



LIVING AS A SYNODAL CHURCH
COMMUNION. PARTICIPATION. MISSION.

ARCHDIOCESAN SYNTHESIS
OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR
THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

--- from October 2021 to June 2022 ---

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS | JUNE 15, 2022

1. Introduction

Moved by a desire to draw closer to the Lord, the Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese of San Antonio have responded to the call to participate in the synodal process.

The process began through a special iteration of the Archdiocesan Assembly shortly thereafter on November 6 and additional listening and interactive sessions with the People of God. Over time, it has become clear that the offering was pleasing to the Lord, who in turn, apparently blessed the gifts, broke them open and distributed them among the people.

The sessions were carried out throughout the archdiocese in the following six months. The unfolding of the Synodal process at the local level involved:

- Discernment through listening in a prayerful setting, creating space for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Accessibility, in order to ensure that as many people as possible can participate, regardless of location, language, education, socio-economic status, ability/disability, and material resources.
- Cultural awareness to celebrate and embrace the diversity within local communities.
- Inclusion, making every effort to involve those who feel excluded or marginalized.
- Partnership on the model of a co-responsible Church based on the vocation each baptized has been called to live.
- Respect for the rights, dignity, and opinion of each participant.
- Accurate syntheses that truly captures the range of critical and appreciative perspectives of all responses, including views that are expressed only by a minority of participants.
- Transparency, ensuring that processes of invitation, involvement, inclusion, and aggregation of input are clear and well communicated.
- Fairness, ensuring that participation in the listening process treats each person equally, so that every voice can be duly heard.

A number of important events marked significant points during the Synodal process in the archdiocese.

The presence of the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, who was in San Antonio Oct. 11-12, 2021, was a historic moment for the local Church that was a sign of fraternal communion of the archdiocese with Pope Francis and the Universal Church.

“The focus on Synodality is to enhance the whole People of God’s sense of participation, communion and mission,” said the nuncio. “As the Family of God, and you, as a portion of that family in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, we journey together participating in, that is, sharing in, the life of the Church, deepening our communion, and working together on our common mission of evangelization, of making disciples.”

The archdiocese invited all the people of God to join Bishop Boulette and guest speakers Professor Rafael Luciani and Father David McCallum, SJ, from the Theology and Methodology Commissions of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops to an online encounter on January 8.

A Spanish online presentation featured Archbishop Gustavo and Cristina Inogés-Sanz from Spain, a member of the Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops Commission on Methodology, as well as Professor Luciani on February 26.

All of these special gatherings offered the archbishop assistance in setting the direction for the future of the local Church. The Synod is a dynamic archdiocesan discernment pathway. It strives for listening to the real questions and authentic needs of the local Church, and sifts for the real issues with a wider participation and vision, where subsidiarity and creativity are greatly needed, encouraged, and embraced for the sake of evangelization.

As part of the Synodal conversion to which all the baptized are called, the archdiocese invited everyone to make a significant impact through their participation. Archbishop Gustavo desired that the voices of lay faithful from all the parishes — in both rural and urban areas — be heard as a testament of fellowship and hope for the discernment of the vision for the local Church for years to come.

Bishop Boulette took part in a Synodal encounter with members of the LGBTQ+/HIV+ community and heard the pain of many who commented. He thanked the participants for their honesty and courage of coming together to share. The bishop renewed the commitment of the archdiocese to walk with the group and encouraged them to seek the accompaniment of a spiritual director. The archdiocese will continue to help to the best of its ability.

There were a small number of other voices who expressed dissatisfaction with the position of the Church on issues such as the Traditional Latin Mass and women’s ordination and

pro-life teachings, but those individuals who expressed their thoughts did so through e-mails or letters and did not participate in the process of encountering or listening to the other in Synodal gatherings.

Difficulties with other areas of Church teaching were contained in minimal responses through e-mail or an occasional remark contained in a listening session report.

Responses to the fundamental questions of the Synod in conjunction with others as a result of on-going synodal conversations for years to come will assist the archdiocese to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the canonical erection of the Diocese of San Antonio in August 2024 as well as the 100th anniversary of the elevation to Metropolitan Archdiocese of San Antonio in August 2026. We will discern new goals and priorities, which will be used to develop a new pastoral vision and plan new pastoral activities for the people of God in south central Texas.

2. Synthesis

A number of overarching themes were identified by the Synodal Process Steering Committee during a joint session analyzing trends and topics from reflection sheets received into the month of June, and that effort continues. The topics are not introduced necessarily as positive trends (areas of excellence) or negative trends (areas of concerns). The summary of each theme and any sub-category mentioned is simply suggesting that we have enough data and information to consider them relevant and noteworthy for the archdiocesan report. The trends are not ranked nor follow a particular order of relevance, and example comments follow to illustrate a range of responses.

Structural transformation of governing and advisory bodies in the Church

While their existence is celebrated and appreciated, the people consulted expressed a longing desire of taking a step towards the transformation of structures and advancement of lay leadership committees and councils in the Church to better serve the mission, including but not limited to Pastoral and Finance Councils as well as Liturgical and Social Concerns Committees.

Clergy formation

The faithful at large are desiring ministers in priestly and permanent diaconate ministries to get comprehensively formed (not just academically). There is a trend that seems to dominate

the voices consulted: a pastor or deacon with outstanding academic background lacks pastoral closeness and empathy and the other way around. This also pertains to the areas of homiletics; listening skills; interpersonal relationship building; civil and ecclesial law; Human & Financial Resources, and liturgical formation. Pastoral formation to include Catholic Social Teaching & bioethics. We are also called to facilitate tools and foster opportunities assisting Priest on how to handle stress and burnout as well as an orientation for international priests to immerse them in language, culture, and procedures of our local Church prior to their pastoral assignment.

Clericalism

Priests (pastors) are perceived by the faithful, including permanent deacons, as the sole-decision maker in the parish community. Dismissing the input of lay leaders and faithful in general is one of the main causes of parish disengagement. The challenge is to overcome self-absorption. It is the struggle between authoritarianism versus leadership; between performing functions and furthering the mission of announcing Jesus Christ to the rest of the world.

Mental, Emotional & Spiritual health

A post-pandemic world calls for a post-pandemic Church able to accompany the psychological struggles of brothers and sisters in the present time in both behavioral and mental areas as they holistically seek to procure individual's well-being and individual's state of being. We are called to accompany every person coping with suffering, grief, and loss. It is perceived that the local Church has not done enough in this field. Issues which we are called to address more aggressively include domestic violence; clergy abuse; sexual identity; isolation, family trauma, depression, and anxiety; and social media addiction. More recently, we have been summoned to accompany in three specific areas: the homelessness crisis, the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic, and the tragedy of the mass shooting in Robb Elementary School that took away the lives of 19 kids and two teachers and wounding 17 others on May 24 in Uvalde.

Faith formation

The faithful are seeking more robust offerings of catechesis that confront relativism and reencounter families around the table (in the dining room of homes as well as around the table of the Unity, the Eucharist). Stereotyped models of Catholic formation in the parish, in a school, and at home, need to be overcome. Our people are seeking religious formation for children and adults in addition to Catholic formation and education through Catholic schools. The importance

of supporting and strengthening the role Catholic Schools had significant recurrence in the feedback received

Communications and technology

A Church of the Third Millennium is called to adapt to “new methods, and new practices, with a new ardor.” Communication and technology techniques and best practices are not only desirable but encouraged to reach out more to those disengaged, non-affiliated, the outcast, abused, and neglected. Social media must be used as a tool of evangelization, and the fear by some of being exposed to new technologies or learning about them must be overcome. Internal and external communications plan for Catholic institutions need to be developed if not already in place, and young adults must be empowered in their own creative forms of ministry.

Parish renewal

Parishes are called to evolve into a more creative self-sufficient, self-adapting entity, capable of “thinking out of the box” (its leaders and ministers alike) to reflect and address the pastoral needs and challenges of every local reality. This theme touches on a large number of areas. It is suggested that parishes provide a comprehensive offering of administration of sacraments, as well as spiritual direction and accompaniment of parishioners experiencing a personal sense of loss and family trauma. Parishes are asked to develop dynamic outreach and be known for up-to-date use of technology. In addition, it is important to understand the origin of dissident voices who partake in the celebration of liturgies outside of approved/authorized rites. Overcoming self-referential attitudes and ideological trends – which lead people to identify their religious identity as opposed to others causing isolation and division – require redoubling efforts to offer faith formation processes that engage believers in prophetic witness to the gospel in their daily lives. Hand in hand with this finding it is mentioned the need of fostering more inter-parochial collaboration.

Community and family building

Families perceive their connection with a parish often as a “club membership.” If the parish model gravitates around the personality of the pastor and just a few have access to him one cannot expect that healthy and organic family bonding sentiments emerge between parishioners and the priest in a community of believers with that perception. It was suggested that we develop a sense of parish belonging, empower lay leadership to accompany families, and provide oppor-

tunities for encounter (parish activities) beyond the Sunday celebration. Some of these may arise from the encouragement of culturally rooted forms of popular piety in ways that are welcoming to others.

Episcopal and curial outreach

There is a tremendous desire by the People of God to have more direct contact with the Ordinary and his auxiliaries. Perception suggests that bishops are only in parishes with limited time to listen to parishioners when they celebrate Confirmation. Voices struggle to understand the value of the Pastoral Ministry Center in the daily life of the parish and the resources of accompaniment available for individuals in the Curia often associated to a lack of promotion and awareness.

Role of women in today's Church

It is perceived that women are capable and committed to accept prominent roles in the pastoral and ministerial life of the local Church. Their reliability and consistency in the roles where they have been “boxed-in” so far (such as sacristan, catechist, and lector) are yet to include the necessary female contributions that are still undervalued and/or underrated.

Cultural diversity

The local Church is longing for inclusion. Anglo and Hispanics are the biggest groups in the archdiocese. Indian, African, Korean, Vietnamese, German, Alsatian, Black, Igbo, and Filipino groups are also present and actively participating in the pastoral life of the Archdiocese. Still, it is believed that segregation is happening too often. Clergy are not necessarily formed in the customs, beliefs, and culture of their parishioners, which constitute an obstacle to unity. This issue may be addressed through additional clergy formation, in addition to a wider and more conscientious embrace of deeply rooted and meaningful forms of popular piety, through which people of different backgrounds grow in appreciation of diversity through the dynamics of encounter.

Young Church empowerment

Youth are thirsty for witness. From their perspective, Catholic communities are often lacking in authentic enthusiasm and attractive expressions of the faith, which can only come

from its fruitfulness in the world. While many are leaders themselves, youth and young adults in the Catholic Church continue to be led by “older” leaders. A large majority feel that others outside of the Church listen to them better than the Catholic Church does. How can we bridge the gap between generations in order to connect our heritage with our future, instilling a sense of identity that witnesses to the present world? What can we do to change that reality and allow them -- through formation and accompaniment -- to take ownership of their initiatives, projects, dreams, and hopes? we are also invited to reinvigorate the promotion of vocational discernment in the Archdiocese by encouraging the people and priests to speak to young men and women about religious vocations.

Reintegration of domestic Church

Voices expressed the need of extending the outreach of the parish to the “living room” of homes: being Catholic 24/7 and not just an hour-and-a-half every Sunday. Families are called to celebrate time spent around the dinner table like a sacramental, in such a way that when the hour comes, the heads of the domestic Church take their place at the table with eager desire to share the fruit of their work as the life-giving sacrifice they make for their loved ones. Parents would proudly provide nourishment through their witness of faith with their children; and families would live out moral values and Christian/Catholic practices as a way to give testimony of the richness of the Church. We are called to be more inclusive about the image of family that sit in our pews: single parent, grandparents-grandchildren, mixed families, empty nesters, single-unit families.

3. Conclusion

We continue to remember and celebrate the Church which journeys together. The call of the Gospel and Vatican Council II for Full, Active and Conscious Participation in the Eucharistic Liturgy, especially the Sunday feast, is our vision. The spiritual and theological truth that the Eucharistic liturgy, our Mass, is the source and summit of our spiritual life nourishes our journey.

For Christ Jesus, present for us in every Mass, flows the invitation and mandatum to serve all, especially those most in need. To these ends, the archbishop has called all in the Church in the archdiocese to walk together in Eucharistic renewal as part of the “Living as a Synodal Church” process.

On this subject, there will be Synodal encounters beginning with our clergy but continu-

ing throughout our parishes and other groups in the archdiocese. Living as a Synodal Church, we are invited to be a priestly and Eucharistic people in a listening disposition to one another, embracing a revolution of love for God's people. Eucharistic renewal calls us to listen to one another's experience of the celebration of the Eucharist and continue to dialogue to discern God's will as to how we might improve our experience of Jesus Christ in the Mass.

As a Synodal Church, Archdiocesan Assembly 2022 will take place in all 14 deaneries with a focus on Eucharistic renewal of Sunday Mass that reflects the Church's call to missionary discipleship and outreach.

In an address to priests at the archdiocesan Clergy Day, Archbishop Gustavo emphasized that the fundamental question of the Synod is how "journeying together" is taking place today in our particular Churches. This means: What experiences in our local Church this question calls to mind? What difficulties and obstacles have we encountered? What wounds have we brought to light?

For the Archdiocese of San Antonio, this Synodal process has confirmed Professor Luciani's comments at one of the online Synod encounters, that the Synod might perhaps be the most important ecclesial event in the current phase of the reception of the Second Vatican Council under the pontificate of Francis. Reinvigorating synodal dynamics might be what the Church needed to switch from an administrative mentality and approach – primarily focused on pastoral ministry – to bolder and more fruitful outreach efforts – through an emphasis on new evangelization endeavors which are ground-breaking in their ardor, methods and expression.

The Synod's preparatory document expresses: "In the Synodal style, decisions are made by discernment on the basis of a consensus born of common obedience to the Spirit."

Through the dialogues that the synodal process incites, many are finding an explanation for their distress in the light of the Scriptures, finally coming to recognize once again the face of the Lord in the Church. It is as if after having the impression that their companions were going elsewhere, the disciples regain hope through the breaking of the bread. Their hearts burn again, making them run back to announce the Good News with the expectation of a new dawn for our communities.

Illumed by the conclusions of this consultation, the archdiocese gets ready to celebrate the sesquicentennial anniversary of its canonical erection as Diocese in 2024 and the centenary

of its elevation to Metropolitan Archdiocese in 2026. As the invitation to keep synodal consultation process remains open in parishes, groups, institutions, and movements we seek to receive inspiration from the Holy Spirit in order to proclaim a new pastoral vision that includes priorities and goals for our local Church.

Appendix

The number of persons who engaged in the Synodal process is impressive, as archdiocesan staff and volunteers endeavored to offer as many possibilities for encounter as possible.

More than 1,700 reports from these sessions were submitted by parishes and groups and were analyzed for their information. Constituent groups participating included priests; permanent deacons; religious brothers; religious sisters; seminarians; archdiocesan seminary faculty and staff; university staff from Mexican American Catholic College; personnel from the Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry and Service; parish leaders; parishioners; youth ministers; young adults; Catholic school principals and staff; Catholic school students; college students; youth (middle and high school students); retired priests; individuals experiencing same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria, in addition to those identifying themselves as LGBTQ+; those who are HIV positive; Catholic Social Services (Catholic Charities of San Antonio); Pastoral Ministry Center staff; members of archbishop's senior staff; catechetical leaders; parish staff; Finance Councils; Pastoral Councils; liturgical ministers; the Deaf community; and incarcerated brothers and sisters.

Feedback

Structural transformation of governing and advisory bodies in the Church

“Continue to evolve and focus on strategic planning, understanding it is dangerous to lose sight of bring people closer to Jesus.”

“Be people who invite: the Spirit is calling us to grow in our ability and confidence to invite people to ministries, events, and to Mass.”

“Feel support of one another across ministry groups – helping one another, serving together; definitely a spirit of community.”

“Get more lay people involved in the spirit of Vatican II, which opened many opportunities for parishioners to get involved. It is not only the priest leading and working for the Church.”

“There has been no turnover or wholesale turnover on our council(s).”

Clergy Formation

“Priests are often working alone and sometimes people are not being served due to time constraints. Laity have not been included as much as is possible and necessary. Women tend to be seen only as ‘helpers’ when there are many parish needs that they could serve. To prevent stress and burnout there is a need at the pastoral level for much more delegation to the laity.”

“We are not being fed enough at the homily.”

“Growth is engendered by giving people responsibility, i.e., the master entrusting talons to his servants. Responsibility is spread throughout the church instead of consolidated.”

“There needs to be a focus on matching the right priest to the parish in order to serve the church and parishioners better.”

Clericalism

“The priest sets the tone in comradery and involvement through his actions and interactions with parishioners.”

“It is difficult to journey together with so many changes in pastor and with parochial vicars.”

“Deacons have been holding our parish together.”

“The church is relatable when it is based on a pastor who is present and engaging and serves only one parish.”

“There are constant comparisons between the leadership differences between the former pastors and the current priest.”

“It’s not about priests and religious only, the lay persons in the church need to rise up and assume our roles for the good of the community.”

Mental health

“We need an Outreach Committee for Compassion, Concern, and Wellbeing post-COVID.”

“Create more outreach for the ‘black sheep’ ... the lost ones who need inclusion. We have to go out to build community and that is uncomfortable; to love as Jesus did.”

Faith formation

“We must stress the importance of religious formation; that parents are the first role models, but they are not very knowledgeable, and younger parents are even less knowledgeable. We start educating parents with baptismal preparation, and later bridge the gap between the children and parents, and then engage the parents with adult education.”

“We surveyed the parents for what they want, and they seem to be thirsty for knowledge. We give them the opportunity to participate in classes at the same time as their children.”

“There is a great need for more adult formation, especially on the issues of our day and time. Despite the efforts of Pope Francis in this area the official church is lagging behind.”

Communications and technology

“We have to find a better way to communicate the Catholic voice to the general public as well as fallen away Catholics.”

“Our parishes are currently ‘recovering’ in many aspects from the effects of the pandemic. Parishes worked hard to provide services and keep everyone safe. A positive aspect of the coronavirus has been the use and development of technology in many parishes which allow the sick and infirm to continue to participate in liturgies and other parish events into the future.”

“Communications is an issue; our parish uses little social media.”

Parish renewal

“We see ‘journeying together’ in parish worship situations, especially at Eucharistic celebrations, where there is a good sense of community and where the laity are very active and involved in a variety of different liturgical ministries. This is true in times of joy including baptisms, weddings, birthdays and anniversary celebrations when a community spirit has been developed. This is also true in times of pain, sorrow, bereavement and other difficult challenges. It is often very evident at funerals of those who have participated in ACTS retreats in their perspective parishes. RCIA also contributes to this sense of community as adults and sponsors journey together in faith formation for a long period of time.”

“The Church should be looking to actively focus on the word of God getting to His flock in a way that supports the philosophical needs and desires of the majority of parishioners and not catering or giving an inordinate level of credence to a more vocal and often small minority.”

“Another population that should be invited -- and welcomed -- on this journey are non-traditional families. We know that marriages and families are under attack, but we also know that those who come from families that look different from others often fail to find places to connect with their church community. Cultivating a welcoming and non-judgmental atmosphere that holds space for single parent families, grandparents raising grandchildren, foster families, and others will only strengthen the community as we journey together as the Body of Christ.”

“We need to continue to create and strengthen community of faith and belonging, where people can grow, deepen their faith and claim their spirituality. There is a need to be more welcoming and inclusive and to be open to people who are vulnerable and/or ‘on the margins’ such as the poor, LGBTG persons, etc. We need to reclaim the prophetic role of the Church as a ‘community of love.’”

“We need to acknowledge newcomers, anniversaries, celebrations, and deaths in order to bring people together.”

“People tend to form ‘clicks’ and favorite groups and are resistant to change.”

Community and family building

“God helps us to look around our community to see who are the marginalized, and those who do not attend Mass, even though they are parishioners, and then lead them to come to church again. This journey is not along, but we all share the same responsibility, pray together,

participate, and move away from the formal and abstract ecclesiastical reality, listen to everyone, and therefore proclaim mission.”

“Our community continues to journey together by sharing in traditional celebrations such as Las Posadas, All Saints Day, May Crowning, Living Rosary, and the sacraments of reconciliation and Holy Communion. As a community, we journey together through the interconnectedness of our faith.”

“We have to open our eyes to the possibilities to reach people outside our parish and outside the church. We have to eschew attitudes that form ‘clicks’ and concern themselves with social advancement or control over others.”

“Families journey together as a family, and we would like to see more of that at the parish.”

“Many people have not returned since the pandemic, and that is sad to see. We are doing our best to invite them back.”

“It seems we are becoming more divided rather than more united. Some love new changes while others are unhappy.”

Episcopal and curial outreach

“Our bishops need to take a stand on social justice issues, and speak out more on issues such as racism, immigration, gun violence, etc. ... Taking a bold stance is called for despite the fact that they may get negative feedback from some and that some donors discontinue their support. Sometimes we are known for what we are against rather than what we are for. This is particularly true regarding respect for human life issues.”

“Top-down oversight coming from the archdiocese is going to have long-term damaging impact on the Church as a whole.”

“The bishops need to pray, dialogue, and discern the burdens placed on the people. There is a new time calling for aggiornamento.”

“We seldom understand why changes are made from the archdiocese – no explanations

are given.”

“We need the bishops to visit the rural parishes on more occasions to know our concerns. We only hear from them for monetary needs.”

Role of women in today’s Church

“The Church needs to be more inclusive of women’s gifts both at the parish and the arch-diocesan levels, with the involvement of women and their gifts in every area of decisions making in the church. Pope Francis has taken some initiative with the less clerical set-up of the Vatican Dicasteries in Rome in this regard, where their leaders do not have to be ordained clergy. This is a first but important step. ... Work toward gender equality and inclusion of women in the Church in general is vital to its future. ... Young women today are being educated to believe that there is no ‘glass ceiling’ for them, so this inclusion is very important for the future of the Church.”

“Sometimes out of fear I do not express what I would like to. I would like to be listened to.”

“Being a wife and mother changed my faith journey. I’m a strong advocate for the elderly, children, and the oppressed. There needs to be more inclusion. The church gets lazy!”

Cultural diversity

“In God’s love and wisdom, the Holy Spirit inspires us and asks us to walk together as a Church, as a community with as many people as possible.”

“Be a person with an open mind and heart. Sometimes it’s hard not to be prejudiced and try not to think of this. Try to listen to everyone and be compassionate about it. God sends us people in need, and we experience His presence. Give more time for people to speak and express what they are going through.”

“When we have people who come here from Mexico, there is fear of being deported. I assure them they can always come here. ... Sometimes ministry to others is humbling.”

“Regularly use bilingual Masses to promote opportunities for cultural growth and friendships.”

“Intermingle English and Spanish cultures in Church celebrations, devotions, and processions for enriched participation.”

“When there is a crisis situation such as with refugees and immigrants ... many members of our Church communities respond positively.”

Young Church empowerment

“There are a number of youth that leave the Church after they leave high school. Somehow we need to find a way to keep those 18-plus year olds in the Catholic Church.”

“The Church journeys wells, but sometimes we do not give preference to youth. There are a lot of senior parishioners, but we lack in having the presence of youth among us. We need to give youth their role in our parish. We need to bring youth to our parish and invite them to play sports on our campus.

“We need to involve and recognize youth in ministry service, to reach out and include youth, to build and grow in faith and teamwork through interactive ministry services together.”

“There is a need for parishioners for evangelization so that the Church and its mission can thrive. We are neglecting our youth.”

“The Church is not addressing the root issue of those who have left.”

“Retreats were a very popular activity that were affected by the pandemic.”

“We need to bring people into the Church and invite them to join us on our journey to know God on a personal level.”

Reintegration of domestic Church

“Teaching of the virtues: prudence, honesty, respect, integrity, responsibility, faith, humility, temperance, fortitude, charity, justice, diligence, and mercy.”

“Sometimes, by sending their children to Catholic schools, parents (and others look to

the school to wholly fulfill the spiritual needs and requirements for the students. But we know that the parent is first and foremost the child's primary teacher, and that spiritual formation must continue at home when the children leave school at the end of the day. We know that parents have many obligations and responsibilities, and that sometimes it is easier to allow the responsibility of the child's spiritual formation to fall to the school. We feel that steps should be taken to encourage a deeper sense of engagement and spiritual connection with the parents in order to find a healthy balance for the spiritual growth of the whole family. This is difficult to do when people lead busy, complicated lives."

"Seventeen years ago, as a new parent, returning to the Church was intimidating, but I was welcomed by a family and received the sacraments. I also became active in ministries in the Church challenged by its imperfections to be welcoming and accepting to all."

"We need a better understanding of young couples not married by the Church, to help them become close to the Church and lighten up their spirit and their faith."



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