



## Report on Synodal Process 2022

May 2022

This report from our Parish Pastoral Council is a reflection of the exchange of perspectives that took place during our Synodal process at Saint Patrick Basilica Parish over the months of October 2021 through April 2022.

Saint Patrick's is a spiritual community who value and take comfort in the traditions of the Church including the beauty and serenity of the sacred space, the communion rails, many priests and deacons leading us in our celebrations, the traditional altar boy acolytes and servers, the beautiful holy paintings, statues and stained glass windows in all the traditional places, the soaring heights, the smell of incense, the sound of the church bells, the vintage organ and traditional sacred music, the sacramentals, the rosaries, the prominence of the tabernacle, both the Latin and English in the Mass and multiple daily and weekend Masses and confessions. The daily scheduled availability of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is very much appreciated.

We are a downtown Ottawa, English-speaking parish with deep roots in our largely Irish and Scottish Catholic heritage – made visible by the historic architecture, monuments and grounds of the Basilica, the beautiful marble high altar, presided over by a statue of Saint Patrick, the green accent colours in the ornate woodwork, the classic stained glass and even extending to the parish hall where the Honoris of the Blessed Fr. Michael McGivney is proudly adorned, sharing the beautifully renovated scavi space with the grotto of our Lady of Lourdes, our parish gift shop and library. Prior to COVID, our regular parish socials often reflected these traditional roots, especially Saint Patrick's and Saint Andrew's celebrations.

Prior to COVID, we seemed to have two communities in one – our weekday community was made up of many public servants who worked locally and found our weekday Masses to be a welcome respite from the usual workaday and our weekend parishioners who travel from many surrounding communities in Ottawa and Gatineau because they find comfort in the traditions and feel welcomed at Saint Patrick's. Saint Patrick's also welcomes many tourists who visit Ottawa and are attracted to our historic Basilica in the heart of downtown Ottawa.

Some parishioners expressed appreciation for the support they received from our pastoral staff while facing stressful family-related situations which had brought them comfort and drew them closer to the Church, while others expressed their appreciation of the quality of the homilies they have heard during Masses and the welcoming hospitality of the priests, deacons, staff and volunteers. The popularity of our RCIA program is a beacon of light for our parish community. Some parishioners however related their concern that the sacred traditions may be lost and expressed their concern that the Synodal process may threaten those traditions that keep them engaged in the Church.

There is also some concern arising from the obstacle created by people hanging on to their understanding of our Faith and reluctance to accept other views and practices as legitimate within our Catholic Church. Others expressed their concern that the necessary administration of the Church rules and policies sometimes places barriers that turn some people away. Our Church is understood to be universal, and we need to be welcoming yet remain faithful to our Church doctrine and teachings if we are to grow the faith. In a universal Church, we must be able to welcome many views without alienating others. This dichotomy may be partially bridged by presenting more opportunities for catechesis and sharing of the faith, building on the lessons



we have learned from this Synod. Adopting an annual parish Lenten Mission is one method that our parish can readily adapt to be more synodal in nature yet remain focused on the teachings of the Church. In addition, parish retreats devoted to these questions may also hold the key to more answers.

We also must recognize that our faith community is slowly (and not so slowly in some places) spiralling inward and is growing smaller as time goes on. We need to understand the root causes of this phenomenon and address them sooner rather than later. We need to take a close look outward at who we have left behind, who have we rejected, who have rejected us and who know nothing about us and why – and then plan how best to proceed? Perhaps this can be the topic of the first parish mission?

Recent events and circumstances have highlighted how we, as a Church, need to walk together in our faith journey with our Indigenous sisters and brothers and be welcoming and creative in how we respond. We, as a Church, must also respond to the victims of abuse in the Church in a spirit of ownership of the issue, with justice and empathy for the survivors and strategies for prevention. This is no small undertaking; however, taking ownership is a good first step and from there the rest will follow.

At Saint Patrick's, we need also respond to the multitude of cultures that have become parishioners or have not joined us, feeling perhaps less welcomed because of our historical cultural traditions. Becoming more inclusive by recognizing the diversity of those cultures and traditions in our parish life would also encourage more growth. We can help achieve this by injecting a diverse cultural flair to our other regular parish dinners, picnics and social events. Due to our location, we have no local schools officially linked to our parish; so, we need to also find more creative ways to reach more young people and families. We can more fully engage and champion our young people who call Saint Patrick's their home and help enable them to "unleash the Gospel" into "a new missionary age" and "accompany people, from all of walks of life, back to the Faith." We need also expand our ministries for the seniors, the disabled and the poor and continue to reach out to those who cannot physically attend Masses by continuing to offer live streaming of the Masses, other celebrations and even offer some virtual parish events. In addition, we need also be welcoming to other marginalized people who feel left out of our community of faith. Christ welcomed all sinners without judgment and, because of the encounter with Him, they became profoundly changed. We should do the same.

Within Saint Patrick Basilica Parish, we have several groups and communities of faith, each setting about, meeting regularly and expressing their charism. Perhaps the parish can consider coordinating with the groups, look for gaps – groups and interests we may be missing, work together in growth opportunities and expanding our reach into the broader community? We need to build on the strength of our traditions, ensuring they maintain a rightful place and yet be open to new ideas that may help reverse the slow inward spiral and turn our gaze outward once again.

The members of Parish Council wish to acknowledge the coordination of our process by Harold Marcotte whose leadership was key to our fruitful discussions. The members also thank parishioners who contributed to the process of reflection at various stages.