

St. Mark Summary Report Synodal Process Meeting November 18, 2018

Preamble:

As pastor of St. Mark Parish, Father John Malazdrewich, OMI, chose the four members of the team to lead the synodal process: himself, Margie Voisin, Michelle Jones and Barry Engelhardt

The team attended the first diocesan meeting at Our Lady of the Annunciation on October 3, 2018 during which Archbishop Paul-André Durocher explained the synodal process. Following that presentation and the documents provided, the team met on October 18 to plan the synodal process for St. Mark. At that meeting it was decided that we would have one session for the parish on November 18, 2018 as it would give sufficient time for planning and advertising as well as to complete the report for the diocese. The basic structure of the session was agreed upon as were individual assignments. A follow-up meeting on October 30 allowed for final details to be worked out.

The agenda for the session is attached. A guiding principle was to have as much interaction with the parishioners as possible.

Report:

Fifty-six parishioners attended the meeting (not including the team of four). People were very engaged during all stages of the presentation, both in the initial large group and subsequent small group sessions. However, the demographics of those in attendance were not representative of the demographics of the parish as a whole. For example, people under thirty years of age, young families and visible minorities were under-represented. In addition, many of the attendees were the same familiar faces who are already deeply involved in the parish, and have been for some time.

The summary below organizes the considerable verbal and written input provided by parishioners into themes that were identified after the session. The order of subcategories within 'Strengths, Weaknesses and Concerns' reflects the relative frequency of these responses.

A) Snapshot of the Parish: attached. Most of the snapshot was done by the team prior to November 18 in consultation with many members and groups in the parish. It was reviewed during the first half of the session and a number of additions were made based on input from the attendees.

B) Our Parish Reality: Strengths, Weaknesses and Concerns

1) *Parish strengths*:

i) Culture: consistently described as a welcoming parish, a charitable and cohesive community, with generous volunteering, openness, engaging, nourishing, secure, hopeful, active, multi-generational, multicultural, calm, personable, a sense of easy belonging

ii) Great Liturgy: including great children's liturgy, sacraments, accommodating mass schedule, wonderful music and superb homilies

iii) Active parish: lots of fellowship and groups to join including Youth Group, lots of opportunities for service

iv) Leadership: excellent leadership especially by the priests and good spiritual direction

v) Stability: well run from a fiscal perspective with good financial accountability, well maintained church property

vi) Faith formation: opportunities for faith formation such as Cristian Meditation, Knights of Columbus Rosary, Bible study

vii) Outreach: refugee support, Meals on Wheels, pastoral care, Supper of Love, Guignolée

2) *Parish weaknesses:*

i) Faith formation: need for more faith formation including Catholic morals, issues around sexuality, tools for speaking with others about our faith (evangelization), opportunities for spiritual growth and faith education, family prayer, need for more retreats especially for couples, need for more support for families and couples, better library with inventory on website, more opportunities and advertising for sacraments (e.g. sacrament of the sick and general absolution), more faith formation between first communion and confirmation

ii) Demographics: aging population, need for more youth and opportunities for youth

iii) Present parish services: need for more communication and cooperation between various church groups and ministries, need for more recognition, respect and appreciation of volunteers, looking for ways to prevent volunteer burnout (always the same people volunteering), more openness to gifts that new volunteers bring (minimizing resistance change, avoiding 'cliques'),

iv) New outreach within the parish: learning to cope with change, couple retreats, more activities for involvement of people age 18-35, more opportunities for fellowship of singles, more activities for families with young children, more help for families who are struggling (parental support)

v) Outreach outside of parish: more outreach and cooperation with other parishes and other faiths in Aylmer, more contact and cooperation with social programs in Aylmer, better advertising of our parish and parish activities (mass, dinners, fundraising, etc.), support citizens of Aylmer through visits and phone calls especially shut-ins, the poor, those with addictions or mental health issues, the LGBTQ community, more support of Pro-Life activities

vi) Financial: too much/too continuous fundraising, not enough detail regarding investments

3) *Parish concerns:*

i) membership—aging population, volunteer burnout, recognizing volunteers, introducing visitors/new parishioners to pastor, assistance getting to church if disabled/elderly, attracting new members,

ii) Faith formation: for youth and adults, linking first communion and confirmation, general absolution, assistance living in secular world, retreats

iii) More outreach—to other churches, other faiths, community organizations, marginalized (poor, mental health, addictions), home visits/phone calls, persecuted Christians, support for young mothers, more fun activities for youth, more support for couples,

iv) Finances and the state of the church property

v) Reconciliation for Church wrongdoings

vi) Pro-life activities

Summary:

The synodal process meeting at St. Mark Parish was well attended and participants were engaged and enthusiastic. They appreciated the chance to both speak and listen to their fellow parishioners about their faith and their parish. However, as mentioned in the preamble, the demographics were skewed.

There is a general sentiment that their faith as lived out in St. Mark Parish is a source of support and stability in their lives and fosters attitudes of tolerance and patience. People are pleased with the availability of various groups and volunteer opportunities.

There is an awareness of the need to attract more youth and to achieve a better balance between liturgy and service, in particular by increasing our outreach to the marginalized and to other faith communities and groups in Aylmer.

In the small group session and to a lesser degree in the large group session, there was some concern expressed regarding the impact on the parish of larger issues facing the Catholic Church, such as the sex abuse scandal, the place of women in the church and meeting the needs of families and youth (and therefore attracting them to the faith). These issues are not issues primarily of St. Mark parish but clearly they impact the parish and are deserving of some attention.

Finally, there is a very great appreciation for the leadership, wisdom and spiritual support of the priests in our Parish, particularly Father John Malazdrewich.

As a parish we look forward to continuing the synodal process and appreciate the opportunity to engage with our fellow members of the Archdiocese of Gatineau in what has the potential to be a transformative step in our faith journey.

Respectfully submitted by St. Mark's Synodal Process Team

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