



Synod  
2021  
2024



**ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF GREENSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA**

**SYNODAL SYNTHESIS**

**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF BISHOP LARRY J. KULICK AND THE**

**SYNOD COMMITTEE**

**APRIL 1, 2024**

## Introduction

As part of the interim stage of the Synodal process, the Diocese of Greensburg undertook an effort to listen to the faithful and discuss major issues together with a goal of hearing where the Holy Spirit is calling the Church. Bishop Kulick's role was to facilitate, listen, seek and encourage feedback, and to provide staff and volunteers the resources necessary to complete the process.

A Synodal workgroup planned and executed the process with three distinct audiences, employing hybrid tactics for information gathering including various in-person listening sessions and an online survey.

The workgroup determined the major theme of the Interim Synodal process for the Diocese of Greensburg would focus on faith formation and the following belief:

**Rather than accepting the declining participation in the Church, we need to seek new ways of forming disciples that will respond to the needs of our people.**

## AUDIENCES

There were three distinct audiences for the interim stage of the Synodal Process. The first was a group of faith formation leaders who came to meet with Bishop Kulick about his newest initiative. To take a more proactive and direct role in the faith formation efforts of our youth and families, after consultation with our clergy, Bishop Kulick is establishing Regional Directors of Faith and Discipleship. These leaders will enable all parishes to begin the process of developing programs that meet the current formation needs of our families, most especially our youth.

According to Bishop Kulick's pastoral letter, *Donum Veritatis*, by working together on innovative and experiential methods of formation and evangelization, we can better meet the needs of our people and change the narrative of shrinking numbers of participants in the life of the Church.

These professionally trained Regional Directors will provide the necessary catechetical and faith formation support to allow our pastors, priests, and permanent deacons to focus on sacramental and parochial ministries. Working together with one another, these Regional Directors can create the best resources and practices to reach both our youth and adults in ways that meet the present needs of the Church while preserving the Truth of the Gospel.

Through sharing resources of staffing and materials between parishes, we are able to reach a greater number of families and offer them transformative Catholic experiences. When parishes align their resources, we are able to provide the youth and young adults with a more comprehensive and complete catechetical experience rather than single parishes working alone.

The second and third groups were attendees at both men's and women's discipleship events. The goal of these gatherings is to create opportunities for men and women of the Diocese to gather for prayer and discussion. In addition, these are perfect events for parishioners to invite friends or family, including those who have been away from the Church or non-Catholics, for a good message, faith sharing, and an encounter with Jesus.

**Transformed: A Gathering for Men was held** on Monday, January 22, at 6:30 p.m.  
**Beloved: A Gathering for Women** was held on Monday, January 29, at 6:30 p.m. At each of these gatherings, Bishop Kulick was the keynote speaker on the topic "*Created in God's Image.*" Both included time for prayer, reflection, small group discussion, Eucharistic Adoration and the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation with multiple confessors.

## Small Group Discussion Questions and Answers

### **Topic #1**

**The Bishop is calling all of us to uphold the dignity of the human person. How do we respond to his call in our parishes?**

The Women's gathering feedback listed existing ministries and emphasized the need for women to take up the cause and become lay leaders in outreach with projects like Walking With Moms in Need, Catholic Charities, Bethlehem Project, St. Vincent DePaul, among others.

The Men's gathering feedback consistently mentioned the need for more focused (short and impactful) homilies from the clergy and emphasized impact that inspirational messages can have on a man's motivation to engage with the faith.

The Faith Formation Leaders gathering resulted in a good mix of the above; that focused on the importance of inspirational communication in all forms (homilies, guest speakers, social media) which can motivate men and women to become leaders in our parishes. They are very knowledgeable and proud of the work being done to connect with the poor and marginalized on a parish level.

## **Topic #2**

### **How well do you think our faith formation has been educating our young people about upholding human dignity?**

Faith Formation Leaders explained that the Church as a whole needs to work harder at supporting and guiding our youth through the teen years that can often be isolating and confusing. They believe we need to overhaul how we relate to them and meet families where they are instead of only employing traditional tactics for education and communication.

The Men's gathering participants agreed that the next generation of Catholics are exposed and influenced by the wrong types of messages. They believe that some young people do not agree with the Church's teachings and do not find the Church's messages to be appealing because they are not catechized. They believe it is critical for families to attend Mass together so they can appreciate Catholic teachings and values.

The Women's gathering participants said there is a serious need for quality curriculum that is delivered to families in new and innovative ways.

## **Topic #3**

### **How have you witnessed the goodness of the person at work in the local church, and how have you witnessed the fall human nature at work in the local church?**

The Women's gathering participants listed dozens of ways they have personally witnessed goodness at work in the parishes of the Diocese of Greensburg, including the many mission-driven outreach programs. But they do not believe parishes are providing parents with ways to handle "hot topics" and "hard topics" with their young and growing children.

The Men's gathering feedback articulated serious areas of concern for the Church that they believe can be overwhelming to parish staff. They say these issues need to be addressed by Diocesan leaders immediately including catechesis surrounding LGBTQ issues, support groups for divorcees and bereavement programs to assist the aging population in Western Pennsylvania.

The Faith Formation Leaders believe parish staff and active parishioners display great care and concern for the needs of others.

## Online Survey

About 150 people from the aforementioned gatherings also took an online survey. The goal of the survey was to gauge the perception of the effectiveness of faith formation in our parishes from two perspectives: that of the laity and that of the faith formation leaders themselves.

94% of respondents believe that rather than accepting the declining participation in the Church, we need to seek new ways of forming disciples that will respond to the needs of our people.

95% of faith formation leaders feel religious education in their parish is forming well rounded disciples.

69% of people from the men and women's gathering feel that religious education in their parish is forming well rounded disciples, however, 79% have seen improvement over the last year.

## Conclusion

The feedback gathered in the recent listening sessions and surveys provided Bishop Kulick with both quantitative and qualitative data about the effectiveness of the current faith formation infrastructure in the Diocese of Greensburg, the importance of innovation to better serve the needs of the young faithful and the value that both the laity and the faith formation leaders see in the excellent work already being done in our parishes.

With regard to Bishop Kulick's plan for faith and discipleship in the Diocese of Greensburg and once again citing his pastoral letter, *Donum Veritatis*, through this effort, we can offer families a choice of experiential catechetical sessions, including intergenerational or family catechesis and The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

"I am confident that through these efforts, we will have an increase in those seeking Christian Initiation as older youth or adults. This increase will require a more robust Christian Initiation process offered in our parishes that meets the needs of families joining the Church or requesting the Sacraments of Initiation. I have requested the Office of Faith, Family, and Discipleship to align our sacramental policies and Christian Initiation preparation programs to form disciples in a family-friendly manner that provides inspiring and meaningful catechesis and keeps the faithful connected to their respective parish communities."

– The Most Reverend Larry J. Kulick, JCL, Bishop of Greensburg