

NOTES AND ATTENDANCE FROM THE FIRST SYNOD MEETING

Our parish sees itself as a “hands-on,” “helpful,” close-knit, somewhat older community. Our traditions of coffee after mass and potluck-style “Breakfast Sundays” embody our spirit of community. Our parish, we feel, is a legitimate community, where you really know your co-worshippers.

Parishioners are concerned that we may unconsciously be marginalizing: 1) People of color 2) The young and young families (many children attend Religious Education but not mass and abandon the parish after First Communion or Confirmation) 3) the ill and homebound.

With regard to these issues, parishioners suggested that: 1) Demographic limitations may impede our progress on diversity: few people of Latino descent reside in Appomattox County and the African American community is happily Baptist. 2) More groups and activities for children might help retain youth; more childcare might help their parents be more involved in the parish. 3) Homebound ministry could be more carefully coordinated.

On the positive side, Mac’s Kitchen—our soup kitchen and food pantry—was recognized as an important outreach that connects many types of marginalized people with the church.

Parishioners are concerned that the Church is not sufficiently listening to the young or addressing their needs. They feel that children need to be given more of a role in Sunday liturgies and we could really use a youth group. On the other side of the coin, some parishioners were concerned that the elderly may also be marginalized: for instance, if age brings wisdom, why can’t cardinals who are over the age of 80 vote in a papal conclave?

The people of the parish generally felt that the Church did not sufficiently listen to the voices of women. This conviction took several forms: Some parishioners felt that women’s

voices could be better heard simply if the laity were given a louder voice in the Church (as with this synod). Others felt that the ordination of women as deacons was necessary if the Church is to truly understand and minister to women. Still others argued for female priests.

Conflicting opinions were expressed with regard to the reality of clericalism in the Church today. One parishioner asserted that clericalism is an enormous problem and that, even in our own parish, the laity simply abandon their opinions if the priest ever says something different. Another parishioner countered that actually priests typically just try to be agreeable and keep the congregation getting along; they do not really function as an authority.

Parishioners generally agreed that small, rural communities like our own have difficulty being heard in the governance of the Catholic Church in America, which is oriented primarily towards the needs of major metropolitan areas.

The people of the parish feel that our liturgies are truly active and participatory. The music is “joyous” and the style friendly and informal. The homilies are considered to be down-to-earth and engaging. Some parishioners would like to see this informal style go even further: they would like Catholic worship to have the unstructured and spontaneous style of a Baptist or Pentecostal service.

January 25, 2022 Attendees:

John Seaquist

Sheila Seaquist

Mary Metzinger

John Metzinger

Cecilia Harmon

Scott West

Patti West

Chene Heady

Renee May

Bonnie Toth

Mary Graf

Todd Craft

Kathy Ford

Luke J. Ford

Fr. Jim Gallagher

Mary Fishback

Mary-Jane Burgess

Deacon Lou Burgess

Veronica Haney

Chuck Haney

B. Sidney Smith