



Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Communion, Participation, and Mission

In February 2022, Bishop Gary invited all people to participate in Synod 2021-2023¹. Over the months that followed, nearly 500 people from across our diocese took part in the Synod process by attending online or in-person Listening Circles, or completing the “Listening Church” response form.

The Diocesan Synod Committee, which included representatives from religious communities, education and healthcare professions, and Indigenous communities, combined everyone’s responses into a report that was sent to the Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops (AWCB) in June 2022. The AWCB combined all the reports from Western and Northern Canadian dioceses into a single document, which was sent to Rome in preparation for the final Synod 2021-2023 meeting in October 2023.

Below is a summary of our diocese’s Synod Report. The full Diocese of Victoria Synod Report and AWCB Synod Synthesis are available at <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/synod>. For more information, please contact synod@rcdvictoria.org.

SUMMARY OF THE DIOCESE OF VICTORIA SYNOD REPORT

FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS

Journeying Together

Participants openly shared their stories – a heart-filled blend of joy and sorrow. While many are striding along, others are questioning and searching as the Spirit moves them along in their faith journey. Participants bore witness to the connection between a joyous journey and enriching adult faith formation experiences, involvement in ministry, and ecumenical engagement.

Challenges, losses, and opportunities were shared due to the isolation experienced during the pandemic lockdowns. People were grateful to have the opportunity to participate in live-streamed Masses and several people said that they would like online Masses to continue post-pandemic. Recent converts were noticeable and inspiring to others in their enthusiasm for the faith and their desire to learn more.

A Synodal Church

The Synod participants expressed much hope. The act of simply sharing feelings and thoughts openly was an invigorating boost. People were stirred and surprised. It is as if the process modeled what people aspire to - a Church that is open, welcoming, engaging, and full of life.

A yearning for change and transformation was evident in calls for more women in leadership (especially in our churches), ordained women, married priests, a Synodal approach similar to the momentum experienced in the early post-Vatican II era, more adult faith formation, greater involvement in social justice and interfaith dialogue, more youth involvement, and Indigenous truth and reconciliation.

Above all, the overarching desire is for a welcoming Church that exudes openness, inclusion, acceptance, love, and belonging. Hope springs eternal, no matter where they are on their faith journey. Expressions of hope and gratitude abounded. The listening circles offered a breath of fresh air, allowing participants to be where they are at, listening and sharing, as beloved People of God.

1: <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/news/charting-a-course-for-our-journey-together-synod-2021-2023>

DATA ANALYSIS

After reading all the comments received, 10 topic threads emerged. Each comment was sorted into one of these ten threads. For the responses to the first Synod question (*How are we journeying today?*), the comments in each thread were further sorted by mood: whether they expressed joy, or sorrow, or were neutral. For the responses to the second and third Synod questions (*What steps does the Spirit call us to take? What emotions have stirred in you?*), the comments in each thread were further sorted into Synodal themes: whether they related to communion, participation, or mission. The topic threads, moods, and themes are described in the full report, available at <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/synod>

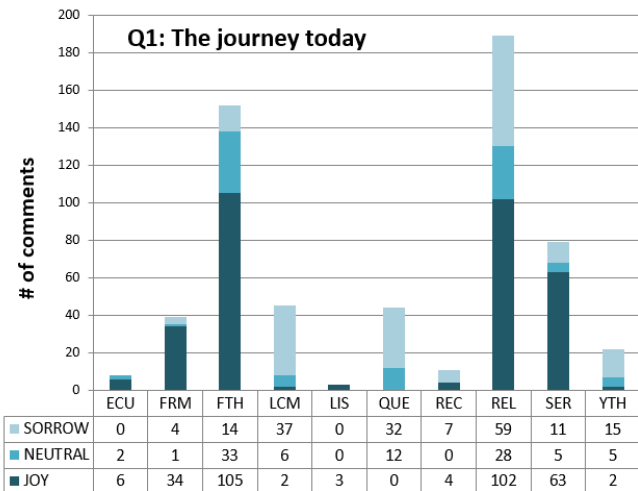


Fig 1: Responses to the first Synod question

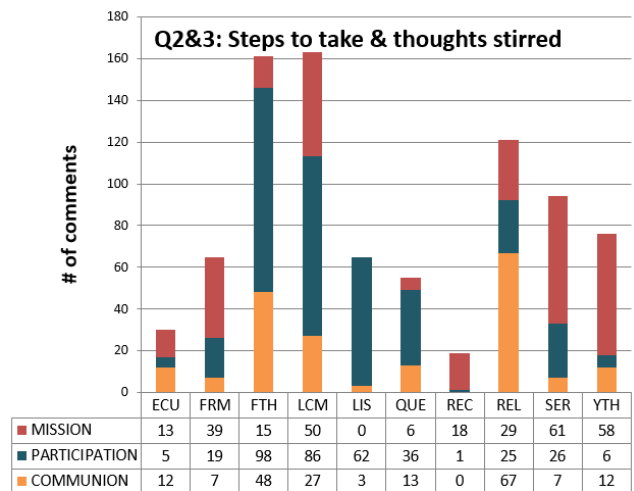


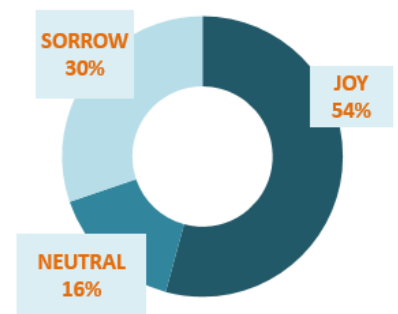
Fig 2: Responses to the second and third Synod questions

Looking at responses to the first Synod question (Fig 1 - *How are we journeying today?*), the three most common topic threads are Relationships, Faith, and Service (REL, FTH, and SER). Faith Formation and Education (FRM) is another thread where participants expressed many joyful comments. The threads with the most sorrowful comments are Relationships, Reconciliation, Youth, Leadership, and Questions and Concerns (REL, REC, YTH, LCM, and QUE).

Looking at responses to the second and third Synod questions (Fig 2 - *What steps does the Spirit call us to take? What emotions have stirred in you?*), the five threads receiving the most comments are Leadership, Faith, Service, Relationships, and Youth, (LCM, FTH, SER, REL, and YTH).

If we pool all responses to the first Synod question together across all topic threads, we find that the majority of comments expressed joy (54%), with 30% of comments expressing sorrow and 16% of comments being neutral (Fig 3).

Figure 3: Overall mood of the journey today



CONCLUSION

We are on the path toward living synodality in communion, participation, and mission. These dimensions are intertwined and each needs focused attention and reflection. Living synodality will require further discernment with more conversation to explore what we heard. Overall, people said that participating in the Synod Listening Circles was a pleasant surprise, as they did not know what to expect before attending, but were encouraged by being heard and listened to. The Holy Spirit inspired people to share their personal stories in response to the questions posed.