



Church of the Risen Savior

1501 East County Road 42 ♦ Burnsville, MN 55306-4798
Phone: (952) 431-5222 ♦ Fax (952) 431-5221
E-Mail: info@risensavior.org

December 20, 2021

Most Reverend Archbishop Bernard Hebda
Archbishop's Office
Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis Catholic Center
777 Forest Street
Saint Paul, MN 55106

Dear Archbishop Hebda,

Just a couple of weeks ago, Risen Savior joyfully welcomed you to share in our parish's celebration for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We continue to be grateful for your presence and ministry with us.

My reason for writing is to share some of our parish's experience with the Synod Small Groups in the hopes that this feedback will enrich not only what remains of the Archdiocesan Synod 2022, but also how our Archdiocese responds to Pope Francis's invitation to embark on the "Synod on Synodality."

While the Archdiocesan Synod Team is no doubt preparing for the Deanery Consultation Process and looking ahead to the Synod Assembly, I am writing in regards to the Archdiocesan Synod Small Group Process. We hosted the groups at Risen Savior starting the week of October 4th through the week of November 8th, 2021. Our parish had a total of 15 small groups: 10 of which were in English and 5 of which were in Spanish. 1 of the 10 English-speaking groups met virtually on Zoom. There were about 68 participants each week in the English groups and 25 in the Spanish groups. We are looking forward to receiving the data from the feedback forms that the scribes inputted each week.

At the last small group gathering, we encouraged participants to reflect on the experience as a whole and invited them to fill out a general feedback form, a copy of which is enclosed in both English and Spanish. I let them know that if they indicated their permission, I would include their comments in a letter to you and the Archdiocesan Synod Team. A total of 55 participants' responses are enclosed. (8 respondents did not give their permission to share with the Archdiocesan team, so they are not included).

After prayerfully, sincerely reading their responses, I share the following themes I distilled:

1. Our English-speaking participants were more critical of the process than our Spanish-speaking participants. All involved were committed to the process and sincere in their desire to listen to the Holy Spirit guiding the Church and our Archdiocese.
2. A common concern from participants was what felt to be too much structure and direction from the Archdiocesan team who put the content together.
3. Many of our Spanish-speaking participants are hungry for more family formation and opportunities to grow in faith together.

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4. Many of our English-speaking participants are hungry for more acknowledgment and appreciation of the variety of vocational expressions—as married, single, divorced, parents of grown children, not being parents, widowed, etc. Furthermore, many felt acknowledgment and open conversation about concrete challenges in our contemporary experience were lacking (i.e., racism, women’s role in the church, priest shortage, social justice).
5. Overwhelmingly, participants found the opportunity to get to know others better through the process one of the most valuable pieces of the process. They would’ve benefited from more open-ended time for discussion.

On behalf of our parish community, thank you for convening the Archdiocesan Synod and inviting participation as a whole archdiocese. We are hopeful that all involved, formally and informally, will embrace the sincerity and courage of Mary in saying “Yes!” to God’s invitation to carry and birth new life into our Church and world today.

With Warm Advent and Christmas Greetings,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Grace Koleczek", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Grace Koleczek, M.Div.
Adult Faith Formation & Social Justice Coordinator
Church of the Risen Savior
grace.koleczek@risensavior.org
(952) 698-1724

Enclosures