding the Parishes

- A need for the faithful to participate in the administrative decisions of the diocese, especially the length of the rotation period of priests
- If youths harness a love of God, they will understand what they are doing in the Church and not do it because they have to do it.
- Are members leaving the Church because other denominations are providing the pastoral care and mission that the Catholic Church is called to provide? This is a false notion, but people are no longer finding the Eucharist a reason to stay in the Catholic Church.
- Infant Baptism does not allow young children to journey towards making a truly life-changing decision.
- There must be an inculturation of images in our churches. They should reflect the ethnicity of the people of that place. If the creation story started in North Africa, why are there not black images in the church?
- Need for leadership formation of the youth
- Need to encourage and nurture men's groups



Guiding the Diocese

- Catechists need sound training in liturgy, sacraments, and the Church's teachings.
- Organize whole family retreats
- Stronger finance administration and transparency in both parish and diocese
- Improved communications in parish and diocese
- Need to establish a Diocesan hotline
- Vocation Prayer and Promotion
- Ecumenical Prayer Service and Works of Mercy.



Image of Church at Present

Image – a body that is healthy in many parts but on a ventilator because it is not breathing freely. It needs an input of oxygen. It depends on something artificial to breathe..

What paths are opening up for our local Church?

In addressing this question, we found great similarities regarding the insights elicited. However, here are some additional points raised:

- It requires the existing structures of the Church, such as Parish Pastoral Councils, Presbyteral Council, and regional organisations to move forward in the spirit of the synodal process - that of listening and collaboration; of critical self-evaluation, accountability and seeking creative ways of journeying together, thereby excluding no one.
- Special mention must be made of the Catholic School as a referential place for evangelization.
- Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue stand as a privileged channel to listen together to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.



CONCLUSION

*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.
Psalm 127:1*

The Holy Spirit is inviting us to renew our Caribbean Church to create a caring, hospitable, and non-judgmental family where everyone (laity, bishops, priests, religious) is accepted and respected. This renewal involves welcoming, caring for and accompanying those on our margins. Throughout the synodal process, the Holy Spirit has invited us to pay keen attention to the People of God on the margins. Those on the margins include lapsed Catholics, our youth, LGBTQIA+ persons, the elderly, the poor, women, ethnic minorities, refugees and those we have wounded.



As a Church, we have to develop effective ministries to reach these individuals/groups and to keep the dialogue open with them. We are called to be attentive to their reality. Quoting Elie Wiesel, Pope Francis recently reminded us in his address to indigenous peoples in Canada that the “**opposite of love is not hatred, it’s indifference ... and the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.**” The Holy Spirit is inviting the Caribbean Church to greater attentiveness and love for those on the margins of the Church and society.

These are some of the areas in which greater discernment and engagement are called for:

1. **There is a need to reflect on the social question.** Very little was heard across the board on the issues of labour, care for the environment, migrants, gender issues, women’s rights, the protection of children and the sexually abused.
2. **Climate change is one of the major existential issues of our times.** The Holy Father has written about this so it should take some prominence in synodal discussions as regards its interaction with the post-modern society.
3. **Greater importance needs to be given to Integral Human Development,** that is, the balance of the physical, spiritual, socio-economic and environmental well-being of humanity.
4. **Laudato Si’ § 146 spoke of indigenous peoples as our primary dialogue partners.** Further emphasis needs to be placed there. In that regard, the Church must have greater concerns for the Guianas and other nations with indigenous people.



5. **More attention needs to be paid on maintaining a democratic and just exercise of the law.** The law is sometimes prejudiced against certain groups of people. The general exercise of human rights needs to be looked at.
6. **The effect of the digital world** on the evangelical mission of the church needs further discernment.
7. **Inter-religious dialogue**, especially in regions such as Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname and Guyana need to be more prominent.
8. **The church has always promoted and safeguarded art and culture.** We need to explore in our region how these can help enhance our spirituality. Sometimes art speaks louder than the written or spoken word.
9. **Many of our modern liturgical music have very little content and theological depth.** There is a need to reflect more deeply on how our writers and poets can help our imagination of a greater future.
10. **Our pastoral accompaniment of young people** should be holistic as we help them to discern God's will for their lives and their personal vocations.

The Holy Spirit is constantly speaking to us. The most important step for us as a Church currently is to make time to listen to the Holy Spirit. Communal discernment is the path to journeying with the Lord.

Lead us Holy Spirit into the depths of eternal life so that we may not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen



APPENDIX A

The Caribbean - A brief Background

The Antilles Episcopal Conference consists of dioceses from the English, French (Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana), and Dutch speaking countries of the Caribbean include Bermuda in the Atlantic Ocean. These territories consist of islands and countries and sovereign states and overseas territories of European countries – the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands.

The Caribbean region has historically been described as the “Caribbean basin” and the “West Indies”. In general, historians have used the term West Indies, to identify the group of countries that are bounded by the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic. Boswell (2003) considers the Caribbean to be: ‘a set of three concentric zones of Caribbean identity, the innermost zone is the core and includes the islands that everyone considers to be the Caribbean. The middle zone is the fringe which includes islands, such as the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos, as well as the islands located off the Caribbean coast of Central America. Belize, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana are considered part of this fringe. The outermost zone constitutes the periphery and covers southern Mexico and Venezuela in South America.

The boundary nations of the Caribbean Sea are Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, United States, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago , Venezuela and the overseas territories of France (Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana), the Netherlands (Aruba, Curacao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Maarten), and the United Kingdom (Montserrat, British Virgin Islands).

Caribbean Identity. As a result of slavery and other historical associated antecedents, the Caribbean today comprises a variety of ‘races’ and ethnic identities, cultures and ideologies which have influenced the broad social formation system of the region. The social system of the Caribbean is characterized by a rich, compelling mix of numerous linguistic traditions: English, French, Dutch, and Creole-speaking communities. Norman Girvan points out that it used to be fashionable to speak of the existence of something called a “Caribbean identity” (Girvan 2001 cited in UWI, 2004). However, Girvan asserts that it is more acceptable to perceive the socio-cultural realities of the region as the co-existence of many cultural identities. Caribbean people are the people born in, or inhabitants of, the Caribbean region or people of Caribbean descent living outside the Caribbean. The Caribbean region was initially populated by Amerindians from several different Kalinago and Taino groups. These groups were decimated by a combination of enslavement and disease brought by European colonizers. Descendants of the Taino and Kalinago tribes exist today in the Caribbean and elsewhere but are usually of partial Amerindian ancestry.

Modern Caribbean people usually further identify by their own specific ethnic ancestry, therefore constituting various subgroups, of which are: Afro Caribbean (largely descendants of bonded African slaves) White Caribbean (largely descendants of European colonizers and some indentured workers) and Indo-Caribbean (largely descendants of jahadi indentured workers (UWI, 2004).



connections. With its typically sunny climate and recreational resources, the Caribbean has become one of the world's principal [winter vacation](#) resort areas.

According to the Caribbean Development Bank Report (2021), throughout 2021, the Caribbean continued to contend with the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic including severe pressure on health and education systems, steep declines in production, significant loss of life and livelihoods, increased social inequity, and worsened conditions for vulnerable groups. In the two years since its onset, the pandemic has taken 6,000 lives, triggered a 7.6% contraction in economic activity and intensified the significant socio-economic challenges already facing the Region. Despite the unfavourable environment, BMC economies grew by an average of 3.1% in 2021. This growth was spurred by the implementation of unprecedented fiscal stimulus programmes, the roll out of vaccines, and the phased roll back of border controls and internal lockdown measures. Correspondingly, due to GDP growth, the average debt-to-GDP declined to 80.5% compared with 82.5% the prior year. The total value of CDB projects approved in 2021 was \$122.6 million (mn), which represented \$71.2 mn in loans and \$51.4 mn in grants. Disbursements totalled \$256.6 mn with \$185 mn in loans and \$71.6 mn in grants. For the second consecutive year, the Bank supported its BMCs' pandemic responses and mobilized more than \$80 mn to meet COVID-19 specific needs.

Today, while recovery has commenced in both commodity and service-producing economies, growth in the Region remains subpar. The deleterious effects of COVID-19 have combined with pre-existing structural weakness to stymie the Region's already sluggish progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Surmounting these adversities demands a multifaceted response to complete the rescue of CDB's BMCs from the immediate effects of the pandemic, while accelerating their economic recovery and repositioning for future growth and prosperity (ibid).

Another major thrust which commenced in 2021 is the elevation of knowledge acquisition to promote a shift to evidence-based decision-making, a key driver for sustainable development. CDB is advocating for the amalgamation of digital, searchable, and interactive knowledge facilities for greater access to information on key aspects of the Caribbean economy, environment, and society. Improved access to refined data and enhanced analytics will facilitate the use of reliable, high-quality knowledge solutions to ensure the Region's development efforts and achieve intended outcomes (ibid).

APPENDIX B

Videos, Stories, Artistic Expressions, Images

Archdiocese of Castries, St. Lucia

- Synodality in the Antilles Episcopal Conference - <https://youtu.be/WTJXqIJVPOY>
- Synodality Assembly - <https://fb.watch/eR15RkMEO6/>
- The Journey begins by Archbishop Emeritus Robert Rivas - <https://fb.watch/eR17RqwtmG/>
- Message from Archbishop Emeritus Robert Rivas - <https://fb.watch/eR1aoSaOkS/>
- For a Synodal Church - <https://fb.watch/eR1d6B6R8N/>
- Synodality Prayer - <https://fb.watch/eR1f3BTBCC/>

Archdiocese of Nassau, Bahamas

- Prayer - <https://youtu.be/rInZVqLjIBk>
- The Church is Convoked in Synod - <https://fb.watch/eR1mMd9yFm/>



- Message from Archbishop Patrick Pinder - <https://fb.watch/eR1qCwxvtG/>
- Opening Mass in the Archdiocese for the Synod - <https://fb.watch/eR1sfwVyW8/>
- Synod on Synodality - <https://fb.watch/eR1u5i2YWc/>
- The Synodal Process - <https://fb.watch/eR1wB97Xql/>
- It's Synod Time! - https://fb.watch/eR1yZ_EAD/

Archdiocese of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

- Synod Promotional Videos - <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJDuFhHdCIC4MX5d0q3cdkvq8HF0KtFHq>



- Front page of local Catholic newspaper

- Audio/Visual testimonies from Youth, Clergy and Religious

Young Male:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or4qPKjAV6U&list=PLJDuFhHdCIC4MX5d0q3cdkvq8HF0KtFHq>

Young Female:

<https://www.facebook.com/catholictt/videos/1122091621959297>

Priest:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gF9aR8iBYSs&list=PLJDuFhHdCIC4MX5d0q3cdkvq8HF0KtFHq&index=4>

Religious Sister/Nun:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NFhnGvHdIY&list=PLJDuFhHdCIC4MX5d0q3cdkvq8HF0KtFHq&index=3>



Archdiocese of Kingston, Jamaica

- Short courses offered by the St. Michael's Theological College on Synodality
-



St. Michael's Theological College
6 WEEK SHORT COURSE
October 20th - November 30th, 2021
Every Tuesday
6:00 - 8:00 PM - JA Time
(7:00 - 9:00 PM - EC Time)

The Spirituality Of Synodality
FR. DONALD CHAMBERS
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ANTILLES BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

This course is a useful follow-on to Bishop Clyde Harvey's presentation on "Synodality in the Catholic Church: On The Road Together"

All Classes via Zoom
Registration and Payment Info at www.stmtc.edu.jm/short-courses

**\$4,000 JMD
OR
\$30 USD
PER PERSON**

ST. MICHAEL'S THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, COLLEGE AVENUE, KINGSTON 15, JAMAICA



St. Michael's Theological College
6 WEEK SHORT COURSE
September 14th - October 19th, 2021
Every Tuesday
6:00 - 8:00 PM - JA Time
(7:00 - 9:00 PM - EC Time)

**On The Road Together:
Synodality in the Catholic Church**
BISHOP CLYDE HARVEY
BISHOP OF ST. GEORGE'S-IN-GRENADA

*Pope Francis will launch the global synodal process with a Pastoral High Mass in the Vatican on Sunday, October 10th, 2021.
Under the guidance of the local bishops, each diocese in the world will open their local synodal process with the same intention on the following Sunday October 17th.
St. Michael's Theological College will be offering a course taught by Bishop Clyde Harvey, Coptic of the Antilles Bishops Conference on Synodality, which will be useful in preparing our respective dioceses for the synodal process.*

All Classes via Zoom
Registration and Payment Info at www.stmtc.edu.jm/short-courses

**\$4,000 JMD
OR
\$30 USD
PER PERSON**

ST. MICHAEL'S THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, COLLEGE AVENUE, KINGSTON 15, JAMAICA

Diocese of St. George's - in - Grenada

- Diocesan Theme Song - <https://youtu.be/bevo4a73DRU>
- Prayer - https://youtu.be/N9QunVu_Wh8
- Presentation by Bishop Clyde Harvey - <https://youtu.be/KMDmgcpvkvg>
- Homily by Bishop Clyde Harvey - <https://youtu.be/XBS056loav0>

Diocese of Paramaribo, Suriname

- Diocesan Theme Song - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPPN_QjoDU0

Diocese of Bridgetown, Barbados

- Message by Bishop Neil Scantlebury - <https://youtu.be/Ho-MIBb09i8>
- Bishop Neil Scantlebury Synod Message on Listening - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLhJLldtzM>



Diocese of Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

- Opening Mass for the Synod - <https://fb.watch/eR6tQvZ3KQ/>
- Social media graphic



Diocese of Belmopan-Belize City, Belize

- Painting unveiled at the Launch of the Synod



- Flyers for several Synod Masses held



MISA PARA REFUGIADOS E INMIGRANTES
 La misa se celebrará en la Iglesia Católica en Las Flores en acción de gracias y solidaridad por todos los refugiados.

NOVIEMBRE 20, 2021 7:00 PM
 Los refugiados aportan increíbles fortalezas, conocimientos, solidaridad, resiliencia y cultura a su nuevo país de residencia.



MASS FOR UNBORN AND EXPECTING MOTHERS
 The Catholic Church is inviting you to a Holy Mass of the Holy Redeemer Cathedral

DECEMBER 28, 2021 5:30 PM
 The Mass is being celebrated in thanksgiving for the wonderful gift God has shared with all mothers to participate in the creation of new life.



On the feast day of Saint Sebastian
MASS FOR ATHLETES
 The Catholic Church is inviting you to a Holy Mass at the Holy Redeemer Cathedral

JANUARY 20, 2022 5:30 PM
 The Mass is being celebrated in thanksgiving for the wonderful gift of athletics and sports. It is a gift that allows us, as image bearers, to reflect the glory of God.



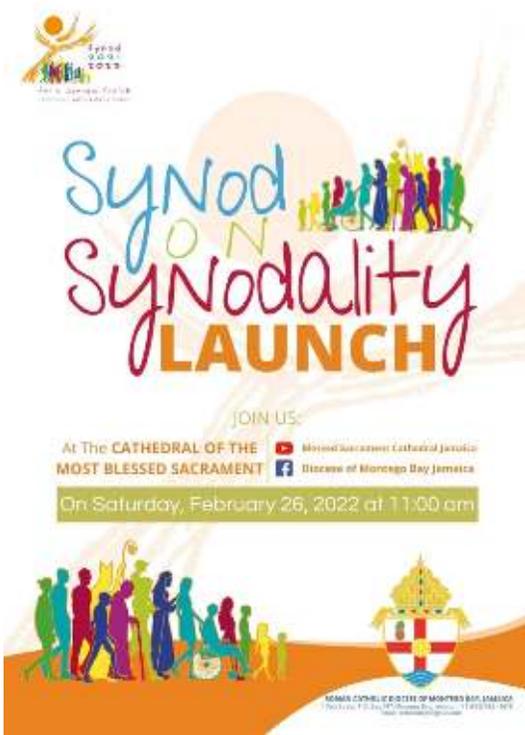
Banner in Belize City



Synod Mass for Expectant Mothers

- A Call to Journey - Video presentation - <https://youtu.be/aDJmidsZ5UkE>
- Launch of the Synod in the Diocese - <https://youtu.be/TP9r391ZzT4>
- Synod Theme Song: "Call to You" by Jackie Castillo and Sr. Mary Rachel - <https://fb.watch/eR52NTI61B/>

Diocese of Montego Bay, Jamaica



Diocese of Mandeville, Jamaica

- Music - Journeying Together in Christ - <https://youtu.be/-k1FgkvHgXo>



Diocese of St. John's - Basseterre, Antigua

- The Baton

“The cross, the principal symbol of our Christian faith, is now being passed on by our bishop to 15 members of our parish community, who themselves symbolically represent all the faithful of our Diocese. This group also reflects the image of 15 persons on the Synodal logo as it consists of persons of different ages, gender, social and cultural backgrounds. The first person to receive the baton from our bishop is a young child. He represents for us the disposition of simplicity, openness and trust which is required of each one of us as we begin this Synodal process. This action of passing on the baton to a young child also symbolizes beautifully what Pope Francis has been stressing these past weeks, no one is to be excluded from this process, and those who are normally not listened to, or not normally included



are to be given a voice.

This cross baton can serve to remind us that Christ is in our midst as we begin this journey together. As the baton continues to be passed from person to person, around the perimeter of the Cathedral, we are reminded of the journey it will make in the coming weeks and months as it is passed from parish to parish, from island to island until it is received in every parish in our diocese.”



- Listening Sessions in the Diocese of St. John's Basseterre, Antigua and Barbuda



Diocese of Willemstad, Curacao

- Message from Bishop Luigi Secco - <https://fb.watch/9BLXjMLSK0/>
- Synod song - <https://youtu.be/nTYmGS6Zllo>

Diocese of Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe

- Launch of the Synod on Synodality - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fu-rLoldW48>

Diocese of Cayenne, French Guiana

- Launch of the Synod on Synodality - <https://youtu.be/-PDEgOdNuOk>
- Article entitled “The synodal team of Saint Laurent du Maroni at work” - <https://www.guyane.catholique.fr/doyenne/actualites/300190-lequipe-synodale-de-saint-laurent-du-maroni-en-travail/>
- Article entitled “Synodal meeting in Saint Laurent du Maroni: Sables Blancs” - <https://www.guyane.catholique.fr/doyenne/actualites/300548-rencontre-synodale-a-saint-laurent-du-maroni-sables-blancs/>



Diocese of Roseau, Dominica

- Launch of Synod - Each Synod Rep was given a lit Synod candle





- Closing of the Synod on Synodality in the Diocese

Diocese of Georgetown, Guyana

- Listening session in Kamwatta: Moruca Mission - Indigenous Peoples



- Synod Activity in St. Ignatius: Indigenous Peoples



Antilles Episcopal Conference Secretariat Synod Resources

- Synod Articles and Stations of the Cross - <https://aecbishops.org/on-the-road-to-synodality/>
- Synod Retreat Powerpoint Presentations - <https://belovedreflections.org/synodality/>
- Synod Lenten Retreat with Presentations - <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1oKnFge4BJq-7SG9BUjIWwgY3WC4y-jB>
- FaceBook Live: Participants in the synod - <https://youtu.be/xZ15BgcUQes>
- FaceBook Live: Bishops' Reflection on the drafting process - <https://youtu.be/elulwuGagDw>
- Launch of the Synod on Synodality by the AEC - <https://youtu.be/xV1Niv0tFa8>
- Synod on Synodality Introduction Presentation - <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1DiVPVNiwhGR7VsNhGY4jS25UC8WJPUYi/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101778617603213180484&rtpof=true&sd=true>
- Drafting Process Powerpoint - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zV8d2OvtlxzuNIQTaoVt8ph0gDwW1zBM/view?usp=sharing>
- Audio blog by Fr. Donald Chambers - Listen - Build Bridges - https://youtu.be/4_s8HPp1138
- Synod 101 Info sheet in English and French. This document was also completed in Spanish and Dutch.



APPENDIX C

Quotes of the People of God

Diocese of Belize City-Belmopan, Belize

“The highlight for me was the gathering of the Religious for prayer and a meal on Feb. 2. This was the Synod listening session that meant the most to me because I was meeting a bunch of these people for the first time. This showed a great success of the theme of Journeying Together, because how am I supposed to journey together with the other religious in my Diocese if I don't know them and we never exchange ideas? But this happened there, and I hope we can continue with communication and collaboration in the future.” – Missionary Consecrated Religious Women

“I think the 5k Run for Unity for Christ and the Synod Mass for the Unborn and Pregnant Mothers on Holy Innocents was a highlight of the synod journey.” – A Mother

“The priest gathering day was amazing. It was very fruitful. I was in the youth group and there were many good ideas shared. I realized that I really need to make time to get together with the other priests. I get so busy and never get to visit.” – Newly Ordained Diocesan Priest

“I called several catechists in remote villages in PG and they poured out their hearts for their lack of resources and deep hunger to learn the Catholic faith.” – A volunteer for the Synod Team

“For me a big highlight was listening in on some of the synodal conversations at SJC among students and faculty. It was inspiring to hear their real desires and hunger for a faith that speaks to them and nourishes them. It was challenging, in a good way, to hear some of their hopes for and critiques of our local church.” – School Chaplain

“I felt that some conversations stayed a bit at the superficial level. Discernment requires a lot of time, a lot of prayer, and a lot of listening. Some of the one-off conversations, even among us clergy, seemed too rushed and perhaps not going as deep as I would like.” – Priest

“During the discernment day with a new team, sitting with the responses of the People of God from the encounter sessions and reading them one by one during Adoration. It was like listening to the cries of the people.” – Member of the Diocesan Synod Team.

“The responsibility of sharing the word of God gave me great pleasure and filled me with content to continue serving him daily. My attitude has improved through these past months, simply because of reflecting and internalizing His words and applying his ways in situations brought forth to me.

*To God be the Glory! as we continue journeying together. Amen.” – Catholic Primary School Teacher

What wounds did they reveal?

“Confession has been shoved aside”.

What is the Spirit asking of us?

“I need to be with my people, I must remember the words of Jesus. ‘My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me’.” – Priest

“The diocese should set up a Diocesan Pastoral Plan which focuses on developing all aspects of the human person. Subsequently, an integral formation for the youths is vital, and after forming them in the faith they can engage in the mission of the Church”. – A Priest



“Evangelization can be done through perpetual adoration by inviting others to participate in adoration where Christ will speak to their hearts”.

“We need to go out and reach out to those who have left the Church or who do not come to mass. The shepherd went to look for the lost sheep”.

What paths are opening up for our local Church?

“It was truly beautiful to see the breadth and diversity of our local church, especially as lighted at some of the synodal gatherings like the gathering of consecrated religious. Our local church is a beautiful mix of traditions and talents, and I felt inspired to find ways of tapping into that more.” – Jesuit Priest

“Experiencing and identifying the space in hearts for more of God. There is a hunger that brings hope that, with authentic and meaningful opportunities, Catholics are ready to respond to being part of a renewal.” – Catholic School Manager

Diocese of Bridgetown, Barbados

"In a time when we all face so many challenges, the Church has seemed stagnant and, through lack of in-depth engagement, gives the impression of being unable to guide and comfort those in turmoil. So they leave, or find other avenues for the spiritual fulfillment they may seek."

“I think the Church has been singularly unable to engage with young people in a fundamentally transformative way. It feels like guidance has been left largely to parents, but we have been given very few resources with which to educate and prepare ourselves.”

“There is a perception that individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ are not welcome in the Church. “Unfortunately, some Priests have made them feel unwelcome by how we preach, how we have ministered to people or laughed at them, it is really a sad thing and we need to apologize, reconcile and bring peace.”

“Unvaccinated individuals are currently being excluded, rejected and bullied, some way or another, directly or indirectly from Catholic activities, like prayer groups, ministries and Mass service. It is hypocritical that this is “currently” happening at the same time that the Church “attempts to open” the Church to all.”

“Why do we celebrate Christmas, why was Jesus on the cross,”

The LGBTQ+ Community: “We should have broad programs if we are our brother’s keeper, to help all of these persons.”

“That there is no recognizable voice, space or ministries for anyone in these categories, the gays and the divorced. Socially excluded persons have more difficulty being heard. We don’t cater to, encourage nor uplift these persons, they are treated as outcasts.”

“Whatever space might be there, such space is being blocked by prejudices of every kind.”

“In addition, those on the margins or in the minority tend to have been suppressed to the point of being silenced for so long that they feel they have no voice.”



“In Barbados, I do not see the Church in the vanguard of outreach to the poor or the marginalized. There is not a sense of the Church having open arms and of being welcoming to all. The impression is more of aloofness. I think this stems from a lack of proper communication to the wider community about anything the Church is doing in these spheres. I think that someone on the margins of society will never think about coming to the Catholic Church because they may not be aware that it could be a place of refuge and support for them.”

“Interestingly enough, there are ‘spaces’ for voices but they are not many safe spaces where voices are actually listened to and measures taken to cater to those voices.”

“We need to let young people and minorities know we are listening to them and by implementing some of their suggestions /recommendations, even if they have to be tweaked, we can demonstrate that their voices matter.”

“The laity have grown up with the understanding that they cannot contribute to the pastoral policy of the Parish. Some Clergy over the years have supported this. A radical conversion on the part of Priest and laity is required. Catechism on this is vital. A firm grounding in and understanding of Christian and Catholic doctrine would perhaps give confidence that individuals may need to speak out.”

“Some of the Priests are very thin-skinned and think that any comment about how we can do better is a direct personal attack. But our Priests need feedback too. They are not perfect and a very sensitive or arrogant Priest can spoil it for everyone. You can be ostracized by the Church if you have an opinion that’s opposite to Church teaching. You can be ostracized by society if you have an opinion that is outside the popular norm. If we can ever get to a stage where persons can share differing points of views and have healthy debate around emotional topics then this will encourage persons to be more candid.”

“Despite attending Mass for most of our lives, many Catholics don’t understand very much about the Liturgy. Many of us follow it like parrots. If we are to participate more actively, the Liturgy needs to come to life for us and for this to happen we need help to understand it a bit more. Priests are in the ideal position to do this.”

“Firstly, knowing that there is a mission and that they are called to it. If the Church can promote mission, and bring it to the forefront of the faithful, to educate, to enlighten, to bring to a sense of willingness to go on mission, maybe then the faithful would come to have an understanding as to why they are called to be part of a Church on mission and then begin to fulfill that role.”

“Personally - Church has become a chore, like school. “You just don’t feel welcome. You go into a Church and my hair is this colour and I had a Nun that came to me “How dare you come into the Church looking like this?” And I am like, “Well, I am at Church. I go to Church every Sunday. I play in the choir, I sing in the choir, I read sometimes at Church and yet they are here judging me. I try to be as committed to the Church as possible, as a young person I make mistakes as everyone else but I was trying to make a commitment to Church and I walk into Church and I could just feel people judging me. They say , “ You need to dress better than that, you need to look better than that.” The lack of open arms and open mind and heart that they claim to have is what keeps me away. If you are a woman and man of God - why do I feel the most judgment from you? Because we are coming,



“Increase representation in decision-making policies conjointly within the Church should be done responsibly. Every member should have a voice.”

“This questionnaire is a decent start. Giving people a voice is important. Realistically, persons cannot share their views or needs during Mass. Therefore, spaces must be created for persons to make their contributions. People can be invited to send suggestions via email, or drop them into a box. Parishioners can be encouraged to attend general meetings where issues can be raised.” “Perhaps annual, national “mini” synods can be held so that the voices of the people can be heard more frequently.” By sharing answers to the consultation questions.

“First, prove the Church is a safe space, stop shunning people because of their status and sexuality and stop putting people on a pedestal because of their race or wealth.”

“We need to focus on men’s spirituality and contemplative prayer.”

Diocese of Cayenne, French Guiana

Let us ask the “Holy Spirit to help us undergo a profound conversion and for a new momentum to proclaim the Gospel” (Denis Moutel, Bishop of Saint Briec et Tréguier)

“Accepting the other in my life can be uncomfortable but it is a way to become more human. The other takes me out of myself, it opens me to relationship and God is relationship”

“God loves you regardless of your sins and he can help you”

Diocese of Georgetown, Guyana

“The synod on Synodality, is about Jesus and so there is a need for us to examine our journey and our ability to listen as a church. It has brought some people together. The mere fact that it was extended to the laity made people feel special, that finally a space was made for their voices to be heard.”

One parishioner described their parish as a “home away from home”, with the intermingling of parents, grandparents, children, and grandchildren.

There is a need for shepherds “with the smell of the sheep.”

“We need our priests to be more active, not just come and do Mass but to spread the teachings, traditions, and practices of the Catholic faith and to incorporate the history of the Catholic faith within their homilies.”

Diocese of Hamilton, Bermuda

“Not all marriages seem to be “joined by God” even if they took place in a church”.

Archdiocese of Kingston, Jamaica



“Listening to each other in a non-judgemental way in light of Scripture and being open to the Holy Spirit’.

“By the conclusion of the meeting everyone had had something to say, even those who came with the expressed intention of not saying anything. There was a real sense of achievement, almost excitement that we had actually worked together and shared our deep-seated concerns at a number of levels and matters. There was a feeling that we were listening to the Holy Spirit in the person of our fellow parishioners”.

“Where there is communion with the Lord and communion with the community there is participation and signs of mission.”

“A successful parish isn’t just the numbers – it is a vibrant Christ-centred, love-filled, supportive community of fellow-travellers reaching out to others, whatever their story and affirming and celebrating their calling as God’s daughters and sons.”

“The parish experience lacked this vibrancy, it ‘can be unfriendly and unwelcoming for new people, with the perception that established groups did not welcome new members... Mass in the parish lacks joy’. ‘The parish does not really act as one, only very few people participate in the life of the church.”

“There is a sense that the priest is the determining factor in a parish ‘the key as to whether the parish will thrive.”

“Need to work with parishioners and collaborate, avoiding appearing as dictators who see no need to explain their decisions or to seek advice.”

“We need good leadership to foster a sense of unity.’ ‘The ethos from the Parish Priest instils reverence in church, but also encourages community spirit.’

“Some baptised Catholics feel disconnected. They want to belong to Christ and the Church but find it difficult, see the Church even as a barrier.’ ‘People lose connection with Jesus by losing connection with the Church. We have to help people to reconnect and re-trust the Church.”

For many the pandemic has been ‘substantial and traumatic’: ‘we are able to slowly share the pain of what these two years gave us. Since returning, we realise that there are many who have not returned.”

“The pandemic has stripped spiritual practices and opportunities for growth both communally and personally. Parishioners are feeling detached. We need to find ways to support one another to feel confident and once again feel we all belong to the parish.”

“Women in our parish are well represented in the variety of ministries for which they are currently eligible. However, there is great enthusiasm that women are an underused resource and this issue must be a high priority for change in the future.”

“The role of women in the church was raised – many women make up our congregations and yet their role is still restricted within the Church.”



“Women are the ‘other’ in the church; many feel alienated and therefore this is a matter of concern. Women are called by the Holy Spirit to a variety of ministries but this call is not fulfilled in the institutional Church.”

“There is confusion over what is allowed for divorcees or those who are re-married in terms of how much they can participate.”

“Eucharist treated as reward of the righteous and denied to those who are sinners and need it most.”

“As lay people, we cannot ‘lie back’ in the belief that it is for our parish priest to ‘do everything.’”

“We see the fastest change in faith (underlying religiosity) and worship (participation at Mass) in our schools. Moving from “engaged” to “indifference” promoted by peer groups and lack of discussion or answers to fundamental issues relating to wellbeing and sexuality, and lack of role models.”

“It appears that the Parish Priests have autonomy in their own parishes, and run them according to their own precepts. It means that many people ‘shop’ around for the parish that suits their views and attitudes. Thus, there is not really a sense of a shared mission.”

“In the parish there are two structures which have a synodal character,’ reminded one submission, ‘the parish pastoral council and the financial council.”

“the PPC [Parish Pastoral Council] is a mystery”

“If we build community the mission will be easier for people to contribute to effectively. ...Some leadership on this is needed.”

“Many feel that they are seen as parts of a devoted but passive congregation. They would really like to be involved in the mission of the Church, but do not always feel welcomed, valued or encouraged to do so.”

“We can't promote our message if our understanding is poor. This suggests that Catholics must do more than simply witness by their lives; they must actively preach. The use of words only when ‘necessary’, a form of gentle witness could be used as an ‘excuse to avoid the divine commission to the Church.”

“If catechesis, adult formation and liturgy is delivered with love and care and competently, then this will aid parishioners as missionary disciples. It does help to understand the faith and apply it in our daily life. My priest encouraged me to read the Bible on a daily basis and has given me confidence to share the word of God with others outside the parish.”

“A strong theme was the sense that everyone feels the lack of the sense of community and mission, but no one knows how to fix it and are nervous about trying things.”

Diocese of Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines



“People who are already in the ministry have expressed fatigue and burnout as they continue to work out of love for God. The Lord, without a doubt, is calling this Diocese to a time of renewal and celebration.”

“Here was much excitement from all the commission leaders. However, some concern about "synod wariness" was raised due to a previous synod.”

“There was general agreement that talking about Jesus to others is unsettling. People mentioned the need for formation. However, some people have pointed out that it does not take much to get started. One can begin by simply discussing their own experience. People prefer to go out in groups and would like to have more Holy Spirit encounters.”

Diocese of Mandeville, Jamaica

Quotes of persons who are ‘further apart’ are:

“Those who don’t believe in God.”

“Greedy and ‘**badmind people**’, [persons with unkind intentions] disrespectful people, those who carry a grudge.”

“Those who have intentions to do evil and hurt others, physically and by badmouth do harm.”

“Persons who are victimized, those who boast they have money to fool people who don’t have.”

“Some people who attend church with you see you and pretend they don’t know you.

Those who don’t have money. ‘If you don’t have wealth and [are] jobless, ²“**dog eat you supper**”’ (Jamaican slang: meaning “too bad for you.”)

“The mentally ill can’t tell you what is wrong and you can’t know so you can’t hear anything from them.”

Some persons find it difficult to speak to the priest.

“You have people who just don’t listen and some of them are also not listened to, nobody not willing to listen to nobody because once they talk, they want you to listen but they are not willing to hear your story.”

“You know sometimes I don’t want to hear from nobody because they can’t help and only get you frustrated. And start put fi them burden on you.”

“Some people think others are idiots and don’t listen. People tend to not listen to people who don’t share their views.”

“Others will not listen when they fear being bullied, or if they believe that the persons speaking have been ‘bad mouthing’ them, gossiping and say unkind things. Some people two-faced. It is hard to listen to them. It is hard to relate to people because of fear of further outcome of evil.”



“When I don’t want to hear anything from the other person, I will not pay attention and I will not listen.”

“Physical pain: when some pain hit you, you only think of your own pain. You don’t business with anybody else. Anger, tension and stress prevent you from listening.”

“Harshness and heavy duty ‘lick’ (*Jamaican slang for a blow caused by hitting someone*), stress, fathers who take out their anger on the children.”

“We don’t listen to those on the sidelines because of the feeling of not having it to give, so I don’t listen. I feel inadequate.”

“Persons felt that when they voice their concerns they are branded as a ‘troubled church’ for speaking out.” (Asking why a priest was removed without explanation)

“Genuine deafness.”

“Hardly any space for the little people to speak up because there is too much “**back and belly rat**” (*Jamaican slang for someone who causes mischief between two persons by carrying tales from one to another*) corruption and selfishness.”

“The poor nuh talk. They just keep silent, like meself, me just shut up and do wha’ me have to do”

“As the baptized, we need to show more hospitality towards the general membership. For quite some time, members have not visited those members who have been unable to attend church for various reasons.”

“Where are the youth?”

Archdiocese of Nassau, Bahamas

Participation in a parish ministry is also viewed as a marker of “closeness” as bonds are developed between ministry members.

One young adult found the journey “impersonal”.

There was agreement that listening required an open mind, “a receptive heart” and a willingness to comprehend what the speaker says.

Participants gave the impression that some ministries were dominated by voices who effectively silenced others; “[Listening] never [occurs], members get overlooked because we do not like new ideas” and “Too many cliques”.

Some suggested that a “Parish Council”^[1] was a useful forum for speaking out, but not all parishes have such a group.

Parishes, typically small communities on islands distant from Nassau, without a priest are typically reliant upon a Permanent Deacon to provide a “Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest”.



Younger members noted the lack of “up-beat” music and found liturgy boring, “Service puts people to sleep”.

Members indicated that reaching out individually to others to participate was one way to increase participation. However, it was noted that some ministry leaders did not groom successors, possibly due to “ownership” of a position.

There are strong feelings that all are called to participate in our common mission to serve each other (through time, talent and treasure) and to share the good news. This empowerment stems from “baptism and the sacraments”.

Respondents said that strength to undertake this mission, including evangelization, is the Eucharist. This mission needs to be seen through the way Catholics live their lives, by being “witnesses to the love of God in the world”.

Participants seemed to think the shared responsibility for the mission was limited to the “Parish Council” and those who participated in ministries.

It was suggested that the Church should be seen as “family” to all members.

Younger participants indicated the hostility, even persecution, they experienced from other Christian groups, “the Catholic Church is evil” and Catholics “worship Mary”. This feeling of “other” might be exacerbated by Catholics being a minority in the population.

Members had mixed views on synodality. Some appreciated its importance and that it could build spiritual growth and “bring the faithful together for broader consultation and commitment”.

This consultation requires a two-way communication between the laity and the clergy with listening to each other. Its effectiveness depended on hearing many voices, not just a few. “Potential is there if anyone will listen” and it is “required for an introspective look at the church.” Others only seemed to see synodality associated with “Parish Councils” (which do not function in every parish) and parish ministries. There was a feeling that some members occupied “the limelight” and so this prevented others from participating in discussion.

Some members thought that there was too much “red tape” and more consultation on decisions would be beneficial, as one person said, “Ask people what they want.”

Archdiocese of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

“Distrust and disenchantment towards Church leadership at parish level, exacerbated or even caused by the lack of community connection and communication”

“Dictatorship is entering the Church”; “priests are making their own rules while the hierarchy is not protecting us.”

“We need to utilise to a far greater extent the unique strength and abilities of women towards furthering God’s will in the church.”



“Disenchantment with the misogyny of the Church leaders – will return to church when it begins to ordain female deacons and priests.”

“People need affirmation, recognition, respect – they don’t need being pushed over.”

“The Church has become irrelevant and has no significant role in the community.”

“The parish you get is the parish you make.”

We need “trained shepherds who will pastor the flock with love and acceptance”

“Brokenness isn’t welcome in our Church”

“Out of touch with humanity and their current issues and challenges and some priests are outdated and arrogant and the Church is prone to clericalism.”

“Open its arms to everyone”

“As Catholics we have to be careful that we have not now repositioned ourselves like the Pharisees and Sadducees”

“Spirituality of charity”

“Generous heart of the Church for the poor”.

“Catholics serve whoever is in need”.

“We feed the poor but we do not evangelise so that we can bring them into the Church, so that they can join in communion with us and feed on the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist.”

“Catholics versus them/society.”

“Just praise and worship”

“Music and rhythm are intrinsic to our Caribbean identity and thus particular attention must be placed on the quality and style of music in the Archdiocese.” “Members of Music ministries in the Church experience obstacles, such as lack of support, expertise, succession planning, personnel and resources.”

“There is congruence in our mission and so there is an opportunity for a heightened, united voice as we embrace communities. Through our common mission we can come up with one package that we can offer to communities in need”. Additionally, “the Churches need to come together, examine the cultural realities and reflect from time to time on what is needed for the transformation of the society.”

“Notwithstanding the undeniable need for ecumenism, moreso in a multicultural/multi-religious society such as ours, a stronger projection of Catholic identity or ethos is needed. In the absence of this, we lose some of the glue needed to bind the faithful together and to answer the quiet, often unanswered call to know what the Church’s values really are in a highly dysfunctional, value-deficient social order, [which is] crying out for moral certitude.”



“Hospitality is not a duty but a biblical way of life”

“Hospitality is a whole-Church experience, not just for the team.”

“A very simple thing like learning each other’s name” will help to build family”

“Church should establish a permanent place/mechanism to share pain and hurts and get help when facing life’s challenges”

“Our priests and deacons to be more caring and responsive and spend more time with the faithful as Jesus did.” “People must see Church as a hospital for the broken and wounded to be cared for by Dr. Jesus”.

“The youth and young adult membership must be engaged in new, creative and meaningful ways to grow in, and live out their faith in the midst of challenges”.

“There is need to find a way to provide a more effective way of guiding our children through the “rites of passage”

“to translate the Gospel for our media-savvy culture.”

“Use the arts and modern technology to attract and increase active membership. There should be greater use of technology in parish and community life.”

“We should make use of the multiple media resources to develop material to support our faith.”

“Use technology to improve the Mass experience, evangelise and motivate parishioners to be their best selves”

“Technology provides a pathway for making all voices heard”.

“We need to ‘be the change we want to see’ and not wait for someone else to do it.”

“Am I making the extra effort in my personal faith formation? “

“We are too heavy on the clergy and religious to create the Church without understanding that we are all the Church. We, the body of Christ, must appreciate that we also must do our part, in sharing this faith with others, firstly with our lapsed brothers and sisters and then with those of other religions.”

“Don’t change the Mass, change everything else”

“Catholics want a faith-filled Church that is witnessing to the love of Jesus Christ in daily life “

"We need to demonstrate love for our environment by 'living' Laudato Si."

“I would like to see the white images in the church change to reflect the real ethnicity of the peoples of that time. If the creation story started in north Africa why are there not black images in the Church. This turns me off. If the Church is teaching the truth, it must be shown by the images that adorn our churches.”

“The Synod experience was like a rose garden. Roses represented the positive experiences, thorns stood for problems and obstacles faced and the buds were potentials to explore.”



"I encourage us to develop a new psychology. A type that allows for difference and not just black and white. A type of radical, intolerable loving that jolts the psyche of the nation and the world. A kind of leading that is not caught up in the lights and cameras of our divine offices but, instead, willing to let the cassock get dirty with human stories splattered all over it.

I call us into a place that looks and feels like a newborn baby all over again – a new Nativity. A church born again, so to speak, Leaders, do your self-work. The world needs less politicians and more Mother Teresas and Saint John Pauls. Get it together, quick!"

"I have so much to say, it feels like a lot. I was raised Roman Catholic by a very dedicated grandmother, so I wanted my children to be Roman Catholic and to go to school at Roman Catholic institutions. My trauma began when I wanted my daughter to get into a Roman Catholic school in the South. The acting principal was rude and condescending. Imagine, myself and my husband both practicing Roman Catholics, born and raised, had to fight to get our child into what we considered our church. My challenges didn't end there. No! When my second daughter attended the school and displayed learning challenges, she was treated like a second-class child in the school. My church and our school turned its back on my child. My attempts to see the principal were futile when I went for a transfer to the school she demanded I take my child out of her school and send her back because she wanted a certain standard for her school."

"I grew up very close and connected to everything concerning church. I was a teacher of First Communion, Confirmation, cleaned the church, a lector, a member of Legion of Mary and more. Now I am an outcast. I've been told that there's no difference between myself and a prostitute when financial circumstances change and I was not having sex but staying with my boyfriend and his family. I was told I could not have communion because I'm married and divorced but cannot get it to null. I have cried bitterly and been in immense pain because of not being able to partake in the Blessed Sacrament. I stopped going to mass. However I was able to feel God's love through the virtual mass since COVID and the Archbishop recently said that once a divorced person is not sexually active, I can receive communion. The attitude of some priests towards us is so shaming and painful."

"In the past great joy, living in a parish that was alive. We came out with social gatherings once a month. It was a community coming together to meet each other and participate in events like musical chairs, spin the bottle etc. This got people talking and listening to one another. Then they started to address issues like forming choirs for everyone visiting those in need. That gave rise to parishioners sharing part of their Sunday lunch with young people, guiding drivers where to collect and deliver hot meals. You helped those who were challenged with learning, eventually forming a cooperative in the parish."

"For me, joining together as part of the church has been a fulfilling one. I have made a genuine connection with my parish community. I am an active member and my children are involved in ministry. It has brought many learning experiences. Good and bad, but through it all I have grown to embrace all those as growth experiences. At first, some personalities of priests, laity and other elders were intimidating and unwelcoming, but those were fewer in number to consider... the voices of the shut ins and marginalized are barely heard".

Diocese of Roseau, Dominica

Building unity

Initiatives to "*becoming traveling companions*" should come from both clergy and laity.



Improvement in celebrations and Liturgy:

Make Sunday and other celebrations more appealing including the homily, “being a *“living gospel”*”.

Authority and Participation:

The Church is far removed from reality, “Stuck in old time.”

Excerpts from a Youth:

“About involving the youth... over time, having the responsibilities would make them feel appreciative of the work that they do for God, but I think it works the opposite way where if they learn how to harness a love of God, they would be more willing to do those things.because they don't understand what they are doing, they doing it because they have to do it.....I think the Love of God is the most important to me because it is what drives you to do anything religious, to willingly bow before the Altar, to clean the church because Jesus is present.....Personally, when I had that realization during Confirmation, that's what made me more interested in church, when I decided through a few experiences in my life that God is real and this thing is for real so I have most respect for God, and a respect for church, obeying Catholic dogma and understanding what I am doing and why I am doing it. It is also important for it {Love of God} to be embraced in the home as well.....”

Diocese of St. John's-Basseterre

The absence of dialogue was described in this manner: “there appears to be one way traffic from the pulpit in that the priests are not ‘hearing if the people are hearing”.

To correct these disparities one group of respondents, recommend: “Priests and Religious need to witness the togetherness among themselves..... witness to right relationships”.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to the Church? “Our way forward as a Church is to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Emphasis should be put on the formation of the Christian community on how to move forward as one”.

“We will work with others and spread the faith, come to church, do what is expected of (us). Improve as Catholics, to walk and to understand our faith, and seek more information to help us to walk together”.

“... there is little to no support for their groups by the Clergy or other groups, therefore “we may be journeying together but in our own groups”.

“... show care and concern ... We need to reach out personally to those who may be discouraged or feel left out with “a gentle tap on the shoulder and a face-to-face chat”.

Diocese of St. George's in Grenada

“Though we do not attend church, we can improve our relationship with the Church through the donation of fish to the vulnerable, especially during the season of Lent to help the Church keep its tradition.”

It was evident that “people want to be part of the decision-making process of the Church”. The opportunity allowed the faithful to express that journeying together is joyful “knowing that there are others at the same stage of life, seeking the same direction/goals as you are”.



Pains and wounds experienced would require reconciliation and healing. In addition, some participants “agreed that they were all journeying together within their particular [ministry] but not journeying together as a Church”. This was attributed to a “serious disconnect with the ministries of the Church”.

Appreciation for the universal Church- the fact that Catholics can travel anywhere and feel “at home” with the celebration of Mass

The feeling of the existence of “big churches” and “small churches” as greater attention is given to the parish church community than to the satellite communities of the parish

The feeling that some parishioners are treated with greater respect than others, giving the impression of different “classes”

There was concern as to “how we communicate with persons outside the walls of the church” in that we need to communicate with and engage them lovingly and in a spirit-filled manner

It was expressed that “people want to be part of the Church's decision-making process”

A need to be more hospitable to our own parishioners. A call for Catholics to get to know our brothers and sisters and be sociable with each other, “for we may sit in the same pew and not know the person next to us”

The call for a deep and impactful connection with the children- “engage them in the present to avoid pitfalls later”

A call for activities for children such as “Sunday School”

Will be more effective, impactful, and meaningful if they are linked to the experiences of the people. This will help members to “live church”

[Homilies] should be “broken down to reach the people” including the children

Testimonies

Some participants, who are unable to attend church physically, did not feel marginalised or excluded. The following reasons were given:

- The priest brings communion monthly
- Members of the church visit, pray with them and keep them informed
- Being able to participate in the Mass broadcasted via the diocese’s Communications Network (GNCC)
- Members sent books about the Church that they read
- One participant expressed displeasure with members of his congregation for not visiting his mother who is sick and shut-in, after giving a life of service to the Church.
- “At the age of 19, a priest tried to molest me and after that experience, I did not want to participate in the church anymore.”
- “There are high-up church people who take what should be given to the poor and share it out to their friends who are not in much need. This results in needy people who should have received help, going without.”



- “I did not appreciate the way the distributors made me feel. They treated us like we were beggars and we were hungry. We were treated with scorn.”
- “The journey is much more than attending the Mass. It is how we live our lives and what we do on the outside.”
- “We worship together but do not know each other.”
- “We are limited in matters of faith and that hinders us from being civil evangelizers. Our faith teaches us how to live with others, how to build community and serve country.”
- “Too much attention is given to one’s failures in life. We hold things about people.”
- “This synodal activity is a stepping stone to revamping and reviving the young adults and youth groups.”
- “Church is a place where you get kindness, care and a home.”
- “The church does not listen because it is made up of walls and has no ears.”
- “[Adults] just look at us sometimes, without actively helping us.”

Diocese of Willemstad, Curacao

All can confirm that the Gospel message that “thou shall love God and thy neighbour” is a non-exclusive outreach for love of all... that means everybody. In this sense, there ought not be any “group on the margins”, or at least the Church ought not leave anyone on the margins.

Liturgy and church services are not exciting or enthralling enough and are therefore not attracting the younger generations. “Church is boring”. Always the same. Message? What message?

Some respondents claim that the downward spiral of number of faithful and vocations is to be countered with a “different approach”.



Synod
2021
2023
Bistricio di Willemstad, Curacao