

**Pastoral Reflection**  
**7<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time**  
**February 20, 2022**

As you know the Archdiocese is undertaking a Strategic Planning Process that will directly involve all Catholics who care to participate. At the same time every diocese in the world is engaged in what is called "the synodal process". Here in St. Louis there is a small task force that has been assigned to this work because the Archbishop has to send in a report to the Vatican this summer. Pope Francis has initiated this process which could revolutionize our church. He, like no other Pope, wants the people to have a voice and not just the bishops. Pope Paul VI initiated the calling of synods but those meetings were for bishops. This synod is called "the synod on synodality". The Pope wants all to listen to one another. Synod means to "journey together". Let's face it we haven't been "journeying together" we have been given marching orders from the hierarchy. If you have time check out what the German Church has been doing. They are calling for major changes in the church especially in its approach to sexuality. Dioceses have set up all kinds of listening sessions and one diocese that I know of has volunteers calling Catholics and asking for their input. Our Archdiocese is not expending much energy on this "synodal process" because of "All Things New" process.

However, there are two opportunities that I know of that are worthwhile. One session will be held at Aquinas Institute on March 12<sup>th</sup> from 9:30-11:00. This listening session is designed to elicit meaningful feedback from people who have left the church and/or feel left by the church. The Pope wants to learn how the church can better live its mission. I am sure that you know people who have left the institutional church. Please invite them to this gathering. This is not an attempt to lure them back but rather a sincere effort to listen. I know the person who is organizing this meeting for the Archdiocese and he can be trusted. I should have a flyer sometime next week and it will be distributed. I ask you to encourage folks to participate. It is time for the truth to be spoken and heard. Offer to accompany your relatives and/or friends who have been hurt by the institutional church and/or feel no attraction to the church.

The second opportunity may occur here at St. Cronan's. We have been asked to host a listening session for those in the LGBTQIA community. This meeting is in the planning stages but we are hopeful that the LGBTQIA community can have their say. Again, it is time for the truth to be out in the open. The Pope wants to know why some of the community have stayed in the church and what obstacles are faced in their involvement in church life. He also wants to know why many have chosen to leave the institutional church. I am hopeful that we will be able to host this opportunity.

There will be specific questions that people are asked to reflect on and comment on. The actual "synodal process" has 10 distinct areas for consultation with numerous questions. The process is quite comprehensive and it is a shame that our Archdiocese will not be able to devote more attention to this monumental endeavor. But the two opportunities that are mentioned above are extremely worthwhile. We will keep you posted.

Be safe and be blessed,  
Fr. Jack (he/him)