

Archdiocese of Regina
Synod Report 2024 – Part I (Universal Church)

To Be a Church in Mission

The Archdiocese of Regina Synod Team identified six themes in the October 2023 Synod Report “A Synodal Church in Mission” as the focus of our spring listening process, two themes in each of the three parts of the Report. The team conducted three online listening sessions during March and early April. In addition, parishes, prayer groups, the Victim Services and Advocacy office, Campion College, and the Women’s Commission held listening sessions. The Archdiocesan Catechetics and Youth and Young Adult offices conducted surveys. Participation in this phase was lower than in the earlier diocesan phase in 2022. However, there was a rich response from those that participated. This report summarizes responses from these listening sessions that we wish to report to the Synod Assembly in October 2024.

Part I: The Face of the Synodal Church

- 3) Entering the Community of Faith: Christian Initiation
- 5) A Church “out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation”

The first themes discussed at our spring synodal listening focused on Christian initiation within the Catholic faith, highlighting themes of inclusivity and women’s roles as well as the experience of diversity of worldview and culture within the church and the world.

Participants discussed Christian initiation as a sacramental rite marking entry into the faith community, highlighting the importance of focusing on supernatural aspects. They explored Confirmation and Pentecost as transformative encounters with the Holy Spirit, shaping identities within the Body of Christ and emphasizing belief in God’s active grace. The discussions also covered ongoing catechesis, women in church leadership, and the need for comprehensive catechetical programs for a deeper understanding of Catholic beliefs. Participants recognized the sacraments’ interconnectedness in fostering belonging and commitment, viewing the sacramental journey as dynamic and aligned with the church’s mission of forming active disciples.

Participants discussed celebrating diversity within unity, emphasizing inclusive language and the role of women as significant themes. Some expressed a desire for change, noting tensions between equity and justice and the church’s perceived reluctance to progress, particularly regarding women’s roles. They are committed to promoting inclusivity, equity, and justice through outreach, dialogue, and inclusive language in worship. Additionally, there was a call for increased pastoral engagement with marginalized groups, highlighting the importance of education on colonial harms, truth, reconciliation, and holistic support. The discussions underscored the need for the church to actively embrace diverse voices and experiences for unity and inclusivity across all levels.

Sexual abuse and abuse of power within the church have created much hurt. The church needs to stand firm and be a voice on issues of sexual abuse and violence, trafficking, pornography, and supporting victims with pastoral care and counselling within a victim-led and victim-centred process. Our mission of justice, healing, and reconciliation must continue within our parishes and be shared in our homes, places of employment, and community.

Part II: All Disciples, All Missionaries

- 8) Church is Mission
- 9) Women in the Life and Mission of the Church

As we seek to be a synodal church in mission, all disciples and missionaries, we heard the call for further formation to live out those roles. Participants in listening circles referred to gifts, charisms, and vocations not identified in the community or not called forth or welcomed when they are identified. This was clearly heard in spiritual conversations about the role of women in the life and mission of the church. Many respondents called for revisions to canon law, along with access for women to the diaconate and priesthood, "... without distinctions or a so-called 'new' position for women that differs (from a male deacon)." One respondent wrote, "Structural change is required in order for women to truly have co-responsibility at every level of the church's life and for both female and male to see themselves as protagonists, without subordination, exclusion, and competition." Language was identified as having different levels of effect on people's lives, as some called loudly for more inclusive language, and some noted fear and division from possible changes in language in liturgical texts and church documents.

Many voiced the lack of welcome in our churches. One young adult commented that they "don't feel engaged with adults in church ... don't feel heard." "We invite others but don't let them participate fully. If we are going to be inclusive – will we be truly inclusive?" The Victim Services and Advocacy group commented, "The church is a male-dominated clerical power structure deeply rooted in clericalism. It has strayed from Jesus's teachings, which included leaving the temple to seek out the marginalized, interacting with the most vulnerable, and with strong words for those who hurt any of his little ones. Church celebrations are exclusive and have lost the foundational principles of what Jesus believed: that everyone is welcome."

Part III: Weaving Bonds, Building Communities

- 14) A Synodal Approach to Formation
- 18) Structures for Participation

A survey of catechists elicited numerous responses on the education and formation of young people that mirrored comments on Christian initiation. There was a recognition that more youth ministries must be developed in both parish and diocese. Youth participation in the church is frequently interrupted by inadequate formation or understanding of church teaching, or the inaccessibility of the language and concepts in which the teaching is presented. Some participants encouraged a focus on contemporary issues that may be more relevant to youth, such as climate change, environmental stewardship, inequality, poverty, and world peace. Respondents warmly welcomed the idea of community involvement in catechesis, though many catechists were sceptical of the likelihood of this development.

Many of the responses that addressed structural changes connected these to other themes, such as the role of laity in the church, the ordination of women as deacons and priests, and opportunities for lay preaching. Though some are cautious about change, many called for ecclesial conversion. There was a general agreement with proposals 18 h) on mandatory pastoral councils and the presence of laity in participatory bodies and 18 i) on the accountability of those who exercise responsibility.