

St. Patrick's Parish – Walkerton, Indiana

Synod Listening Session Report

I. Introduction

This report summarizes the key themes, insights, and recommendations gathered from the parish synod listening sessions at St. Patrick's Parish. The purpose of this session was to identify the most pressing needs of the parish and diocese, highlight current strengths, and discern opportunities for future growth.

A consistent and unified message emerged across all groups: while St. Patrick's Parish is a vibrant and welcoming community, its long-term vitality depends on intentional efforts to engage youth and young families, strengthen faith formation, improve communication, and expand outreach.

II. Most Pressing Needs

1. Youth Engagement and Retention

The most urgent and frequently identified need is increased involvement of youth and young families in parish life. Participants expressed concern about the loss of engagement following Confirmation and the lack of ongoing opportunities for youth to remain active in their faith.

Key needs include:

- Establishment of youth groups
- Development of youth leadership opportunities
- Creation of events that appeal to younger generations
- Greater integration of youth into parish ministries

There is strong agreement that youth engagement is essential to the future of both the parish and the diocese.

2. Faith Formation and Catechesis

Participants emphasized the need for stronger catechesis across all age groups. A deeper understanding of Catholic teachings is seen as essential for fostering confidence in evangelization and strengthening parish identity.

Suggested areas of focus include:

- Adult faith formation programs
 - Bible study opportunities with flexible scheduling
 - Expansion of RCIA
 - Youth-centered religious education
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3. Communication and Diocesan Connection

A significant concern expressed by participants is the perceived lack of communication and connection with the diocese. Many noted limited visibility of diocesan leadership and a desire for more consistent engagement.

Key concerns include:

- Infrequent visits or communication from the Bishop
- Lack of clarity regarding diocesan initiatives and direction
- Desire for greater transparency and connection

At the parish level, improved communication and outreach—particularly to inactive members—is also needed.

4. Digital Presence and Evangelization

Participants identified the parish's limited digital presence as a critical gap. In an increasingly digital world, strengthening online engagement is essential for evangelization and outreach.

Recommendations include:

- Developing and maintaining an active parish website
 - Expanding social media presence
 - Appointing a dedicated social media administrator
 - Utilizing online faith resources
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5. Community Outreach and Belonging

While the parish is known for its welcoming environment, there is a need for more intentional outreach to ensure all individuals feel invited and valued.

Suggested improvements include:

- Establishing greeters at Mass

- Reaching out to inactive or homebound parishioners
 - Increasing participation in charitable initiatives such as food pantries
 - Building relationships with neighboring parishes and Christian communities
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III. Parish Strengths

1. Strong Sense of Community

St. Patrick's Parish is widely recognized as a welcoming and hospitable community. Parishioners value the sense of belonging and mutual support that defines parish life.

2. Active Social and Fellowship Opportunities

The parish offers a variety of well-attended social events, including dinners, community gatherings, and seasonal activities. These events contribute significantly to parish engagement and morale.

3. Facilities and Resources

The parish benefits from well-maintained facilities and stable resources, including income from school rental. These assets provide a strong foundation for future growth.

4. Dedicated Leadership and Participation

The presence of a dedicated priest and active parishioners contributes to the parish's vitality. There is a strong willingness among members to serve and support one another.

IV. Areas for Growth

1. Youth and Family Integration

Efforts must be made to actively involve young families in parish life. This includes creating family-friendly programming and encouraging intergenerational participation.

2. Expanded Faith Formation

There is a need to provide ongoing opportunities for spiritual growth beyond sacramental preparation, particularly for adults.

3. Enhanced Communication

Improving both internal and diocesan communication will help foster transparency, trust, and a stronger sense of unity.

4. Digital Engagement

Developing a robust digital presence will allow the parish to reach a broader audience and remain relevant in a digital age.

5. Outreach and Evangelization

Proactive outreach efforts are needed to re-engage inactive parishioners and attract new members.

V. Recommended Actions

Short-Term Initiatives

- Organize social events such as parish gatherings and family activities
- Introduce greeters at Mass
- Re-engage inactive parishioners through personal outreach
- Increase youth participation in liturgical ministries

Medium-Term Initiatives

- Establish a youth group, potentially in collaboration with nearby parishes
- Launch regular Bible study programs with flexible scheduling
- Appoint a social media coordinator and enhance online presence
- Develop mentorship opportunities between older parishioners and young families

Long-Term Initiatives

- Create a sustainable youth ministry program with leadership development
 - Expand parish-wide catechetical programs
 - Strengthen relationships with the diocese through increased communication and engagement
 - Explore opportunities for collaboration with other parishes and community organizations
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VI. Conclusion

St. Patrick's Parish is a vibrant and faith-filled community with many strengths upon which to build. The synod listening sessions revealed a shared commitment to growth, renewal, and evangelization.

The path forward is clear: by prioritizing youth engagement, strengthening faith formation, enhancing communication, and embracing new methods of outreach, the parish can ensure a strong and sustainable future.

With intentional planning and continued collaboration, St. Patrick's Parish is well-positioned to grow as a dynamic and faithful Catholic community for generations to come.
