

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 WORKS OF CHARITY AND JUSTICE			
Challenge #1	76%	18%	6%
Challenge #2	80%	13%	7%
Challenge #3	70%	20%	10%
Challenge #4	77%	12%	10%
Challenge #5	78%	16%	6%
Challenge #6	68%	17%	15%
Challenge #7	19% - Need to Add; 80% - List is fine		
EMPOWERING THE YOUNG CHURCH			
Challenge #8	65%	28%	8%
Challenge #9	No Voting on this challenge		
Challenge #10	56%	25%	20%
Challenge #11	56%	34%	11%
Challenge #12	44%	36%	21%
Challenge #13	61%	29%	10%
Challenge #14	50%	27%	23%
Challenge #15	62% - Need to Add; 39% - List is Fine		
Challenge #16	73%	24%	3%
Challenge #17	62%	19%	19%
Challenge #18	85%	11%	4%
Challenge #19	56%	25%	20%
Challenge #20	2% - Need to Add; 66% - List is fine		
BUILDING UP COMMUNITIES OF FAITH			
Challenge #21	88%	10%	3%
Challenge #22	75%	18%	8%
Challenge #23	73%	17%	10%
Challenge #24	18% - Need to Add; 82% - List is Fine		
Challenge #25	83%	12%	6%
Challenge #26	85%	12%	4%
Challenge #27	84%	9%	6%
Challenge #28	82%	13%	5%
Challenge #29	15% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
Challenge #30	88%	10%	3%
Challenge #31	86%	10%	4%
Challenge #32	90%	7%	3%
Challenge #33	86%	8%	6%

Synod 2014

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

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

	ACCEPT AS IS	ACCEPT WITH MODIFICATION	DO NOT ACCEPT
Challenge #34 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	16% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
Challenge #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 to attend Catholic schools.	86%	9%	5%
Challenge #37 Catholic schools lack viable financial models that are sustainable over time.	88%	6%	6%
Challenge #38 There is a need to strengthen the relationship that should exist between schools, parishes	86%	7%	6%
Challenge #39 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	15% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
FOSTERING EVANGELICAL 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%
Challenge #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 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, 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 the FIRST ENCOUNTER with Jesus Christ.	78%	11%	11%
Challenge #50 There is a need to clarify the theological and historical questions that many people have.	78%	11%	12%
Challenge #51 There is a need to more effectively evangelize and train the diocesan leaders, Clergy, 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, for the sole purpose of healing those affected.	44%	13%	43%
Challenge #53 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	20% - Need to Add; 78% - List is fine		
Challenge #54 Do versus Being: There is a need to make Social Media and Technology relevant and impactful as a means 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 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 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 is having on its users, especially young people.	84%	7%	8%
Challenge #58 Best practices: There is a need to consolidate our research into the impacts of Social Media so all can leverage it.	76%	12%	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 of the Gospel and to counter the prevailing perception in the secular media.	81%	8%	11%
Challenge #60 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	10% - Need to Add; 89% - List is fine		