



Diocesan Phase:

Synthesis Report & Next Steps

September 2022



Archdiocese of
Grouard-McLennan

Diocesan Synthesis Report (June 2022)

Introduction: Rereading the Synodal Experience

The Diocesan Phase of Synod 2021/2023 was undertaken in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan between October 17, 2021 and April 17, 2022. While enthusiasm for the synodal process was not widespread, the parish priests and animators of listening gatherings ensured that people in the Archdiocese who wanted to participate had an opportunity to do that. At the conclusion of the input process in the Archdiocese, we counted at least 55 listening gatherings held in 23 communities (both in person and online) and hearing from between 275 and 300 individuals.

We believe that there were a few substantial obstacles to greater participation. One was the restrictions on gatherings imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, whether external or personal. A second was the timing; winter in this archdiocese makes it difficult for people to travel. Another reason was the confusion many people expressed about the meaning and purpose of the synod, *For a Synodal Church*. For some people, the words “synod”, “synodal”, and “synodality” were off-putting. For others, the Fundamental Question did not provide sufficient direction for a meaningful response.

The confusion about the Fundamental Question led to several of our local animators and parish priests choosing to either reformulate the question or replace it entirely for their listening gatherings. As a result, the input from our listening gatherings often focused on the personal faith or the journey of faith of the individual. Therefore, the input often did not directly address the themes identified by the documents from the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops. However, we trust that the Holy Spirit was present in all the gatherings and our discernment of his direction to our particular Church is still possible.

Experience and Feedback

Although the number of participants in the consultation was small, the views and opinions that were shared reflect the diversity to be found among the people of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan.

Various approaches were used to bring views from the peripheries into the listening gatherings, from personal invitations to holding gatherings outside of the parish church. For the most part, these efforts were not notably successful. Some people who had encouraged their family members, whom they identified as on the peripheries, to take part were themselves disappointed at the lack of interest. However, a small number of youth and a few individuals who identified as being marginalized, either by people or by Church teaching, accepted invitations to participate in the diocesan phase of the synod.

The level of participation and the experiences and feelings that were shared by the participants in listening gatherings were not particularly surprising or unexpected. We expected there to be people speaking of their faith and love for Jesus Christ and his Church. We also expected to hear from people who have been and continue to feel hurt and rejected by the teachings of the Church and the people who follow them.

More significant for our particular Church and for the Church in Canada are the differing levels of personal knowledge about Church teachings, recent scandals and historic wrongs. In some cases, the lack of knowledge appears to be the source negative feelings about the Church and the faith.

Also of significance is the degree of personal hostility some people expressed towards “the Church” and clergy, not limited to the hierarchy. This hostility may be the result of experiences with or a response to scandalous actions by people in the Church.

Below is a synthesis of the input from our listening gatherings, collated under the ten themes and their questions, as outlined in Part 5.3 of the *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*.

Discernment of Collected Contributions

1. Companions on the Journey

This theme was the most popular among the participants at listening gatherings, probably because it is the focus of the Fundamental Question.

Many people spoke with tenderness and gratitude about those with whom they ‘journey together’. For many, these are the people who come together for Mass and other sacrament celebrations. They expressed their reliance on and need for the Eucharist and their love for the people they meet at Mass. They also mourn for their children who have rejected or neglected the faith they were raised in.

People shared their thoughts on what is required of those journeying together to also grow together in faith. We worship as one community, then come together in smaller groups to develop in faith according to our gifts, needs, and interests. Spending time together outside of Sunday Mass contributes to growing as companions on the journey. Having a shared vision or goal for life was also mentioned as being essential to growing as companions.

There is much diversity in how people grow together in faith: at the parish level, with Bible studies and other education programs, and Catholic organizations linked to the parish, such as the Catholic Women’s League and Knights of Columbus. For some, their ‘journey companions’ are members of diocesan, national and international Catholic Movements, such as Regnum Christi, Cursillo, Engaged Encounter, and World-Wide Marriage Encounter.

A minority of people said that the Church is not a place where they choose to grow in faith, for various reasons, including the recent scandals of sexual abuse, personal negative experiences at the parish with clergy or others, or because growing in faith is not a personal priority.

The people who participated in listening gatherings and identified themselves as being “left on the margins” were Catholics who felt judged and excluded by Church teachings (LGBTQ+, divorced, IVF children and parents) or by people in the parish, whether clergy or lay people.

Other participants named those whom they believed were left on the margins, usually because of identifiable characteristics: LGBTQ+ group(s), Indigenous peoples, especially those grievously harmed by Indian Residential Schools, black and other people of colour, and minority cultural and language groups.

People shared their thoughts on what we can do to attract those on the margins, especially uninterested adults and youth. Our local Church should develop and provide ministry and faith formation opportunities that meet the particular needs and interests of all, and especially of our youth, young adults, and other marginalized people. Those who are journeying together could reach out to people on the margins, with personal invitations to participate in ministry, worship and faith formation

activities. Some people expressed a desire for change to Church teachings regarding marriage, especially not recognizing same sex marriage and not permitting new marriages after civil divorce. A few people also expressed a desire for women to be in positions of authority and leadership in the Church, and for married clergy.

Concern for Catholics who have left the practice of the faith, especially youth and young adults, was raised by many participants, who believe efforts by the Church and its people can bring these Catholics back into the mainstream journey. Some who are in that mainstream said that they need the Church to develop a framework that will allow them to reach out to the people on the margins.

2. Listening

The theme of “listening” was more apparent in the comments about marginalized voices and proposed changes to Church teachings and culture. A few people made suggestions for more formally including the laity in discussions and decisions regarding the Church at every level of the hierarchy: the parish (recognizing female altar servers and laypeople as ministers of Holy Communion), the diocese (changing canon law to include laity in non-liturgical decisions), the national bishops’ conference (including women Religious and laypeople), and the Vatican (women in ordained clergy and in positions of authority in the Church).

Comments from people indicated that negative judgement, obscure and archaic language, and an over-reliance on tradition as an explanation or defense of a decision, all inhibit our listening. For example, people who feel judged and excluded by Church teachings would respond well to being listened to with compassion and loving attention. Evidence of that listening would be reflected in changes to Church teachings on a number of moral issues.

People suggested that, for those who feel excluded because they are members of a minority cultural, language or ethnic group, the Church has to publicly acknowledge racist attitudes of her members and take acceptable action to eliminate those attitudes.

Comments made by those who desire change in the Church to accommodate the marginalized indicate that hearts and minds of those who refuse to change are not open to acknowledging that different views are not necessarily incorrect views. They also indicate that insufficient effort has been given to understand and explain, or teach and learn, the Catholic worldview; rather, the desire to protect what we love is dominant for many people, on any side of a question.

Other suggestions about hindrances to our listening were that there are misunderstandings between different “voices”, and that there is a lack of interest both within and outside of the Church in listening and being listened to.

3. Speaking out

Fear of judgement by others appears to be the single largest hindrance to people speaking up courageously, candidly and responsibly, especially on questions of moral teachings and behaviours, whether to criticize or defend them. A second hindrance, for those who accept or criticize them, is the perceived lack of support from the Church hierarchy for laity who speak up about Catholic teachings.

4. Celebration

The theme of “Celebration” is contained in the responses of many participants at listening gatherings. People said that it is in our liturgical celebrations, especially the Sunday Mass, that we come together to pray, worship and receive the Holy Eucharist. We are reminded that we are called to community, that these are the people we love and with whom we share this journey. The hope and fellowship we experience through these celebrations bring us a sense of peace and acceptance.

The priest’s homily at Mass is an opportunity to teach the congregation and to connect scripture to their everyday lives. The sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, are great blessings and through them we touch the love of God and know the Real Presence of Christ. It is also a blessing that the Archbishop makes sure that our small, rural communities are served by priests.

A few people said that they find priests from other cultures can discourage active participation by changing elements of the liturgy and by being difficult to understand.

The sacraments and the teachings of the Church keep us all headed in the same direction. Although we may express ourselves differently, it is in this difference and diversity that we are called to unity. Together, each with our unique life, we are one body.

For some people, our liturgical celebrations are seen as impeding our mission. Some people mentioned how the sacraments are the presence of Jesus who comes to give healing yet we deny it to so many. What right do we have as a Church to deny the healing power of Jesus in the sacraments to anyone?

Others commented on how our liturgical celebrations do not contribute to our common life when people feel judged by the words of the priest in the homily or by the words of scripture proclaimed at Mass. Someone suggested that we need to present a positive image of a God of love so that people come to know and experience hope and love at Mass and so continue to attend church.

Several people offered that building relationships outside of Mass will lead to more people, especially youth and young adults, to active participation in the liturgy. Several more suggested priests and lay leaders of the various ministries at Mass extend personal invitations to people to become involved in ministries, such as usher, greeter, reader, singer, musician, and Eucharistic minister. As one said about her or his participation in the Mass, I feel I am part of the Church, that I have a role in the Church.

Some people commented that a lack of interaction between parishioners has led to Mass ministries and other parish needs being filled by the same few volunteers. Others cited the need for there to be more roles for lay people in liturgies and in the Church, generally, especially for women and children.

Other suggestions for encouraging active participation included making liturgies more beautiful, such as with beautiful music, and ensuring there are opportunities for people to be greeted when coming to Mass and to socialize after the liturgy.

One person mentioned how the celebrations on annual feast days, such as Pentecost, the Annunciation and Mardi Gras, brought people together, socially and in faith. A few people commented that the opportunities to come together are decreasing and this change is impacting our sense of a common life and mission.

5. Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission

The comments related to this theme of a shared responsibility for the Church's mission were diverse.

There were thoughts on what the common mission is. Some suggested that it is to bring God and the Gospel to our communities and the world. Others think that it is to reach out in service to the poor, the sick, the lonely, the isolated and the needy in our community and the world. A few commented that the Church's mission extends beyond evangelization and service to the needy, to community building with other Christians, other faiths, and non-believers. One person said that the Catholic Church is not the only correct religion and much of what it teaches about social justice is misguided; there is no common mission of the baptized.

There were thoughts on who shares the responsibility and how that is achieved. Some people expressed this as a commitment they make personally. Their mission activity is an extension of or a response to the love they personally receive and share with God. Others said that it is the Church that is active in the world or that is responsible for calling people to live out the mission of the Church.

A few people would like to see more attention being paid to people in poverty and serving and helping others.

Many people's comments referred to the inadequate or completely absent apologies and reparations by the Church hierarchy and offending clergy for the scandals and harms done in the past and more recently. Some people said that their personal pain, embarrassment and anger in response to the criminal, scandalous and arrogant actions of clergy and other Church members, and the multiple cover ups by the hierarchy, keep them from participating in the Church. Others said that authentic reconciliation efforts and effective healing are needed to bring the baptized, both directly and indirectly affected, back into the Church.

A few people said that the lack of leadership and guidance from the Church, especially priests, makes it difficult for laity to participate in the common mission. They mentioned discouragement from "bad" priests, as well as that no structure or framework is in place to inspire and encourage participation in mission. The lack of volunteers among the faithful also hinders mission work. For a few others, the exclusion of lay people from ministries and decision making in the Church hinders their participation in the mission.

For Canada, in the words of some people, community and relationship building is an especially important aspect of mission with regards to Indigenous people harmed by the Church's participation in Indian Residential Schools.

A few people commented that we are not effectively bringing the message of the faith into the community: our school spaces, our job spaces, and our social activities. Some people recommended that we move out of the church walls and get involved with the community around us. We should also interact more with one another outside of the church: visiting one another in our homes, having programs and activities for youth in the community.

A few people noted that the Church needs to work with the whole community and could begin by parishes sharing their facilities with other denominations and community groups.

A few people spoke about the criticisms and mistrust of the world directed at the Church and her members as hindering participation in the common mission. It is difficult to move out of our “comfort zone” when we believe we will be rejected.

In the opinion of a few people, we are neglecting our mission to teach the faith to our own members. As a result, many Catholics do not know their faith or the Bible as well as they should.

6. Dialogue in Church and Society

A few people spoke of how little dialogue they experience in the Church and observe between the Church and society.

From the comments of several people who spoke of their personal struggle with Church teachings and rules, we might infer that people avoid entering into dialogue within the Church because they believe it is not welcome. One person commented on how the Church uses guilt to make the person feel bad about using birth control. Another person commented on the rigidity and the “because we’ve always done it that way” reasoning for Church decisions. A third person doesn’t like having to “cherry pick” his or her way through Catholic teaching but does it so that he or she can continue to be with the people he or she loves.

Some people noted that there is a lack of confidence in the Church, in Canada, to speak about major social issues and difficult doctrines of the faith. They said that the guidance from the Church, on such important issues as abortion, is dearly missed in what they view to be essential dialogues.

Some people spoke about addressing difficulties and conflicts by having the Church get with the times, move out of the past.

Several people said that, in their parishes, people have experienced the conflicts of cliques, personal insults about differences of opinions, and discrimination for cultural or ethnic characteristics. Other people said they observe a certain lack of sensitivity from people in the majority culture to people of different cultures. We can infer from these comments that no dialogue is opened between people from each culture.

A few people expressed confidence that in the Church all people, on the periphery and in the mainstream, in all our diversity come together in the Church and faith we love.

One person said that the local parish works with the whole community for social gatherings like a Harvest Supper and a Christmas Bazaar. We could extrapolate from that and say that in the smaller rural communities of our local Church, places and means of dialogue are informal and part of the normal day-to-day activities.

7. Ecumenism

A few people commented on the relationships of their parish churches with other Christian traditions and denominations. Some commented that the parish has a good relationship with other Christian churches in their community, getting together for World Day of Prayer each year, as well as for Christmas and other social gatherings. It was suggested that similar relationships need to be developed with other faith traditions and believers.

A few people commented that they note a lack of Christian community with local Protestant churches and between the Catholic Rites in the area (especially Ukrainian Greek Catholics and the dominant Latin Rite Catholics).

8. Authority and Participation

Two themes arose in comments about authority and governance in the Church. On the one side, people are asking the shepherds (priests and bishops) to be true to the Tradition of Church teachings. On the other side, people criticize Church leaders for staying stuck in the past, teaching people things that are no longer true, and mishandling their authority such that they have gravely harmed people, citing residential schools and the sexual abuse crisis as examples.

People also commented on the need for priests to be leaders and active participants in their communities. A comment was made that priests should not be spending time on parish administration and office duties when their talents and time are much better used in meeting people, teaching and evangelizing.

Parish councils were identified by a few people as a means for engaging lay people in governance, at least of their own parish church. A few people cited the parish council as a good example of teamwork and co-responsibility for all manner of decisions that affect the local Church. One person commented on the need to develop a governance structure that grants autonomy to parishes and dioceses in defined areas of interest, as is done by having different levels of government in a country.

A few people commented on how goals are identified and how strategies are determined. None were positive in their evaluation. They all identified the decision-makers as the clergy and/or the hierarchy, with one questioning whether the hierarchy wants to include the People of God in these choices. They all assessed the decision-makers as failing, either by choosing the wrong goals or the wrong or no strategies to achieve the goals.

A few comments suggest that people are concerned that decision-makers, usually clergy, are not accountable to anyone, at least not to lay people, for their decisions.

9. Discerning and Deciding

A few suggestions for decision-making were offered: listen to everyone, with particular attention to minorities, and striking a balance [between contrary positions, needs] in decisions; decision-making needs to provide for feedback from those affected; and, the decision-making processes, from the Vatican to the parish, should be transparent; people suggested that bishops and the pope need to be heard from more about the decisions they are making and have made.

A few other people identified the methods and processes as being solely in the hands of Church leaders: the pope, cardinals and bishops, who make decisions without reference to the laity. A few people said that women are particularly shut out of the processes or merely permitted, i.e. have no inherent right, to act within the Church, since the power belongs only to the all-male clergy.

One person identified the need for the Church to change and said that the processes that leave only (certain) men in charge prevent that change, as so many of these men work against progress. Another person called for the Church to become a democracy in order to bring about the desired changes. The

decision-making process would seek input from all parishioners and from people outside the Church and the method would give parishioners a role in the decisions, not just contributing to the discussion, as is now the situation.

A few people commented that the laity needs to be catechized on Church structures and processes before the people can effectively and sincerely participate in decision-making.

To promote participation, one person suggested, the laity will need to believe and trust that they are heard. For example, if the laity do not see that the input from this synodal process is heard, understood and used by the hierarchy, then it will achieve nothing. Another person said that leaders of institutions can be defensive and want to protect the institution. To engage the laity, the people need to see the hierarchy putting the well-being of the Church as the priority in all decision-making. The failures of leaders to deal with and put to rest the issues of clergy sexual abuse and residential schools keeps the laity reluctant to participate in the Church.

Another commenter said that listening to everyone applies to all of us in the Church, not just leaders.

A few suggestions made by participants in listening gatherings apply to helping the local Church grow in communal discernment. Comments about the transparency and accessibility of the Archbishop here imply that developing connections and relationships can contribute to the sense of community, which is necessary to communal discernment. Another person commented that the archdiocese would benefit from more of these kinds of listening gatherings, to share about issues and concerns in a forum where we are just listening, not debating and not judging.

A concern was voiced by one person that the small number of participants in the diocesan phase of the synod reflects his own experience that parishioners are not interested in coming together to listen to one another, to make decisions about or for the Church. Their interest is in their individual and personal spirituality.

10. Forming Ourselves in Synodality

A suggestion made by several people is that our parishes build community (or re-build community in the context of the impact of covid restrictions). That is, we become more capable of “walking together” by doing just that. Parishes and the archdiocese need to bring people together, through events and activities. The people then become one community, like the one described by someone as a supportive, involved community that comes together often to share meals.

Another person suggested that people need to be encouraged to make time for the parish, share their talents and time to improve it, and help out financially.

For other people, it is by being part of Church committees, organizations and movements that we become more capable of “walking together”. For example, one person said that being a parish representative to diocesan bodies widened his or her participation in the Church and experience of being listened to by the Archbishop. Others said that membership in such organizations as the Catholic Women’s League, Knights of Columbus, and youth ministry increased participation in and understanding of the Church’s mission.

Synodality: Discerning the Holy Spirit

Discernment of the Holy Spirit in our diocesan phase of the synod was undertaken by a group of animators and priests at the Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting on May 28, 2022. Together they reviewed the collated input from listening gatherings. Over several hours they prayerfully discerned what the Holy Spirit is showing us about the current state of synodality in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan and how the Holy Spirit is inviting us to grow in synodality.

1. Current

From the input, it appears that ours is a Church divided, with two main groups who “journey together”, within their group. In one group are the people who love the Church and follow its teachings, they feel support and love in return. In the second group are the people who want to see changes to Church teaching and culture. Some feel marginalized, at best, and rejected by the Church and people, at worst, and others are those who support the marginalized. So, while there is a certain sense of “journeying together”, it is happening on either side of a clear divide.

Some people also spoke of feeling harshly judged by a parish priest or by other parishioners. The judgment may be for cultural, racial or language differences. It may involve unfortunate group dynamics within a parish community. It also may be related to personal characteristics, such as being LGBT+, being in an irregular marital situation, or otherwise finding oneself marginalized by Church moral teachings. Feeling judged and condemned has led people to hide their true selves in order to remain in the Church or simply to leave the practice of the faith until something changes.

It was noted that lay people do not feel engaged or included, or even deliberately excluded, from decision making at all levels of the Church. There is a need for structures and processes that can build synodality in our local Church.

Many people also spoke of their concerns about the impact on parish communities of aging parishioners and few younger people in the pews, so to speak. The simple loss of population contributes significantly to the anxiety the faithful feel for the future of the Church.

In our local Church, then, we might deduce from these conflicts and concerns that synodality is not widely practiced or experienced.

2. Called to Grow in Synodality

A pleasant surprise for those who reviewed the input was that people who participated in the listening gatherings said that they would like to have similar gatherings introduced in their parish. They said that these gatherings, where listening is foremost, would be best used for parish decision making and for building relationships.

The pre-synodal meeting also examined the input from the perspective of the question: “What dreams, desires and aspirations for the local Church were expressed by participants?” They identified three principal themes: everyone should feel that they belong in the Church and in the parish; we need effective action to keep youth and young adults in the parish and the Church; and, our goal should be achieving unity in diversity, especially with regards to the practice of the faith, the teachings of the Church, and how we worship.

a. Belonging:

A desire to be accepted by and belong to the Church community may be considered the cry of those who feel they are or are described by others as having been rejected by the people and/or the teachings of the Church. We believe that the Holy Spirit is inviting us to examine how synodality, that is, the practices of listening to and journeying with one another, can contribute to easing some of that pain we hear in this cry. Open minds and hearts will create a welcoming Church where all who want to be a part feel accepted by one another.

b. Youth:

Many of the participants in listening gatherings spoke of the absence of youth and young adults, from weekly Sunday liturgies and from parish ministries, events and activities. While the problem is easily described, the solutions are complex and, we believe, difficult to implement. However, passing on the faith to subsequent generations is a responsibility of the Church, of all believers. We must together better listen to and discern the movements of the Holy Spirit regarding how to succeed in this part of our mission.

c. Unity in diversity:

The principal areas of diversity that were discerned at the pre-synodal meeting are: in the practice of the faith, in personal acceptance of Church moral teachings, and in personal preferences regarding how we worship God as a community. We believe that our local particular Church is being called by the Holy Spirit to help deepen the understanding of the baptized faithful about the beauty and coherence of the Church's precepts that are the foundation of the practice of our faith, of the Church's moral teachings that give us life and not death, and of reverential and communal worship of God.

Many people also said that more and better teaching of and learning the faith would increase unity and feelings of community.

As it was phrased at the pre-synodal meeting, the Church must "embrace not assimilate". The Holy Spirit appears to be directing us to build relationships of trust with one another in our parishes and our local Church. We are being called to listen to each other; we want dialogue, not monologue. We acknowledge that our differences are deep and may appear irreconcilable, but ours is a faith of paradoxes and we believe the Holy Spirit is calling us to move with him in faith and trust, synodally.

Next Steps: Becoming Synodal (August 2022)

The above report was submitted to the Assembly of Western Bishops on June 17, 2022, which then synthesized with reports from 20 other Catholic archdioceses and dioceses of western Canada. In the Preparatory Document for the Synod, Pope Francis is quoted as having said, "It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium." Therefore, we would like to propose some areas of action that arose from the discernment that the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan could take to build and grow in synodality, at the parish level and at the archdiocesan level.

1. Building a synodal local Church

To build synodality, the discernment process revealed two principal action areas: creating structures and processes for listening and discerning; and increasing accountability for and transparency in decision-making, especially by parish priests and the Archbishop.

In parishes, Parish Pastoral Councils and Parish Finance Councils are already intended to operate in a synodal style, with attention paid to consultation and consensus. A good place to start is getting people familiar and comfortable with a synodal style for meetings and decision-making. We suggest that PPC and PFC spend some time over the next year discerning how to build on what is working and eliminating obstacles to synodality. This might mean:

- Setting aside time at meetings to listen to each person speak about an idea or concern without discussion (until a subsequent meeting)
- Regularly consulting the parish in general on agenda items
- Minimizing the use of voting to make decisions and working for a unanimous consensus of the parish priest and council members.
- Acknowledging that biases and prejudices impact our choices and developing strategies for identifying and combatting attitudes that cause division in the council and/or parish.

A large question for building synodality arises from the reality that most baptized Catholics are not directly involved in their parishes. We pose a question for the reflection and discernment of our priests and the lay members of PPC and PFC: how can we make parish life and activities attractive to people who are accustomed to finding them dull and irrelevant?

In the Archdiocese, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council also is already intended to operate in a synodal style. We encourage the Archbishop to work with the APC over the next year to make changes that will enhance its role as a consultor on identifying pastoral needs in the Archdiocese and create processes that increase the listening at APC meetings.

Increasing accountability for and transparency in decision making will need better structures and processes for consultation and communication about the decisions made. It may also require clear delegation of responsibility to an existing or new body, at the parish and the archdiocesan level, that can ensure information is shared and easily accessed, with confidentiality and privacy protected as required by Church and civil laws.

2. Growing in synodality

The discernment process revealed two principal areas for action to grow in synodality: developing strategies for giving people a “sense of belonging” and for youth engagement; and, increasing unity through better knowledge and understanding of the Church and its teachings.

Parishes should develop strategies, specific to their own communities, that will increase the sense of belonging in people. These could include establishing a “Greeters” ministry for Sunday Mass, more frequent social activities, and faith formation programs designed for specific groups (e.g. youth, families, women, seniors, etc.)

Youth engagement is a concern that many people want to see addressed in parishes and the Archdiocese. There are many factors that have contributed to youth, and young adults, leaving the

Church. Additional discernment by parishes and the Archdiocese, which should include committed efforts to consult with youth, is still needed.

When we say that we can increase unity through better knowledge and understanding of the Church, we are speaking of improving and increasing catechesis of Catholics, young and old. The Archdiocese, through its various pastoral offices and committees, should take the lead on developing plans for faith formation across the Archdiocese and over extended periods. Some the questions to pose include:

- How is this catechesis going to be conducted in the Archdiocese? Our school system is public and our resources (esp. human) are extremely limited. What is the Holy Spirit saying?
- How to synodally address the points of division (especially those about marriage, family and sexuality)?
- How to imbue a sense of “mission” as central to a Catholic or baptized identity in our people?

Many thanks to everyone involved in preparing, leading and participating in the parish gatherings for the Diocesan Phase of Synod 2021/2023: *For a Synodal Church*. Our prayer is that the faithful of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan put the lessons into practice and ever more fully continue their “journey together” in the Church.

This report was prepared and submitted by the Archdiocesan Synod Team:

Rev. Edward Eherer, C.Ss.R.

Kevin Walker

Lauri Friesen