Synod 2014

Synod wrestles with challenges

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Delegates largely reached consensus on a wide range of issues affecting the local Church during the Second General Session of Synod 2014 on November 15, but wrestled with ways to approach youth, disaffected Catholics, and social justice issues.

More than 350 general delegates, observers, and invited guests gathered at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in the Nichols section of Trumbull to review

60 challenges related to the four major themes of the synod: empowering the young Church; building up communities of faith; promoting works of charity and justice; and fostering evangelical outreach.

Patrick Turner, deputy synod director, said that in addition to the discussion and comments made during the session, delegates made additional observations through nearly 1,000 emails that were submitted during and after the gathering.

The goal of the Synod Commission will be to reduce all of the challenges to 12 or fewer goals, so that the synod can begin to make final suggestions for addressing the issues.

Throughout the day-long session, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano challenged delegates to think outside the box and to understand the many Catholics who were not in the room. "We are all believers, but we must also give voice to those who aren't here," he said, referring to the many

Catholics who no longer participate in the life of the Church.

The bishop also announced to delegates

that the diocese is exploring the possibility of commissioning a Marist Poll to survey those who have stopped attending church in Fairfield County. The day-long



session was crammed with presentations of the study committees, voting on presented materials, and comments from delegates about the many challenges and

List of Challenges and Responses

		ACCEPT AS IS	ACCEPT WITH MODIFICATION	Do not accept
Promoting V	Works of Charity and Justice			
Challenge #1	There is a Need to Create an Understanding and Acceptance of Social Justice			
Ü	not only as a Gospel Mandate but as a Lived and Personal Experience.	76%	18%	6%
Challenge #2	There is a Need to Use Charitable Service to Help the Believer,			
	the Non-Practicing Believer and those of Good Will to Discover Jesus.	80%	13%	7%
Challenge #3	There is a Need to Better Identify & Respond to Unmet Needs Across our Diocese and Beyond.	70%	20%	10%
Challenge #4	There is a Need to Create an Inter-Generational Diocesan Wide Volunteer Network	77%	12%	10%
Challenge #5	There is a Need to better Inform the Populace about Catholic-Sponsored Services	78%	16%	6%
Challenge #6	There is a Need to Build & Leverage a Network of Interfaith Communities Working for Social Justice	68%	17%	15%
Challenge #7	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	19% - Need to Add; 80% - List is fine		
	THE YOUNG CHURCH			
Challenge #8	There is a need to introduce Children into the Life of the Church as Fully and Early as Possible.	65%	28%	8%
Challenge #9	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	No Voting on this challenge		
Challenge #10	There is a need to closely examine the issue of Peer Pressure for Teens	56%	25%	20%
Challenge #11	There is a need to share the Gospel Message in a manner that resonates with Teens.	56%	34%	11%
Challenge #12	I Would Go to Church More Freely, but	44%	36%	21%
Challenge #13	Good Youth Ministries are Tough to Find.	61%	29%	10%
Challenge #14	Let's be realistic, am I expected to practice my faith every day?	50%	27%	23%
Challenge #15	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	62% - Need to Add; 39% - List is Fine		
Challenge #16	There is a need to communicate and connect more often and effectively	73%	24%	3%
Challenge #17	"We are too busy": We Need Time for the People and Things We Love.	62%	19%	19%
Challenge #18	There is a need to help Young Adults to Fall in Love with Jesus Christ.	85%	11%	4%
Challenge #19	Things We Believe are Contrary to What the Church Teaches.	56%	25%	20%
Challenge #20	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	2% - Need to Add; 66% - List is fine		
	Communities of Faith			
Challenge #21	There is a need for Engagement of all baptized	88%	10%	3%
Challenge #22	There is a need to overcome competing activities, influences and negative media.	75%	18%	8%
Challenge #23	There are inadequate resources to fulfill our mission - talent, finances, and tools.	73%	17%	10%
Challenge #24	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	18% - Need to Add; 82% - List is Fine		
Challenge #25	There is a lack of understanding that in order to have a deep life of faith each family member needs			
	to develop a personal relationship with Christ that makes faith central to all aspects of daily life.	83%	12%	6%
Challenge #26	There are many poorly catechized parents and a lack of ongoing faith formation opportunities.	85%	12%	4%
Challenge #27	Faith formation, a lifelong journey, often does not include the entire family collectively	2.00		40.4
	as a family AND all the individuals within the family (regardless of age).	84%	9%	6%
Challenge #28	Many in the Church lack an understanding about the complexity and diversity of families	000/	400/	
	and family life resulting in inadequate outreach and programs.	82%	13%	5%
Challenge #29	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	15% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
Challenge #30	There is a need to understand the needs of ALL members of the parish community	000/	100/	20/
Ol11- #21	individually and collectively.	88%	10%	3%
Challenge #31	We must address the lack of understanding about the Church's teachings.	86%	10%	4%
Challenge #32	There is a need to create an environment of healing and understanding for the people we serve.	90%	7%	3%
Challenge #33	We must acknowledge and understand how current trends and modern culture are affecting traditional Parish organizational structures and the dynamics and demographics of Parish communities.	86%	8%	6%
	and demographics of fatish communities,	00/0	070	070

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opportunities facing the Church.

The discussion addressing the needs of young people and teens drew the most difference of opinion, with 62 percent of delegates voting to add to or amend the challenges as presented.

Delegates discussed many challenges that prevent teens from a deeper faith life, including peer pressure, secular role models in conflict with Church teachings, indifferent parents who don't attend Mass and liturgies that are often centered on adults but don't reach out to youth.

A young man from St. Philip Parish in Norwalk said that teens did not relate to the music played at liturgies. "We're singing songs written in the 70s," he said, drawing laughter from the older delegates. "Why can't we incorporate new music?"

Colin Lomnitzer from St.
Catherine of Siena Parish, a
freshman at Catholic University,
quickly countered him by saying
"Contemporary music by itself
is not bad, and can be used at
Mass and be appropriate. The
temptation, however, that comes
from using contemporary music
is to contemporize the Mass. This
leads to de-reverence of the Mass,
which should never, ever happen.
So we need to help people and
ourselves better understand what

Mass is, and the beauty of the Mass so every aspect of it will and can be treated with this beauty in mind."

Annie Butler from St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan said the Teen Mass was a powerful experience, with all teens asked to come to the altar during the consecration. "We kneel side by side at the altar with our parents and families behind us. It's a powerful moment."

The bishop said that the synod should not make any final decisions about what youth want until he meets with them and discusses their challenges in an upcoming consultation session.



"I will defer to what the young people say for themselves," he said, drawing applause from the gathering.

Father Michael Boccaccio, pastor of St. Philip Parish, said he believed that the Church "must address liturgical practices" as they draw people to the sacraments.

Anne Pollack, a member of Voice of the Faithful, said the synod had more work to do in including women in leadership roles and decisions about the local Church.

Sister Mary Karen Toomy

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		ACCEPT AS IS	ACCEPT WITH MODIFICATION	Do no
hallenge #34	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	16% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
		·	1.00	
hallenge #35	There is an ongoing need to strengthen both the Catholic identity and academic excellence of our schools.	81%	13%	5%
Challenge #36	There is a need to make Catholic education more accessible for those families who wish their children	0.607	00/	50/
1 11 //25	to attend Catholic schools.	86%	9%	5%
hallenge #37	Catholic schools lack viable financial models that are sustainable over time.	88%	6%	6%
hallenge #38	There is a need to strengthen the relationship that should exist between schools, parishes	86%	7%	6%
nallenge #39	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	15% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
ostering E	VANGELICAL OUTREACH			
Challenge #40	There is a need to effectively preach the Gospel, to engage one another individually,			
	to share with joy, enthusiasm, and conviction the Good News.	83%	11%	6%
Challenge #41	The Saturday/Sunday Mass experience needs to be a dynamic place of worship and fellowship			
	that assists with a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.	78%	14%	8%
Challenge #42	Our parishes, schools and their leaders, need to facilitate and revitalize the community of faith, especially			
	in support of the family, and as places of formation, evangelization, missionary zeal and care for the poor.	81%	12%	7%
Challenge #43	There is a need for diocesan leaders to encourage solidarity and sensitivity to the uniqueness			
	of each parish, support parish leaders and assist with implementing standards.	74%	11%	14%
Challenge #44	Everyone in diocesan leadership needs to nurture, sustain, support and encourage those in crises			
	of faith, both from within and those who have left the Church.	75%	15%	10%
allenge #45	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	19% - Need to Add; 80% - List is fine		
Challenge #46	There is a need to acknowledge past and/or present sinful actions by individual members of the Church,	,		
	while at the same time pointing toward the Truth and beauty of the Church as the visible Body of Christ.	56%	17%	26%
Challenge #47	There is a need to overcome our individual FEAR of evangelizing, so we might effectively	5670	2770	207
	and fruitfully share our faith in the person of Jesus Christ.	69%	17%	15%
Challenge #48	There is a need to prayerfully engage those at risk of leaving the Church, or those who have already gone,	57.70	-,,,	
	in a manner that recognizes them where they are in their lives, not necessarily where we think they should be.	78%	15%	7%
Challenge #49	There is a need for all those in rectory/school offices to remember that they are often providing	7070	1070	7,0
unionge // 17	the FIRST ENCOUNTER with Jesus Christ.	78%	11%	11%
allenge #50	There is a need to clarify the theological and historical questions that many people have.	78%	11%	12%
allenge #51	There is a need to more effectively evangelize and train the diocesan leaders, Clergy,	7070	1170	127
unenge #31	Staff, DRE's, Principals and Teachers so that they may live and share the Gospel message.	75%	15%	10%
Challenge #52	There is a need for acknowledgment by those in authority for past transgressions,	7370	15/0	107
unenge #32	for the sole purpose of healing those affected.	44%	13%	43%
allenge #53	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	20% - Need to Add; 78% - List is fine	15/0	157
allenge #54	Do versus Being: There is a need to make Social Media and Technology relevant and impactful as a means	2070 - Iveca to Aua, 7070 - List is jiik		
Chancinge #34	of Evangelization and Catechesis; not as something we do, but as a share of who we are as disciples of Christ.	81%	11%	8%
Challenge #55	There is a need to address the current perception that religion is a private matter and should remain	0170	11/0	0 /0
manenge #55	in an individual's personal sphere.	68%	13%	20%
Challenge #56	Generational Gap: There is a need to engage the older generations to utilize Social Media	0070	1370	207
	with their insights, wisdom, knowledge and life experiences.	51%	12%	36%
Challenge #57	Impact on the Young: There is a need to better understand the formative impact that technology	3170	1270	307
	is having on its users, especially young people.	84%	7%	8%
allanga #50			12%	
allenge #58	Best practices: There is a need to consolidate our research into the impacts of Social Media so all can leverage it. Greatest Challenge: There is a need to prioritize our resources; time, talent and finances.	76%	1270	13%
Challenge #59	Greatest Challenge: There is a need to prioritize our resources; time, talent and finances,			
	to utilize all forms of Media (social, traditional, and new) to assist in the Proclamation	010/	00/	110/
allangs #40	of the Gospel and to counter the prevailing perception in the secular media.	81%	8%	11%
allenge #60	Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	10% - Need to Add; 89% - List is fine		