

**THE SYNOD PROCESS HERE AT ST. KATHARINE DREXEL PARISH,**  
**MECHANICSBURG, PA**

**May 2022**

Our parish held 8 small group meetings and 2 general parish large group meetings during the month of February, March, and April after an official Parish Mass Opening the Synod, explaining it and a training with facilitators.

Our small groups consisted of:

- The Parish Staff, Parish Council and Finance Council
- Knights of Columbus
- TMIY
- PCCW
- Cursillo
- Adoration Teams
- Faith Formation Catechists
- Faith Formation/Catholic School Families
  - Primary and Elementary FF Parents/Families
  - Secondary FF Parents/Families
  - Catholic School Families

About 125 people participated in this process.

We discussed the 11 themes of the Diocese and the enclosed parish themes decided upon by the Pastor and Parish Council. Our parish spent quality time in prayer, dialogue and listening as we shared and walked together in Communion, Participation and Mission and with the awareness and presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

Our experience here at St Katharine Drexel Parish was one of participation, dialogue, discernment and prayerful listening and encounter. Our experience was positive, faith filled and an honest expression of thoughts and concerns and respectful listening.

- 1. Our first major theme was a concern for our Catholic School Parents and Families providing a “Catholic, quality, academic and spiritual formation and education in each area of the diocese and local deanery”.** Our emphasis should be on local deanery, diocesan schools rather than trying to have parish schools in a challenging culture. As we have local diocesan high schools in each area, so we should have elementary schools in each area of the deanery and diocese. Individual parish schools are a thing of the past for many different reasons. We need to have “new wineskins” to keep the wine new and fresh.
- 2. Another concern for most of our parents, children, and families, is the value and importance of Faith Formation.** Recently we moved from a classroom, religious education, catechist, student model to a more friendly, family, parent – parish model which involves parents and the entire family.

There is a great concern for parents-based faith formation and parents as the first teachers and models of their children in the way of faith especially how faith is lived, not as topic of mind and intellect but as a living encounter and a relationship with Jesus.

**Intellect and mind – knowledge**

**Heart – experience, encounter, and belief**

We are greatly concerned about quality faith formation catechesis, the training of our catechists, the practice of our parents and families. Are we just going through the hoops, checking off the box or are we “truly passing on the living faith”? Are we putting in the efforts of “truly passing on an experience with the “living, Risen Jesus in action and in Liturgy and in charity and service (ministry)?

We highlighted concerns for parents, children, and families in primary and elementary faith formation, in Baptismal preparation, sacramental preparation, Marriage preparation, high school faith formation and youth ministry, and young adult ministries for 18- 25 and 26 – 30-year-olds as well as a single and young family ministry.

Our treasure (tithing) should feed this concern and important value if the church is to be healthy and grow and attract our young people. Our young people are our present and future. We need to spend ample treasure not just in Catholic Schools but in all Faith Formations Programs across the board.

Most of our families do not go to Catholic Schools; does our treasure connect to this truth.

Catholic Schools, Faith Formation, Youth and Children Families Programs and leadership

Less parochial and more deanery, cluster programming and leadership; share finances for programming and leadership.

### **3. Our third major concern is Liturgy and Worship participation.**

70% of our people do not regularly attend weekend Mass to keep holy the Lord's Day.

*What to do? Catechesis, Evangelization, Parent Faith Formation*

- In our local Cumberland/Dauphin Perry Deaneries; we have 17 parishes, 21 priests, 17 weekday Masses and 58 weekend Masses toooooo many for the 30% that are the "faithful remnant"
- we need to twin and close, and cluster some parishes who will need to share a priest or not have a resident pastor
- better use of buildings, priests and rectories/church - very difficult decisions but necessary!
- Imagine if Bishop Dattilo didn't close 25 parish back in 1995!! Courage, Trust in the Holy Spirit!!
- We need another Consultation Process to reduce the number of parishes before the vocation crisis forces us to.
- Only 11 seminarians remain!

Religious Priests can care for cluster of parishes and married pastors can take care of certain parishes.

Deacons can also be administrators of parishes and share a sacramental/pastoral priest/pastor

**4. Our next concern which is tied to the others is the sacramental preparation of our children and their parents and families especially in Grades 1 and 2 / 7 and 8; and how to encounter and engage their parents.**

FF needs to be home and family based rather than classroom based. We need to pass on the faith to parents and children.

Finances must support family and faith formation ministries equal to Catholic School education.

Pray to God for vocations but pray for parents and families and parent encouragement and support and practice of the faith.

We need to be centered in Eucharist and do “whatever it takes” to maintain our sacramental/pastoral center. “The Eucharist is our source and summit”.

**5. Our next concern is ministry and service and how we invite more members and engage with each other to meet the needs of our parish and ecclesial community within our immediate area, i.e., our cluster or deanery.** We need to be less parish based and centered, and more deanery/cluster based.

We can share ministries, like Young Adult Ministry and RCIA and Youth Ministries.

We need to personally invite people to ministries through ministry fairs and highlight ministries in the bulletin, newsletter and on the website.

COVID stopped a lot of in person meetings and encounters and we need to bring this back.

Livestreaming and ZOOM is not the permanent answer; we are” incarnational”, that is to say, “we are a person-to-person faith and discipleship”.

It is not enough to watch the Mass and be entertained from a distance but to be in person, celebrate the Mass and receive the Eucharist; to be a participant and not just a passive spectator but an active, engaged participant.

**6. Our next concern is the lack of understanding of a spirituality of stewardship of time, talent, and treasure.** As Catholics, we have a poor understanding of true tithing of time, talent, and treasure.

We are asked to give a meager 10% away and live on the abundance of 90% for ourselves. What a great bargain. We are invited to look at our checkbook and see where we spend our treasure and time.

We are asked to look at our calendar and see where we spend our time and talent.

Who is our God? Me, Myself and I or God, Other and then Self. Who is my Trinity?

Maybe 10 – 15% truly give and volunteer in a normal parish. Where are the “other 9”?

Here at St Katharine Drexel Parish, a wealthy, suburban parish in Silver Spring Twp, Cumberland County, we have grown in our understanding a practice of tithing and stewardship of time, talent, and treasure.

We have particularly grown in putting these tithing principles into practice.

Just 8 years ago, we were struggling in fiscal areas; we were borrowing from savings to meet ordinary expenses; we were in debt as a young parish, and we were in deficit spending.

After study, renewal, and a new awaking of stewardship we are not only meeting our own needs, but we are taking care of others in the spirit of St. Katharine, our foundress.

We are taking care of those on the fringes and those poor and in need.

We are well on our way to tithing 10% of our income to charity outside of our parish while meeting our own needs and fiscal responsibility.

We are debt free, and we live within in our fiscal means. We have a fiscal surplus each year which helps us to plan for future temporal and pastoral needs and save for future challenges.

We have been able add to our savings which has reached \$1,000,000 in savings and a capital replacement account. We have been able to pay our DAC assessment each year and last year we received a \$20, 000 refund over our goal.

We can give away 10% of our gross ordinary income to charities outside our parish

Included are the following:

- Our sister parish in the Diocese of Gallup, NM (Arizona and New Mexico)
- COVENANT and MISSION TRIP annually along with monthly donation to aid poor parishes and missions.
- St Jude's Hospital for Children
- Wounded Warrior Project (Veterans)
- St Michael's Indian Mission School
- Food For the Poor

- Catholic Outreach
- Vocations (Harrisburg)
- Morning Star Pregnancy Center
- St Francis Soup Kitchen (feed the poor in the City of Harrisburg)

7. **Our final concern is Evangelism and Evangelization.** Personal Invitations always work. We need to be more purposeful and draw people to encounter in person with one another. We have given in to the myth that virtual and being separated is acceptable.

A warm welcome and smile go along away along with developing small Christian Communities within each parish as parishes do with in a deanery or cluster.

A five-year goal for us here at St. Katharine is to develop Small Christian Communities within our parish with its own leadership team and pastoral leader.

We hope to have Masses, Anointings, liturgical and pastoral and educational/teaching opportunities in these areas as the priest goes out to the peripheries of the parish rather than have everyone come to the church for liturgy and meetings and events/activities.

We have begun this effort a while ago and then COVID happened in 2019. We hope to restudy and begin anew in September 2022.

Our parish has been divided into 10 small communities which we call missions with their own leadership team and pastoral leader.

Each team and leader are responsible for ministries in its own area and reports back to the core team, pastoral council, and pastor on a regular basis.

We border St Patrick's on the west, St Joseph's on the south and east, Our Lady Of Lourdes on the east and Perry County to the north (St Bernard's – New Bloomfield, Our Lady of Good Counsel – Marysville, St. Bernadette - Duncannon)

In prayerful solidarity, we thank you for listening and sharing and walking together in Communion, Participation and Mission.



Sincerely yours,

**Fr. Kenneth G. Smith, Pastor, and Parish Pastoral Council**

May 1, 2022