

## **A brief report on the Synod Listening Sessions held at OLM**

Over 100 parishioners participated in the synod listening sessions held in February. All age groups were represented, including young people. Participants varied in their involvement in the Church, from people who were active in the parish, involved in ministry, and attended daily Mass to those who no longer attended Mass or participated in formal religion. *A report was sent to the Archdiocese & has been read & reviewed by the synod team there. Eventually it will be incorporated in a national report that will be sent to the Pope in Rome.*

A brief introduction about the format & goals of the session was conducted by the main facilitators and a prayer to the Holy Spirit for guidance was said.

Small groups of six people were gathered at a table with both facilitators and scribes. Comments were recorded confidentially. Participants were asked to answer core questions posed by the Pope to help determine the future of our universal Church. The questions posed were:

1. How is this "journeying together" happening today in your community?
2. What prevents us from walking together; what hinders people from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously?
3. What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journey together?

The questions were to be addressed at the local, archdiocesan and universal Church level & there were several subset questions posed.

The participants engaged in spirited, thoughtful conversation & their caring for the Church was readily apparent. They left the sessions energized and grateful for having the opportunity to have a voice in the future of the church. All agreed it was a very worthwhile experience.

The major themes that emerged were:

### A. Universal Church:

1. Church needs to be more inclusive of divorced, gay, & groups on the margin.
2. More active leadership role for women; they should be deacons/priests.
3. Church doctrine needs to reflect today's societal norms.
4. Church needs to be less top/down in management; less hypocritical
5. Priest sex scandal remains an issue.
6. Competing interests make it difficult for some to find time to attend Mass

B. Archdiocese:

1. Keep Catholic Schools open
2. Archbishop & auxiliary bishops need to be more visible at parish level.
3. Provide more programs for special needs groups & work on attracting young families.
4. Foster collaboration among parishes to address needs/conduct programs/share experiences.

C. Parish Specific:

1. There is a need for improved communication & transparency. Pastoral Council members should be identified.
2. OLM provides many varied opportunities for involvement & inclusiveness.
3. OLM is involved in the community through social outreach.
4. OLMA is a vital part of the parish.
5. The size of our parish makes it difficult to get to know everyone.

*As a consequence of the listening session, many OLM specific issues have been or, are, being addressed:*

*Communication:*

*1a. The Pastoral Council recently met with Sr. Donna, the Chancellor of the Archdiocese & will begin to meet monthly. The names & pictures of the members will be posted as will minutes of their meetings.*

*b. Meet the Pastor Sessions are being held to facilitate dialogue & answer questions regarding both Church teachings and the management & happenings within the Parish.*

*c. Announcements are in the bulletin & made at Mass prior to the final blessing.*

*Involvement & Inclusiveness:*

*2. A ministry fair was recently held to invite involvement. Many opportunities have been presented recently such as Search, Movie Night, Rosary Challenge, Christmas Tree Lighting, Feasibility Survey.*

*Hospitality:*

*1. A hospitality committee & greeters at Mass have been instituted.*

\*\*\*The complete report submitted to the Archdiocese, along with more detail about the listening sessions and OLM specific comments, are available on request from the rectory office.