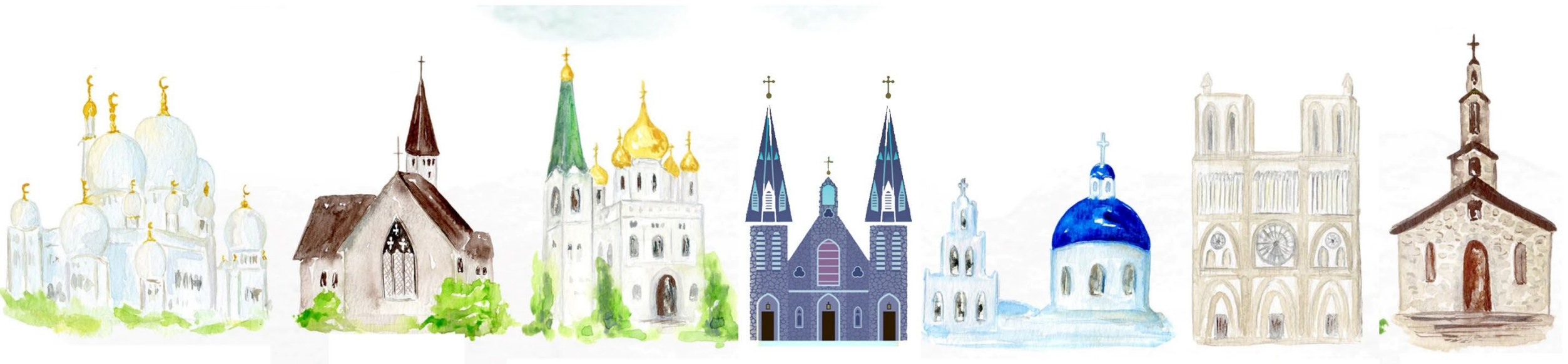


INSPIRATION & INFORMATION



SYNOD

These conversations stem from a multi-year effort in the Vatican called the Synod, wherein last fall, about 450 people gathered in Rome in what was an unprecedented series of discussions.

- In addition to the typical attendees (bishops, cardinals), dozens of lay Catholics participated, including more women than were ever assembled for a papal gathering of this nature
- All discussions were held in small group/round table format, with an unprecedented emphasis on candor, active listening, and equality of voices and opinions.

Many of you may recall the series of “Listening Sessions” the parish held in 2022 to provide input for the Synod.

- We sat discussed what we liked and would like to see improved in our church and in our parish.

SYNOD

WHAT WERE THE SYNOD SUPPERS?

- A recap of the information from the parish's our Listening Sessions
- An expert-led discussion about the Synod and subsequent updates.
- Table discussions about how to proceed with this information to strengthen parish
 - Areas of discussion might include how to build more community, how to bring back fallen-away parishioners, and how to better engage younger members
 - Also how to provide more opportunities for faith formation, stewardship, and service
- We will introduce some of the listening skills used in the Synod – focused on discerning what the Holy Spirit is putting on each of our minds and in each of our hearts
- We had special guests Julia Oseka, Dr. Massimo Faggioli, Ph.D. (a St. Joseph University student who participated in the Synod in October 2023).

SYNOD

WHAT IS A SYNODAL CHURCH?

- Where an atmosphere of trust and welcome, where people express themselves freely and safely, so all better experience the presence and participation of the Holy Spirit.
- Where parishioners assume co-responsibility for the health, well being, and growth of the parish.
- Where the parish involves people and groups who express a variety of experiences, skills, charisms, and ministries, including groups living in conditions of poverty and social marginality, as well as Christians of different denominations and people of other religions.

SYNOD

WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION?

- The quality of one's capacity to listen as well as the quality of the words spoken
- Paying attention to the spiritual movements in oneself and in others
- An act of respecting and welcoming that takes seriously what happens in the hearts of others and creates a safe place to share openly

SYNOD

What Came out of the Synod Suppers?

Sense of hope and joy

- Synod and our process give sense of hope (openness, equality, commitment)
 - A “seed for change”; how do we water it at the parish level?
 - Hope that we can address gender imbalances and attract young people
 - Pope is asking questions, modeling active learning
- Staying hopeful is important as we move forward

Sense of urgency

- How can we meaningfully change given slowness of global church
- This work needs to happen!
- How fit church into people’s busy lives (e.g., women, young people)?
- Open our doors, let in fresh air, “let the Spirit blow”

Sense of Inclusion

- This process and synodality feel inclusive – presence of the Holy Spirit
 - Keep “listening with our hearts”

SYNOD

What Came out of the Synod Suppers?

Sense of concern

- Frustration, lack of concrete topics to discuss
- Some questions about lingering male dominance (e.g., in the synod)
- The work of the Spirit can take time to manifest
- Can necessary “deconstructions” happen to facilitate needed change? Where is my place in the church?
 - “All Are Welcome” – are they? Lots of people feel marginalized
 - Other Christian communities are more welcoming
 - What is STV’s conversation around LGBTQ Catholics? (Pope Francis is talking about it)
- How to re-engage “lukewarm” Catholics in the parish?
 - “Synod” and “synodality” can be exclusive since unknown and not intuitive
 - Parishioners who do not attend mass but may otherwise be active in the parish?
- Context of political division and national election cycle – how work around this, push through it?
 - Perception of older/conservative vs. younger/liberal – how create space for all?

SYNOD

What Came out of the Synod Suppers?

Sense of sadness

- For those who will not encounter Jesus because of where the church is now
- For those still understandably suffering from the sex abuse and cover up crises
- For those who have fallen away from their faith
- For our marginalized and underserved brothers and sisters

SYNOD

Core Focus

- What can we do at STV (e.g., leadership roles, intentional sharing of visible duties)
- Women are the “fabric of our faith,” especially their role in family and volunteering
- Consider idea of “equal but different” for men and women
- Early church “blueprint” (precedent) - even with lesser rights of women in ancient society
- Need to better emphasize and celebrate Mother Mary

Youth crisis

- “Church of the future” (young families, young adults, teenager’s post-REP)
- Not too many young people in the Synod; 87-year-old Pope is concerning
- How engage? How encourage participation?
- How make Mass more appealing/welcoming for young people?
- How synch the church, Catholic values and truths with young lives?

SYNOD

Core Focus

Faith Formation

Leverage sense of hope/optimism

How to instill sense of personal ownership of one's faith?

Feelings of being disconnected; how to make STV my spiritual home (again)?

Need to be more prayerful – individually and collectively

Keep sacraments at center of what we do / who we are

Abuse and cover-up ongoing effects - don't shy away from discussing it since it's a core reason why some have left the church

Who is my/our neighbor? How do we welcome them?

Where does North America fall on core church issues? How about Philadelphia? STV?

SYNOD

NOW WHAT?

- This is a critical time, a pivotal point for our church
- Leverage our momentum
- Be intentional and deliberate
- Keep building synodal muscles
 - Continued education on synod/synodality is key
- Consider variety of efforts/events (e.g., faith formation, social, service) – branding/intentionality key
 - Need more community events
 - More emphasis on small groups

SYNOD

NOW WHAT?

- Try “big things,” especially to include disengaged groups; requires diversity of thought/ideas
 - Allow people to take risks, step outside the box
 - How to avoid preaching to the choir?
- Welcoming spirit needed at all times
 - personal invitations and one-on-one encounters
 - decrease polarization
 - How to create space for those who have been?
- Service is key to engage, drive discipleship
- Lay ministers are critical – increase participation and bear witness with a shortage of clergy
 - Lay men need to step up to engage younger men

