

# **NELSON DIOCESAN SYNOD SUMMARY**

## **NORTH OKANAGAN DEANERY**

### **1. Companions on the Journey**

Our companions are parishioners and clergy who attend Church liturgies; ministries and service groups within the parish and diocese. We must witness our faith to all in our family, workplace and social spheres by living our Christian life. Ecumenism must be given another chance and pursued with determination. The children of God need to stand together and find a common platform to counter Secularism. As a Church we must contact the marginalised; invite and welcome those who are morally repugnant to our self-righteousness.

We need to remain in Jesus - the One True Vine - and be willing to be pruned to produce more fruit. We need to be authentic, loving, and nonjudgmental, meeting people where they are at while seeking understanding and providing assistance as needed. We need to see the saints as role models and study how they lived out their Christian faith in the world. In order to share our faith, we need to know our Catechism and learn how to defend it in a time where there is a lack of tolerance of the Christian World View. We need to learn how to accompany people better, be more accountable to each other, and humbly speak the truth in love.

### **2. Listening/ Speaking Out**

God speaks to us in many ways even in secular media that tends to persecute people of religion. Ignoring anti-religion propaganda will simply make Christians ignorant to the persecution that exists. The CCCB need to respond through the president concerning hateful and false press concerning Catholics. It is discouraging for Catholics to have to defend their faith especially when they are not properly informed.

Biases born out of ignorance will keep us from engaging in dialogue. An I-Thou mentality is never open to listening. Educating Catholics in their own faith is necessary for the confidence in listening to others.

This Synod is an attempt by the Church to listen to its citizens; to examine the health of the members of the Body of Christ. There are some who feel the Church in general is not listening. They need to be accountable. The Canadian Catholic Church has failed to challenge the divisive and misleading language of mainstream media, worldwide, with regards to the Residential School situation. Canadian Catholics bear the brunt of false and biased reporting by invested groups without any clarity by those in the Church who have the answers we need. There needs to be more opportunities for parishioners to

dialogue with each other. Shut-ins, youth and women need to have personal input in the parish through social gatherings specifically for them. Clergy need to seek support from religious brothers, sisters and lay orders within the diocese. We need to engage our professionals for specific tasks. There are some powerful lobby groups such as Pride who like to castigate the Church, labelling Catholics as closed-minded bigots. We need people with specific skills to be able to dialogue with such groups; invite them into our parishes. Parishes should have trained counsellors available to assist those dealing with abortion issues and euthanasia. Dioceses need to have pro bono legal assistance to prosecute hate speech, attacks on churches and individuals. People are needed to assist the Bishop in presenting stories to local media outlets not just Catholic Media. We need to communicate what the Catholic Church is doing in our Diocese. The Church is only perceived by the public in a negative context. Advertising in local media is necessary for people coming to live in our diocese and for those visiting for holidays. Parish social events and speakers need to be made available to the general public.

### **3. Celebration**

The Mass is central to our journeying together. It is important to come together as community to support each other in faith. Creating a spiritual atmosphere before and after the Mass is important to a more worthwhile celebration of the liturgy of the Word and Eucharist. We need to be a welcoming Church where there is a place for everyone. Education is needed to understand the prayers and postures during the Mass. The Mass must be the same approved liturgy in all Canadian Catholic Churches. Individual posturing and other personal overt acts of reverence are confusing within a Mass and should be discouraged from the pulpit. Those serving on the altar should have a passion for their ministry and a desire to follow instruction for their position. Joining a ministry is not a lifelong entitlement. Young altar servers need to be educated in the prayers of the Mass and the proper responses. Many feel you must be a holy person to participate in the altar ministries and they will not come forward in a general call to serve. A personal invitation to reflect on a ministry is necessary.

Grandparents cannot be the sole source of bringing up children to practice their faith. Grandparents feel like outsiders because their Christian values are at odds with attitudes in our present churches and society. Schools and parents need to be the ones directing children to Mass. Perhaps all Catholics need to have continuous RCIA teaching in our parishes. If children lose their enthusiasm for Christian life after Confirmation, how can they possibly help their children later in their adult life? It is not okay for adults or children to miss the Sunday liturgy for things other than health reasons. It is not okay for children to make their own decision for the entrance sacraments of the

Church. We are not Anabaptists. Families with babies and youngsters need to be made welcome and comfortable at Mass.

Each parish should initiate apostolates to be carried out by all parishioners, young and old. Home and hospital visitations come to mind. Personal contact with parishioners by hand delivering bulletins; an easy task for many hands. Everyone wants to be valued and a part of the parish.

Many clergy members are joyful and passionate about their ministry but not all are humble and growing their relationship with Christ.

#### **4. Co-Responsibility in the Mission**

We have a responsibility to ourselves in fostering our relationship with God. Through prayer we grow in confidence and courage to witness our faith to others. Every parishioner has something to offer the parish, our families, our friends and acquaintances. The Church is our source of formation in the Catholic faith. Non-Catholic Christian churches seem to do a better job of evangelizing than the Catholic Church. Priests speak of our baptismal duty to evangelize but there is no parish effort to do so. It is difficult to share our beliefs when we have some outspoken Bishops with conflicting opinions on the teachings of the Catholic Church.

#### **5. Dialogue in Church and Society**

Dialogue in the parish occurs in groups serving the parish. There is a need for clerical dialogue in general formats. Homilies need to speak the truth even if it offends people. Bishops and priests need to lead without being divisive. Personal biases and beliefs should be left out of the liturgy so that parishioners in any church receive the same message and liturgy. Public scandals need to be addressed according to Church teaching. The Vatican has been guilty of not addressing the scandal of high profile Catholic politicians. The Canadian Church allowed the Residential School propaganda to get out of hand which led to a worldwide embarrassment to individual Catholics. We have a lot more to do in assisting communities with poverty, unexpected pregnancy, abortion, the brokenness of people, women's rights and speaking out for legitimate minority concerns. We do not want nor are we equipped to get our hands dirty with the homeless, the addicted or those experiencing sexual identity crisis.

#### **6. Ecumenism**

The Vatican promoted ecumenism worldwide but failed to give guidance or formation to those attempting to implement the process. It is difficult to tell others you want to have a dialogue with them. Ecumenism does take place within groups who interact with others in performing social justice programs within the secular community.

Community churches must want to participate in seeking the treasures we have and those that we share. Too often we dwell on the things that continue to separate the churches.

### **7. Authority and Participation**

The parish priest is supported by a Parish Council made up of people representing a cross-section of the parish. A Finance Committee is also incorporated into the Parish Council. All members of the Parish Council need to be visible and available to hear individual parishioner concerns when an occasion arises. Parishioners could seek permission of the priest to speak at a Parish Council meeting. Projects involving parish funds should be open to all parishioners.

Some feel the Diocese is more of a bureaucracy that sends out directives without understanding the individual situations in a given parish. The bishop is less accessible than in previous years. All access to the Bishop passes through a secretary.

There is a sense of disconnectedness between Bishop and clergy then clergy and parishioners. There could be much better communication between ministries serving in a parish. Who is in charge of a ministry and what does the ministry support? Every group in a parish is overburdened with a few doing many roles. People need to be asked what they are doing for the parish community besides making a monetary donation.

### **8. Discerning and Deciding**

Decisions are generally made by the person in charge of the diocese, the parish or the principal of a school. Parishioners are usually informed after a decision has been taken. At times some privileged person might leak a piece of information causing informal gossip.

The typical Catholic is not aware of the decision-making process of the Universal Church. Many parishioners will attribute a decision in a parish to the pastor and not to a Parish Council. It is safe to say not all members of our parishes are represented or have a voice in decision-making.

### **9. Forming Ourselves in Synodality**

Journeying together suggests a commonality which will not come from self-formation. Catholics require formation through the Catechism of the Church. Many Catholics turn to American Broadcasters of Catholic programming for personal formation. Many of our difficulties in Canadian Churches has been caused by the conflict between American bishops and the Pope. Catholic formation belongs in our schools and in our parishes. We have people capable of teaching Catechism to children and to adults. We have people capable of offering short programs on aspects of the Catholic faith. There are many who could teach people how to enliven their prayer life though praying with

Scripture. It takes a community to raise a Catholic. Without a formation process, such as RCIA, Catholics are lost and unable to discern true Catholic teaching from the quasi-Catholic prejudice. There are also Catholic priests flirting with New Age religion concepts. Catholics do not know a proper Catholic Bible from a truncated protestant Bible. The CCCB must lead the way in forming Christian Catholics who know their faith beyond a few prayers.

## **10. Additional Questions**

The parishes seemed to discover the things they are doing and how their efforts could be improved with more helpers. In the present climate of inclusivity, there is an understanding that we are not being Christ to the modern *anawim*; the truly poor in spirit. Some individuals who are influenced by the American media want our Bishops and priests to preach homilies on political action. American politics surrounding abortion is deeply embedded in their culture and Canadians do not understand the issue is different within our own country.

It would be a shame if we do not take a serious look at what the parishes have contributed. There is information that can be considered by pastors for their parishes as well as concerns to be considered by the Bishop. There are some common threads that resonate in this deanery and perhaps in other deaneries as well. The Holy Spirit has touched some minds and souls that are interested in seeing an adjustment in how we are journeying. There are some who are frustrated by not having an opportunity to vent their frustrations with the Bishop. Parochial and Diocesan Synods might be a future for the Catholic Church. Many felt they would not see the work of the Synod implemented but hoped change would begin locally.

Many spoke of being in the dark as to the truth of the Residential School situation. The clash of Secular values and Christian values are especially difficult for practicing Catholics who no longer understand their world. There is a growing awareness of persecution of religions in Canada. We have a baptised Catholic as Prime minister who seems to enjoy persecuting all things associated with Catholic values. Ecumenism needs to be given a real effort at the local level since it may be the only way religions will be able to survive in Canada.