

Essex Catholic Community



**Creating a Vibrant ECC Together
2018 Synod
Summary of
Action Plan Discussion Forum
Holy Family Parish Hall
June 6, 2019, 6:30-8:00 p.m.**

Diocese of Burlington 2018 Synod Priorities

- **Evangelization**

“Do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept His power... Open wide the doors for Christ.”

—St. Pope John Paul II

- **Build Vibrant Parishes**

“A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor ... under the authority of the diocesan bishop.”

—Code of Canon Law, canon 515, §1

3. Communication

“Communication is part of God’s plan for us and an essential way to experience fellowship.”

—Pope Francis

Our Agenda

Timeframe

Agenda

6:30-6:45 p.m.

Welcome and Opening Prayer
Introductions
Meeting Objectives and Guiding Principles

6:45-7:35 p.m.

Individual Reflections on the 3 Synod Priorities
Small Group Discussions on Common Themes
Group Report Outs

7:35-7:50 p.m.

Commitments for the Future

7:50-8:00 p.m.

Closing Prayer
Adjourn

Essex Catholic Community Prayer for Synod

Heavenly Father, guide us on this spiritual journey to fulfill
Jesus' command "to make disciples of all nations."
Give us the courage to share the Good News of Your divine message.

Holy Spirit, ignite our passion to live and share the Gospel, and commit
ourselves to a renewal of our personal faith.

Through our prayer, work and outreach, let our vision of a newly enriched
faith community be a true witness to the fullness of Your Love.
Amen.

I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (MT 28:19-20)

Summary of Group Conversations



1. Thinking about the Synod's priority of EVANGELIZATION, how will the ECC:

- Develop a pastoral approach that helps every person become an intentionally evangelized parishioner beginning with his/her relationship to God?
- Deliver engaging religious education programs for children, youth, post confirmation and adults?
- Attract young people, and others, who want the opportunity to develop their faith and relationship with God?

Your Personal Reflections

1. General

- Research best practices in all areas
- Many people uncomfortable doing evangelization
- Always have a welcoming attitude to those who come our way, so they feel accepted
- Avoid Cliques
- Rotate parish leadership roles

2. Religious Education (Adults)

- Small home/neighborhood-based groups; co-ed or not, e.g., Men's group
- Rotate groups to meet new people and keep group fresh
- Bible study where we can ask questions
- Share information on Catholic resources, e.g., Commonweal, Dynamic Catholic, Bishop Barron
- Deliver series like "Catholicism" on a regular basis
- Promote retreats like Light of the World

3. Religious Education (Youth)

- Attract young people through well-funded, stimulating programs
- Ask youth what they think would stimulate them
- Family Religious Education
- Discuss how science and faith are not incompatible
- Rel Ed should use many forms covering all types of learning and personalities
- Picture books/coloring books for young children who don't go to children's liturgy

- Youth Masses, opportunities for leadership, use videos/games, not just classroom learning
- Ways Grandparents can work with grandchildren: bring grandchildren to Church
- Have children more involved in liturgy: readers, greeters, collection
- Focus Rel Ed on the basics – keep it simple: love God, love thy neighbor, Faith and importance of it in their lives

4. Outreach

- Invite people individually to become involved in parish activities
- Announce and celebrate weddings and Baptisms like First Communion and confirmation
- Welcome couples with new babies.
- Create Teen Nights quarterly
- Attract youth to events with competitions and prizes
- Important to know what you're talking about & to whom. Everyone not on the same page.
- Use Baptism/ First Communion/ Confirmation as “welcome back” opportunities. Have receptions for the families like funerals.
- Whispering in the Pews – Milwaukee program teaching young children about the Mass.

5. Faith Development

- Perpetual Adoration one weekend a month
- Create Adoration Chapel at Pius X. (St. Pius X is “Eucharistic Pope”)
- Establish faith-based Culture
- Faith testimonials
- Offer regional pilgrimages
- Explain and encourage the sacraments
- 6:30 morning mass before work
- Make it easy to come back and get confirmed – make RCIA more inclusive
- Outreach worship sessions, music
- Rely more heavily on prayer before action; let Holy Spirit guide
- Put Jesus at the center of our efforts
- Read and study our religion so we know how to be better followers of Christ

6. Liturgy/Prayer

- Revise liturgy especially music to more engaging and contemporary
- Have public masses on Memorial Day and Veterans' Day
- Look at “Rebuilt” homilies outline
- Personal prayer for minds to be open to receive God's word
- Daily mass, daily prayer, Rosary nite, TV documentaries, “Catholicism” series

7. Other

- Research best practices (in all areas)
- Invite lapsed Catholics to participate with us
- Be inclusive to all: divorced, singles, home bound, etc.
- Do more to apologize for past abuse and ensure they won't happen again
- Parish leadership training lay and pastor

Your Group's Reflections

1. Bible Studies in people's homes
2. Spiritual reading groups or personal reading of Catholic literature
3. More visual aids for youth in religious education
4. Family *Religious Ed*
5. Diocesan level activities
6. Use social media
7. Adoration
8. Serve refreshments!
9. Service Works and celebrations for students and leadership opportunities

2. Thinking about the Synod's priority of BUILDING VIBRANT PARISHES, how will the ECC:

- Build a vibrant ECC, understanding the limited availability of priests and the importance of their presence outside of weekend Mass celebrations?
- Engage more parishioners in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, fruits of the Holy Spirit, love for the truths of the faith and regular celebration of the sacraments?
- Look for ways to free priests to focus more on pastoral ministry and less on administration and facilitating greater lay participation in the spiritual and pastoral works of the parish?

Your Personal Reflections

1. Spirituality

- Pray for God's will to help with whatever will be the right objective at the right time; pray for our priests and support them
- Create a group for helping parents develop faith with children
- Work on personal holiness (retreats, Adoration, personal prayer)
- Use Religious Ed teachers in a different capacity to help us grow spiritually
- Bible Study
- Have more interactive social events w/ discussion on individual relationships with God to share experiences
- More book review studies like "Jesus, a Journey"
- Engaging, familiar, and contemporary music at Mass
- Move St. Lawrence Mass to 8:30 to engage more young families

2. Parish Administration

- Parish Councils go back to structure with sub committees to address: Evangelization, Rel Ed, Stewardship, Parish Activities
- Hire lay people to take on administrative duties & programs for adults and youth: social, educational, community service (or get volunteers)
- Recognize lay people are capable of leading, therefore, authorize them to lead

- Have other people on the Parish Council and have an agenda of progress
- Parishioners must recognize that it is not just about the priests; we tend to sit back and follow the priests' lead
- Parish Newsletter: testimonials, how people are involved, volunteer profiles, etc. (*See Communications*)
- Allow parishes to be run by parish councils and not every decision go through priest.
- Parish administration should be in the hands of a parish administrator who reports to the Finance Committee
- Stop focusing on saving money and provide value to families and people will donate if they believe in the programs
- Focus on core issues. Have a Parish annual plan (what we as a parish want to accomplish this year and how we are going to do it) that everyone knows about and can more fully embrace.

3. Programs & Events (*see also Spirituality above*)

- Groups: single, divorced, homebound, Moms, Widows/Widowers, single parents.
- Hire a parish social worker
- Movie nights that present values-based stories
- Bonfires, Carnival, Pot luck cook-outs
- Create programs that have a tangible impact on parishioners
- Promote region-wide Catholic programs
- Continue to support ALO, EEO, SON
- More activities like Serve our Neighbor, EEO but all year long in small groups; work with community service groups
- More activities for children

4. Lay Engagement & Responsibility

- Need to get to know each other in the parish by name. Use name tags once a month.
- Recruit, train and support lay leaders
- More social action engagement teams
- Take responsibility for getting to know others; many involved as Greeters/ushers
- Annual outreach about all existing volunteer groups/activities (Ministry Fair?)
- Mentor couples and new parents
- Encourage and affirm one another in their involvement in the Parish
- Frame parish needs in terms of volunteer opportunities to perform works of mercy and grow in spirituality.
- Take more advantage of Osterio di Sarto to engage with parishioners you don't know.
- Formal and repetitive welcome to new parishioners with Welcome Kit

Your Group's Reflections

1. More involvement; more lay energy put into parish activities
2. Multigenerational commitment
3. Open, respectful and welcoming to all
4. Build a sense of community
5. Reach out to community
6. Youth programs
7. Better connection to Sunday Liturgy through music, themes, more roles for lay
8. Empowered committees
9. Baptism/marriage mentor programs

3. Thinking about the Synod's priority of COMMUNICATION, how will the ECC:

- Establish a communications plan to further the work of evangelization and good communications within the parish and to individuals in the community?
- Create communications uniformity within ECC, for example by e-mail, website and bulletin formats?
- Continue to maintain traditional forms of communication while exploring new ways of communicating?

Your Personal Reflections

1. Use more Social Media

- Social media: Facebook Group, Texting (for youth), Twitter, Podcasts, Front Porch Forum, Formed.org
- Improve email list and website
- Connect to those without email
- Survey parish for what technology is used most
- Clarify the "messages" we want to communicate: liturgical, events, volunteer opportunities, parish issues, contacts information

2. One-on-One Communication

- Personal invitation is the best way to get people involved
- Encourage input even anonymously, e.g., set up a Suggestion Box
- All Parish leaders should make effort to listen to parishioners and have a way to document requests and report results
- Publish contact info for Parish Council members so parishioners can reach them
- Get children involved as greeters
- Events focused on needs of specific groups: singles, single parents, divorced, homebound, young adults
- Weekly/monthly coffee hours
- Childcare at all activities so families can attend
- Wear ECC t-shirts when we serve at other functions like Salvation Army meal
- Special luncheons for newly registered or interested new visitors to parish

3. Other Publications

- Submit articles to Essex Reporter
- Publish a newsletter (online/paper) focusing on all ministries
- Share “newsletter” with EEO, SON participants

4. At Mass

- Name Tags at Osterio di Sarto
- Mass announcements by the people involved
- Welcome packets at Church entrances for visitors or new parishioners
- Project announcements on screens before Mass and use for readings and song
- Address the issues the public is reading about the Church

Your Group’s Reflections

1. Update/upgrade bulletin.
2. Share communication responsibilities across the parish; priests and staff cannot do it all.
3. Develop strong social media presence including links to Catholic literature and news.
4. Demonstrate a more welcoming community
5. Repeat announcements about activities and volunteer opportunities in Bulletin, Newsletter, pulpit, email, FB
6. Learn what the community knows about ECC and their perceptions

Summary of Personal Reflections & Commitments

1. One high point at the meeting for me was:

- Engaging with others in small group
- Energy and creativity in the room
- All the exciting ideas
- Everyone wants the church to do better for all
- Well organized meeting
- Meeting new people

2. One of the most important outcomes in my view was:

- Having everyone know what was going on with the Synod process
- Identification of specific issues; loss of youth by the Church
- How we can get our children to Church
- Honesty
- Evangelization is important, but how can we do it?
- A shared vision of the future at ECC; feels like our ideas are valued and will be used
- We need leaders with group support to make events happen
- Sharing passionate ideas

3. In what ways are you able to support the ECC in the future?

- Action planning
- Participant; make effort through current media to reach groups
- Attend meetings
- Prayer
- Would enjoy working on one of the projects (welcome packets)
- Holy Thursday Night Adoration
- Help at Mass
- In any way possible
- Make the good ideas a reality; help with Eucharistic Adoration at St. Pius X
- Participation in discussions on an on-going basis
- Events of the parish
- Participate in further discussions; leadership writing; reporting to Parish Council

4. Are there any additional ideas that didn't come up that should be considered?

- More collaboration among the two parishes
- Offer bereavement group
- Need more people involved and more young people
- Publish Parish Council members contact information
- Develop a response for us to give regarding the sex abuse scandal
- How do we give victims/survivors the fair hearing they deserve?
- Not enough time to discuss!
- Use the experience, expertise and guidance of retired parishioners to meet some of the parish needs and move these projects forward