

DIOCESE OF
SACRAMENTO



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

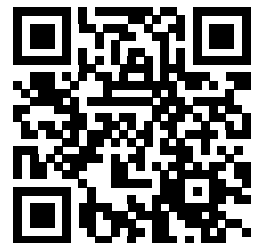


Towards an Enduring Season of Grace

Synthesis of the synodal experience
of the Diocese of Sacramento

www.scd.org/synod/report

THE MIRACLE OF THE
LOAVES AND FISHES
Giovanni Lanfranco (1624-1625)



Introduction

Last October 17, 2021, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Sacramento joined with dioceses around the world to begin the *Synod on Synodality*, which His Holiness Pope Francis formally opened on October 9 in Rome. Pope Francis' vision set forth a two-year ecclesial event designed to invite and engage the entire People of God in the synodal process. The diocesan phase precedes regional and continental phases, and the fruits of this expansive worldwide communion and participation culminate with bishops gathering in Rome, in October 2023. At that time, bishops will invoke the Holy Spirit, “the source of communion and mission,”¹ discerning the promptings made manifest in the hearts of all who answered the call to listen and learn from one another, intentionally and prayerfully, journeying together during the diocesan phase.

The Diocese's synodal process recognizes the essential elements desired by the Holy Father—*encountering* Christ in each other, *listening* with ears that hear, and *reflecting* with intention. These emphases fostered an enduring season of grace already underway in the Diocese—a season still blossoming in response to Bishop Jaime Soto's *Call to Holiness Pastoral Letter* of April 2021 (**Appendix A**) which also invites awareness, discernment and action in and among existing structures, namely parish pastoral councils, to inspire holiness.

Accordingly, parish pastoral councils assumed key roles in implementing synodal listening sessions throughout the diocese. Guided by instructional support from the diocese early in November 2021, parishes began to arrange their respective events by late November. Many other entities, likewise, prepared to convene, including, but not limited to priest and deacon deaneries; religious congregations; Catholic lay organizations and agencies; and youth organizations, schools and Newman Centers. Often hosting bodies accommodated both English and Spanish language populations.

Spiritual dimension

In identifying the Gospel reading of Matthew 14:13-21 (**Appendix B**) and the corresponding biblical fine art image of Giovanni Lanfranco's *The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes* (**Appendix C**), both a spirit of hospitality and a spirit of openness and welcome to all was awakened during the synodal preparations.

Bishop Soto's January 2022 column in the diocesan magazine, *Catholic Herald*, (**Appendix D**) relates this transcendence and invites the faithful to contemplate the scene and behold “the humanity of Jesus so that we may marvel at the divinity....” In doing so, Lanfranco's drama awakens spiritual curiosity and summons an array of virtues such as humble work, gratitude, generosity and mercy, all of which lead to abundance, and fruitfulness. Therefore, in the imitation of Jesus, all embraced a spirituality of hospitality rooted in service and love for each other—the *whisper of divinity within their own humanity*—making it the spiritual foundation for their listening.

The selection of the image intentionally ties into the National Eucharistic Revival, commencing on Corpus Christi Sunday, June 19, 2022. Lanfranco's artwork invites the viewer to identify a participant in the miracle and imagine himself or herself—at various stages of life—in the Lord's presence. In the same way, we are drawn to recognize his Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist.

Resources

The diocesan website offered easy online access to synod materials including a video message from the bishop (**Appendix E**), an overview of the process (**Appendix F**), thorough details for facilitators (**Appendix G**), and a PowerPoint presentation (**Appendix H**) which structured the listening sessions. Packets were mailed to pastors and parochial administrators with hard copies of the online materials as well as printed prayer cards for listening session participants. The beautiful card reproduced the synod prayer, four reflection questions for participants' discernment and Lanfranco's image.

¹ Address of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Opening of the Synod, Saturday, October 9, 2021.

The Diocese provided details on how to organize listening sessions within the desired timelines and recommendations for notetaking. Communications encouraged session organizers to reach out to active and lapsed Catholics, non-Catholic neighbors, and poor and marginalized neighbors. Materials also offered consistent iterations of the *purpose* of synodality—listening to each other “not so that we can better understand what we want” but rather “to better hear and understand what the Lord Jesus wants for his disciples.”²

Challenges to the synodal process

The Diocese of Sacramento encompasses 20 counties and nearly 43,000 square miles. Blessed with a multitude of ministry opportunities in rural and urban settings, the challenge always remains to reach all corners consistently with limited resources. Digital resources make communication easier although many areas were stretched to facilitate synod listening sessions inclusive of large, representative swathes of their communities.

The timeline to produce synodal listening sessions worried many amidst the realities of continuing pandemic matters. Further, the launch of listening sessions occurred at the height of other liturgical priorities prompting concerns regarding participation.

Surprises in the synodal process

Despite challenges, the Diocese of Sacramento experienced a significant outpouring of grace as the Holy Spirit moved about Northern California. Listening sessions of every size and variety (including videoconference platforms) occurred over a five-month period. More than 250 reports were submitted to the diocese via an electronic form process containing the collected experiences and dreams of thousands of synod participants. A demographic summary (**Appendix I**) offers insight into who participated.

The overwhelming response to, and participation in, the synod listening sessions inspired participants with its context of spiritual conversation. The synod motivated a widespread desire to integrate the synodal process as a means for the ongoing mission.

Gathering fruits

A diocesan synod team of 10 individuals consisting of clergy, religious, chancery staff and educators carried out the initial synthesis of communal spiritual discernment, gathering the fruits of participants’ prayer and reflection. The team’s work recognized themes and gave insight into the experience of the living Church in Sacramento particularly pertaining to life-giving aspects as well as challenging realities. They further gleaned ideas and inspirations regarding growth and engagement, and the overarching significance of the synodal process. The team’s product encouraged the final phase of discernment which invited three existing diocesan bodies to gather and contemplate the promptings of the Holy Spirit, leading to the final synthesis. These included members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Presbyteral Council and the Deacons Council.

Journeying Together, Always in Season

As the Church moves through time with reverence for liturgical seasons, the synodal listening sessions in the Diocese of Sacramento similarly experienced the rhythmic movement of cycling seasons, and the Holy Spirit at work. Conversations celebrated life-giving truths and beauty as easily as they transitioned to unreconciled challenges or concerns. Subtly, the journeying turned, as seasons turn, to reveal the promptings of the Spirit, the blossoms on the tree, and the essence of synodality. With a keen awareness of the need to grow through these seasons, synod participants imparted their Advent and Christmas, their Lent, Triduum and Easter, and most assuredly their Ordinary time.

² Bishop Jaime Soto’s video message to the faithful on the diocesan phase of the synod, October 17, 2021.

Further discernment and synthesis of these thoughts, ideas and dreams from the listening sessions cast light on *discipleship* and *mission*. The perceived independence of singular voices revealed an unambiguous unity if not shared responsibility for renewal, holiness and faithfulness to Christ and his Church. Similar and disparate expressions came together respectfully, honoring the interconnectedness of the two-pronged journey of the missionary disciple that is: 1) with each other as the People of God, and 2) as the People of God with the entire human family.

The baptized Christian journeys forward by the grace of the Holy Spirit on a perpetual mission of encounter and accompaniment, inviting others to unite in community with an unreserved readiness to send forth new disciples to make disciples of all nations.

“We are called to open ourselves more and more to the action of the Holy Spirit, to offer our unreserved readiness to be instruments of God’s mercy, of his tenderness, of his love for every man and every woman and especially for the poor, the outcast, and those who are distant.” – Pope Francis, address, May 17, 2013

Journeying Together is Life-Giving

Participants first pondered life-giving aspects of the Church while contemplating Mark’s Gospel with consideration for how Jesus nourished his disciples and vast crowds.

In translating this scene to today’s Church, four common themes emerged pointing to (a) the importance of an ever-flourishing personal practice of faith, from which grace flows outward, and (b) the fruits of an intentional, public expression of faith made visible in participation, communion and mission—in effect, faith lived and focused on service to God and the larger sphere of humanity.

Sacraments

Lanfranco’s painting not only depicts the miracle of the loaves and fishes but also Jesus as the bread of life. It prompted ardor for the Eucharist, the bread for life, nourishment for the journey, and the source and summit of the Catholic faith.

“It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others,” Pope Francis implores at the onset of the pandemic calling for an intentional choice, “a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not.”³

Listening sessions confirmed a profound love and choice for the sacramental life describing it as life-giving and vital to the perpetual renewal of a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Eucharist, reconciliation and the anointing of the sick were cited often. As wellsprings of grace and healing, the restorative gifts of the sacraments during the height of the pandemic created profound awareness and appreciation for the real hunger and thirst for Christ in the world amid a season of earthly storms and darkness. Participants stressed how sacraments empower the faithful with the grace of Christ’s own life and infuse their abilities as disciples to enter the world, giving life *themselves* through service and communion.

Devotions and sacramentals such as Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Rosary, among many other practices, add to the ways and manners in which Catholics grow closer to Christ.

Faith Formation

The ministry of faith formation also emerged as prominent among listening session participants who recognized it as highly valuable in transmitting and building up the faith, especially among youth and young adults. This sense of value seemed rooted in personal experiences, and the life-giving understanding and knowledge derived from

³ *Christ in the Storm*, Pope Francis *Urbi et Orbi*, March 27, 2020.

embracing formation opportunities.

A clear and deep yearning exists to honor the mystery, share the faith and elevate it in the hearts of all humanity. Listening sessions revealed how many are encouraged by efforts to reach out to families in support of the domestic church and to offer meaningful youth and young adult activities and retreats. Many acknowledged the Word of God and preaching as life-giving, too, suggesting the catechetical nature of preaching and its effective power in answering the need and desire of the people to be fed.

Participants also see faith formation as the life-giving link to adult children who no longer go to church or practice any faith. More and more young people express no interest in the gift of faith. While many young people may have experienced an ecclesial journey with the Church, many such journeys did not serve to develop personal relationships with Christ or bridge sacraments to an active faith practice.

Community

With an intentional and growing interior faith, inspired by life-long catechesis, the disciple draws from the personal, interior journey to enter into communion with the Body of Christ, participate in community and journey forward in mission. This interplay and harmony live in community and represent a vital life-giving aspect of the Church in Sacramento.

Listening session participants recognized and treasured the rich diversity of their parishes best described as cultural and ethnic diversity but also geographic and socioeconomic. Many expressed gratitude for the sense of welcome and hospitality they find in their own parishes. Yet, as heartening and pastoral as hospitality may be internally within a given parish, many believed community could be enriched with greater attention to outreach—a conscientious focus on welcoming each other but *also* welcoming “new people, visitors, people unlike me, people to whom we have not yet been hospitable.” Community members grow in Christ by examining areas of potential neglect, oversight and opportunity for welcoming hospitality.

Participants distinguished hospitality from inclusivity indicating a necessity for *greater* inclusion of all cultural, racial and language groups as well as the marginalized, and individuals identifying as LGBT. This outward orientation represents more than kindness on the continuum of inclusivity, proceeding to accompaniment and mutual sharing. It surfaced as an important element of journeying together as modeled by Jesus in Lanfranco’s depiction. The scene reveals, and synod participants noticed, everyone is “in a different place, all wanting something from Jesus, but they don’t know what or how to get it.” Community experiences breathe the life of a merciful Jesus into humanity.

Service

Prominent in session discussions, the topic of service to the poor and needy is life-giving for both the recipients and those who give of their time, talent and treasure. The dire circumstances of recent years inspired many to stand firm in their commitment to support and contribute to the Church and programs aiding those less fortunate. Many recognized the good work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Knights of Columbus and highlighted service as the epitome of the missionary disciple journeying with the entire human family. In this sense, service is seen as the tangible extension of the community’s love lived out in charity.

Many participants also shared their joy in offering their gifts or charisms as lay people to serve the Church and facilitate unmet needs for the parish and its people. This, too, answers the call of discipleship ensuring the well-being and function of the parish community so that it can live its mission through every season.

Journeying Together is Challenging

Listening session participants also brought their burdens and challenges to Jesus in this synodal encounter. These unreconciled concerns face the Church and its people locally causing tensions and heartache as people seek the peace of Jesus the Good Shepherd for themselves and those whom they love.

Often the burdens present barriers to missionary discipleship in the broadest sense and difficulties for ministerial leadership and governance in a pastoral sense. In humility and respect, listeners opened ears and hearts to real, daily problems and sought “the newness that God wants to suggest” via the grace of the Holy Spirit. Three prominent themes emerged.

Competing/divergent societal realities

The challenge to “be in the world but not of it” poses conflict and friction in one’s mind, in the family, in the workplace and in the pews. Varying philosophies, systems, secularism and fear draw attention away from Jesus, often thwarting holiness. More than mere distractions, the messiness of life is “where we live” as people face the burdens imposed by busy, imbalanced lives, and the often resented need to juggle work and family. Many may succumb to the pull of technology and social media which promises instant gratification and placating escapes as it also incites relativism and steals away time and devotion from the higher goods of silence, patience and prayer.

In the midst of the pandemic, struggles with the interventions of secular government and its influence prompted divisiveness within the Church, the Body of Christ, and the People of God. As parishes worked to respond and serve in a chaotic climate, the pandemic exposed the Church’s vulnerability in its ability to meaningfully connect with the faithful when in-person community Mass became inconsistent. Debate and even anger about closures, liturgical limitations and the Church’s response to the pandemic continue to linger prompting disparate viewpoints on safety and re-integration. The question of secular politics converging with the Church and its teachings remains problematic in the context of religious freedom.

Similarly, secular views and incursions on prominent pre-pandemic Church priorities remain concerning: the respect for life topics, for example, have been diminished, as have conversations on immigration and restorative justice even though the pandemic has made them no less important or real.

Profoundly, a Church responsible for “changing the world” rather than a “world changing the Church” resonated. Emphasis on a compassionate Church resolute on “not watering down the truth or compromising to make people happy” came through as paramount.

Identifying with the Catholic Church

An ambiguity of living and sharing the faith joyfully and defending the Catholic faith presented a complex struggle. Some participants described being Catholic as “a burden that is indefensible.” Prominent issues perpetuating the problem include: (1) the handling of the clergy abuse crisis, (2) the lack of roles for women in the Church and the resulting perception that the Church is out of touch, and (3) the contradiction between Jesus’ teaching of love of neighbor with some Church teachings regarded as “not welcoming” to vulnerable and marginalized.

Discernment posited that deterioration of Church credibility and moral accountability points to these painful realities yet also suggested *more* underlying causes not articulated as clearly. Indeed, headline news and seemingly paradoxical standards become upfront, top-of-mind fodder at the expense of deeper, personal anguish. For example, our emphasis on the dignity of human life can appear to be inconsistently and singularly applied along politically partisan lines, when in truth, the dignity of human life encapsulates all life issues from the womb to the tomb.

The strength and participation of women surfaced as a counterpoint citing their “generosity, responsibility and trustworthiness as they step up to plate in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church.” Conversely, a call for more men to be involved in living out their spiritual leadership of the family as husbands and fathers came forth

hinting that the activation of *all* the laity—men and women—is needed.

A lack of trust, therefore, looms over many as they try to identify with the Church today. Many fear that traditions and rules are more important than unity and love of neighbor. Participants lamented that the loudest messages are “what people cannot do or cannot be.” Instead, a focus on proclaiming the mission of the Church, its mercy and saving grace should prevail.

Rebuilding trust is viewed as essential, citing a need to do so with practicing Catholics as much as with those who have lapsed or fallen away from the Church, and with those who yet may be evangelized.

Questions of worthiness and consequent relational effects

Many burdens center on engrained feelings of unworthiness that either stem from self-doubt, or negative Church experiences and perceptions. Every expression further causes deep worry and emotional pain due to the resulting effects on relationships.

Parents and grandparents worry that their children and grandchildren have lost their faith and that they may never come back to Mass. They question whether they have failed as parents. Participants feel ill-equipped to share or defend their faith when pressed by their children or society in general.

Some participants who identify as LGBT feel they have been placed on the outside of the Church and that their gifts are unwanted, as was also the case for many divorced and remarried Catholics without a declaration of nullity. Other groups, such as single parents, immigrants and people of color, suggest a lack of opportunities to contribute to the life of the Church.

Many participants express compassion and worry for people who feel unworthy to approach the Eucharist implying that bad experiences in confession or preconceived notions of Church teachings keep them away. Participants are saddened that some feel judged inside the Church and, therefore, “outside” the Church becomes more appealing.

Synod participants sense that judgment seeps into other aspects of Church operations, too, with parish leadership possibly alienating people with closed-minded attitudes and beliefs, or by an inability to invite and welcome participation. Therefore, left on the margins of parish life, some give up.

Some cite judgmental thinking in the Church as the easy reason to leave, choosing avoidance over action. It becomes easier to avoid difficult conversations than to make the conscientious decision to know someone’s situation and humanity.

Recognizing the awareness among many participants of being “ill-equipped,” or having preconceived notions or perceptions of Church teachings, a clear need for catechesis for *everyone* arises. And while the first instincts do tend to be catechesis and conversion, the wisdom of *Jesus* teaches us to heal first, to love first, fostering relationships with all the children of God in tune with the grace of the Holy Spirit. In so doing, helping people belong so that they can come to believe.

Any sense of alienation caused by parish leadership or clergy also requires attention to ensure cultures that reach out to those who have fallen away or who feel marginalized, meeting people in their practical lives with a spirit of welcome and hospitality. Pastoral ministry should strive to reconcile and guide humanity across the daily thresholds of conversion with sensibilities for every person’s unique experience (with added care not to lump together groups with vastly different experiences and needs) while also praying for renewal and grace.

Matters of unworthiness bring the Church to a place of deep humility, and therefore a place of immense gratitude for the grace which moves us forward in discernment. As we grow as Christians, our capacity to love others must be compellingly attractive to the extent that others *want* to come and learn about Jesus.

Fundamental Findings

Journeying together with the Holy Spirit who leads us to growth, engagement

The spiritual conversations of the people of the Diocese of Sacramento signified a great season of discernment and produced bountiful fruit. Although separated by great distances and time, perspectives and experiences, in diversity, the Holy Spirit moved about, inspiring unity in five key areas that encourage discipleship and mission. As disciples who grow and engage in holiness and mission, the Holy Spirit breathes upon us the necessary grace to build up and strengthen all that is found to be life-giving. At the same time, the Holy Spirit empowers the Church to face the burdens and challenges of humanity together with compassion, hospitality and love.

Keys to growth and engagement

- **Prayer** – A pronounced desire and intention to grow in prayer and pray more. A strong desire for Sacramental encounters that bring the Lord Jesus closer to his disciples.
- **Faith sharing and formation opportunities** – An appeal to join together to share one’s faith—*giving testimony and receiving formation*—at parish and deanery levels as well as in virtual formats.
- **Scripture** – A need to break open scripture in small Bible study groups to learn and know and grow, and hopefulness that Bible study opportunities may be plentiful.
- **Service** – An aspiration to serve others in ministry.
- **Trust in God** – A longing to grow in trust of God.

The prominence of these hopes and dreams for the Sacramento church among all listening sessions suggests a common vision for the ways in which people know they can grow and engage more fully. Upon further discernment, recommendations concerning how the local Church can facilitate these encounters may be found in the Conclusions section of this report.

Journeying together in consultation, collaboration, community

The synodal process touched participants in many ways garnering praise and support for future opportunities to come together, listen and share again.

Described as a **spiritual exercise**, many found their spiritual conversations centered on God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Participating in the listening sessions offered joy, hope and inspiration for the future with people seeing the methods of sharing, listening and dialoguing as significant.

Beyond the spiritual aspect, others saw value in the **community-building** virtues of the synodal process. Participants saw the listening sessions as welcoming, safe, and non-judgmental environments. Many discovered they were not alone and felt comforted to learn of shared experiences, stressors, and struggles, including the need for continued trust in God. Participants spoke of feelings of “connection with one another” and “belonging to the Body of Christ.”

Finally, the synodal process crystalized **discipleship and hospitality**. Participants discovered a new vitality and desire to be engaged in their faith—to lead by example, sharing one’s gifts and talents, especially in service to those in need. They also recognized the need to be welcoming and inclusive inside the Church and beyond the parish walls as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, towards an enduring season of grace.

Conclusions

The synodal experience for the Diocese of Sacramento reintroduced a classic methodology for *how* the Church consults with her people in order to make well-discerned decisions. Listening to one another informs decision-making, inspires compassion and invites the community to engage in the Church. The result can be greater effectiveness in

administration and leadership while also creating meaningful spiritual development among the People of God.

Synodality shows us that people, pastors, and parishes must all partner and journey together as Church, receptive to the grace of the Holy Spirit but also as generous participants in that grace. It is in this communion and participation that we listen and hear the voice of Christ—listen attentively and hear Jesus and what he is calling us to.

Here the Church identifies how it may facilitate spiritual encounters and translate synod findings into vital commitments to grow in Christ and engage in his Church.

1. A spiritual way of life

Already recognized as powerfully life-giving, a “healthy” *community* requires ongoing attention. The parish community is where growth and engagement are made possible, personal and spiritual. Parishes focused on creating a revived sacramental culture intent on spiritual growth to explore the gamut of resources available that best align with expressed spiritual needs, including support services and counseling with Catholic sensitivities.

It is the community that invests in persons that also fosters personal relationships with Jesus Christ through the sacraments, catechesis, and works of charity. People hunger and thirst for meaning which is only satisfied in the peace of Christ. Encounters with the Holy Spirit bring people out of the noise to a place of peace.

Ultimately, thriving cultures of participation, communion and mission bring individuals to a place where an instinctive trust in God develops more fully and permeates throughout lives.

2. An environment that is welcoming and hospitable

Community is most threatened by a lack of welcoming spirit and hospitality. Parishes, ministries and individuals must examine the welcome mats at every threshold, and more importantly, the welcome mats in every heart. Neglect and oversight can be corrected in favor of training the senses to identify opportunities to welcome people and render hospitality with warmth, outreach and guidance.

Families and parents should feel supported in their joys and sorrows, and in their celebrations and their struggles to the degree that the parish feels like a “second home.” This second home supports the domestic church in creative ways so that today’s family can avoid a loss of faith among its children and feel confidently grounded in Christ so that children, youth and young adults “own” their faith and grow their personal relationships with Jesus themselves becoming stewards of the New Evangelization and missionary disciples.

Every parish must honestly assess how it lives out the love of Jesus toward parishioners who may feel left out or ignored, ministering to their needs so they too may experience the fullness of faith. Care must be taken to welcome any individuals who may feel discouraged from participating and contributing due to race, ethnicity, other identity issues, family & generational issues, or country of origin. Those who find themselves in challenging or lonely circumstances such as the elderly, single parents and divorced Catholics, or those who have left the Church or fallen away, all must experience the welcome embrace and support of brothers and sisters in Christ who serve as ministers of hope.

Recognizing a “post-Christian” reality, the Church faces condemnation for lacking inclusive environments. Invitations can be extended to those who feel alienated and who seek to know Jesus through his Church. The Church in fidelity to Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Sacraments *exists* to share Jesus’ gift of salvation.

3. A focus on intentional community-building

Quality, intentional programming for the spectrum of ages represents the surest vehicle for delivering communal opportunities for prayer, faith sharing and formation, Bible studies and meaningful service opportunities. Such offerings may segment populations, supporting every season of life, every milestone and every threshold towards a perpetual renewal in faith. A special concentration on programming for youth and young adults is paramount.

Prayer naturally exists in liturgy and various prayer groups. Emphasis also can be given to developing personal

prayer in individuals, examining methods of prayer, and the important elements of quiet listening to God and subsequent discernment.

Faith sharing and faith formation, and Bible studies can include face-to-face and virtual meetings accommodating varying objectives. Attention to training becomes crucial in order to stir the fire of faith among participants. Directing energy to (1) deploy creative methodologies for faith formation and (2) find those with gifts and talents in imparting the faith produces fruits of inspiration and conversion.

Service opportunities may exist in standing ministries designed to help those in need within the parish or local community. They also might align with other community-based efforts to reach out to the poor and marginalized. Service manifests in the sharing of one's gifts, talents and charisms in other fruitful ways, too, which support the parish pastorally, organizationally, creatively, or in evangelizing. Living, witnessing and sharing Christ with others in service effectively shapes generous hearts via humility and self-emptying for true transcendent happiness.

Consideration must be given to the different advantages and disadvantages of parishes each with unique circumstances relating to staffing and financial resources. A parish-based model for all programming may not always work. Regional deaneries and diocesan involvement can create programming partnerships, strengthening the entire community. Above all, attention to programming does not necessarily mean an amplification of work but rather intentional and qualitative outreach consistent with community needs.

Appendices

Appendix A [Bishop Jaime Soto's *Call to Holiness* Pastoral Letter of April 2021 »](#)

Appendix B [Selected scripture reading: *Matthew 14:13-21*](#)

When Jesus heard of it, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." [Jesus] said to them, "There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here." Then he said, "Bring them here to me," and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

Appendix C [Selected Biblical image »](#)

Appendix D [Bishop's column, Catholic Herald Magazine of Sacramento, Jan./Feb. 2022 »](#)

Appendix E [Video message/Bishop Jaime Soto/opening of the diocesan phase of the synod »](#)

Appendix F [Overview of the synod process »](#)

Appendix G [Instructions for facilitators »](#)

Appendix H [PowerPoint slides for listening sessions »](#)

Appendix I [Summary of participants and characteristics: December 2021 through April 2022](#)

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Sacramento experienced notable participation in the various listening sessions which occurred throughout the Diocese within a five-month period.

Instructions encouraged session notetakers to capture general information about

participants; that is, how many people attended, whether they were Catholic or non-Catholic, and an unspecific age capture. Many groups jotted down additional individual characteristics to document their respective experiences more fully.

Collectively, through these informal methods, the Diocese presents an overarching description of participants to tell the story of its synodal path. An important caveat must be recognized: *this summary is not intended to be a data analysis or a statistical representation of participants but simply a way to gain perspective and understanding of who participated.* Quantitative information presented here cannot be generalized accurately to the larger regional population or regional Catholic population.

Submitted Synodal Listening Session Reports: 251

Belief

- **Active Catholic participants:** Over 2,050 people self-reported as Catholic. Within this group many further identified as “converts,” and “returning Catholics.” A small number of participants (less than 35) still identified as Catholic but reported being non-practicing.
- **Catechumens:** There were many participants engaged in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
- **Non-Catholic Christian participants:** Many other Christians joined in the synodal process including several pastors from other denominations. Other faith practices represented were Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Church of Latter-Day Saints, Baptist, Unification and other interfaith or non-specific reports.
- **Non-Christian:** Some listening sessions reported participation from Jewish and Bahá’í neighbors.
- **Non-believers:** Some participants identified as agnostic and some self-described as “non-religious.”

Catholic ministry involvement

Many Catholic participants volunteered their ministry involvement. Some recurring ministries on the list included choir, lectors, altar society, catechist, youth minister, young adult minister, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, sacristan, and Filipino ministry.

Age

People who attended were as young as 13 and some were over 90 years old. Some Catholic schools arranged for 8th-grade classes to participate. Many youth groups convened as well as many college-aged gatherings. Many submissions consistently reported participants most often falling between the ages of 40 and 70.

Race/Ethnicity

Submissions varied greatly in capturing race or ethnic information. Categories mentioned included African American, Asian, Brazilian, Caucasian, Filipino, Hispanic, Latino, and Native American.

Other descriptors

Many notetakers reported a range of descriptors used by participants during listening sessions to further describe their experiences, involvements, environments or situations. These descriptors are listed below in no order.

- Parents
- Homeless
- Clergy
- Women in leadership
- Marginalized
- Deacon
- LGBT, Lesbian, Gay
- Divorced
- Youth group
- LGBT ally
- Grieving loss of spouse, child
- Wildfire victim
- Graduate
- Widowed
- Migrant
- Business leader
- Disabled
- Relocated to Sacramento
- Student
- Religious
- Staff
- Teen

Listening sessions host/facilitator types

In-person meetings occurred most often although several sessions took place via online meeting platforms. Diocesan parishes often hosted synod sessions but many other groups provided the organization and leadership for people to gather as indicated below.

- Parish Pastoral Councils
- Faith formation parents
- Newman Centers
- Priest deaneries
- Young adult groups
- Catholic Charitable Organizations
- Deacon deaneries
- Religious congregations