

Name of Parish: Our Lady of Fatima (OLF), Coquitlam

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Name of group with whom the Synod discussion was held:

Individual Volunteers, a few Knights of Columbus members and Our Lady of Fatima School teachers

QUESTION 1: What helps or prevents you from being active in the Church's mission?

WHAT HELPS:

1. Strong Sense of Community

- Welcoming parish
- Clear and open communication between priest and the faithful
- Importance given to intergenerational connections
- Ministries, support groups, fellowship

2. Use of Technology (Zoom, YouTube, Live stream, podcasts, social media), parish website and bulletin

- Time saving
- Easy and fast dissemination of information
- Networking with other parishes and church groups
- Accessibility during the pandemic
- Allowed small groups to meet and pray together

3. Spiritual Formation Programs

- RCIA
- PREP
- Lectio divina – teaches parishioners to discern God's will

4. Presence of Parish Schools

- great opportunity for evangelization to students and their families
- Parents' active role in the life of their children
- Great opportunity to give children active roles in the liturgical life of the Church

5. Strong Pastoral Leadership

- Welcoming, relatable, transparent
- Fosters relationships and sense of belonging across cultures in the parish
- Empowers the laity
- Knows how to delegate
- Knows the faithful

- Approaches, invites and encourages parishioners to be actively involved in ministries
- Relevant and dynamic homilies

WHAT PREVENTS:

1. Work-Family Life Pressures

- Reluctance to commit to Church ministries/activities due to work or family demands
- Young parents with young children miss on the Church services because they have to attend to the needs of their young children
- Parishioners who work on shifts and weekends cannot make it to Church
- Confession schedules NOT working for everybody; also elderly cannot wait in cue standing up (physical limitations)

2. Lack of Formation Programs (Spiritual and Pastoral)

- Adult formation (e.g. bible study)
- Spiritual Education Programs for all ages and stages of Life
- Marriage and Family Life programs (very important!)
- Life direction/ Spiritual direction
- Lectio Divina – to teach parishioners how to discern God’s will
- Meeting basic needs of the youth especially after Confirmation
- Powerful testimonies and witnessing
- Lack of knowledge of the Church’s mission
- Archdiocesan and local programs on how to evangelize
- Outreach and service programs (for singles, maturing adults, seniors, lonely, shy, isolated, afflicted and many others)
- Building the interior life (having a personal relationship with Jesus)
- Spiritual Accompaniment

3. Need for Community Building

- Mass times not allowing interaction in between masses
- Physical limitations for fellowship (inaccessible parish halls, small foyer, lack rooms in the parish)
- No welcoming committee and greeters
- New parishioners not welcomed at Mass
- No Cell groups, support groups (for youth, young adults, maturing adults, singles, couples seniors, LGBTQ and other needed support groups)
- More Parish events/ activities
- Ministry fairs to encourage volunteerism
- Conversation Circles to continue (to include especially the youth)
- Ministry to the shy, isolated, lonely and the elderly

4. Need for Transparency and Accountability

- The Church needs to be open and transparent in giving information on social, moral-ethical and pastoral issues like abortion, gay marriage, residential schools, poverty, loneliness, assisted suicide, shifting views on identity, gender and sex, spiritual homelessness, spiritual isolation, relativism, consumerism, etc.
- We need to recognize our faults and be accountable for how we contribute to the problems.
- There also has to be a clear and solid lay education on the defending position of the Catholic Church on the relevant issues the faithful are facing. Majority of us struggle in defending our faith against those who question “Why do we remain Catholic despite all the abuses of the Church?”
- There should also be transparency and accountability on Church finances

5. Role of the Priest/s

- Sticks to the “letter of the law” rather than the “spirit of the law”
- Lack of listening skills
- Not approachable
- Not open to feedback
- Judgmental
- Lacks transparency

QUESTION 2: What areas of the Church are we MISSING or NEGLECTING?

1. Communication Breakdown in Evangelization Plans

- Lack of clarity in the Church’s mission. We have to have MISSION-DRIVEN parishes
- Lack of consistency and sustainability in implementing archdiocesan programs in the local parish
- More powerful testimonies and witnessing from the laity
- Emphasis on creating awareness and knowledge of socio-political and moral-ethical dilemmas like LGBTQ, gay marriage, abortion, indigenous issues, assisted suicide, spiritual homelessness, human trafficking, sexual exploitation
- Clear and laymanized responses of the Church to these current issues. Our youth especially, needs to hear this.
- More conversation circles in the parish level
- Re-catechesis on making the Eucharist the center of parish life and promoting other sacraments.
- Lack of dynamic speakers, teachers, pastoral leaders, especially priests.
- Lack of radiating JOY in the RESURRECTION in Church’s teachings
- Not fostering roles of the laity in Church’s mission

2. Pastoral and Spiritual Formation and Support

- Continuing Adult formation
- Awareness and knowledge of socio-political and moral-ethical dilemmas and a laymanized, clear response of the Church to these current issues
- Lay apostolate
- Building roles of the laity to support the clergy
- Recognition of gifts (esp. talents) that parishioners bring and use them for the Church's mission
- Spiritual Direction
- Discernment Formation through Lectio Divina
- Promoting Marriage and Family Life
- Meeting basic needs of the Youth / Formation Programs after confirmation
- Support groups for all ages and needs
- Programs that seek out the poor, afflicted and lonely
- Catholic Social Teachings
- Finding one's own identity in Christ
- Ongoing conversation circles

3. Lack of Relationships/ Connection and Sense of Belonging

- Not giving importance to intergenerational connections
- Lack of Church activities that bring peoples together
- Strong leadership of priest and pastoral leaders needed
- Lack of physical facility in the church to allow activities to happen (e.g. welcoming foyer, accessible parish halls especially to the kids and the seniors)
- Need for parents to take active role in the lives of their children
- More Youth programs and activities (e.g. Youth bible study groups, youth witnessing, sports, questions about life conversation circles, mentorship, role modeling, buddy programs, youth choir, youth masses and anything that promotes accountability).
- No ministry to address spiritual homelessness and social isolation

QUESTION 3: What particular issues in the Church do we need to pay more attention to?

1. Formation (Spiritual and Pastoral)

- Must be ongoing for different ages, different stages of life and different pastoral needs. We need to strengthen the interior lives of the faithful.
- Build all areas of relationship with God – intrapersonal (our relationship with God within us), interpersonal (our relationship with God in others) and meta-personal (our relationship with God in the Church and in societal structures)

- Adult formation
- Our search for Identity (especially the youth)
- Making Eucharist as the center of parish life and promoting other sacraments
- Bible study
- Lectio divina (discernment) and the importance of prayer
- Powerful testimonies of how God is working in the lives of people
- How the laity can help evangelize
- Catholic Social teachings
- How to live a moral life

2. Communication

- Needs to improve system of communication between church ministries, among parishioners, between archdiocese and parishes and between parishes too
- Continue to use technology for evangelization – podcast, bible series, zoom, webinars and social media, in addition to the church bulletin, newsletter, etc.
- Conversation circles to continue on societal and pastoral issues
- Providing information on current issues and Church's teachings
- Regular communication with the youth
- Support groups for divorced, single parents, LGBTQ, couples, married, singles, youth
- TEACH THE LAITY WHAT TO SAY AND HOW TO SAY IT. We need to defend our faith with clarity and confidence.

3. Transparency and Accountability

- In admitting Church's mistakes/ faults with caution on media representation
- Dispel moral confusion resulting from bickering among bishops
- Solid stand on relevant issues in society in order to support position of the Catholic Church and not avoid facing the issues.
- Make available resources that the laity need to be aware , understand and defend the Catholic faith on ongoing social issues.
- Openness to dialogue and conversation circles on any pressing topic that the Church is faced with
- Intensifying formation programs in all levels to become more confident in discussing our Catholic faith with others.

4. Greater Children and Youth Participation in the liturgical life of the parish

- Altar servers as early as 8 years old
- Youth lectors
- Children and youth masses
- Youth choir
- Youth bible studies

- Youth events with lots of powerful testimonies
- Fellowship programs that will engage the youth and help them be responsible and stay connected instead of experiencing isolation, mental health issues, depression or suicidal tendencies.
- Storytelling groups
- Youth Conversation circles
- Youth Creativity groups – The youth can bring in lots of creative ideas in enriching the life of the Church and making the Church services come alive

5. Empowerment of the Laity

- Fostering the role of the laity in the Church's mission
- Evangelizing with the help of the laity
- Giving the laity roles in governance of the Church
- Recognizing the many gifts that the laity brings to the Church

6. Family Life

- Broken, fragmented and dysfunctional families
- Erosion of family structure
- Divorce
- Pre marital sex, crisis of teen pregnancy and abortion
- Financial stress and debts
- Dealing with extended family and in-laws
- Grand parenting
- Lack of knowledge in the power of the sacrament of matrimony (forgiveness, love, power of the Holy Spirit)
- Lack of Marital Christian formation (marriage prep, couple mentorship)
- Christian values are challenged
- Identity crisis (not knowing baptismal birthright)

7. Culture of Death/ Societal Issues

- Euthanasia
- Abortion
- Drugs
- Abuse
- Sex trafficking
- Pornography
- Oppression and hate
- Spiritual homelessness and social isolation
- Relativism, materialism, individualism

8. Sanctity of Life and Creation

- Care of the sick, the elderly and the dying

- Refugees and migrants
- Care of the environment and all creation
- Human rights (Racism and Sexism)

QUESTION 4: What particular issues in society do we need to pay more attention to?

1. Deterioration of the Family

- Broken , fragmented, unstable and dysfunctional families
- Lost and scattered children
- Poor understanding of sacramental marriage/ breakdown of Christian culture
- Shifting view on relationships very confusing to children (e.g. gay marriage)
- Lack of strong Catholic parents/ good role models that kids can look up to
- Objectifying sex
- Lack or no family values
- Lack of couple mentoring, marriage preparation
- Lack of faith formation of parents/ families
- Loss of trust in marriage
- Poverty (Finances and debts)
- Mental Health Issues
- No guide from the Church on what's the purpose of life
- Pro-life vs. pro-choice

2. Intergenerational trauma, poverty, homelessness, single families, mental illness, Racism, sexism, violence and abuse, abortion, euthanasia, addictions, human trafficking, slavery, relativism, loneliness, individualism, isolation, pro choice, dehumanization, Bio-ethics, pornography, oppression, abuse of environment, economic disparity, indigenous issues, health, refugees and migrants, materialism, sexualisation of children, lower voting age, Bill C230, lowering voting age that can lead to lower age of consensual sex, permissiveness, war, lies of media, bioethics, problems with seniors and youth, lost human dignity, busyness of life with no time for God

3. Youth needs help and the Church is not doing a great job in meeting their needs.

4. Inability of the faithful to make morally strong, informed and responsible decisions due to lack of guidance from the Church

- E.g. lack of awareness and knowledge of pro-life issues (and other social issues the laity are facing) and the defending position of the Church that needs to be communicated down to the laity
- Regular conversation circles around issues/topics that need enlightenment instead of avoiding, hiding or “not saying anything” for fear of giving the wrong answers
- The laity needs to be confident and clear in knowing “what to say and how to say it” (defending position of the Church).

5. The Church must focus on apostolic mission (e.g. religious and pastoral training of the laity) instead of administrative/ capital expenditures

6. The Church “must be the resource” for young people, singles, couples and families who need help like counselling, instead of sending them to clinics, secular therapists or government agencies.

7. With the shortage of vocations, the Church must look into training and formation of the laity in pastoral ministry. Our priests can do more in carrying out the Church’s mission if pastoral knowledge and skills are shared and duplicated among the laity.

QUESTION 5: How can we, the local Church, journey with our indigenous sisters and brothers in the process of healing and reconciliation?

1. Naming the Problem is the first step to Healing

- Start every prayer service or meeting by acknowledging the land we live in.
“ We acknowledge that we live, work and play in the traditional ancestral and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. “

2. Education

- Learn about the First Nations cultural heritage by inviting elders or story tellers to our Church or local schools
- Update school curricula to include indigenous perspective (e.g. Indian Act, residential schools history and the effects of intergenerational trauma) and provide resources for teachers and pastoral leaders
- Provide aboriginal support workers in the schools
- Find commonalities in our faith practices (e.g. Love of Mother Earth and Laudato Si)
- Acknowledge and support the “truths” behind the abuses and the role of the Church
- Actively seeking and restoring indigenous artifacts and any missing historical records

- Focus on integration NOT assimilation. This is applicable not only to the indigenous people but all the visible minority group of immigrants in the country. Each culture brings gifts that need to be recognized as a sign of welcoming and acceptance
- Use the approach of cultural humility instead of cultural competence. Every culture is rich with traditions, beliefs, practices and we can learn from each other. No culture should be above any other culture.
- Challenge generalizations/ prejudices and promote sensitivity training sessions in schools and in parishes
- Promote indigenous culture like music and arts
- Offer Indigenous courses in the schools (maintain their language and culture)
- Promote the Knights of Columbus video on the Indigenous people to create awareness among the laity

3. Faith Dimension

- Vatican visit and the pope's apology was a big step and great role modeling of Pope Francis
- Clergy and Laity mourn for the sins of the world and the Church but can also help in healing and reconciliation by creating prayer groups, reaching out to local indigenous schools and organizations like COSA (helping indigenous brothers and sisters transition from prison to normal life, Agape, Street ministry, etc.
- Support our own missionaries working in the north
- Avoid committing the sins of the older brother in the Prodigal son story – pride, judgmental, sitting in safety, unforgiving, blaming, instead, be discerning, move past the “blame game” and shift from guilt or shame to renewal of relationships. “We will never let the abuses happen again.”
- Welcome and acknowledge our indigenous brothers and sisters into the Church by displaying their flag, any artwork that expresses their love for the land and the whole of creation
- Talk about Indigenous saints and how they lived their lives
- Pray, pray and pray for healing and reconciliation

4. Ongoing Dialogue

- Invite indigenous elders or story tellers to come to our school and church to tell their stories , journey with them and experience spiritual healing with them
- Ask our indigenous brothers and sisters what they need from us, what's important to them and how can the Church help them?
- Priests should talk more about indigenous issue at Mass
- Open dialogue with other parishes on the residential schools issue
- Listening to Indigenous Voices with D. Rennie Nahanee is making a small step to reconciliation

5. Strong and Concrete Church Leadership and Action

- Archdiocese must be pro-active in their approach to the residential schools issue

- A solid and clear defending position must be made available for the clergy and the laity on pressing social issues that are relevant today
- The laity has observed that the archdiocese/ priests usually “sit quiet” when pressing social issues arise and the faithful are lost on how to defend the Catholic faith when challenged
- Truth and Reconciliation has been there for 30 years but only represent 5% native population
- Church must respond to the Call to Action
- Provide resources that will help our indigenous brothers and sisters cope (counseling, kids programs, mentorship, youth programs, health programs, soup kitchens, local indigenous schools can be recipients of fundraising for a cause or charitable donations, parent education, life skills education and many more)

From this time of listening, could you sum up in one or two sentences how the Spirit is calling us to grow in “journeying together”?*

The SYNOD conversation circles are authentic exchanges of our faith life and must continue to happen in all parishes and the archdiocese. Those who were involved in this parish discernment process felt the Holy Spirit's presence as they spoke from their hearts in response to the pressing needs of the Church and society. Discernment is the key to service and this is what we all learned from the sessions.

Describe the groups that met, both as a whole community and in your own particular small groups. Were there people you expected? How did they interact? Is there room for your community to grow, not only in number, but in connection and friendship?*

The 33 participants in the Synod conversation circles were individual volunteers and a few from the Knights of Columbus. OLF School represented by the teachers had their separate sessions and the summary of themes, insights and issues were submitted to the Synod coordinator. We did not expect majority of the parishioners who volunteered to participate. The sessions were spread two weeks apart and the groups were rotated every session to give a chance for participants to hear from the other groups. It was only the facilitators and the recorders that remained a team. We followed the Synod process of “scripture reading/ question, one minute silence and response” that was good spiritual grounding for each one of us who came with varied beliefs, expectations and emotions towards the five questions that needed to be answered. Issues raised triggered strong emotions and responses, but the volunteer facilitators were adept in remaining focused on the goal of the sessions and ensured that everyone was heard. The participants were honest, transparent and very concerned about what's happening to the Church and the society. The recorders did a great job in capturing the common themes, insights and issues. Not all participants were present in all four sessions, however, as one or

two participants cannot make it, new participants joined in. Everyone was appreciative of the conversation circles and recommended that they be continued in the parish level. The experience brought us closer and we were given the chance to get to know each other on a much deeper level. The Synod definitely helped in building our community.

How many sessions were held? 5 sessions of one and a half hours/session

How many people attended? 33 plus Our Lady of Fatima School teachers (sessions done separately)