

MARCH, 2022

Synod Summary

Saint Brigid Parish - San Diego, California



DISAPPOINTMENTS WITH THE CHURCH

Half of the comments regarding people's disappointments with the Church revolve around three themes: **1) judgement and exclusion, especially to the LGBTQ+ community, 2) the sex abuse scandal and cover-up, and 3) leadership at all levels from parish priests to the Pope.** After that, people were disappointed for various reasons related to divorce, women not being able to be priests or in other leadership roles, family and friends who have left the Church, Church teachings and traditions, sacramental preparation and faith formation, the Church not being relevant or growing with the times, politics, money, COVID, fertility as it relates to abortion, birth control and miscarriage, other people in the Church, and gaps with youth and young adults.

Some specific comments from Saint Brigid's parishioners:

- "LGBTQ+ community feels that they are not truly welcome in the Catholic community."
- "Sex abuse scandal has tainted many Catholics and left deep scars of distrust."
- "Church should express love more than anything else."
- "A patriarchal attitude flaunting authority, who is the Church? The people are the Church."
- "Stigma with divorce; divorcees are excluded from the sacraments"
- "Women should be able to be priests and deacons, especially with the shortage of priests."
- "Only one of our four children is still practicing."
- "We need to be clearer about what we believe and why."
- "I was disappointed about how politics made its way into homilies during the elections."
- "The ability of Church to hang on to young people"
- "The lack of evangelical zeal to welcome and invite those who are outside of the Church"

What is a Synod?

The Catholic Church is facing unprecedented challenges the world over. Because of this, Pope Francis is inviting all the world's Catholics to participate in a consultation about the Church in a gathering called a synod. This synod is focused on how the Church engages with people at all levels.

Demographics

196 Participants

26 small group circles including 20 C2C groups

86 (44%) participants are young adults (ages 18-39)

**77% Females
23% Males**

The six-page detailed summary can be found at saintbrigidparish.org/synod





JOYS WITH THE CHURCH

Almost half of the comments regarding people's joys with the Church revolve around three themes: **1) celebrating sacraments, 2) community, and 3) the universality, history, and beauty of the Church.** After that, people's joys related to pilgrimages and retreats, ministries they are involved in and received support from, small groups, young people, Pope Francis, music, personal faith, spiritual accompaniment by priests and others, and coming back after COVID.

Some specific comments from Saint Brigid's parishioners:

- "parish community providing love, prayers, and comfort"
- "finding a parish that puts time, effort, and passion into building a vibrant young adult community"
- "sacramental moments, the true presence of God with us"
- "Pope Francis – keeps me attached to the Church"
- "joy in suffering and finding strength in the Catholic Church"
- "music – a very intimate way to find joy in the Mass"
- "the community, sacraments, daily Mass, Holy Eucharist, Adoration"
- "being Catholic, being connected, encountering God"
- "felt welcomed even though I was church-hopping"

HOPES FOR THE CHURCH

Almost half of the comments regarding people's hopes for the Church revolve around five themes: **1) that we are open and welcoming, 2) that people return, 3) inclusion, 4) young people, and 5) unity.** After that, people's hopes related to the Church being Christ-centered, the synod process, Church teachings, meeting people where they are, support ministries, Church reform (including but not limited to the sex abuse scandals), that women will be allowed in leadership roles within the Church, that the Church is relevant in today's world, Catholic education, the Church's long-standing history, and that priests be allowed to marry.

Some specific comments from Saint Brigid's parishioners:

- "everyone would feel welcome, included, and loved"
- "that people return to the Church, including my family"
- "that the Synod takes root and makes a great change"
- "the Church radiates the love of God to the world"
- "stand up for the truth while continuing to reach new people"
- "serve all people of the world in times of need"



What's next? at the parish, diocese, and beyond

At **Saint Brigid Parish**, we as a staff are continually searching for ways to not only help you grow closer to Jesus as disciples, but also to help you become disciple makers who encounter, love, and serve Jesus, one another, and the world. Your feedback from these synod listening sessions will support these efforts which include a strategic planning session with Evangelical Catholic in May, 2022 and our continual prayers and planning moving forward.



At the **diocese**, all information from synod listening sessions across San Diego and Imperial counties is currently being analyzed. This summer, a summary report will be shared by Bishop McElroy to our community, and sent to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops who will submit a report of its own to the Vatican. A survey is also being created for those who could not attend a parish session or those not regularly attending Mass. Meanwhile, synod sessions of young people (at parishes and schools), the homeless, the incarcerated, and refugees continue.

DISAPPOINTMENT COMMENTS

Some additional comments from Saint Brigid Parish parishioners related to **disappointments** with the Church:

- **LGBTQ+ response:** "inconsistency of messaging regarding our acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community;" "I've seen a general feeling of unwelcome, blatant doors shut in faces, and removal of members from activities and leadership positions." "LGBTQ+ people get judged quickly but the priest scandals are swept under the rug."
- **Judgement:** "I experienced conservative judgement because I didn't go to high Mass, and liberal judgement because of politics. I felt cut off instead of belonging to the Church, so I stopped going to church for a while."
- **Sex abuse scandal:** "personally abused – I forgave and tried to move on but lack of apology sent a 'you don't matter' message;" "can't get around it; number one reason people have left the Church;" "Bishops knew about the priests but would still move them from parish to parish. We should hold shepherds to higher standard than sheep."
- **Leadership:** "reluctance by Church leaders to answer questions that can challenge;" "'holier than thou' attitude of many parishes is turning people away from God;" "Cardinals and bishops need to speak out more against controversial issues." "I am disappointed with the administration element of the Church. I think so much is put on the clergy and staff when there are so many lay people who can pick up work and help."
- **Divorce:** "A priest not knowledgeable about annulment process nearly prevented my marriage in the Church."
- **Women:** "lack of female clergy;" "women lacking a role in the Church;" "class system based on gender"
- **Leaving Church:** "Today the church is half empty." "I wish there was a way to engage people more in college." "I had everything growing up Catholic and still fell away from the Church but God always welcomes you back."
- **Sacraments:** "felt shamed during confession;" "Some parishes don't treat the Eucharist reverently." "The Church isn't properly challenging couples in marriage prep."
- **Faith Formation:** "A lot of Catholic schools focus on the rules but not the why behind of the rules." "I was poorly catechized in 60's/70's. My parents were expected to be primary educators but inadequately prepared to do so."
- **Politics:** "In last couple elections, I was looking to the Church for guidance. But there was a lack of guidance so I felt pressure that I was making the wrong choice."
- **COVID:** "As a newer Catholic, the closure of churches for COVID felt especially challenging, having the sacraments unavailable." "I wanted the Church to take proactive steps to help prevent misinformation on the COVID vaccine."
- **Money:** "A friend worked for the Church and wasn't paid a fair wage so was unable to afford day-to-day living."
- **Fertility:** "The Church takes little or no action on abortion." "I'm confused because of birth control issues." "There is a lack of resources and accompaniment for infertility and miscarriage issues."
- **Lack of support:** "not equipped to help those with mental illness;" "Church could do more for the homeless."
- **Communications:** "Keep online Mass times information current; it's important and is greatly appreciated."
- **None:** "I don't want to focus on the negatives of the Church; I love our Church. I accept it and realize there are many issues, and by the grace of God, everything will be for the good."



JOY COMMENTS

Some additional comments from Saint Brigid Parish parishioners related to **joys** with the Church:

- **Sacraments:** "After a break from the Church, I realized part of my life was empty so I went to confession. I had a conversation with the priest, not typical. He offered counseling after the confession and it was a very reassuring welcome back." "When I was in the hospital and a priest came to visit me, it meant so much to me and I felt like such a member of our community during a vulnerable moment where I really needed it." "My wedding was beautiful; my children's weddings were beautiful."
- **Community:** "When I found community, my faith expanded beyond just sitting in Mass. I became known and found other people whom I could talk to about faith." "Joys with people living their faith, using their gifts, and creating a welcoming community;" "God's fingerprints shining through other people in the Church."
- **Pilgrimage/Retreats:** Pilgrimages to Holy Land, World Youth Day, Santiago de Compostela, and other religious sites mentioned. Cursillo, Kairos, Steubenville, Opus Dei, Young Adult, and Charismatic retreats mentioned.
- **Universal:** "Traveling and going into different churches throughout the world, it's universal, even if it's in a different language." "consistency of Church teachings and the Mass;" "I'm proud that the Church is 2000 years old."
- **Beauty:** "the detail the Church has put into decorating God's house;" "beauty in religious art and chapels"
- **Leadership:** "Integrity that is shown by the Church when they double-down on what they believe regardless of what is espoused by the rest of the world." "Podcasts, in particular Father Mike, who has changed my life."
- **COVID:** "When the pandemic started churches adapted very quickly to bring the Mass, through livestream and outdoor services." "Thankful to be back together after closures ... seen and unseen grace."
- **Mass:** "daily Mass and high holidays like Easter Triduum and Christmas;" "Kiss of peace brings community to Church." "My greatest joy is the Eucharist which is so vital for me and for all; Jesus is her center."
- **Priests:** "The priest remembered my name and invited me to join the parish." "priests open up to parishioners, when young people can relate to the message through language and explanations"
- **Pope Francis:** "I feel he speaks to me and cares about everyone. He invites joy and inclusion, closeness and belonging, versus dictating." "care for the environment;" "forward thinking, welcoming, minimalist (first Pope not to wear the designer shoes), loves children"
- **Personal:** "facing anxiety/depression during Lent and finding strength in the struggles of Christ;" "Pope John Paul II's visit to the US. The football stadium filled and overflowing, people of every race, color, age; outpouring of love." "I was blessed to be born into a strong Catholic family; it is a true gift."
- **Youth:** "My CCD teacher at the time lived near me and would pick me up and take me to class each week." "Catholic education and youth programs, blessed with coaches who were role models"



HOPE COMMENTS

Some additional comments from Saint Brigid Parish parishioners related to **hopes** for the Church:

- **Christ-centered:** "to know we are loved;" "for everyone to be an example of Christ, love as I have loved you;" "There is a hunger for greater evangelization, to bring our Lord Jesus to the people; they want to know Him."
- **Welcoming:** "Welcome the 'other' and love them well, so they might grow in fellowship and love." "Be more welcoming and relatable to the young adult community." "hope for the Church to continue to open its doors;" "More conversations that break down walls within the Church and with those outside. Get to know people beyond prejudice to better know how to serve them and lead them to Christ."
- **Return to the Church:** "Recapture lost Catholics, including young people and my family members." "Bring back people who have stepped away and been hurt, back to the Church." "Fill their hearts and hold to the truth."
- **Inclusive:** "Be inclusive, less rigid, and more accepting." "That the Church balance the need to be 'open and inclusive' and yet not say 'anything goes.' This will appeal to the spiritual side of people and not the intellectual."
- **Unity:** "Bring the world together. The Holy Spirit is in the community – be like the pandemic but spread love, joy, and mercy." "Be a force for unity in the field hospital and at home; come together and unite."
- **Young People:** "I'm hopeful that young adult ministries across the country are igniting a refined fire for Christ." "Build more young adult communities in parishes and find ways to get people involved. Use social media." "Evangelize to high school students/youth, bring the light of Christ to them, inspire them to fall in love with God."
- **Church teachings:** "Clarify and end the ambiguity related to moral teachings like birth control, living together before marriage, and our position on LGBTQ+, etc." "We 'sacramentalize' but don't catechize; live out the call of Vatican II to strive for greater catechesis." "People who were raised Catholic have misconceptions of what they think the Church believes but it is not true; provide clarity around these misconceptions."
- **Synod process:** "That feedback from this synod is fruitful and that suggestions are implemented so as to help the Church expand by bringing former parishioners back, and inviting new ones in." "That the synod has an impact and that the Church prospers because it is our spiritual home."
- **Support:** "I hope the Church will become a leader in solving the problems of homelessness and poverty – feeding programs are good, but why are so many unhoused, unfed, and unhappy? The answers are complex and varied and so the solutions need to be the same."
- **Reform:** "The Church needs deep reform at the highest level related to the sex abuse problem. Go forward with checks and balances, and accountability. The clergy needs to clean up." "Keep moving toward words and actions of Jesus; less focus on wealth and power, and emphasis on small community and humility." "priests be able to marry"
- **Women:** "Have women priests and deacons; be inclusive of women in all positions of the Church." "reformed understanding of gender and women, more diversity in leadership;" "more help for mothers and young families"
- **Education:** "Make Catholic education affordable and available to everyone." "It shouldn't be exclusive to affluent families with resources." "Hope with children and the next generation; their innocence is inspiring"
- **Community:** "Foster a deeper connection with the people in the Church; create a parish-to-parish sister program."
- **LGBTQ+:** "Build a bridge to the LGBTQ+ community." "that someone high up will stand up for LGBTQ+ community"
- **Divorce:** "The annulment process should be simplified to welcome them back and marry again within the Church."
- **Communications:** "Embrace new ways to reach people (i.e. social media)." "Have priests lean into online space to make God's word more relatable." "more transparency and positive representation of Catholicism in the media"
- **Relevant:** "Pivot for a modern world; we are alienating a lot of people." "How can we be an approachable Church?" "Lead by influence, not by laws." "Stand firm to age-old beliefs to spread the Word of God in simple terms."



PARISH-SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Some additional comments from Saint Brigid Parish parishioners related to **disappointments**:

- **Not welcoming:** "A Church staff/volunteer shooed away a homeless person who was asleep while opening the Church for Mass." "unfriendly receptionists/volunteers/parish staff; some volunteers/staff/clergy gossiping"
- **Leadership:** "Pastors are not interested in all facets of the parish – limited to liturgical and sacramental activities. They should be participating in all ministries and make their presence known whenever possible." "long-time ministry leaders not sharing with others who are willing to be trained to take on a leadership role"
- **Personal:** "A complaint was filed against me but I had no way to address the parish council face-to-face. I had to hear the story from another parishioner and had no way to defend myself."

Some additional comments from Saint Brigid Parish parishioners related to **joys**:

- **Clergy:** "two wonderful priests and three deacons – great homilies;" "Fr. Sebastian and Fr. Steve are very involved with the younger generation, ready and eager to serve." "see the priests outside after Mass;" "Our priest has allowed us to celebrate the Holy Mass in honor of our Virgin of Guadalupe." "Fr. Steve – a joy that priests do know the difference between petition and annulment, tribunal;" "when Fr. Sebastian talks to the students"
- **Sacraments and Mass:** "The Easter Vigil where I entered the Church at St. B's. Other religions have you join on the spot. It took me time to understand RCIA; I wasn't always thrilled to go to it and I had to go to Mass and not receive the Eucharist. But the sense of reward receiving Communion and Confirmation was a joyful experience." "Deacon Chris teaching about reconciliation;" "baptisms in Mass;" "the 9 am family Mass and 'Sunday experience' after"
- **Ministries:** Both in serving and being served; ministries mentioned: Eucharistic Minister, Lector, C2C facilitator, GIFT, nightWATCH, home ministry, Witness to Love, serving coffee, Divine Mercy, Stations, Friday fish fry, divorce, recovery (leader wrote a book), Neighbors in Need, caroling at Christmas, children's Christmas Mass, and charisms.
- **Weddings and WTL:** "wedding and prep process with deacon was extremely fruitful;" "marriage prep really good, able to be with a real non-perfect couple;" "awesome experience to share, learn, grow, and become friends"
- **C2C:** "The Holy Spirit is on fire in our C2C group." "It's great to be outside the typical large group bible study. The small group is more intimate and brings the community together, actually getting to know people."
- **Young Adults:** "St. B's Young Adult Community;" "a parish that believes in discipleship of young people;" "This YA community brings so much meaning to my life. It is flexible and something we can leave and return to throughout our careers and lives as young adults." "seeing new people at Wednesday Bible study nights and testimonies"
- **Music:** "My choir angel at 7:30 am Mass; she gets me out of bed on Sunday mornings;" "gospel choir from Christ the King;" "the Easter Vigil and Bill Nolan's chant"

Some additional comments from Saint Brigid Parish parishioners related to **hopes**:

- **Support:** "For first-time parents; it's really lonely and overwhelming; parents can't do C2C groups and child care is not available." "Reach out to people with wide interests: singing, children's ministries, more events on charisms (how do you actually live that out?), help the homeless, Catholic sports leagues, meet people in all aspects in life, etc.."
- **Relevant:** "Parish has something for everyone; remain approachable and keep growing."
- **Community:** "I have hope in this community here at St. B's in how we represent the Catholic Church to others who may have had very little direct exposure to it. We make it look very good." "I love this community; it is my family!"

