

FOR SAINT MICHAEL PARISH PLANNING

CORE QUESTION ONE THEMES FOR SMC PARISH PLANNING

The section of the Listening Session Notes requested that we develop Themes for Parish Planning based solely upon information provided in the Synod Listening Sessions. We agree that these themes should be considered in the parish planning process along with other parish planning input.

The Core Question One and Two themes are listed in order, high to low, based upon the number of tables that recommended that theme. The quotations below are from the Listening Session Scribe Notes.

Core Question One Themes for SMC Parish Planning

Core Question ONE (30 – 45 minutes)

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish community, campus ministry, university, school, youth group, religious congregation, or other area of Church life that you might participate in?

In what ways do you as a parish invite all baptized Catholics. All the baptized include ethnic and cultural communities, youth, families, persons with disabilities and their families, those living in poverty or social exclusion, and more into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?

A. WHAT PREVENTS US FROM “WALKING TOGETHER?”

- What hinders you from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly?
- How are authority or governance, teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local parish?
- How do you as a parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions about pastoral and financial needs?

B. POPE FRANCIS ENCOURAGES US TO REACH OUT BEYOND OUR ACTIVE PARISH COMMUNITY. . .

and observe who is in our local area. It is essential to look at who “used to be at our parish,” and who is not here, and those who might feel left out or on the margins.

- Do we as a parish, reach out collectively or individually to those who are no longer participating in church? What helps or hinders us?
- What are some ways to find out why they are not participating?
- What do we have to offer and attract those who are not participating?

SMC RESPONSES

Theme 1: Mass, Sacraments, Worship

“Brings us together; enables us to show concern for others.”

Focus on increasing our gratitude for the Eucharist and on living Eucharistic lives in the “circle of love” of the Trinity (which is in our DNA – since we are made in the image of a God who is Love); Prayer, Spiritual Growth, Prayer/Faith Formation Groups

Theme 2: Ministries

“Opportunities to participate in responding to needs; being able to serve the parish, parishioners, persons in need in and outside of the parish; giving of time, talent or treasure; also good people ministering as ‘living saints’; ministering in many ways in one’s daily life.”

Focus on evaluating and re-founding our ministries and developing new ones, including one(s) that encourage everyone to see each other as potential “living saints,” ministering in many ways in one’s daily life.

Theme 3: Events, 150th Anniversary Events

“Gives us opportunities to be together, to share interests, show openness to each other.”

C. WHAT PREVENTS US FROM “WALKING TOGETHER?”

Theme 4: Attitudes

Initiatives to lessen the impact of “Societal, Personal and Intra-Church attitudes” that keep us and others from a fuller experience of the joy of the Gospel message (God is For Us and God is With Us).

Theme 5: Faith Education and Prayer, including an understanding of “Issues thought to be controversial (LGBTQ, divorce, politicians/Communion)”

Theme 6: Parish Staff, Volunteers, anyone interested

Programs and initiative that encourage growth in being “seriously committed to the faith” - for the sake of the Church’s mission. [an action statement of “staff should be seriously committed to the faith; more parishioner participation”]

Theme 7: Communications

Update so that the message is appropriate and most likely to be seen and viewed.

CORE QUESTION TWO THEMES FOR SMC PARISH PLANNING

Refer back to Core Question 2. In your discussion of this question, participants were asked to offer specific actions for the local parish.

Core Question TWO – 30 Minutes How are we “walking together” as a Church, and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

C. BY OUR DEEP LISTENING TODAY, WHAT ACTIONS DO YOU HEAR THE HOLY SPIRIT ASKING OUR PARISH AND THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH TO TAKE? For the PARISH For the UNIVERSAL CHURCH

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E. WHAT PRACTICAL STEPS ARE NEEDED TO INCLUDE PEOPLE IN THE AREAS OF LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND INCLUSION IN THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH?

Local Questions – 10 Minutes

How are we “walking together” as a Church, and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

F. HOW CAN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR LOCAL PARISH?

G. WHAT ARE THREE STEPS WE CAN TAKE IN OUR ARCHDIOCESE TO GROW MORE COLLABORATIVELY FOR THE FUTURE?

SMC RESPONSES

List themes which you heard in the table discussions which will assist with your future parish with pastoral planning. (Note: The participants were tired by then and directed most responses to Church levels above the parish.)

Theme 1. We are asking the Church to (1) show us the “relevance and reasonableness of Church’s teachings”, and (2) help us to “see that the teachings do speak to us and our lives in today’s world.” We, then, have to be willing to try to listen to it with an open mind and an openness to the Spirit helping us to understand and accept it. How do we do this and do likewise with what the Universal Church presents to address the sex abuse scandal.

Theme 2, If the Universal Church responds to the requests for “administrative/leadership change” and the “inclusion of the laity, especially, women” in church positions, the parishioners must welcome them and allow them to serve in this capacity.

Theme 3. Parish priests, staff, volunteers and other parishioners must see oversight of the parish be the Archdiocese as well as inter-parish collaboration as being performed for the good of the whole Church and fully support this.

Theme 4. Create “education opportunities” for parishioners to learn about doctrine and history – lecture series or speaker series?

Theme 5. Revitalize the CLOW (Childrens’ Liturgy of the Word), youth and young adult and adult efforts; continue with more social events similar to the ones organized for the 150 Anniversary.