**Report on the Synodality Meetings of St. Ignatius Parish, Portland, Oregon**

March 29, 2022

In October 2021, Pope Francis announced that the Church was embarking on a Synodal process in which the People of God were asked to walk together on a common path to discern where we are to go, and what we are to do in order to become the Church we are called to be. In an initial statement Pope Francis said, “...let us journey together, in order to experience a Church that receives and lives this gift of unity, and is open to the voice of the Spirit.” He emphasized the importance of communion, participation, and mission if the Church is to move forward through the synod. The two-year process began with a diocesan phase from October, 2021 to August 2022, which will be followed by a continental phase from September, 2022 to April, 2023. Finally, the bishops will convene in October, 2023 to consider ways to be a synodal church, that is, a church that has local communities coming together to make prayerful decisions regarding matters affecting their area. The goal of this process is to bring us together so that we can travel to a new place by listening to each other and by responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. In this way we can discover what our place will be in the future and set out on the path to a better world.

**Our Parish Process**

Members of St. Ignatius Parish began to meet in December, 2021, in order to plan a synodal process for our parish that would involve both prayer for guidance and serious interchanges and meaningful consideration of the path forward. The synodal planning group examined documents from our own archdiocese and other dioceses, and had members attend the Archdiocese of Portland orientation workshop on January 20, 2022. An important goal was to welcome people into the synodal process who were from diverse backgrounds, and with varied life experiences and relationships with the Catholic Church. The St. Ignatius planning group wanted to establish meetings that would have participants gather in small groups, so that all would have an opportunity to share and be heard. Parish members agreed to serve as facilitators of the small groups, and as scribes who would take notes so that the contributions of those who participated could be recorded. Because of concern with Covid-19, meetings took the form of two online Zoom sessions, and an in-person meeting at small tables of masked participants at Loyola Jesuit Center.

Through announcements at parish Masses, email invitations, articles in the bulletin, a portal on the parish website, and personal invitations, substantial numbers of people agreed to participate in this journey of discernment by filling out a form on the online portal. Participants included clergy, members of the parish, and a representative of Catholic Charities, a social service organization that has enduring partnerships with the parish. On February 28, 2022, 35 participants joined the Zoom session held from 7:00-9:15pm and were assigned to one of six smaller breakout rooms. The March 1, 2022, in-person session which was held at the Loyola Jesuit Center had 14 participants who each joined one of four small tables from 7-9:15pm. The final session, on March 12, 2022, from 9:00-11:15am included 34 participants who joined one of seven breakout rooms on Zoom. A number of people attended more than one or all of the listening sessions. All sessions began with a welcome and introduction, followed by an opening prayer. Guidelines for sharing were briefly discussed, and then smaller groups were formed so that each person would have an opportunity to participate in an exchange around three central questions. Each group was facilitated by a parish member, and notes on the discussions of each question were taken by parishioners trained to be scribes. After the sharing on questions, the small groups came together and heard a brief report on the main points raised in each of the groups. The meeting was opened with a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for unity and guidance as we journey together (“Adsumus”). Each one of the groups that met had the scribes prepare a written report that was submitted one or two days after the conclusion of the session. Quotation marks enclose language copied verbatim from the group session reports.

**Question 1: How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish community: its school, its Masses, its service organizations, its educational opportunities?**

The majority of the team reports recorded the centrality of the participants’ connections with St. Ignatius Parish, the liturgies that sustained them through difficult times, and the relationships with other parishioners that provided the community support that they were seeking. Synodal participants reported that St. Ignatius was a place that they found the personal and group connections that sustained them. Positive aspects of the parish noted by groups were women’s retreats, the men’s group, the Novena of Grace, the Ignite program of spiritual development, the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and Tibbetts House, and most homilies. One parishioner stated: “I am connected to people at St. Ignatius in a number of ways: the group I meet with every Friday for Centering Prayer, then silent prayer and discussion; the men’s spirituality group meets the second Saturday of each month; and a substantial number of groups meeting around the Just Faith projects.” A group report noted the tension that members found between fostering spiritual growth, “going deeper,” and engaging in outreach “what we do in the world."

Several synodal groups had participants who spoke to their appreciation for the education that was available through St. Ignatius School and talked of the centrality of the school to the mission of the parish and to its promotion of peace and justice. “St. Ignatius School is a major center for our parish. Parents are actively involved and are developing a possible new core of committed parishioners.” Members of one group asked a key question, “How can we incorporate school families and students into the synodal process?” Perhaps because of competing demands and the timing of the listening sessions, few parishioners with children participated. Another participant noted that the school was costly, and expressed the opinion that the focus on education should be on young adults: “Topics such as marriage, careers, children, ethics, health, and ecologically sound life styles would be of more interest to this group.”

Parish liturgies were identified as opportunities to grow spiritually along with others who participated in these sustaining experiences. Several people talked about the importance of the Jesuit approach to the liturgy that they sought in the parish. Particularly noted was the growth they experienced through the Novena of Grace, which featured reflections by Jesuits and lay people on their life stories. A participant said: “Trust in the slow work of God. The Novena of Grace is the best that Catholicism offers: it connects us through the flame of participation. We bless each other—it is vertical and horizontal. It represents the reentry into the personal Mass.” One of the few young participants with pressing life demands noted that she found the liturgy an “anchoring place” in her life, appreciating both the familiarity of the Mass across languages and cultures, and the connection that was developed through the music and sermons. As one person reported, “I am connected with the music fostered by Joseph and Grace.” In summing up the discussion in a group, the scribe wrote: “Liturgy is the work of the people and cannot be done by one person alone. People must listen, and work together as we all are part of the body.”

The parish efforts to provide supportive services and advocate for social justice were also seen as part of St. Ignatius’s central mission. As one participant stated, “We the parishioners need to realize we are the Holy Spirit talking and working for justice in the world today.” At the synodal parish meetings, there was frequent mention of service being an important part of living as a Catholic. “This also means emphasizing social justice, and working for disparity reduction for persons who have been discounted or abandoned within our society.” As one parishioner stated “We need to engage [more] with the homeless as friends and neighbors.” There was also an emphasis on promoting and sustaining current parish efforts such as working with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and collaborating with Catholic Charities on resettling refugees through our joint work at the Tibbetts House. Efforts to address such major problems as climate change and ecojustice were also frequently mentioned in groups. “It has become increasingly important to learn more, and to take on climate change and promote sustainability. For me, this is an issue that is so crucial, that I have begun to pray about it, and feel the need to join with others to take decisive actions.”

Participants in the Synodality meetings also emphasized the role of the parish in providing educational opportunities that have extended the knowledge and awareness of parishioners of major challenges and the possibilities for their involvement in needed social change. Several people mentioned the importance of the Just Faith series of programs for their own personal growth and their ability to address major social issues such as racism. These parish level efforts helped to build community as stated in a group summary: “Community” emerged as one way our parish is showing strength, e.g., liturgical life, school, work with refugees, learning groups, environmental issues and a focus on racism, inclusion, and diversity.” One person remarked that the rise of concern for diversity and women’s issues was seen as a sign of openness to change.

***What is challenging about participating fully in your parish?***

Concern was expressed in several of the reports about feelings of isolation that some people experienced as they participated in parish services and activities. One group reported “We are journeying alone rather than together. We worry about our own relationship and forget about others. You can go to church every Sunday and know no one. People need a connection to keep going. We have shoulder to shoulder worship, and we need face to face worship.” One person asked for change in the relationship with clergy: “Don’t want to be preached at. Want to be listened to. Want to dialogue. More accompaniment.”

Groups reported on the importance of women having a significant role in the parish and the Church. “The women at St. Ignatius have a voice at St. Ignatius. The pain is that women are not listened to more by the whole church. Mass and the sacraments are less available because they are controlled by priests who must be men. Women should be priests.”

Many challenges to offering and participating in parish events were identified: “…distance, health, and people are in so many different places in their faith.” Time pressures and lack of childcare were mentioned, particularly for young parishioners raising families and having work demands. A lack of peers for adults without children in the school was noted. Youth and young adult participation was also seen as problematic, since programs for younger people have depended on the willingness of volunteers to lead them. As indicated in one report, “Young adult ministry has ebbed and flowed based on someone volunteering to lead this.” A popular and well-attended program for young adults met at local public houses and focused on theological discussions, but is now defunct. This underscores the critical importance of volunteers for our many of our worship services throughout the year as well as outreach, community service, and social justice programs. More programs aren’t possible without volunteers.

Group participants remarked on the impact that Covid has had on their ability to connect with the parish and participate in its activities. Over the past two years, Covid has produced a feeling of isolation, and limited parishioners’ ability to work with others on projects. “My wife and I love the parish; the preaching has been wonderful. We have a deep hunger for discovering more relationships with our fellow parishioners. Unfortunately, Covid has limited personal contact.” One group report emphasized that “Covid has made us aware of the need for community” and noted that others contribute to our personal and spiritual development. Another group expressed concern over other activities that were valued for helping develop community that may have been discontinued due to Covid: First Friday healing Mass; Adoration; Senior Group; spaghetti dinner; daily Mass in the main Church; and gatherings after Mass such as coffee and donuts. There was also regret expressed about the parish’s loss of connection to other Jesuit ministries. These challenges are not due to neglect by the parish leadership since the drop in parish revenues and the limits on social interaction resulted in half of the parish staff being laid off.

***What prevents us from “journeying together?”***

Several group members expressed concerns about parish members not getting to know each other. Concern was discussed about “anonymity in the pews.” As one report put it: “We want to go beyond anonymity and just recognizing the people who sit near us in Mass; we want to know their names and hear their stories.” Another key difficulty noted by one participant was that once people joined the parish, and were initially welcomed, silence followed. “It would have been great if we had experienced follow up and been introduced to the parish.” It’s unclear how much the pandemic had to do with this. The website was mentioned as an underutilized resource that could include a calendar of events, and provide ways to obtain more information on the parish and its programs.

Participants revealed their difficulty with a type of clericalism in the Church that limits accountability, and seems to disrespect the laity. There was concern expressed with clericalism being ingrained in the Church. A suggestion was made that the Church should “solicit lay input into the selection of bishops.” One participant said “Pastors need to be supportive of us as adults.” Several synod groups had attendees who discussed clerical sexual abuse. “The sex abuse thing is not going away. As soon as you think everything is done, more things keep appearing. The hierarchy keeps covering things up.”

There were also reports of concern and frustration regarding the role of women in the Catholic Church which some group members stated should include increased participation in the ministry. One report put it this way: “Women in ministry— should have full parity with men, including ordination. They are equal to men in their call to holiness and service to the community. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not differentiated by the sexual characteristics of the believer.”

Group members also expressed dismay about the lack of openness in the Church regarding practices that are racist, and the exclusion of members of the LGBTQ community from fully participating. A participant expressed this opinion: “I believe the church should be open to all. The Catholic Church and clerics should allow you to be who you are and not make parts of life taboo such as members of the LGBTQ community, or other races.”

Several groups included members who talked about conservative leadership in the Archdiocese that has shifted the focus away from concerns with social justice issues, and prevented them from connecting positively. A report stated: “Some felt that the division between conservative and liberal–and the seeming bias of the Archbishop toward parishioners and clergy who share his more traditional view of Catholicism–hindered people feeling welcome or accepted.”

Parish members also revealed their ties outside the Church that led to their journeying with other Christian groups and participating in ecumenical prayer and social justice actions. A report indicated that a participant endorsed reaching across boundaries: “Journey with other groups that follow Jesus' teachings even if not part of the Catholic Church. I like that Pope Francis encourages us to journey with other groups. It has been said "You should have one foot inside the edge of the church, and one foot outside."

Finally, there were pleas to engage in planning regarding the path forward. A participant asked this question: “Where should the People of God be going? Seems to be a lack of focus. In the past there were focus groups to decide direction and focus.” Before the pandemic, a path toward service was opened up through the parish’s Ministry Fair. There was a request to reinstitute this yearly activity, and make sure that there is follow up.

***What are the ways we reach out collectively and individually to those on the margins living in poverty or social exclusion? To those who are no longer participating in Church?***

Developing a true sense of community was identified as a force for reaching out to those in need. This was seen as a challenging path to enacting values of social justice and addressing the real needs of those experiencing poverty, homelessness, and exclusion. “It is challenging to introduce yourself to strangers; we might be judged by others. It is hard to be invited into other people’s lives. We might not know who feels excluded, who is struggling financially; we might not know each other, unless we meet in groups.”

A number of people mentioned the many opportunities to become involved in providing resources to those in need through both St. Vincent De Paul Society, and their work with Catholic Charities in refugee resettlement. One group suggested inviting others in the parish to become involved in these two key ways of providing service to those in need, and also stated “We need to engage with the homeless as friends and neighbors.” A key question was asked: “Can there be more to being an open parish than just distributing food to the needy, as important as that is?” Participants also considered ways to reach out to those on the margins of society or those who are excluded.

Several groups discussed the situation of the LGBTQ community being excluded in Church environments. “To us, it feels like the church hasn’t found a way to love and support them the same way Jesus loved and supported the minorities of His time.” Another stated “I believe the church should be open to all. The Catholic church and clerics should allow you to be who you are and not make parts of life taboo such as members of the LGBTQ community.” An improvement in attitude toward those identifying as part of the LGBTQ community was called for by several group members. It is important to note there were no suggestions that St. Ignatius is unwelcoming to the LGBTQ community.

There was also recognition that some racial divides exist in our area and within the Church itself. A key question was asked in the context of our parish: “People of color sit at the back of the church, white people sit more in the front; how do we mix them up?” although, it should be added there are people of color who sit up-front, and people of color are active participants in the choir. Thus, it seems there are multiple and different perceptions co-existing. The Just Faith program on racism has been offered through the Parish, and there are currently two groups discussing materials about uncovering racism and moving toward a more inclusive and welcoming society and Church. “Just Faith helped increase awareness of injustices. It is important to be aware of the unseen and opportunities to engage and appreciate others who may be living on the margins.”

Group members also talked about the large numbers of people leaving the Church. In discussing the church’s mission to reach out to all, one person expressed the view that: “those who have been left out, i.e., those poor in spirit as well as in material poverty, are increasing. LGBTQ, childless couples, young adults, divorced, etc. The margins are shrinking if we broaden the interpretation of who in our Church is thought of as “less.” One group suggested we should “host/create conversation spaces for those who have left.”

Forming a stronger and more inclusive community is work that should never end, and needs to be part of the path forward for the parish. One group report remarked: “Community” emerged as one way our parish is showing strength, e.g., liturgical life, school, work with refugees, learning groups, environmental issues and a focus on racism, inclusion and diversity. I see a need for organizing into small communities within the parish.”

Another participant summed up the challenges ahead: “We need to be braver, not accept the status quo and be open to dialogue in uncomfortable situations. A lack of time and cultural fear impedes knowing each other better, as well as some of those under 40 and non-whites not feeling included. An atmosphere of conservatism pervades which may inhibit people becoming more active or open to hearing from others.” There was recognition of the lack of focus of the bishops on issues of racism, including in our own Archdiocese. Although Pope Francis has come out against racism, group members were concerned it has not been a focus in our Archdiocese, which dismantled the Life, Justice, and Peace office.

**Question 2: What steps might the Holy Spirit be inviting us to take in order to grow in our “walking together”?**

***What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and acceptance of others in the universal Church?***

**Leadership and restructuring roles**

Across the listening sessions, there were many reflections calling for change, in particular change for a new model of lay leadership in the Church. “I believe the Holy Spirit is leading us towards empowerment of laity” as a new, unfolding chapter of Vatican II. One group concluded “The church laity and hierarchy should be about co- creating the Reign of God now, for ALL people to have a decent life. Say “yes” to the energy that people have – let the Spirit blow through the parishes.”

On management and leadership at the parish level, it was suggested by more than one participant there needs to be more visibility, transparency, and continuity of the Parish Council. Moreover, several suggested they be elected by parish members after an appropriate time of discernment.

With regard to priestly leadership, there were numerous calls for change, partly in empathy to the plight of priests and partly in response to the need in the Church to revisit the role of women. One participant commented “The loneliness of the priesthood needs to be acknowledged” while another said, “We need a new model. Priests are over-stretched, churches are closing because there aren’t enough priests. Why shouldn’t women be priests and why shouldn’t priests marry?” Another commented that the rule disallowing women’s ordination is seen as a human choice by the Church and not one from the Holy Spirit.

In terms of local leadership and decision-making, more than one participant questioned why St. Francis of Assisi Parish service programs were curtailed without adequate congregational input, especially in light of the positive community service provided under the leadership of Valerie Chapman. More emphasis needs to be given to communal decision-making with an eye toward continuity of “good things/ good service.”

**Leadership in the Church and Archdiocese**

Eliminating clericalism is another consistently repeated concern. As one group put it, “The Church is plagued by clericalism and it is ingrained in the Church. The Church is seen as being carried on the back of the priests. It puts them on a pedestal, which is unfortunate for the Church. The hierarchy has taken over the Church.”

Another listening group proposed that the parish and diocese need to heed the calls of Pope Francis as he makes changes in the Church, and especially his call to end clericalism within the Church. They encouraged the Archbishop to be more in line with Pope Francis. Too often “the Pope says one thing and the bishops another.” It was observed that American Bishops in the 1980's emphasized social justice. Participants expressed their belief that members of the current hierarchy seem more interested in style, form, and rules than doing the work of Jesus with the poor.

One person emphasized “We need an adult-to-adult style of communication not the current ‘parent to child’ dialogue style. Listen to us. We want the people’s voices to be heard. Jesus didn’t discourage people from thinking and questioning. This is how we grow.” Added another, “Lay people need to claim a place at the table and move beyond being ‘consultants’ at the table where the hierarchy sits.” A participant offered: “the Holy Spirit talks to the people. The Holy Spirit talks to the hierarchy. But one can cancel the other. It should not be one or the other but both working together with a common mission.”

We need the Archdiocese’s support and encouragement to do the things that need to be done by making people and resources available, rather than being an obstacle. A more positive flow of information would be very helpful. Also, more emphasis is needed on what is going on at the parish level so other parishes can learn from each other.

There were numerous and strong observations concerning the top-down governing structure of the Church and, locally, the rules and restrictions originating from our archdiocese. While there are strong, positive feelings favoring parishioners and their priests with the blessing and support of the archdiocese, there are also strong negative feelings about dictates from the archdiocese and the USCCB including decisions like the changes at St. Francis of Assisi parish, restrictions on music used at Mass and more. Several participants and small groups expressed the feeling that rules were considered more important than compassion and love.

**Mass and the Sacraments**

We heard at more than one listening session calls for re-structuring Mass and possibly developing a new model for worship. At St. Ignatius’ Sunday Masses, there are few young people in the pews with seniors predominating. One participant noted, “If the old model was working, we would be flourishing. We need to make it a priority and focus in new and different ways to help recover the beauty of our sacraments and our sacramental world view for our young people.”

Regarding experiences and feelings toward the Mass, one participant said, “Mass can also be a lonely place, God may reach you, but other people may not.” Another participant observed that there is no discretionary speech at Mass except for the priest. While there is lay involvement (readers, ushers, choir, Eucharistic ministers) there is no discretionary speech as no one other than priest witnesses to lived faith. Regarding more participatory Masses. It was suggested that members of the laity could talk on Sunday about how they experience God or work together with the priests on uplifting messaging, participation, and engagement. Another suggestion was to welcome laity to reflect on readings and share in small groups during the liturgy of the word. Everyone then comes together for the liturgy of the Eucharist. As one participant put it, “Jesus is bigger than the first century.”

One listening session group noted that people who are divorced and remarried can’t receive communion, so they drop out. In the main, the Church doesn’t accept same sex unions and in some other parishes and places within the Church the LBGQT community seems pained and singled out and/or rejected.

**Social Justice / Helping Those on the Margins**

Many St. Ignatius participants at the listening sessions noted the need for the Church and parish to do more on social justice issues.

Climate change, sustainability, poverty, homeless and the unhoused, racism and sexism were all mentioned. One participant said, “Prayer can help strengthen me as I take on these social problems.” A report included the statement: “We need to promote what we are already doing with St. Vincent de Paul Society, Refugee Resettlement and do more to support not only these communities with purposeful welcoming practices but also engaging the unhoused as friends and neighbors.” A participant stated that there was a very effective office of Life, Justice and Peace in the Archdiocese and wondered why it was de-funded in September, 2020.

Several participants noted the positive impact of the Just Faith groups, helping to form attachments with others in the parish and provide ways to consider important faith-based issues through shared readings and discussion. More than one participant said we needed more Just Faith groups. It was also noted we need to address the situation of immigrant communities that worship at St Ignatius: Filipinos, Vietnamese, African Americans, and Latinos. For example, a Filipino group has organized services and activities within the parish. Perhaps there is more we could do to support immigrant communities.

On sexuality, one group asked why does the Church continue to support only abstention as the accepted means of birth control? Medically dangerous pregnancies are a very real issue.

***Where do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in your experiences of “walking together” in our parish?***

One participant said, we need to work to create the Reign of God so all people have a decent life not just the middle class.” "Let Us Dream Together" as Pope Francis calls and challenges us to “Trust in the slow work of God.” A group report recorded: “The Novena of Grace is the best that Catholicism offers: it connects us through the flame of participation. We bless each other—it is vertical and horizontal. It represents the reentry into the personal Mass.” Another expressed the view that the St. Ignatius spirituality inspires them — “We find joy and we find God. Catholics do ritual really well.” Yet another noted the Holy Spirit is active in the parish and the Pastor is very supportive.

**Youth and People on the Margins**

It was noted by several participants at different listening sessions that they were saddened that many of their children and grandchildren were either no longer practicing their faith or were inactive Catholics. This seems to be a common occurrence even for members who are devout and loving parents. It was recalled that members of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps viewed our parish life as “irrelevant.” Why?

While St. Ignatius is viewed as a welcoming parish, some LGBTQ, divorced and remarried Catholics, and women who have had abortions may nevertheless feel like outsiders or refugees, excluded from the table. Jesus listened, ate, and drank with everyone and those relationships changed people. A report stated: “The gifts ofthe Holy Spirit are not differentiated by the sexual characteristics of the believer.”

Questions about whether to get confirmed arise for students who identify as LGBTQ or whether they should join the Church. What is their place? Students can remind us of the issues of social exclusion and who is on the margins. We are called by Jesus to be with and help those on the margins. “The act of charity is inclusion,” one report concluded.

Another theme expressed was interest in respecting and engaging other spiritual and faith-based traditions and influential individuals: Ignatius, Francis, Richard Rohr, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and alternative voices. Some of this is now happening at St. Ignatius through Ignite and it’s been noted that we could probably do a better job of informing the parish and promoting what we are, in fact, doing. This might be also of interest to younger people as a way to bring them back to religious engagement.

**Question 3: How can St. Ignatius Parish and/or the Archdiocese support you as we collaborate together in building up the whole Church for the sake of its mission, especially to those on the margins?**

***Hearing together the Emmaus verse “Were not our hearts burning within us?” St Ignatius parish reports:***

First, it must be emphasized that many participants in the listening sessions expressed their love for the Church, the St. Ignatius community, and their fellow parishioners. While the listening sessions generated many calls for change, which are described in detail in this report, likewise, there are many things that are appreciated and liked. For example:

* Small group prayer and discussion for the support members give to one another and for the learning experience.
* Small interest groups where members share an interest such as the Mother’s Group and Retiree gatherings, Ignite, Renew, We the Parish, Men’s Spirituality, Mothers' group, Just Faith, Novena of Grace etc.
* Social service groups (St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Charities Social Services, Tibbetts House, etc.)
* Communion and visits for the home-bound and hospitalized, funeral receptions, and other personal services.
* Thoughtful liturgies with beautiful music, homilies, and ministries.
* The school for its academic and spiritual teachings, and for its social values.
* Jesuit Spirituality.

One synodal listening group described St. Ignatius as “a special parish because of the gift of discernment” which can be tapped to create ways for lay people to work together with the local hierarchy for positive change within the Church. This group also noted that two years ago, the Jesuits in Rome were talking about four major issues:

1. Care for the earth.

2. Work with the young, youth.

3. Work with those on the margins or edge of life.

4. Sharing the riches of the St. Ignatius spiritual exercises.

A group report expressed their aim of “co-creating the Reign of God, for ALL people to have a decent life.” That is, "Sharing God's Bounty" with all. One person stated that “we need to make a place for the hungry and poor on the margins in our parish and to minister to them. If we do not help the poor then the Eucharist has no meaning, why have a parish?”

**Community / Inclusive / Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Dialogue**

We heard in some small groups that St. Ignatius needs to refresh and re-engage in the way we welcome new people into the community, especially in light of the after-effects of the pandemic and social distancing imperatives. This applies to new parishioners, those on the margins, immigrants, those who sit at the back pews as well as those at the front. One participant noted, “We look for the parish clergy and laity to facilitate and promote opportunities for building relationships within the parish and ecumenically with other parishes and church traditions.” At the listening sessions, we heard a few “newcomers” express their difficulties meeting and creating community. Another said “Life at St Ignatius can often feel clubby.”

One group suggested we build up community through prayer and connection, integrating those together. People of all ages need community, the old and the young. Also mentioned in most, if not all, listening sessions, was the deep concern over the lack of church involvement by young people (young couples, high school and college students etc.). “We are now a church of the old. Where are our children, the young adults?”

Perhaps the Church, the Archdiocese, and the parish could set and embrace a goal, with supporting actions, to increase the number of people under 40 in the congregation.

**Social Justice**

Group reports expressed key conclusions around the importance of social justice: “We should work to be known as people who do justice.” “Focus on the corporal works of mercy as part of our baptismal calling.” “Move social justice to the heart of what is valued and acted upon in our parish and diocese.”

Our commitment to social justice can help in our ecumenism, too. The Jesuit communities are good at partnering with the secular world. We should partner with community resources in major ways such as developing an even stronger relationship with Catholic Charities. We could invite the new head of Catholic Charities, Natalie Wood, to speak at Mass. Catholic Charities is all about relationships.

During our listening session, on several occasions, participants noted the importance of Eco-justice: As Pope Francis has said: Creation is crucial. The youth are also very concerned about climate change.

Homelessness throughout the city is a pressing issue according to group reports. We need to engage with the unhoused as friends and neighbors and consider ministering to the Powell Blvd. homeless situation by supporting “small housing,” and talking with people in the tent housing. Perhaps we could help inform them of available resources and listen to their stories. What would we do if the homeless along Powell started showing up at church?

It should be added that many St. Ignatius parishioners are very engaged in secular social, justice, community and global concerns, living their lives with Ignatian identity.

As mentioned above, women in ministry— should have full parity with men, including ordination. Eucharistic ministry, preaching, and anointing of the sick (as a sacramental) can be done by women as well as men. The women working at places like Catholic Charities work relationally with each other. This is a gift for the church; women need to be listened to and participants suggested more “witness” talks by lay people (particularly women) after communion.

Several participants said they hope some of the St. Ignatius programs created by Tyler Wagner a few years ago could be revisited.

It was also suggested that we might promote and communicate better what is already being done, for example, with St. Vincent de Paul, gleaners’ group, and Tibbetts House refugee resettlement. And, as mentioned before, expanding our pastoral footprint requires more parishioner volunteers stepping-up to help staff, fund, organize, and engage.

The Church sex scandal is an ongoing issue. There is still anger for the abusers and for those who hid and denied the abuse and a desire for stronger and appropriate punishment.

***Life at the Parish level***

Let’s keep Synodality sessions going and make synodal exchanges a practice of the parish process. Build-on being a welcoming parish that embraces acceptance and change. Set a target to increase the number of people under 40 in the congregation. For some, bringing the Mass to life with a more uplifting celebration, opportunities for two-way dialog, addressing concerns of daily life, families making bread and bringing it as gifts is important. After Covid, some propose organizing communal meals of parishioners with each other and with “those on margins” (homeless, immigrants, poor in neighborhood, etc.)

Highlight our immigrant and minority communities worshiping at St Ignatius: Filipinos, Vietnamese, African Americans, Latinos and have some Masses or other parish get-togethers focused on a different cultural / country / ethnic group as a way of understanding and embracing our diversity, including a weekly Mass in Spanish.

Bring communion to the sick and develop a grief/palliative care ministry. When a loved one is on palliative care, or has died, providing a helping hand, a listening ear, advice, and assistance are invaluable.

Continue finding new ways to help people get involved, especially in small groups. Because of the pandemic some of our parish seniors stopped their monthly meetings while others have continued. It was suggested that a group of seniors get together and help to reach out to people, perhaps like the senior ministry of the Older, Wiser, and Livelier Seniors (OWLS) in St. Ignatius Parish in San Francisco. We could also have other groups meet every other month, a book group or a cooking group that would reach out to the middle-aged group who are working and want more connections to the parish, and who want to connect with those who are Catholic. Again, while the parish leaders and others can propose and stimulate such activities, parish volunteers are necessary to make it happen.

***Life at the Archdiocesan level***

Group reports offered some suggestions regarding changes needed at the Archdiocesan level.

What we need from the Archdiocese is encouragement to do the things that need to be done. Making people and resources available, rather than being an obstacle. A more positive flow of information would be very helpful. Also, more emphasis on what is going on at the parish level; other parishes can learn from each other. To change to a positive approach to things.

The Archbishop should be in line with Pope Francis. They are two very different voices. Pope Francis is giving us a chance to talk. The archbishop should accept this and really listen to us while encouraging parishes to engage and dialogue without fear or censorship. The Archdiocese could show more flexibility and allow more creativity, i.e., accepting qualified non-Catholic presenters, allowing outdoor Mass so that vulnerable people can attend safely. Too much rigidity stifles the Spirit. At the archdiocesan level, instead of leading with fundraising, lead with social justice. It was also suggested we need to help our archdiocese become more united as it goes forth in the world. Suggestions from groups included:

* Host a common conversation around corporate witness
* Discover and develop the gifts of all God’s people
* Structure a common use of resources among parishes
* Recognition of structural rigidities which excludes women, minorities
* Become one voice, fostering servant leadership.
* Make synodal listening an ongoing practice.
* Heed the call for Ecumenism presented by Cardinals Gresch and Koch in their Synodal instruction dated October 28, 2021.

***Appendix***

In October 2021, Pope Francis announced that the Church was embarking on a Synodal process in which the People of God were asked to walk together on a common path to discern where we are to go, and what we are to do in order to become the Church we are called to be. In an initial statement Pope Francis said, “...let us journey together, in order to experience a Church that receives and lives this gift of unity, and is open to the voice of the Spirit.” He emphasized the importance of communion, participation, and mission if the Church is to move forward through the synod. The two-year process began with a diocesan phase from October, 2021 to August 2022, which will be followed by a continental phase from September, 2022 to April, 2023. Finally, the bishops will convene in October, 2023 to consider ways to be a synodal church, that is, a church that has local communities coming together to make prayerful decisions regarding matters affecting their area. The goal of this process is to bring us together so that we can travel to a new place by listening to each other and by responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. In this way we can discover what our place will be in the future and set out on the path to a better world.

**Our Parish Process**

Members of St. Ignatius Parish began to meet in December, 2021, in order to plan a synodal process for our parish that would involve both prayer for guidance and serious interchanges and meaningful consideration of the path forward. The synodal planning group examined documents from our own archdiocese and other dioceses, and had members attend the Archdiocese of Portland orientation workshop on January 20, 2022. An important goal was to welcome people into the synodal process who were from diverse backgrounds, and with varied life experiences and relationships with the Catholic Church. The St. Ignatius planning group wanted to establish meetings that would have participants gather in small groups, so that all would have an opportunity to share and be heard. Parish members agreed to serve as facilitators of the small groups, and as scribes who would take notes so that the contributions of those who participated could be recorded. Because of concern with Covid-19, meetings took the form of two online Zoom sessions, and an in-person meeting at small tables of masked participants at Loyola Jesuit Center.

Through announcements at parish Masses, email invitations, articles in the bulletin, a portal on the parish website, and personal invitations, substantial numbers of people agreed to participate in this journey of discernment by filling out a form on the online portal. Participants included clergy, members of the parish, and a representative of Catholic Charities, a social service organization that has enduring partnerships with the parish. On February 28, 2022, 35 participants joined the Zoom session held from 7:00-9:15pm and were assigned to one of six smaller breakout rooms. The March 1, 2022, in-person session which was held at the Loyola Jesuit Center had 14 participants who each joined one of four small tables from 7-9:15pm. The final session, on March 12, 2022, from 9:00-11:15am included 34 participants who joined one of seven breakout rooms on Zoom. A number of people attended more than one or all of the listening sessions. All sessions began with a welcome and introduction, followed by an opening prayer. Guidelines for sharing were briefly discussed, and then smaller groups were formed so that each person would have an opportunity to participate in an exchange around three central questions. Each group was facilitated by a parish member, and notes on the discussions of each question were taken by parishioners trained to be scribes. After the sharing on questions, the small groups came together and heard a brief report on the main points raised in each of the groups. The meeting was opened with a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for unity and guidance as we journey together (“Adsumus”). Each one of the groups that met had the scribes prepare a written report that was submitted one or two days after the conclusion of the session.