

NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST MISSION
SYNODAL DISCERNMENT SESSION
MARCH 20, 2022

QUESTION 1: What in the church fills me with life? How is the Holy Spirit working in my life to deepen my faith and inspire me to be a better disciple and witness of Christ's love to others?

Many aspects of the Mass fill our parishioners with life and the Holy Spirit: the Eucharist, the Sacred Music, the homilies which ties the present realities with the readings from the Old Testament and the Gospel, the Prayers of the Faithful, which gives parishioners time to offer those special prayers for friends and family. We have enjoyed the Fellowship of each other through the Mass and the hospitality after Mass. We help teach each other about being generous and giving when we see what parishioners do for our church and our communities like making furniture for our priests and helping others through works of charity especially Turning Point and Hope. Praying the Rosary before Mass and on our own, the receiving of the Sacraments, the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, attending bible study, and the recitation of the Stations of the Cross every Friday evening during Lent and working in the past with the Legion of Mary have given parishioners inspiration to be better disciples of Christ and have strengthened their beliefs in Christ and, therefore, in their lives. Our parish provides the Magnificat during Advent and Lent and the Catholic Sentinel filling us with daily inspirations and prayers renewing our faith and our beliefs that Christ and the Holy Spirit work through our actions and words. Even the statues of the Holy Family are inspirational as we kneel before them with our own prayers of thanks and needs. We remembered how as children we were taught prayers like the Morning Offering to start our day and we were given Catholic prayer books. Prayers throughout the day help us to slow down and reflect the life of Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to come to us to help us find ourselves and to thank God for our lives and what we have in our lives. We appreciated and gave thanks for EWTN and the daily masses and other programs that provided us with more love of our faith during the pandemic. God reaches out to us in many ways to show us that he continues to work in our lives to deepen our faith and to become better disciples and witnesses of Christ's love to us and others.

Question 2: As a community of believers, what experiences of the Catholic Church have brought joys or revealed wounds? And how can these experiences help us grow together in faith and offer the hope and healing of Christ to the greater community in which we live?

Since Vatican II, receiving the Blood of Christ and having the Mass in English have brought joy to many parishioners. Other activities also bring joy to our parishes: watching young member being prepared for the Sacrament of the Eucharist; being baptized in the community on Easter; healing the loss of a loved one during the fellowship of the community after the Funeral Mass knowing that there will be a reunification of families with Christ; seeing young families especially our grandchildren coming to Mass; hearing so many voices of our small community singing the Sacred Music during Mass (visitors have positively commented on the participation of our members); being grateful for our priest visiting those who are sick and offering the Sacrament of the Sick even during a time when hospitals are off-limits to family members. Knowing that our Church is a Universal Church when we see so many hospitals started because of the brave nuns who left their homeland and helped those even if they weren't Catholic, and knowing that the Mass is celebrated the same way throughout the world are joyful beliefs. We need to study our faith more so that we are prepared to answer questions and to stand up for our faith. We discussed the experiences of the wounded because of abuse and abortion. We were reminded

that the Church is divine and human. Being founded by Christ, the Church is perfect but it is the people who have abused the teachings. There were concerns: some priests and bishops not taking a harder line dealing with abortions; stronger beliefs in the pillars of the Church not being emphasized; Catholic politicians not taking a harder stance on abortion. We pray that the Church continues to work with all the wounded including friends and family members who have left the church and no longer believe in God and that we must continue to pray for the Church and all of her people. We grow together by reading and living the Gospel, by being strong in our faith through Christ and the Holy Spirit, and by knowing that by following God that there is a life after death with Him.

Question 3: As a Catholic community, we are expressly enjoined to invite others into a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ. When we dream about how best to accomplish this, what steps in the Holy Spirit inviting the Church in western Oregon to take?

Do not be afraid to share our Catholic beliefs: say grace before meals in public establishments; invite family and friends who are no longer at Mass to join us on Saturday or Sunday; send cards and/or letters to our children or grandchildren celebrating their Baptism every year. Catholic parishes need to become more visible especially in small towns like ours. How can we get out information to new families moving into town, the Chamber of Commerce, and the schools without violating Separation of Church and State? Show representation at City Council meetings to let them know that our faith is alive in the town. Ask City Councils to support the small churches in the area who are struggling by lowering garbage bills and/or water bills. Support the need for more affordable housing in smaller communities so that more families can move into these small towns. Have visible signs on the highways advertising the church and the times of Masses. Contribute to local non-profit organizations and food banks like Turning Point and Hope but also let the community somehow know that our churches have been helping and will continue to help in the communities. Show others we live our faith by helping those less fortunate with street ministries and serving meals to the hungry. Parishioners need to continue to support fund raiser like the Archbishop's Catholic Appeal, which in turn strengthens the ministries throughout Oregon. Continue teaching the catechism of the church. Be role models in our community. Continue to pray for all people and pray for those who have strayed away from the Church and stay strong within our faith not just during Mass but throughout the week. By reaching out to others beyond our fellowship our relationship with and belief in Christ and the Holy Spirit will grow stronger.