

## **A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together,” by proclaiming, celebrating, and living the Gospel as we make our way to the Promised Land of Heaven.**

On March 27, 2022, approximately 40 members of the OLG Community (Oblates, staff, and Parishioners) assembled to share their “journey together” to grow in faith. Fr. Matthew Hillyard welcomed the participants; Tina Wickham, Pastoral Council President, facilitated the discussion. On Sunday, April 10th, approximately 27 members of the OLG Community (Oblates and Parishioners) assembled to respond to the remaining questions for Synod organizers. Fr. Matthew Hillyard welcomed the participants; Parishioner Patricia Heimann facilitated the discussion.

Fr. Matt ended the session by outlining how our responses will be handled; namely, they will be sent to Bishop Burbidge, consolidated with responses from other churches in the diocese, and ultimately, sent to Pope Francis by the end of April. Asked if he will be part of the team reviewing the responses, Fr. Matt responded the Bishop has a counseling group that will conduct the review; he is not a part of that group.

### **FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS**

#### **1. What experiences of “journeying together” in your local church bring you joy and hope?**

- OLG is open to many charities and Outreach programs; there are lots of talents and volunteers who work the programs, not individual efforts; outreach efforts are impressive.
- Coming to OLG is an enjoyable experience – open to outsiders; wonderful evangelical outreach.
- Salesian presence in the Parish is most important; charisma of Salesians; listening to practical points of Salesian teachings– how to live in a spiritual way. Relationships between groups is nurturing – encouraging Parishioners – encouraging to explore other ministries.
- Feel a lot of joy and hope when attending mass and sharing the sacraments.
- Feel welcome when I come in.
- Its helpful that we have programs for young people, young adults.
- There is joy and hope here – bilingual masses bring joy to so many. Parents should not leave when children become noisy as children are our future and need to be at mass.

- We are all on our own journey and this Parish allows all to be on their own journey. The order of priests gives a sense of community. Evangelizes quietly. All ages are welcomed.
- We have strong ministries – ministries for all ages.
- Strong sense of community. More open to families and new Parishioners over the past few years. Have attended High Latin Masses – provides a different sense of grace.
- Been in Parishes with different orders of priests – Oblates have same spirituality across priests; people gravitate to that spirituality; not a personality thing.
- Appreciate being able to come together in faith.
- Priests get a lot of affirmation from Parishioners; that affirmation helps boost priests’ faith as well.

## 2. What difficulties and obstacles have you encountered to “journeying together” in your local church?

- Traditional vs. \_\_\_\_\_ ?? \_\_\_\_\_ Catholics
- With everything going on in the world, we need to hear about our faith. Perhaps St. Michael’s prayer should be offered at the end of mass.
- ‘Welcoming attitude’ seems to fade a bit when complainers don’t welcome those who don’t come to mass every week but show up at Christmas time.
- Questioning why we do what we do helps grow our faith. Especially young people who don’t have exhaustive introduction to the church and its teaching. “Light on For You” during Lent is so helpful.
- Need more opportunities/talks about what is going on in the world. We get snide remarks about our religion – we need words to answer those remarks that more talks/education could provide.
- Need mass times to accommodate working people.
- Agreement with ‘need words to respond’ to those who don’t follow the sacraments, who question our faith.
- Need opportunity for adult education – easy for mass to become a ritual – need refresher and why we do what we do. Example: priest put garments on in front of mass attendees and said the associated prayers so people understood the meaning – a reminder.
- Can have stronger dialogue with others if we are better educated about what we do.
- Perhaps a teaching moment during the homily. Bible studies taught me the basis of my faith. Younger people need to learn; ideas shared: (1) once a month bible study for young people; (2) Scientific basis of religion for young people.
- Biggest obstacle of youngsters who go to catechism is that they do not go to mass. Parents don’t take them to mass. How do we get parents to be part of their children’s spiritual lives?

- Some women don't feel they truly have a place in the church.
- Happy the Pope is looking at how the church fits into today's society. Daughter feels women do not have a place in the church.
- Education for adults – sponsors in RCIA program learn as much as catechists. Parents don't talk about faith with their children – created a lost generation who don't have an understanding of the church and the rich faith that it is.
- COVID hurt a lot of people – deeply hurt emotionally – some still have not come back.
- A fine line still exists between the White and Latino communities – Latinos not fully accepted; not fully part of the community.
- Since COVID, the number of mass attendees has not as yet come back – people have gotten in the habit of being YouTube Catholics – the challenge is how to get people back into the seats of the church.
- There is lost reverence, commitment – OLGCC offers a lot – Problem is parents don't take responsibility for being a parent. We know how to find Jesus but we have to put the effort into it.
- Commitment is not an OLGCC problem but a personal problem – must decide what is more important to you / to your schedule.
- Church must stay out of politics, not advise on who to vote for rather teach what we should be doing to grow faith.
- For a family with many children, it becomes difficult to set aside one evening a week to be with only one child to go to religious education together. Parents do not need another thing to do. Perhaps a Family CCF Program to educate the whole family at one time would
- Feel isolated – need more bilingual opportunities. We are also people of faith and should be included with everyone else.
- A lot of parents who are not teaching their children were not taught themselves therefore we have 2 lost generations.

## THEMATIC QUESTIONS

### 3. How do we most effectively witness to the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Gospel?

- The beauty of the Gospel is “Reading it, Discussing it, and Living it”
- A way to understand the church and how to speak about it
- On an Individual level, its how we live; on a Parish level it is the charitable works, teachings, training opportunities – OLGCC is doing a great job!
- Raising kids in the public school system means less time is spent here (activities at OLGCC); kids only hear the Gospel on Sunday.

- Respect each other, try not to pass judgement but offer help, show compassion, be more Christ-like/Christian.
- Give witness by the way we live our lives. Do most people even have a Bible? And if they do, do they even open it? We cannot witness if we do not read it.
- Need to be better equipped to defend our faith – what we do, why we do what we do. Share the goodness of the Gospel.
- Remember, we are a Salesian Parish, live St Francis’ teachings, practice his ways.
- Truth – focus on the whys behind the teachings. Young people are pressured about social issues, feel forced to conform. Knowing church teachings helps them understand why they should not succumb to the pressure.

#### **4. How effective are we in our three-fold mission of proclaiming and teaching the faith, of celebrating the liturgy and sacraments, and of service in charity?**

- OLGC does an excellent job supporting organizations helping the marginalized in our society. I am proud of the charitable works of our Parish and Diocese.
- Parish offers many opportunities to help – we need to look for those opportunities and reach out to those who are not aware of how they too can help.
- Pandemic offered time to read/research Second Vatican Doctrines. Found things not expecting to find. How closely does our liturgy follow the Council? How Bible-literate are we? “Bible services” were encouraged by the Council – I’m not sure this has been enacted.
- OLGC liturgy, sacraments, outreach projects are excellently handled. However, kids are not going to mass/don’t know about mass. Teaching catechism has not changed much over the past 20 years – approach needs to be updated, to be more involved with the
- Teach “cradle Catholics” the Bible. Participating in RCIA is an excellent learning experience not only for the candidate but for the sponsor, too. Volunteering at the Welcome Desk is a rewarding way to reach out to Parishioners.
- Education of children – the Bible needs to be taught to youngsters.
- Need to reach the 25-40 year olds, those with young children. Continue adult education to bring back those who have fallen away. Many now watch mass live-streamed – need to invite them to come back, need their physical presence.
- Church does a good job with CCF, RCIA but other topics of concern are not being addressed/represented

- Issues our young people disagree with have to be addressed. Parents need to be educated to be able to discuss church teachings with their children. Generations We have lost generations who lack of knowledge about our faith. We live in a busy area and time is not always
  - People need to talk gently with family around the dinner table. I am excited about Sophia Institute with new curriculum for CCF. Teaching kids needs new curriculum/new approach – example: teaching in malls, a Catholic store where priests can do blessings.
  - Need to teach the Encyclicals. I would like to see more integrations between Youth Ministry and Religious Education. Good Shephard catechism encourages active participation.
  - Must try to understand the “other side” (people with differing points of view, other cultural beliefs, and traditions). We must defend our faith, but we don’t understand our faith any more makes it hard to defend.
  - People do not truly know the faith, faith’s fundamentals.
  - Youngsters don’t think they need religion to be a good person – are not concerned about doing God’s will
- Divorced people don’t understand what they are allowed to do when/if they return to the church. Don’t know they can return. Don’t know about partaking of the sacraments

## **5. How do all the members of the Church—laity and clergy—collaborate in their common mission?**

- Q. 5 & 6 seem to go together. Listen and speak within the church. Fr. Matt does a great job listening, but this is the first “listening to the laity” session I’ve experienced in my 80 years. He wants to hear to where we want to go as a Parish, holds meetings and open discussions
- The history of the church shows it has been 800 years since information/input has been requested from the laity. A “first step” to change is for this SYNOD to include laity.
- OLG is a warming community – making people think about what is going on in life and praying together for the needs of others.
- A lot of what we do is “you sit and listen” rather than talking with each other. Sharing prayer intentions is not part of our culture, people don’t open up. We need more expanded format to encourage dialogue.
- Some Bible study groups help participants to open up to share intentions.
- Common mission = the whole world is following Christ. Clergy keeps us on track, they think about how this fits our faith; however, grassroots efforts are needed – the priests cannot do it all, we need to be doing a lot more. Laity needs to reach out more.
- OLG does a great job with outreach projects, makes Parishioners want to help.

- More outreach is needed to those who left the church due to sex abuse. OLGC did a great job acknowledging the tragedy, but some churches didn't mention it at all.
- Celebration of the Liturgy as a community is a good sign of collaboration between the clergy and laity at OLGC.

## **6. How well do we dialogue—listen attentively and speak up candidly—within the Church and with the wider**

- Appreciate this session and Fr. Matt's surveys. Suggestions: change mass times to accommodate workers/people who have long commutes.
- Listening and speaking do not have to go together. Don't always have to have answers to everything. Having differing opinions is Christ-like.
- Respect/Reverence of the Host. Irreverence is seen when people walk back to the pew holding the host rather than consuming it at the altar. Some break it in two and give part to a 2–3-year-old child.
- Candid speaking and listening. A lot of charitable activities are carried out at OLGC, but we don't see the end result. Communicate who actually benefitted from the drive, what the project actually accomplished (BLA for example). We have a lot of government workers in our
- Need more ecumenical activities; perhaps reach out to Jewish and Muslim populations.
- More outreach to disenfranchised (sexually abused, Gay, Divorced, Young people with different ideas, etc.) Need to know the church loves them as well.
- Let's continue being a community of listening and moving forward.
- Perhaps an annual listening session could be planned.