

Synod Bulletin – March 2015

3rd General Session of Synod 2014: Confirming the Challenges and Pivoting to Solutions

Nearly 350 General Delegates, Observers, Ecumenical guests, seminarians, and Synod Commission members gathered for the 3rd General Session of the Diocesan Synod at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull on February 7, 2015.

The Delegates formally approved a series of five global challenges that will be the primary focus for the coming months. The adoption of these challenges followed months of study and revisions by the Delegates, Study Committees and Synod Commission, working in collaboration with Bishop Caggiano. The Synod will now begin to pivot to discern responses and solutions to the challenges that were approved. These are not the only issues that will be addressed in revitalizing our Diocese, but will be our most immediate priorities.

1. **Liturgy and Worship: Every Catholic is called to FULL, CONSCIOUS, AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION (see: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* #14, 41, 48) in the worship life of the Church.**
 - a. *We must foster an attitude of welcome and hospitality that would accompany every occasion of prayer and worship.*
 - b. *Special attention must be given to the preparation and delivery of homilies that are relevant, inspirational, engaging and challenging to those who attend Mass and other sacramental celebrations.*
 - c. *The cultural and ethnic diversity of each community needs to be reflected and celebrated in its worship life, as well as in all diocesan events.*
 - d. *Every ministry associated with the celebration of the sacraments must be revitalized.*

2. **Family Life: There is a need to strengthen and support family life, and to empower and assist parents as the primary teachers of the Catholic Faith.**
 - a. *We call for the evangelization of all parents so that they may share their relationship with Jesus and the Church with their children.*
 - b. *Parents must be provided education, formation and ongoing support in their dual roles as parents and as the first catechists of their children.*
 - c. *Programs and resources must be made available to help families to strengthen the bonds of unity amongst its members.*
 - d. *Families that are confronting particular stressors, such as financial difficulties, employment issues, discrimination, immigration status, addiction, grieving and marital breakup, must be afforded effective pastoral care.*

3. **Evangelization: We must create concrete plans for evangelization through our parishes, schools, ecclesial movements, and communities.**
 - a. *We call every Catholic to ongoing missionary discipleship.*

- b. *There is an urgent need to create a variety of strategies to engage those Catholics who are marginalized to participate in the life of the Church, and to respect the diversity within our communities of faith.*
- c. *People of good will are invited to be evangelized through our effective witnessing of the Gospel.*

4. Leadership: There is a need to continually call, form, and support clergy, religious, and laity in active leadership roles in the life of the Church.

- a. *We must develop a culture that promotes and supports vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life in our Diocese.*
- b. *The ongoing education, formation and support of our clergy is vital, to promote holy and healthy living, and to assist them in their leadership roles*
- c. *Continual efforts must be made to assist Catholics to discern their personal gifts and talents, and to share those gifts with the larger community of faith in a spirit of stewardship.*
- d. *Opportunities and structures must be created to support the ongoing training and formation of lay leaders in our Diocese.*

5. Catechesis and Education: We must renew the ministry of faith formation throughout our Diocese, leading each person to a deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus in and through His Church.

- a. *There must be a clear, authentic and faithful teaching of our Catholic faith.*
- b. *Opportunities for faith formation must be offered in holistic and age- appropriate ways.*
 - i. *promote knowledge of faith,*
 - ii. *liturgical education,*
 - iii. *moral formation,*
 - iv. *teaching to pray,*
 - v. *education for community life,*
 - vi. *missionary initiation (1997 General Directory for Catechesis).*
- c. *We recognize the need for more effective faith formation for our teenagers and young adults.*
- d. *Ongoing opportunities must be offered for all the baptized to grow in their prayer life.*

Now that the challenges have been clarified, the General Delegates have been asked to provide the Synod Office and the Study Committees with information on best practices; models of ministry; programs, places, people and/or institutions that can exemplify solutions to these challenges.

In the afternoon, Delegates were privileged to hear presentations by Mike Gecan, national co-director of the Industrial Areas Foundation/CONNECT (Connecticut affiliate) speak on faith-based organizing principles; Mary Ellen O’Driscoll, Regional Director of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps encourage the Delegates to incorporate Catholic Social Teachings into their lives and to seek out those who are poor and suffering; and Msgr. Jim Lang, Episcopal Vicar for the Diocese of Syracuse, talk about parish planning, visioning and excellence.

The Synod will next meet in General Session on March 21, 2015. Additional sessions will follow on May 9 and May 30. We also strongly encourage all interested parties to follow the Synod through the *Fairfield County Catholic*, www.bridgeportdiocese.com, and www.2014synod.org. For more in-depth information on the challenges presented and the supporting bullet points, please go to www.2014synod.org/gss.