

XAVIER UNIVERSITY (Cincinnati, OH) STUDENT SYNODALITY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW: Students were invited to a town hall style conversation that sought feedback in writing and in small group conversation. 42 students attended, primarily white, and primarily involved in a ministry or Catholic community on campus. About 40% were men, and a range of class years and majors were represented.

Below are the themes found among the responses to each question in a list, with any additional insights after that.

1. Describe an experience you've had of a group working together, respecting everyone's contributions, and growing in unity, so that you felt the Holy Spirit was really working among you.

- Experiences of encounter
- Shared spiritual practices
- Community and conversation
- Talking or sharing about faith
- Leading in the context of all of the above experiences

Student and staff leaders observed that this was a very difficult question to stay on topic and answer—it generated the fewest responses. We are thinking about how formation of leaders and communities could better assist students in identifying the Holy Spirit at work among them, and the value of the unity of the Body of Christ.

2. What do you think is the mission of the Church, and what parts of our mission do you feel we are neglecting? What would make us more effective in fulfilling our mission?

The mission is...

- Salvation
- Holiness
- Evangelism
- Ministries of Care
- Building the Kingdom

Could be more effective by...

- Emphasizing faith formation
- Welcoming with more intention
- Address sex scandals
- Recruit for the religious vocations
- Practicing justice and reconciliation
- Open ordination to more people
- Replacing shame with encouragement

3. What voices are not being heard in our parish, church, or community? What is preventing people from speaking up, and what is preventing us from listening?

- Young families, young people, LGBTQ+ people and groups, pro-life voices, those who don't give money, non-traditional Catholics, traditional Catholics, accepting Catholics, neighborhood communities... are not heard.

People don't speak because...

- A long list of real fears: i.e. being ostracized, rejected, ridiculed or wrong
- Not feeling anyone listens
- Community is divided and politicized
- Not sure where to give feedback

People don't listen because...

- Biases
- Preconceived notions
- Too firm a hold on tradition
- Cannot see relevance

4. *How do you think can we improve participation and transparency in the life of our parish, church, and community? What are some first steps we can take in this direction?*

In the whole church

- More mass times that work for real people and more involvement of marginalized groups like young people in the liturgies; more excitement and passion for the liturgy
- Fellowship and community building beyond the liturgy
- Mass is not a spectator sport, it is a place to give
- This should differ based on the parish and local community
- Better formation for seminarians
- Bishops and archbishops reaching out and meeting with young people
- Transparency with money
- Less judgment and intolerance, more invitation
- Switch from all are welcome to “we want you here” and “this space was made for you.”

On our campus

- Catholic student leaders advertising what happens on campus and inviting others
- More visibility of Catholic values and identity of the whole university
- More service opportunities
- A culture where Catholic students feel confident sharing their faith
- Reconciliation and repair when voices feel silenced or marginalized
- More student access to priests