

# **TOWARD A SYNODAL CHURCH**

**THE REPORT OF THE DIOCESE  
OF BATON ROUGE**



— The Roman Catholic Diocese of —  
**BATON ROUGE**

12 June 2022

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This past December, I had the privilege of being nominated by Bishop Michael Gerard Duca to serve as our local coordinator to engage our community in Pope Francis' synodal process entitled *Toward a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*. Admittedly, as the nominated leader of these conversations, I was hesitant to accept this invitation, not knowing the scope and magnitude of this process.

Any early fears I had were quickly dismissed in the joy and dynamism I experienced in the various listening sessions, which renewed within me a passion to be part of our ever-discerning Church. Bishop Duca and I were able to hear the successes of ecclesial life, challenges to communion both locally and globally, ideas about improving participation, and creativity regarding continuing the Church's mission. The Diocese of Baton Rouge thanks the hundreds of listeners who participated in the in-person sessions or who submitted their observations online. Thank you for accepting Bishop Duca's invitation to participate!

What follows is a synthesis of these listening sessions. While we are unable to elaborate on every idea that surfaced or point that was made, we heard and appreciated each one. This document represents the culmination of spiritual discernment, helping us to understand the Church in our local context as represented by you, the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

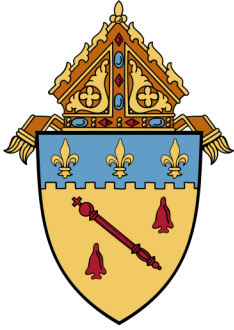
While this process may have seemed unusual initially, many of us have experienced great encouragement as we listened with humility to the needs of our brothers and sisters throughout the world, working toward Pope Francis' goal of "walking together," even in disagreement. I look forward to working with Bishop Duca in implementing plans resulting from what was heard that will hopefully bear much fruit.

At the conclusion of the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles on the Solemnity of the Ascension, two men stand next to the Apostles asking, "Why are you standing there looking up at the sky?" (Acts 1:11). If there is any surety from what we heard in our conversations, we know now is the time for us to go forth to be the Body of Christ to the world through the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit, who always invites us to be open and to listen with humility.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rev. Jamin Scott David". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Rev.", "Jamin", and "David" being capitalized and prominent.

Very Reverend Jamin Scott David, JCL  
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia



# INTRODUCTIONS

## A REREADING OF THE SYNODAL EXPERIENCE

At the request of His Holiness Pope Francis, and eager to join with other Churches throughout the world to engage in the synodal process officially entitled *Towards a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, the Diocese of Baton Rouge, under the leadership of its shepherd Bishop Michael Gerard Duca, started its consultative process later than most. On Aug. 29, 2021, Hurricane Ida, one of the strongest storms in history, impacted the entirety of southeastern Louisiana with catastrophic flooding and winds exceeding 150 miles per hour. As a result, it was not until Dec. 12, 2021 (The Third Sunday of Advent) that Bishop Duca penned a letter to the faithful outlining the diocesan plan for consultation.

Nine deanery listening sessions were to be held throughout the 5,405 square miles that encompass the diocese, bringing nearly two sessions to each of the five deaneries during the course of four months. Any of the faithful would be able to participate in these open sessions of dialogue. Sessions were held on the following dates at these locations spread throughout the diocese:

**Northeast Deanery Session –**

*St. Margaret Church, Hammond (20 January 2022)*

**South Deanery Session –**

*St. Elizabeth Church, Paincourtville (24 January 2022)*

**Baton Rouge Deanery Session –**

*The Catholic Life Center, Baton Rouge (26 January 2022)*

**Northwest Deanery Session –**

*Holy Family, Port Allen (29 January 2022)*

**Northwest Deanery Session –**

*St. John the Baptist, Zachary (31 January 2022)*

**South Deanery Session –**

*St. John the Evangelist, Plaquemine (16 February 2022)*

**Baton Rouge Deanery Session –**

*The Catholic Life Center, Baton Rouge (17 February 2022)*

**East Central Deanery Session –**

*St. Peter Chanel, Paulina (18 February 2022)*

**East Central Deanery Session –**

*St. Theresa of Avila, Gonzales (19 February 2022)*





Hearing Pope Francis' call to give particular attention to those who have more difficulty in participating and responding, "targeted" sessions were also held so that the Church of Baton Rouge could identify who is journeying with us, both inside and outside the ecclesial perimeter. Thus, listening sessions were also arranged with the following groups:

**Non-Catholic Religious Leaders**

*(St. Alphonsus, Greenwell Springs, 30 January 2022)*

**The Latin Mass Community**

*(St. Agnes, Baton Rouge, 10 March 2022)*

**The African American Community**

*(Immaculate Conception, Baton Rouge, 17 March 2022)*

**College Students**

*(Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, 23 March 2022)*

**Healthcare Leaders**

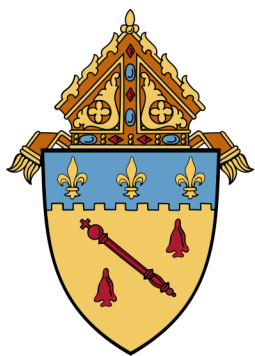
*(Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, 07 April 2022)*

**The Hispanic Community**

*(The Hispanic Apostolate, St. Pius X, Baton Rouge, 09 April 2022)*

Each session gathered anywhere from fifty (50) to one hundred (100) persons together for a true opportunity to listen – with open minds and hearts, without bearing any prejudices. Sessions were led by the Very Reverend Jamin David, Diocesan Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, who defined with brevity the notions of a synod and synodality, calling those gathered to speak with *parrhesia* – bold freedom of speech. Bishop Duca was also present for most of these gatherings, and the team, using a series of guide questions under the themes of Communion, Participation, and Mission, sought to listen, all to foster broad consultation and to gather the wealth of lived synodal experiences in its different articulations and facets.

Also, knowing the difficulty or inability to travel for some, a resource page was created on the diocesan website ([diobr.org/synod](http://diobr.org/synod)), and there an online form was created allowing anyone willing to express his or her voice to do so by simply giving feedback electronically. Hundreds of responses were submitted that contributed to this dialogue of shared commitment.

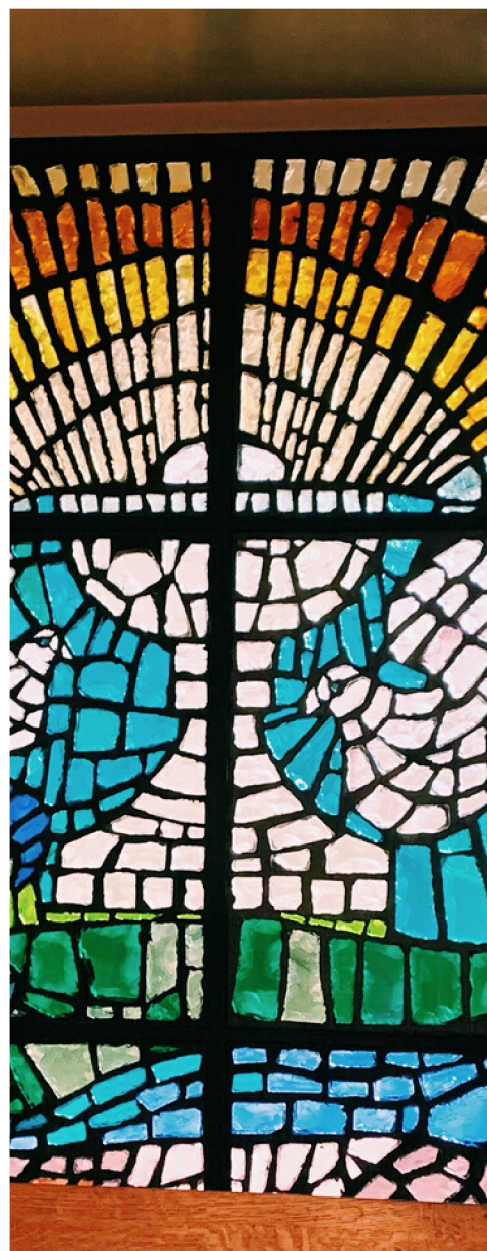


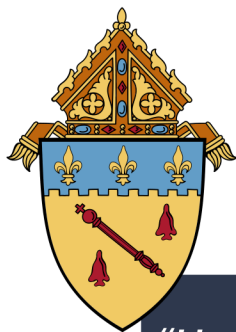
# DISCERNMENT OF THE COLLECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

While many in our Church may be unaccustomed to the synodal process or unfamiliar with the Holy Father's vision of "walking together" despite disagreement, these gatherings surely fostered listening with humility to the needs of the Church, each other, and the world in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. After several sessions it became clear the Holy Spirit was present, since several common themes emerged despite differing demographics. Past hurts were aired; dreams and visions were shared; a sense of hope despite present and past difficulties was apparent; new relationships were formed, and others were mended.

***"Past hurts were aired; dreams and visions were shared; a sense of hope despite present and past difficulties was apparent; new relationships were formed, and others were mended."***

What follows is the thematic synthesis of the Church of Baton Rouge that undoubtedly will contribute to the work of listening and discernment in the Universal Church.





# COMMUNION

*“He put all things in subjection under his feet and made Him head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” -Ephesians 1:22-23*

Participants were invited to reflect upon this first mark of synodality – communion – by recalling the Church is called “Catholic” since she is sent to all to gather the entire human family from every nation and culture in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Three guide questions aided in dialogue: In what ways has the local church been successful in bringing people together in communion? How can our local church build up communion effectively and authentically in the coming months and years (and give concrete examples)? Does our local church relate to members who have drifted away, and how can we improve as a local church in how we invite others back into full communion?

## EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION

Several synodal participants noted that while the Church of Baton Rouge is alive, active, and vibrant, many people feel ostracized by the Church. Some noted that we are all children of God, and that Christ preached a message of inclusion. Still others noted that God chooses among people, and people must in turn choose Christ for salvation. A consensus arose that the Church of Baton Rouge – in an imperfect way – *does* attempt to reflect the call to invite others to participate in the mystery of salvation, reflecting Vatican II’s understanding of the People of God and the Scriptural mandate to “make disciples of all nations.”

Nonetheless, participants shared stories that many feel outside of communion and far from God and the Church. Many participants believe they are unable to change or to be part of the Church’s communion of great respect and love despite Jesus’s insistence to love neighbor as we love God. A challenge was for the Church of Baton Rouge to have truthful, encouraging answers that give hope to the lost, to create a place of mercy where the stranger is welcome, loved, forgiven, and encouraged.

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## **ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE**

Some participants observed that churches at large are drifting with culture and can often be perceived as “just another social ministry.” These church members worry about a general sense of apathy toward the faith and that, in a world of dissension and strife, people often turn to the Church simply as a last resort. Religious bigotry as portrayed by the media underplays and undermines the role of the Church in culture, and many participants noted that individualism has changed how people perceive the Church.

There was consensus that improved ecumenical relationships should grow in intensity and extension so that Christians, together, might feel an impetus not only to overcome differences between denominations but perhaps join spiritually in unity to combat the prevalent secularism of the modern world. However, the call to unity must be based on solid doctrinal basis that is only accomplished through serious dialogue. The work of unity begins and ends with hope, conviction, and courage.

***"The work of unity begins and ends with hope, conviction, and courage."***





## AUTHENTICITY AND TRUST

The sexual abuse scandals of recent decades have undermined the credibility of the Church and its leaders. Although several participants expressed appreciation for the Diocese of Baton Rouge's efforts to protect children and the vulnerable, still more needs to be done.

Many participants have lost trust in Church leaders' ability to lead. Several commented that spiritually, true fraternal relationships require authenticity and trust – key building blocks in reclaiming the Church's prerogative of leadership. Listening in these sessions served as a reminder of Jesus' call to stop and listen and to establish direct, personal relationships with "the other" through empathy and compassion and to develop spiritual closeness, especially to the poor and marginalized. It is in this authentic witness and in trustworthy, healthy interpersonal relationships true community is created.

***"...spiritually, true fraternal relationships require authenticity and trust."***



## WELCOMING THE STRANGER

One participant commented the “field for evangelization in Baton Rouge is ripe for harvesting.” Another commented that fear of the unknown can be paralyzing to how the Church responds to “the other” in our midst. There was a consensus that fear should not determine our responses or fuel hostility and rejection. Rather, the goal is to encounter those who are different to provide an authentic encounter with the Lord. Such encounters help individuals in the Church to overcome their fears and to meet the other where he or she lives. As was reiterated in every session, this is an invitation to overcome fear and *not* an invitation to compromise moral integrity or truth about faith.

***"The goal is to encounter those who are different to provide an authentic encounter with the Lord."***



## CATECHESIS BUILDS COMMUNION

A challenge of the Church of Baton Rouge is to continue to profess the faith in its purity and integrity, not denying any article of faith, but instead assuring the deposit of faith is passed on in its entirety. Many commented that parochial and diocesan programs have generated much success in emphasizing all aspects of the profession of faith. Authentically, this might continue to be best accomplished through processes of holistic catechesis and by a renewed appreciation of the sacraments and liturgical signs of the faith. Renewal of the link between the Sacred Scriptures and liturgy is a crucial starting point.

Eucharistic renewal is currently ongoing and enthusiastically supported in the local church of Baton Rouge. There is a strong sense among the laity that youth particularly encounter conversion through their reception of the Eucharist and in times of adoration. This process will surely invite the whole Church to experience Christ through the transformation the Eucharist brings.

Many noted how Catholic schools and parish catechetical programs assist in building authentic communion through catechesis. Participants are encouraged by current efforts that aide students in today's culture to think critically and through a faith-based perspective, though there remains a challenge to not only offer excellent academic curricula but to also inspire true Catholic identity inspired by the teachings of Christ.

Catholic schools have faced increased challenges in the past several years, mostly because of the COVID pandemic, changing demographics, and financial pressures. Synodal participants emphasized the need and desire to strengthen Catholic identity and values in Catholic schools since these institutions are a sign of unity in their ability to reveal Christ to others.

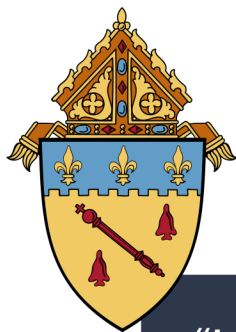




***"A challenge of the Church of Baton Rouge is to continue to profess the faith in its purity and integrity..."***

Various participants longed for a return to traditional exercises of Catholic piety that express what is believed in the context of prayer and communal worship with others. Ideas discussed included small Christian community formation, Eucharistic processions, and community recitation of the rosary, to name a few.

At the same time, the faith can be shared and communion built using the multitude of modern tools at our fingertips. Admittedly the COVID-19 pandemic was difficult for everyone, and while some parishioners have not returned to an incarnational experience of Church, the use of television, radio, social media, and other forms of technology shows promise as means by which the faith can be shared and others can be invited to fully participate in the mystery of the Church.



# PARTICIPATION

*"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." -Hebrews 10:24*

Participants were invited to reflect upon this second mark of synodality – participation – by recalling that all the faithful possess gifts and talents to serve each other through the gifts that have been received by the Holy Spirit. Three guide questions aided in dialogue: How has the local Church of Baton Rouge been successful in inviting others to participate in the rich ministerial life of the Church? Which groups and individuals are least included in our local Church, and how can the Church of Baton Rouge invite them to share their gifts and talents? How can the local church better enable full participation and co-responsibility in the life of the Church on the parish and diocesan level?





## INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Remembering the words of Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, one participant noted that the Church “exists to evangelize.” Understanding this great commission and the Church’s existential reality is essential before one can effectively invite others to believe. A three-fold missionary movement was identified in one session that is essential in calling others to participation – hearing Jesus’ call, giving one’s life totally to Christ, and then sharing in that ministry.

Participants in these sessions echoed Catholic literature in underscoring the importance of the call to form intentional disciples. Several encouraged the clergy to move away from administrative work and embrace more pastoral work while simultaneously inviting lay people to share in the Church’s mission, giving the laity a freedom of discernment as intentional disciples. Participants encouraged the Church of Baton Rouge to consider inviting more and different members of the lay faithful to be intentional about faith. While sacraments provide grace to the recipient, and while Christ is encountered in the people of God and in the sacraments, by intentionally committing to follow him, faith becomes life-giving.

Such discipleship, noted participants, is central to healthy ecclesial life. Pastors must recognize their role in fostering this common priesthood, assisting others to participate in discernment of their charisms, all to truly collaborate between the ordained and the lay faithful. The absence of this communal fruit in parish life thwarts authentic participation in communion.

***"Participants encouraged the Church of Baton Rouge to consider inviting more and different members of the lay faithful to be intentional about faith."***

## SERVING OTHER COMMUNITIES

### ***AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLICS***

African American Catholics provide rich diversity, immense gifts, and a wonderful history to the local Church of Baton Rouge! A continued cultivation of the gifts that Black Catholics bring to the local Church through evangelization and through celebration of their many contributions is essential, and this desire was expressed in almost every listening session throughout the diocese.

However, some participants lamented that advocacy for equality for men and women of color in society and through equal participation in the Church's ministries and outreach has often been absent. African Americans in Baton Rouge often experienced the local Church to be an institution that promoted segregation and racist sentiments through appalling silence and indifference regarding the story of people of color and their experiences of rejection.

The Black Catholic population is growing in Baton Rouge, but the reality is the needs of these communities are often underserved and their gifts not well utilized.

As their story is intimately interwoven with the history of Catholicism in Louisiana and in the United States, African Americans offer a unique perspective of justice for "the other" -- and can uniquely invite the Church to understand its "Catholic" identity. Perhaps the best place for the local Church to start is by celebrating the contributions and accomplishments of these brothers and sisters.

***"A continued cultivation of the gifts that Black Catholics bring to the local Church through evangelization and through celebration of their many contributions is essential..."***

## SERVING OTHER COMMUNITIES

### ***HISPANIC CATHOLICS***

Hispanic Catholics – a growing demographic in the local Church – also bring their unique celebrations, traditions, and culture to enrich the ecclesial experience of Baton Rouge. However, unique challenges exist in ministering to these brothers and sisters.

Many do not speak English, and there are few clergy capable of ministering to this group in their native tongue. The community feels a sense of belonging in the local Church; however, limitations such as language barriers have prevented more outreach. Participants in listening sessions identified a lack of accompaniment of Hispanic families as a primary reason for alienation of Hispanic Catholics on a mass scale.

Outside of the collective, diocesan apostolate, parishes should seek out Hispanics who have yet to come to the Church. As was expressed in several gatherings, violence and suffering are often part of the experience of the journey to the United States. Understanding the story of “the other” is a crucial element in evangelization in the Hispanic community.

The Hispanic community in Baton Rouge expressed that merely listening and accompanying – the hallmarks of this synodal expression – are tremendous steps forward in hearing the needs of the community and building a concrete plan of action.

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## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

A portion of the local church hungers for a restoration of beauty and reverence expressed especially in the celebration of the sacraments. Some participants expressed confusion regarding new limitations imposed on the celebration of the liturgy by *Traditionis custodes*, recently promulgated by Pope Francis; many expressed sadness in the lack of clarity arising from these limitations.

It was clear that some of the participants in these sessions find great spiritual nourishment in celebrating the older rites of the Church and wish to preserve unity in diversity.

***"The Hispanic community in Baton Rouge expressed that merely listening and accompanying...are tremendous steps forward in hearing the needs of the community and building a concrete plan of action."***

## CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH

### ***NOT JUST THE FUTURE BUT THE PRESENT***

Many participants were grateful a "culture of life" exists within the context of the Church of Baton Rouge and encouraged Church leaders to improve this dynamic culture by advocating for protection of all the vulnerable, from conception until natural death. Many reflected the greatest gift that has been received is the gift of children and young people. And yet it was the experience of several participants that young people often experience rejection and seem broken. This has unfortunately become the norm in more affluent and consumeristic societies, resulting in an attitude of indifference toward youth.

It was the consensus throughout the various listening sessions that young people should be encouraged to pursue their dreams to do good for themselves, the Church, and society. Children are not disposable but are rather valuable and integral parts of the Church; listening and accompanying them will be crucial to encouraging them to participate fully in the life of the Church.

***"Young people should be encouraged to pursue their dreams to do good for themselves, the Church, and society."***

## **OUTREACH TO THE ELDERLY**

A new Office of Life, Peace, and Justice was recently established by Bishop Duca in his reorganization of the diocesan curia, and synodal participants were grateful for diocesan efforts to assure there would be a Catholic presence in every nursing facility, hospital, and hospice center in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. One participant invited the local church to help the elderly rid themselves of the feeling that "life has already been lived." It is the responsibility of the Church to foster honor and dignity for those who are fragile and entering a different leg of their life's journey.

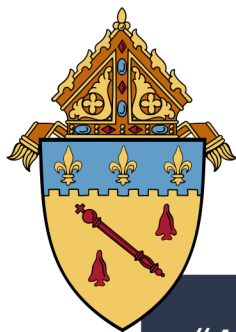
Listening yielded new ideas to interact with an aging population, including reimagining tools for communication such as *The Catholic Commentator*, the bi-weekly diocesan newspaper; more opportunities for evangelization using Catholic Life TV; and other media apostolates.

Specifically in the session aimed at health care workers, great opportunities exist for collaboration

between the Church and its affiliated partner ministries. Baton Rouge is home to a robust health system (The Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System) and a Catholic University (Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University) that can continue to be useful in helping to increase intergenerational participation and ministry. The charism of these sister institutions attends to the needs of the whole person, and much fruit will be born from strengthening these partnerships.

***"It is the responsibility of the Church to foster honor and dignity for those who are fragile and entering a different leg of their life's journey."***





# MISSION

*"As you sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." -John 17:18*

Participants were invited to reflect upon a third mark of synodality – mission– by recalling that the Church is on a pilgrimage through history towards communion with God; all the baptized are honored with the dignity of God and are appointed to the same mission – to proclaim the Good News and build up the Kingdom of God. Three guide questions aided in dialogue: From a missionary perspective, how would you characterize the situation and needs in your parish and community? Does the Church of Baton Rouge, through catechesis, formation, and liturgy, aid in the formation of the people of God as missionary disciples? Where is the Holy Spirit calling the Church to mission and service today?





## OUTREACH NOT JUST DURING TIMES OF ADVERSITY

As was mentioned at the outset of this synthesis, natural disasters are part of the unique experience of Church in southeast Louisiana. For several years now, the impacts of flooding and major hurricanes such as Hurricane Laura in 2020 and Hurricane Ida in 2021 have affected evangelization but have also provided a rich mission field.

Participants feel empowered to see the faith lived in action as communities rally in times of crisis to serve hot meals and provide for the essentials that are lacking immediately after a natural disaster. Many noted the most powerful tools of evangelization that can be offered in these difficult times are accompaniment and service.

At the same time, practicing such stewardship outside of times of crisis is often lacking. Participants heard about the hope born in knowing that people are capable and willing to give their time and resources so generously. A challenge arising from this same gift is to learn how to provide such services better in the future and not just when tragedy strikes.

***"People are capable and willing to give their time and resources so generously."***





## COVID

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Several listeners voiced their angst regarding the Church's response to the pandemic and the lack of a uniform response in the local Church and in the Church universal. Many mourned the loss of the incarnational – being present with each other as the Body of Christ to receive tangibly the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. Participants noted the resistance to and disappointment in the new ways the church was invited to function. Liturgies were live-streamed; churches were emptied; contributions were solicited virtually.

Perhaps the most positive impact upon the Church, though, opined some, was the chance for the Church to reflect specifically upon its mission – that it is not confined to a building but is rather a people who, inspired by Holy Spirit, live for and work toward the reign of God in the world.

Many participants identified their nervousness regarding a future filled with lower participation, polarization, and uneven congregational recovery. Others, though, were hopeful as they see a rebound in their congregation and a new era filled with learned lessons. The challenge remains to invite wayward congregants to the joy of incarnational community and fellowship.

***"Perhaps the most positive impact upon the Church, was the chance for the Church to reflect specifically upon its mission."***



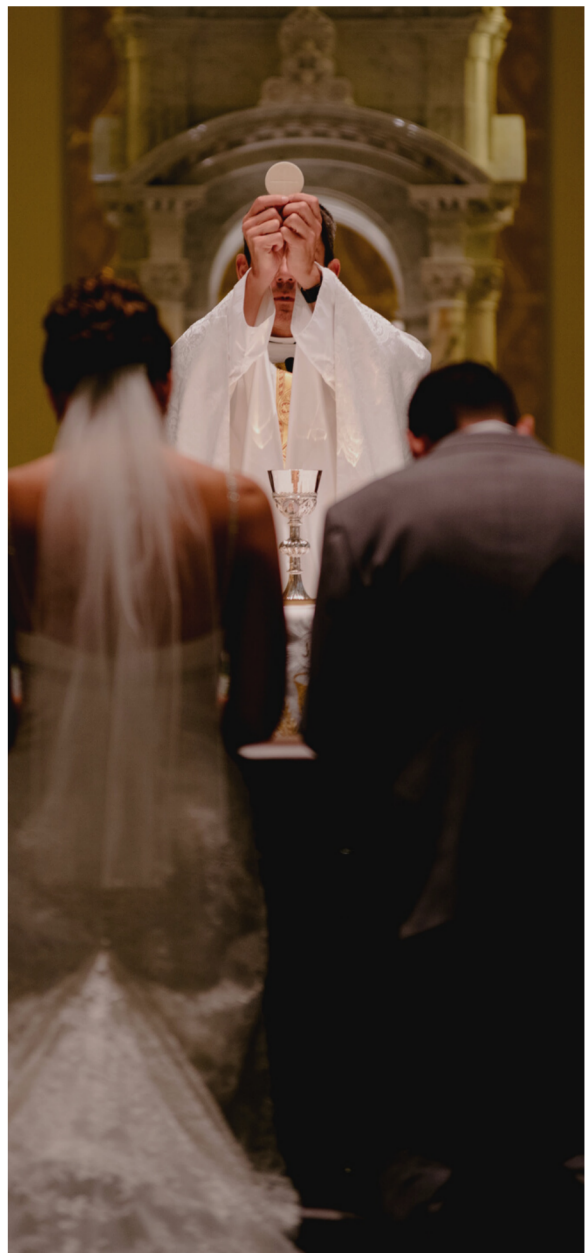
## THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DIVORCED AND REMARRIED

Several participants who are divorced and/or remarried shared their experience of the Church of Baton Rouge and its outreach. Many lauded the workings of the Diocesan Tribunal and recounted the healing that took place when engaging in processes to declare nullity. Others noted there exists much confusion in the Church and in society at-large regarding the annulment process and its effects upon Catholics.

Generally, there was an expressed call for more clarity regarding a Catholic's status and the need to welcome those experiencing divorce or living in irregular marriages since such Catholics are still part of the Church. At the same time, listeners expressed a desire to be clear regarding the tradition of Catholic morality regarding marriage and to remain firm and unequivocal in expressing these truths and fundamentals of faith.



***"There was an expressed call... to welcome those experiencing divorce or living in irregular marriages since such Catholics are still part of the Church. "***



## CREATING A COMMUNITY OF RESPECT, COMPASSION AND SENSITIVITY

It is clear from listening at these sessions that participants believe the Church should reaffirm that the sacrament of marriage is reserved for a man and a woman. Others were adamant to speak boldly against philosophical or intellectual approaches that call into question sex or gender roles.

Concomitantly, as was expressed time and again by listeners, it is the responsibility of the church to create a community of respect, compassion, and sensitivity that invites and welcomes members who experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria.

***"There was an expressed call... to welcome those experiencing divorce or living in irregular marriages since such Catholics are still part of the Church. "***

The church community must consider the individual needs of such persons first, whatever their situation, and accompany them with mercy and compassion. The reality of such persons is incredibly complex. Many people who struggle with these issues are often persecuted, and synodal participants expressed their belief the Church should improve how it welcomes these brothers and sisters into the life of the Church.





## THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

Various synodal participants reflected upon the importance of the Christian family as the first experience of the Christian community and the primary environment for the growth of the faith. It is where the Word of God is received and extended. There was encouragement for the church to offer more opportunities to accompany families – to show families how to live a holy life first before evangelizing others.

To become missionaries as one church, intergenerational learning was encouraged. All ages and generations regardless of life status should build community and meaningful relationships across generations.

***"Intergenerational learning was encouraged."***

Learning from the stories and histories of others in the present helps inform the community to choose a meaningful future. Listeners encouraged the whole community learning together to provide new ways of living and practicing the faith while providing suitable role models for others.

Such incorporation of an intergenerational approach, incorporating community building, prayer, group discussion, and activities, all enhance identification with the Church and integration into the community with a uniform sense of mission.



# CONCLUSION

## AND THE *NEXT STEPS*



As was shared during every listening session, this experience of synodality is, in no way, meant to completely overhaul the Church's decision making! It did, however, give the faithful in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and others an experience of a church that comes together instead of fragmenting, a church that discerns together and walks together through mutual listening, courage, humility, and respect. Most participants were encouraged by this experience!

As was expressed by Pope Francis in his address at the opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People in 2018, the purpose of this consultation was not to produce a document but "to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, wave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warms hearts, given strength to the work of our hands."

Bishop Duca shares this vision of Pope Francis with the hope that our recent experience of listening and conversation will lead to continued discernment to discover precisely where the Holy Spirit is calling the local Church of Baton Rouge. The following concrete steps are being discussed by the diocesan curia to continue these conversations long past this synod's conclusion in 2023.

## **PUBLICATION OF THE SYNODAL SYNTHESIS FOR THE DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE**

Aside from communicating this synthesis to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for their own preparations in the “continental phase” of synodality, this synthesis will be published to the people of Baton Rouge in *The Catholic Commentator* and made available on the diocesan website at [diobr.org](http://diobr.org) as a validation of the local church’s pledge to maintain its commitment to listen.

## **OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED LISTENING DISCERNMENT**

Bishop Duca plans, as immediate responses to this process, to implement the following:

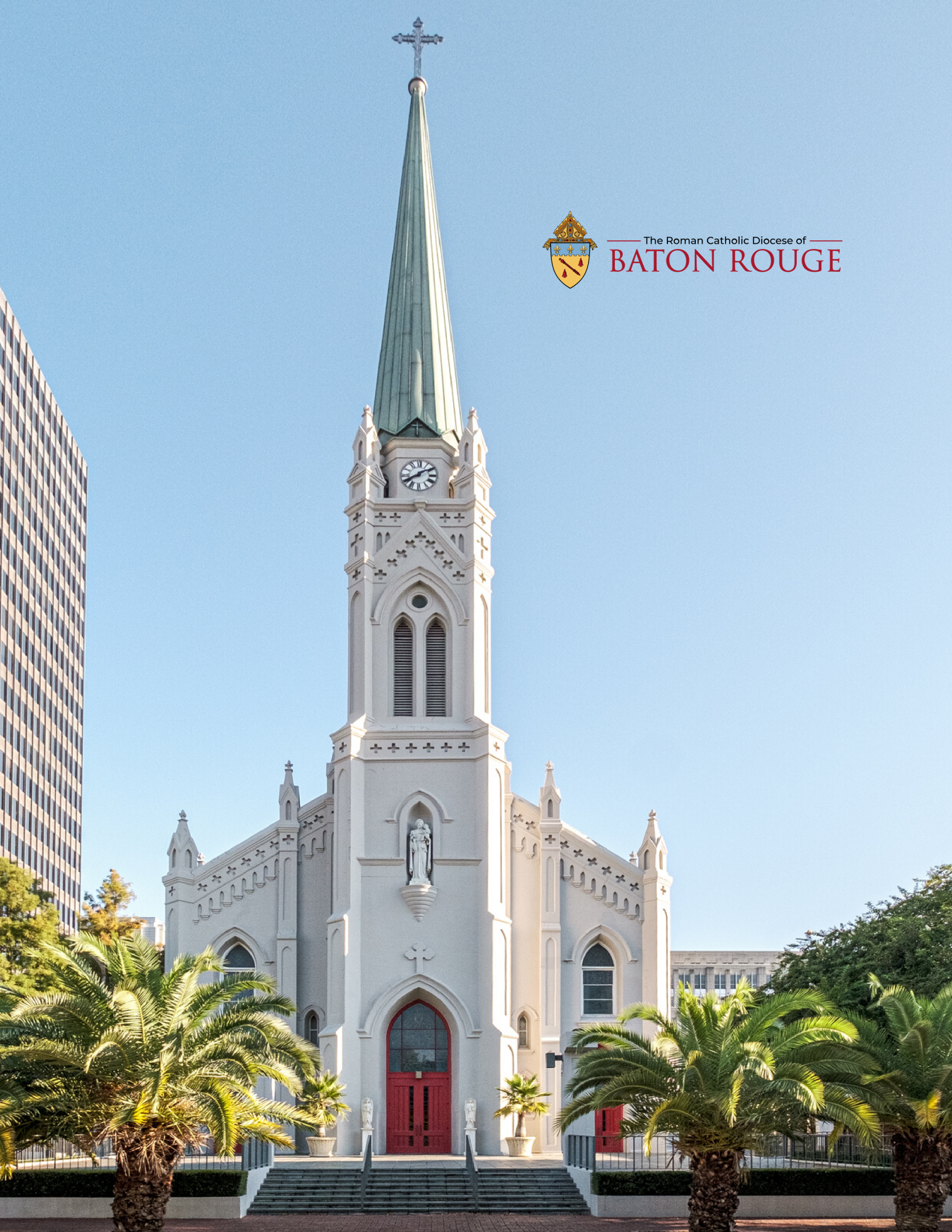
To continue this process of mutual dialogue, the reestablishment of a Diocesan Pastoral Council with representatives of the entirety of the local Church seems opportune.

The structure of this consultative body will be formulated to assist the diocesan bishop in investigating, considering, and formulating practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works (*Target Goal – Summer of 2023*).

Also, in his desire to accompany the people of his diocese in the “joy and pain, their grief and hope,” Bishop Duca intends to reestablish pastoral visitations to all of the parishes, schools, and apostolates of the diocese, visiting every parish personally over during the course of three years (*Target Goal – Beginning January 2023*).

More concrete plans will be drafted and shared with the diocesan community after further listening, discernment, and prayer that will result from our reflection on this synthesis and our mutual collaboration as Church!





The Roman Catholic Diocese of  
**BATON ROUGE**