

St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org



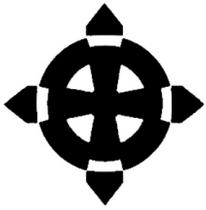
San Damiano Cross, St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church, Hartford CT

“The parish of St. Patrick-St. Anthony has a wonderful and unique opportunity to join with our Catholic brothers and sisters throughout the world to take part in the upcoming Synod on Synodality in Rome in 2023.

It is particularly appropriate for us as a Franciscan parish to do so because St. Francis of Assisi was one of the great reformers of the Church in his day. Through his embrace of poverty and humility, Francis showed how the love of God could be manifested in Italy in the Middle Ages.

Today in the 21st Century, under another Francis, we are not only witnessing his call to renewal and reform – we are being invited to be part of it!”

Fr. Timothy Shreenan, O.F.M., March 6, 2022



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

July 22, 2022

Dear Pope Francis,

Our faith community of St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church is located in downtown Hartford, CT, USA. We have approximately 1700 households registered from over 126 postal codes. For the past 32 years, we have been blessed and influenced by Franciscan Friars from Holy Name Province whose charism of outreach to those alienated from Church and society is expressed through our mission of service and presence in the greater Hartford community.

Francis of Assisi responded to God's call to "Rebuild my Church". We, as a Franciscan parish, have now been invited by you to consider how *we* need to build our Church in our day. This is *our* moment to respond in faith as Saint Francis did before us. The Synod Summary which follows is our response to your gracious invitation.

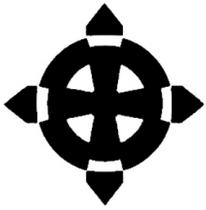
We at St. Patrick-St. Anthony have taken your invitation seriously by soliciting input for the past six months and by conducting more than thirty-five listening sessions held in-person and virtually. We are grateful to engage with the questions, "What does the Church need to hear?" and "What does the Church need to be?"

We have learned so much about ourselves as the People of God in this process. Our joys are abundant as we celebrate our faith at both the global and local Church levels.

JOYS IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH

The universality of the Catholic Church has a profound impact so that wherever we call home in our world, we know who we are and can identify ourselves as Catholic. One participant offers a witness to this truth as she shares from her life:

** Many of the quotes included in this Synod Summary are from our multiple Listening Sessions and reflect the views of the participants; unless otherwise noted.



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“We were a military family for 22 years once I was married, and we moved all over the world in that time. What touched me spiritually was that wherever we relocated to, we found a Church that we all became very involved with. This really saved me and my family through all those years, and still serves as that for me to this day.”

Being Catholic transcends any nationality. The rituals unify us and provide a grounding for us in deeply meaningful ways. We can feel "at home" in any Catholic Church as we celebrate our experience of Catholicism globally.

“I find unity in the community of believers that are all over the world.”

Our identity as Catholics is so closely linked with Gospel teaching and our sacraments.

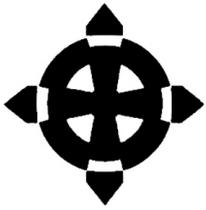
Psalm 119: 12-16 NRSV

“... Blessed are you, O Lord;
teach me your statutes.
With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.
I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.
I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.”

The power of the Word of God as proclaimed in the Church can change hearts and lives. God’s Word moves us to act and thus affects our local communities, cities, and countries.

Our sacramental life as Catholics brings deep joy for individuals and families alike:

“The Eucharist has been a joy, and it is a devotion that has grown in me.
Being a Eucharistic minister is my greatest joy.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“One is seeing my grandson preparing for his First Communion. He is so excited to receive his First Communion and that has touched me deeply.”

Shared moments of receiving God’s grace through the sacraments transforms the Church into a place in our world where:

“Faith is helpful and sustaining during difficult times.”

“I am an adult convert and since then, the Catholic Church has been a place of great solace and refuge for me. It calls me and restores me and draws me up. I realize that the Church is special.”

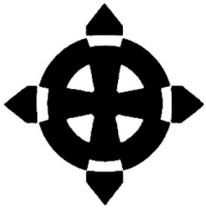
“Growing up in the Church always felt like a safe place for me.”

As you have encouraged us: “Let the Church always be a place of mercy and hope, where everyone is welcomed, loved, and forgiven.” - Pope Francis

The joys we acknowledge and now celebrate through this Synod process provide a touchstone to the global Church alive, at its best.

“I came to believe and to first know God through my parents and then the Church. All the sense of belonging to a People of God has been in the Church. The Church is also where the fundamental questions of ‘who am I?’ and ‘why am I here?’ are reflected on, and we are challenged to find the purpose in our life. The Church gives us a place to walk with others who are asking the same questions. Where the Church does this well, it is good. Most importantly I learned about social justice from the Church, and to me, that is what Jesus is all about...the dignity and value of each life.”

We are beneficiaries of the Church’s legacy of Gospel teaching, sacraments, and a place to call home spiritually. We are blessed by the Church’s many gifts to us.



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

JOYS AT ST. PATRICK-ST. ANTHONY

There are those questions we pose to others, and they require a time to pause and dig deep into oneself to find the answer...eventually. When we asked the question to our parishioners of St. Patrick-St. Anthony, “What have been your joys in your journeying with the Church?”, we were met with immediate responses that came from their heart and from the lives they have lived out at St. Patrick-St. Anthony.

As a Catholic Church, one of the reasons we exist is to celebrate meaningful, relevant, liturgical experiences that provide us with faith, hope, spiritual food for our souls, and inspiration to live out our day, our week...our lives. We would like to share with you some words from our parishioners that will bring to life their impression of their liturgical experiences here at St. Patrick-St Anthony:

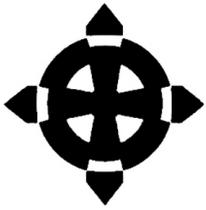
“St. P&A is very different from most parishes and is very inclusive. When we first came here as a family, I noticed that while we were listening to the sermon, I saw my children nodding their heads at times, and as children, they detected the relevance of what was being said. Sermons here at St. P&A bring the Gospel to the people as we walk through our days...they achieve relevance.”

“I grew up in a city parish that was a very positive experience, especially for kids and it was very community based. Then we moved here after we were married and had kids. We did a lot of searching for a parish and then we found St. P&A. Our children consistently receive messages on love and kindness, and that is so good for them to hear this. Finding St. P&A has been like finding the church I participated in during my growing up years. It is a good place to belong and to bring a family up in.”

“The music ministry is so uplifting.”

“The choir is a blessing...’As they sing, they heal.’”

One of our ministries in particular was mentioned frequently as we listened to people’s experiences of joy at St. Patrick-St. Anthony: our Open Hearts Ministry.



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

The Open Hearts LGBTQ+ Ministry provides educational opportunities to build and develop greater visibility and understanding of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender experiences within our Church community. As a Catholic parish committed to justice, Open Hearts Ministry of the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry provides and promotes faith opportunities that build community for those who may have experienced spiritual disconnection.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community are grateful to have a safe haven of support and belonging:

“In my journey I have always felt the presence of God in my life. In the LGBTQ+ community we walk a fine line with the church. This particular parish is extremely welcoming and inclusive. We put our faith first. God had always loved me, and loves our entire church.”

“Found St. Patrick-St. Anthony and have found joy and welcome, and the Open Hearts Ministry Community.”

As spiritual author Joyce Rupp, O.S.M. assures us, “People gain so much hope when they know they are not experiencing something alone.”

What we unexpectedly discovered when we asked about the joys experienced at our parish was this: our parish has a vast number of allies who deeply care about and rely on the mission of our Open Hearts Ministry to embody the welcome and inclusion desired for all LGBTQ+ people in the global Church today. Participant after participant expressed having a gay family member, neighbor, colleague, or friend, and how delighted they are knowing we have this important, vital ministry of inclusion and advocacy.

“I feel welcome at St. P&A as a parent of a gay child. I like that people want to be here. They come from many communities.”

“Love the 5PM Mass. I am single and I see gay people there. Feel at home, can be yourself.”

“At St. P&A there is a sense of welcome and inclusion, including LGBTQ+ and minority populations.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

We stay hopeful as we strive to live up to our parish motto of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors”.

At St. Patrick-St. Anthony our parishioners have told us that they have found their community, which has become their home...their sacred place where they can be at home with others and with their God, and this is critically important to them.

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12

We have included some of their words to speak to their sense of belonging here at St. Patrick-St. Anthony.

“I have found a home in this church.”

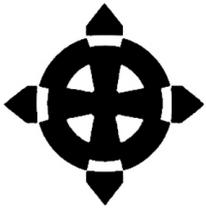
“After leaving the church and not actively participating, when the time was approaching for our older daughter to make her First Communion, I needed to find a program/Church where I felt would be a good place for our family. Finding St. P&A has been an incredible sense of joy. When I spoke to the person in Religious Education I cried because I had never felt so welcomed—just open arms. The community is so full of understanding and welcome—it is a blessing.”

“Key to community is to be more Christlike. We are stronger when all of us are together.”

“Like the community at St. P&A. I feel like a better person when I leave church than when I came in. I feel like I am part of St. P&A.”

As we listened to our parishioners, a theme that they truly value at St. Patrick- St. Anthony is the Franciscan style of welcome, inclusiveness, and commitment to social equality. As Henri Nouwen describes:

“Community is first of all a quality of the heart. It grows from the spiritual knowledge that we are alive not for ourselves but for one another. Community is the fruit of our capacity to make the interests of others more important than our own.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

The parishioners of St. Patrick-St. Anthony bring their genuine, authentic selves to this community. From the youngest to the oldest, we warmly embrace all amidst differences that become gift, and bring out the talents in each other to make a difference for those at our margins.

May you appreciate their words:

“I come here because the Friars have modeled for me how I can be a better person filled with faith, hope, humility, and humor.”

“Finding St. Patrick-St. Anthony...it is a church that acknowledges the diversity of humanity.”

“I find a different spirituality in this Franciscan parish.”

“The parish at St. Patrick-St. Anthony has brought me great joy, and there’s such an emphasis on love.”

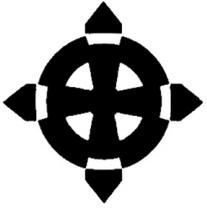
“I had a personal experience with a priest at Reconciliation. After many years of being away from the Church, I was drawn back, wanting to release from my soul something that happened when I was very young. I felt particularly led to this particular priest by a friend. The priest said, “Welcome back to the Church,” and this was such a relief for me. If we can overcome the obstacles, the Church can bring us such joy.”

“Multiple opportunities for service and outreach, especially around food insecurity issues. This service to the Greater Hartford community contributes to a connectedness with other parishioners.”

According to our younger Church members, they had much to share about their joys at St. Patrick-St. Anthony as follows:

“First Communion prep- spending time the entire day learning.”

“My First Communion because it was peaceful.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“When Father would call the young kids up to the altar.”

“Singing in the children’s choir at Christmas and Easter.”

“I also enjoy doing projects for the community, giving food to the homeless.”

“Having Baptisms happen during the liturgy, having youth lectors, and inviting children up to the altar.”

“Having fun getting the animals blessed on the Feast of St. Francis.”

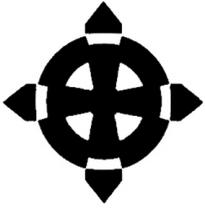
Our parishioners have spoken their truths about the joys they experience at St. Patrick-St. Anthony as well as their joys with the global Church. These joys are deeply rooted in the fabric of their lives...they are to be warmly embraced, celebrated, and preserved. Our focus, however, cannot just be on the joys, since growth is another necessary capacity in our lives. In order for there to be growth, we need to examine life through a different lens...the lens that enables us to honestly and openly recognize and speak our challenges...our obstacles.

Naming these obstacles/challenges requires courage on all of our parts. It has required a trust, a willingness to embrace pain, and a courage deep in ourselves to name these obstacles and to bring them out to the light.

As Richard Rohr, O.F.M. has said, “You cannot heal what you cannot acknowledge.”

We would like to share with you those obstacles that have been spoken by our parishioners about both the local and global experience of the Church.

May you prayerfully receive these reflections.



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

LISTENING TO LAMENTS: Obstacles and What They Teach Us

The humble and profound prophet Dorothy Day offers wisdom, “We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love, and that love comes with community.” Excerpt from The Long Loneliness by Dorothy Day, 1952, Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.

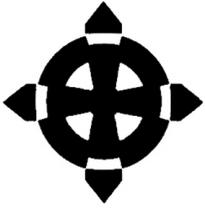
The obstacles noted below, that come forth from a culmination of parish listening sessions and input, point to the further need, on both local and global levels, to manifest these words of wisdom.

First, there is a lack of greater roles for women, racial/ethnic minorities, differently-abled and other devalued communities in the Church. For example, people give voice to the need for women in roles such as the priest and deacon. We are missing these role models, and wisdom/love by excluding these groups in our Church. We diminish the image of God by excluding the images of these people. We need to address the de-valuing and exclusion of these groups in our church communities.

“The synodal process seeks to address the exclusion felt by so many members of the Church.” Excerpt from “Spirit of Mission: A Saint for Synodality”, by Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

There is a lack of inclusion and more full welcome of the LGBTQ+ community in the Church. As one father shares, “My son came out as gay and I looked to the Church’s teachings, and I was crushed. How could the Church call the son that I held in my arms “intrinsicly evil” and “objectively disordered”.”

Others express that they and/or their children have left the church because of its divisive and exclusionary language. Some have even feared retribution from Church leadership. As another parent shares, the Prodigal Son gospel tells us how “welcoming back” should be. There is a call for further education, and to release the grip of fear that prevents the Church and its leaders from full welcome and inclusion of the LGBTQ+ beloved community.



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“The Roman Catholic Church is replete with harsh and rigid regulations on divorce, celibacy, role of women in the church (women priests), homosexuality. It drives people away rather than gathering them-they exclude rather than include. Not a very Christ-like approach to life. Rules should assist, not become more important than the people they are created to serve.”

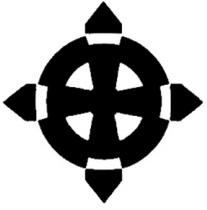
“The first step on the long road to renewal through synodality is to listen to one another.”
Excerpt from “Spirit of Mission: A Saint for Synodality”, by Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

One parishioner shares, “I struggle with hypocrisy, wealth of the Church. There is both a history of pain and goodness. Main concern for me is how do I make Jesus appear to others. What in the end would I stand up for, give my life for? For me, it is my faith.”

There is a hypocrisy, rigidity, clinging to archaic rules and clericalism within our Church. People have voiced a need for radical change in the structure of the Church, to reflect the vision of Vatican II: listen to the laity, have bishops and cardinals reflect the collective conscience and the voice of the laity, and bring this into teachings and actions of the Church. One person shares that the global experience of Church is like being on the deck of the Titanic that has hit an iceberg and is sinking.

There is a loss of parishes in many places; it is painful to see whole groups of people walking away from the Church. There is a need to allow priests to marry, to increase the pool of potential priests. People give voice to the exclusion of divorced and re-married Catholics from full participation, and how this diminishes the Church as a whole. Others share that the Church has not embraced change and has not incorporated the knowledge and wisdom that comes from science nor embraced its own Catholic Social Teaching.

“I come to serve-not dominate.
I come to forgive-not punish.
I come to heal-not injure.
I come to nurture-not blame.
I come to share-not hoard.
I come to love-not hate”. (Pax Christi USA)



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

The people have spoken:

“As a woman, it is sometimes difficult to defend my Church as an inclusive institution when fully half of its members are denied one of its Sacraments.”

“Hierarchy is like the Pharisees. Have not followed Vatican II. Bishops should not turn their back on us. Change the rules, and be like this Synod, to listen, is what’s needed.”

“I both love the Church and am deeply distressed at its inability to move forward from entrenched positions which keep it anchored in the past.”

“As I grew older and got to know more about the Church and the LGBTQ community, I started to find that the Church’s stand did not mesh with how people should be treated. My husband and I were finding it more difficult to stay in the parish we were in because of the lack of welcome and inclusion for the LGBTQ community.”

“Church is just too rule-oriented. Half of the voices are not heard...women are treated as though they are silent.”

“The Hierarchy did not take the laity seriously to realize that the Holy Spirit was working through all of the people in the Church. They were not trusting the body of the laity.”

“Church’s snail-like approach to change. Needs to acknowledge the scientific, social developments and knowledge of our time. The Church is behind the rest of the world.”

“Disappointed local Bishop did not participate in this synod.”

Scripture illuminates the hope to move from challenge to possibility:

“You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem is in ruins. Come, let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and suffer this indignity no longer...let us start...let us build! And with willing hands, they set about the good work.” The Book of Nehemiah 2:17-18



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

We take inspiration from St. Francis when he calls his followers to continue the journey together and not give up nor be satisfied with where things are:

“Brothers, let us begin again. For up to now, we have done nothing.” - St. Francis of Assisi

“Loving God, you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend. Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. We pray that you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, denial, fear and despair. Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility, and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in your eternal presence and love. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our suffering world.”

Excerpt from “A Prayer for Our Community” by Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

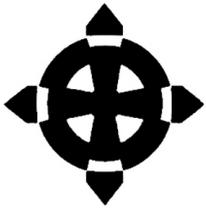
Through faithful discernment prayer at every parish gathering, we now share with you how the Holy Spirit is prompting us to improve the ways we are able to journey together as the People of God at both the global and local Church levels.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE GLOBAL CHURCH

We have broken the answers to this question into two parts. First, we summarize the answers in relation to the global Church. Secondly, we summarize the thoughts as applied to our local Church, St. Patrick St. Anthony parish.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, participants shared that the global Church should be more like Jesus and demonstrate justice, fairness, inclusion, and most of all, love, compassion and mercy for all. Here are some of their quotes:

“We have to go back to the teaching of Jesus, and listen more carefully to the people on the margins the way Jesus did. The institutional Church does not do this...in fact it condemns people, and this is where the Church really needs to improve. The Church needs to go back to its original intent.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“I would like to see the Institutional Church actually listen to the people. They have to really listen to what is happening in their lives—not just be concerned with rules and regulations. They need to really listen to the hard times in peoples’ lives, and think about ‘What would Jesus do?’”

“The Church needs to welcome all, just as Jesus did.”

“Jesus was about love and acceptance of all, and being non-judgmental. I think power and money are the biggest obstacles in the Church and it is just not working. Something has to change. The Church that Jesus came to establish...non-judgmental, welcoming and open needs to be found. I am so grateful for being heard.”

Foremost on their minds and their hearts was a yearning for a Church that truly demonstrates and practices welcome for all, including members of the LGBTQ+ community.

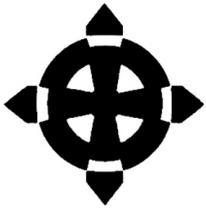
“Need to have an open Spirit of welcome to the LGBTQ community. We need to eliminate “intrinsically disordered” from the language. Recognize gender as real, buy into current science.”

The top concern expressed was for the next generation. Youth do not feel welcome by the Church that rejects their LGBTQ+ peers, their divorced parents and limits the role of women. Youth are leaving the Church and people are sad and angry about this.

“The Church must pay more attention to young adults and youth. Bring them together and build small faith communities with them.”

“The Institutional Church needs to dramatically improve their outreach to youth. Once they are confirmed, the youth still need to find and feel their place in the Church.”

“I have 3 grown children and only 1 still participates in Mass. The other 2 have chosen to not participate in the Church given its stance toward the LGBTQ community and its lack of welcome and inclusion.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“Where younger people are concerned, they would not confide in a priest. They go by their conscience. The Church needs to be careful of not being too antiquated and not relevant. Young people can subscribe to the love of God and love for one another.”

Many people feel that if the Church fully practiced the Gospel tenets of love, mercy and compassion, there would be acceptance and support by Church leaders of those on the margins; not judgment, rejection, repulsion and exclusion.

“Church needs to care more for those on the margins, those hurting; to all those who do not fit in. They should welcome all including LGBTQ folks. They should make room for LGBTQ young people and let them know it’s ok to be who they are.”

“Jesus has shown us the way. It is the way of surrendering into the limitless love of God and allowing that love to flow freely through us to absolutely everyone with special tenderness and attentiveness to the sick, the poor, the outcast, and the marginalized.”

“The Church needs to be more ministry-focused and far less apt to judge others.”

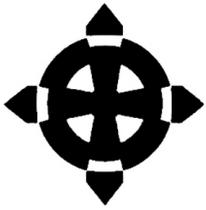
“The Church needs to be less judgmental and there needs to be an emphasis on loving everyone, and being more accepting of each and every individual.”

The following groups could be better served by the Church. Some members of these groups are currently being rejected by Church teaching. As a global Church we must approach in a pastoral manner and accompany them on their journey. The call is for language and action to change to prevent further alienation and hurt:

- Divorced and remarried couples

“Church needs to change how they treat/handle those who are divorced.”

“Recognize divorce and the hardship it brings; so when people are in a time of need during divorce, they have someone/something supporting them.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

- LGBTQ+ individuals and their allies

“It is interesting when I talk to my 7-year-old daughter and what I hope she believes about herself vs. what the Church teaches. If my daughter ultimately decides that she is in love with a woman, I never want her to think of herself as bad. I want my daughter to always know that no matter what, I will always be here for her and will always love her. The Church needs to believe this as well and they too need to always be there for their parishioners.”

“It needs to be clear that the LGBTQ community is welcomed and is safe with us.”

- People with differing abilities, including physical, emotional and mental health behavioral realities

“With the spirit of the Synod, get back to basics. What would Jesus Do (WWJD)? No discrimination for ability, gender, LGBT, ethnicity.”

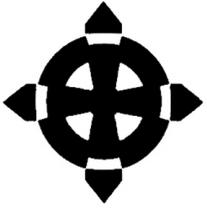
- People of color, African American, Hispanic, Asian and Immigrants

“There are so many tragic events in the world that we are exposed to, and it is bringing out in us the question of what can I do to be a better person. We are all aware of the political dissent, the poor treatment of minorities and immigrants, and maybe this will help the Holy Spirit to inspire us to make a positive difference somehow.”

“It is my hope that the upcoming Synod will result in a Church that has and lives up to the motto ‘All are welcome!’”

But, by far, the leading answer to improving the Church’s ability to accompany all of these groups is the need to expand the resources beyond the current group of clergy to include the voices, the ministerial gifts and vocational calling of 50 % of the world’s population – women; and also, the call is to expand the priesthood to include married priests.

“The ordination of women needs to be a priority. I went to the ordination of an Episcopal female priest, and I was amazed at the role of women throughout that ordination. May our awareness be raised by the Holy Spirit around the role of women in our Catholic Church.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“There is a gradual shifting in our realization that the Church is losing by not having women at the table. The Church is going to have to embrace its entire people ... not just half.”

“There is also the realistic part that in order to cover parishes and meet the needs of the parishioners, they also need to consider allowing men in the priesthood to marry as well as the ordination of women.”

“Female priests need to become a reality. Women need to be more fully incorporated in the Catholic hierarchy. Women need to assume the role of preaching.”

By including married priests, expanding the role of women in the Church, opening up leadership roles, allowing women to become ordained Deacons and Priests, the gifts of all people can be applied toward increasing ministry at the local parish level, as well as at the highest levels of the Church.

“The Church needs to be open to married and women priests. Women are leaving the Church because there is no other place for them and their gifts.”

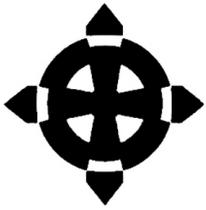
“We need women involved and the gifts they bring, their emotional senses that men do not have. Women can connect to folks in a way men cannot.”

“Women should be able to give homilies.”

People shared that their vision of the Church includes folks like themselves, women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ persons in positions of parish ministry, and in diocesan and Vatican positions of leadership.

“How will we attract men and women to the priesthood? It does not have to be a male Shepherd!”

“We need to continue to be the change. We need to advocate for ourselves to bring about change in clergy and fight clericalism.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“I need to see women in positions of leadership—specifically as deacons as a minimum and then to progress to ordination (as priests).”

Another area related to increasing the connectedness of people to the global Church is to expand the roles of the laity within the Church. The Synod process is a good way to be in touch with the laity. Many embraced the idea of increasing the scope and frequency of listening sessions at both the local parish and global Church level.

“Take laity more seriously. Laity has the Holy Spirit, lived Christian experience. If a Church teaching is not received by the people something is wrong with it and it needs to change. Holy Spirit lives in each of us; lean on wisdom of our life experience. This needs to be just as valid as history, scripture, and theology in shaping our Church.”

“This Synod process is a watershed moment in our Church. Anyone and everyone are invited to express opinions about the Church. I am concerned about Catholics who reject Vatican II principles of being Church, and the legitimacy of Pope Francis. Vatican II was an exciting time, and then the pendulum swung the other way. The anger of those who are against unity bothers me. I hope we can continue to move forward, attract young people, and bring people to Christ.”

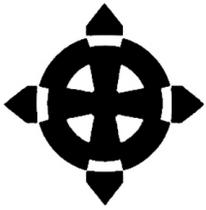
“People need to speak out and Bishops need to listen!”

A final reflection was from the youth and parents in the parish who expressed a need and desire to make the language used in the Mass simpler, less complicated and more inclusive. This together with more programs directed toward middle and high school youth and acceptance of LGBTQ+ peers would help the youth feel more connected to the Church.

“Look at language and words – male domination needs addressing.”

IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

The reflections our community offers for improvements in the Global Church are well articulated in the beginning of this section of the report. Many of these same issues were



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

expressed with care in the listening sessions and are documented in the report section entitled “Listening to Laments: Obstacles and What They Teach Us”.

All these statements from our parishioners point very clearly again and again to Catholic Church Doctrines, Policies and Practices which need to be addressed. The lives of local parishioners are deeply affected by these same concerns. The people long for change and healing; to be part of a Church where the words of Jesus can be fulfilled, “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

We are in a difficult time in our global and local Church. It seems that we are in a prolonged threshold time of waiting. We are celebrating this moment in the Catholic Church’s history, but we also hold a great deal of hurt, disappointment and dissatisfaction which this Synod process has revealed. The Synod process has also lifted up that our spirits are urging us and our Church to pass through this threshold to the other side. The people are waiting and have been waiting a long time for this. It is through this Synod process that the entire Catholic Church can experience greater wholeness, unity and living more fully in the way of Jesus. Indeed, the Spirit seems to be beckoning us.

Given this opportunity for transformation, it is no surprise that one suggestion for improvement which was expressed in our listening sessions was building a stronger community within our parish. For many, their desire was for a more deeply spiritual and prayerful community. People are searching for more ways to come together to learn and to share.

Here are some of their quotes:

“Share more deeply about prayer, discernment and the Holy Spirit”.

“We need more opportunities for listening, sharing and understanding the role of the Holy Spirit.”

“Create listening circles, The Examen and other spiritual practices.”

“Hope our parish will have some evenings and time to pray together and have conversation together. We need to pray, pray.”



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

“We need to work at being a loving and caring community, displaying sacred trust.”

“Would love to see more adoration, chapels for people to sit with Jesus, come together and unite in faith. When I came back to the Catholic Church I wanted to get involved and was part of a young adult group. I value the secular Franciscan order and adoration. I am grateful to be here, share stories and pray for one another.”

“We need intimate connections. The Spirit calls and keeps us”.

In an interview with Pope Francis by Antonio Spadaro, S.J., America Magazine, September 30, 2013, entitled “A Big Heart Open to God”, we read

“... the thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity.”

The improvement to develop a more deeply spiritual community together dovetails naturally with another suggestion for improvement: the synodal process continue in our parish.

Here are some additional quotes:

“Wants prayer to the Holy Spirit to discern what our Parish could do and what was being asked. Also, every parish could offer this time of prayer. This Synod process should have the people praying together for this vision of the Church.”

“Prayer gatherings for parish to pray and make decisions together for the direction of the parish.”

“Group prayer decides decision making.”

“More Synods like this should be happening.”

** Many of the quotes included in this Synod Summary are from our multiple Listening Sessions and reflect the views of the participants; unless otherwise noted.



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

With God's grace, growing together spiritually and prayerfully will yield much fruit. The possibilities are endless "for nothing will be impossible for God" (Luke 1:37).

Our relationships with God and one another can develop more depth and openness, enhancing our charitable works as well as our capacity to minister to each other.

Continuing the synodal process with a strong foundation in prayer will help us to know and accept our Church as she is now with all of her joys and all of her obstacles. We hold onto hope for greater healing in our Church in this prayerful environment.

With the Spirit, we can continue to listen to ourselves, to one another in the parish, and to the whole church and its leadership. We can seek to build honest, open, respectful dialogue where trust and understanding may be experienced; this is needed especially with those who disagree with us and with whom we disagree.

We can continue to name our joys and our obstacles, and our feelings as wounded, faithful, and hopeful Catholics.

And thus, continue to build the Church.

In closing, Pope Francis, this Synod process came at a significant moment in time for our faith community. Uncovered for us as a parish were the numerous joys we experience together.

Our joy from our Catholic identity is bound up with and flows from liturgical celebrations and sacraments which embolden us to move out in faith to respond to the needs of our local community and the world. The rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and our Franciscan charism continue to sustain us, to help us invite in anyone from the margins, and to honor the dignity of all people.

We rejoice that St. Patrick-St. Anthony has served and ministered as a "field hospital" for many who have been wounded by poverty, broken by exclusion, and injured by Church and society.



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

We have helped to heal in body, mind, and spirit through our welcome, pastoral care, advocacy, outreach, liturgies, and faith formation for youth and adults alike.

We feel supported and encouraged by your words from your interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro:

‘I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds... And you have to start from the ground up.’

‘The church sometimes has locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules. The most important thing is the first proclamation: Jesus Christ has saved you. And the ministers of the church must be ministers of mercy above all.’

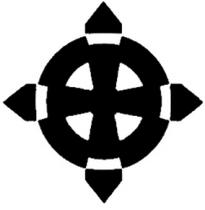
... ‘I dream of a church that is mother and shepherdess. The church’s ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like a Good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel.”

Excerpt from “A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis,” by Antonio Spadaro, S.J., America Magazine, September 30, 2013

Our challenges before us need immediate attention. We sincerely would like to extend an invitation to you, Pope Francis, to partner with us in finding tangible ways to uplift, support, and empower:

* Members of the LGBTQ+ community. All of us, especially our youth, need the Church's current statements about the LGBTQ+ community to change. The documents are harmful and inaccurate. Please embrace developments in science, psychology, and human sexuality. Please eliminate exclusionary language. Our Church teachings have deviated from the love of Jesus. Help us find our way back.

* Women in formal leadership positions in our Church. The time is now for women to become deacons as a first step in recognizing their already proven gifts for ministry and leadership. Please open this door.



St. Patrick - St. Anthony Church
Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry

285 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103-1105
860-756-4034
Fax: 860-249-6487
www.spsact.org

We make an urgent plea for inclusion and welcome of the personhood of all, created in God's image. Your leadership can empower and release the supportive voices of silent allies so that all persons can indeed thrive in our Church.

Lastly, uncovered for us were areas of growth that will continue to need our attention. There exist abundant opportunities yet to be realized for increased allyship with, advocacy for, and accompaniment with anyone who is alienated or disenfranchised. Truly we desire to deepen our Franciscan identity.

As we strive for vibrancy, we pledge to continue this synodal journey to develop as a beloved community with the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit.

We believe our Synod Summary has answered the questions we posed at the start:
"What does the Church need to hear?" and "What does the Church need to be?"

Thank you for this commencement of a new way of being Church, the People of God, together.

Thank you for receiving our truths with openness and in the spirit in which our Synod Summary is offered - the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi who responded to God's invitation to "Rebuild my Church".