

XAVIER UNIVERSITY (Cincinnati, OH) FACULTY & STAFF SYNODALITY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

67 faculty and staff engaged in Synodality reflections in one of three ways:

- Responding to a public survey managed by the Center for Mission and Identity
- Engaging in conversation at a Theology Department faculty meeting
- Reflecting in writing and in discussion at a Center for Faith & Justice staff meeting

Broadly, there were patterns of hopes for inclusion, renewal, greater acceptance of women, people of color and the LGBTQ+ community, and return to tradition. **Our community is diverse, even among those who actively identify as Catholic.** Some desire more investment in theologies and practices that are seen as traditional, while others desire discernment of where God is calling this Church in this specific context and moment in time. Even as a campus related to a particular order and charism, these differing ways of approaching the faith are very evident throughout our community.

Many people **aren't heard by the church and are marginalized** in Catholic communities. Listed were groups like young people, the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, Black voices, poor people, people who don't give a lot of money, women, the mentally ill, those who have been abused by clergy, those who have been divorced, those who experienced abuse as children, widows. Most see hierarchy, clericalism, fear, judgment and bias as the **barriers to listening.**

THEMES

Because of how we gathered insights, we have illustrated some themes using quotes that illustrate the depth and particulars of the conversations. Themes are written in bold, with verbatim quotes following.

Broadly, the three biggest themes were *renewal, inclusion, and co-responsibility for the life of the Church.*

We see the Holy Spirit in our work on campus.

“In general, the classroom is one such space, where people come together across their diverse perspectives and experiences, in the spirit of humility and curiosity, respect and empathy, to learn from and with one another. I marvel at the way my students want to make a difference in the world; their commitments to address harm and tend to those who are marginalized gives me great confidence that the Spirit is at work in their lives.”

“When a group of parishioners came together with community members at large to take a stand for racial justice in our community. It wasn't an easy project, but it was a moment where people of the Church engaged in a meaningful way.”

“When our students shine—I experience the Holy Spirit. The student leadership of this very process was a place that I could see the Spirit of God at work.”

It is vital to the Church's mission and future to better include young people. Young people are not just the future of the Church, they are also the present of the Church.

“We are neglecting our young people. So many have left the church even if they were raised in a Catholic household. They don’t feel any pastoral concern from the church. The Church needs to seek them out and ask them about their concerns, questions, problems. The Church needs to address with them the world situation.”

We need renewal in formation--faith formation that is relevant to people’s real lives.

“Religious and spiritual formation has often failed. Help people cultivate a real sense of God’s presence in their lives—help people see that there are real spiritual resources in the tradition, not just in Buddhism or yoga.”

“I am convinced that to be more effective in fulfilling our mission, some of our official teachings will need to change.”

Effective liturgies teach everyone to see the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, and are relevant to their everyday contexts.

“Embrace divorced people as full members allowed to receive the sacraments”

“WELCOME. Not the kind of welcome where “everyone’s welcome” ... but then you have to do everything how we traditionally do it. Rather, a genuine welcome that sees and engages the full humanity of those entering and provides them with acceptance and space to be present in their fullest humanity.”

Clericalism and a lack of genuine co-responsibility with lay people is holding the church back.

“This synod is a first step, if only those who make decisions and set priorities will listen. Then we have to continue to find ways to discern and discuss goals and strategies for pastoral care together. This will take time, it will take resources, and it will take a much more inclusive approach to who counts as “the church.” We need priests and bishops who smell like all their sheep, not just the ones writing big checks or benefitting from an unjust status quo in our current economic, political, and social spheres.”

Encourage personal faith and relationship with Christ more deeply throughout the church.

“Jesus was not a Catholic – rather Jesus was the loving son of God, who loved everyone unconditionally, including the tax collectors, the sinners, the ‘good’ folks and the ‘bad’”

The Church needs to practice repentance and reconciliation, while making room for everyone in the Church to wrestle with difficult experiences and doubt.

“The voices of those who struggle with their understanding of God and spirituality are not prominent. Folks may hesitate to speak up when they feel their views are outside of what is normative.”

“People have been traumatized and excluded by the church they love—moving beyond that requires repentance from the Church, and then healing and reconciliation.”

“I hope for full accountability for moral failing among the church’s clergy. I hope for reconciliation and amends for Catholic Church sexual abuse.”