



Catholic Leadership  
INSTITUTE

Confidential

REPORT OF FINDINGS  
ARCHDIOCESE OF WINNIPEG  
LISTENING SESSIONS

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*Presented to Archbishop Gagnon  
Prepared by Catholic Leadership Institute*

*December 19, 2016*



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## INTRODUCTION

In efforts to prepare for the upcoming Archdiocesan Synod, Catholic Leadership Institute recommended a series of listening sessions so that the clergy, the people of God, and the diocesan staff could provide direct feedback to the Archbishop. Catholic Leadership Institute and the Archdiocese developed targeted questions to be answered by individuals, discussed in small groups, and then presented directly to the Archbishop without rebuttal. The questions focused on three main areas: things that the Archdiocese does well to foster growth in relationship with Jesus (appreciation), areas in which the Archdiocese should focus their attention over the next two years (vision), and areas in which the Archdiocese should make significant accomplishments in the next three years (priorities). A consultant from Catholic Leadership Institute facilitated the first session and then trained Winnipeg volunteers to facilitate subsequent sessions. Among the volunteers were note-takers who contributed their observations to the pool of feedback. The information gathered is to be used to guide the creation and development of the Synod.

## PARTICIPANTS

Nearly 800 participants (clergy, Archdiocesan staff, and people of God) attended one of the thirteen listening sessions. Sessions were held September-November and were hosted throughout the Archdiocese for the convenience of the people of God. Another 24 participants submitted their questionnaire via online survey.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Group/County</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
St. Paul High School	9.8.16	Pastoral Council	24
St. Anthony of Padua	9.13.16	N. Winnipeg Deanery	60
St. Augustine of Canterbury	9.14.16	Westman Deanery	75
St. Kateri Tekakwitha	10.8.16	First Nations	21
St. Viator's	10.13.16	Parkland Deanery	36
Our Lady of Perpetual Help	10.13.16	S. Winnipeg Deanery	100
St. Paul the Apostle	10.22.16	Central Winnipeg Deanery	115
St. Peter	10.22.16	Youth	81
St. Paul High School	10.25.16	Students	119
Parkland Deanery	10.28.16	First Nations	26
Christ the King	11.5.16	Interlake Deanery	31
Online		Online	24
Our Place/Chez Nous	11.3.16 & 11.17.16	Drop-In Center	41
Stony Mountain Institution	10.29.16	Incarcerated Men	11
<b>Total Respondents</b>			<b>764</b>



## **CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE OVERALL SUMMARY**

A broad overview of the feedback revealed many areas to be celebrated and some challenges to be considered further.

Listening Session participants expressed satisfaction in two key ways: the welcoming nature of the Archdiocese and their individual parishes, as well as the quality and number of opportunities for formation. They benefit greatly from what is offered and seek new opportunities to continue growing in this way. In particular, respondents would like to see more adult education and catechesis, particularly about what it means to “live a Catholic life,” rather than basic precepts of the faith. The Archdiocese’s commitment to diversity and welcoming of immigrants and refugees was a major theme among those who mentioned the welcoming atmosphere of the Church in Winnipeg. Most respondents feel that the diversity of cultures brings a richness and new life.

There were two main responses when participants were asked about their vision for the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, and they fell under the umbrella of evangelization as well as education and formation. Respondents envisioned an increased commitment to Evangelization, which includes new ways of reaching out beyond church borders. They envisioned a dedication to interfaith dialogue, reaching out to fallen away Catholics, as well as an Open Door policy with an emphasis on mercy. Participants recognize the need to learn how to evangelize. The people of the Archdiocese wanted to see more education and formation—for all ages. This includes more opportunities for retreats, speakers, and classes. Focusing on the liturgy and creating a vibrant encounter has been suggested to bring people back to the church. A greater offering of youth and young adult programs was a major emphasis across all Listening Sessions. The prevailing sense is that, while they are happy with what the Archdiocese and their parishes offer, participants desire a more uniform formation focusing on what it means to live a Catholic life.

The immediate priorities were much the same as the vision of the future. In addition to education and youth ministry, the third highest priority is that of Social Justice. The people of the Archdiocese seek to emulate the call of Pope Francis in living out their faith through mercy and good works. Particularly, respondents seek to continue reconciliation efforts with the First Nations, to assist refugees, and to offer more in the local community to help the poor. Throughout every session, but especially among youth and young adults, there were individuals who emphasized the need for understanding and dialogue for the LGBT community.

Overall, the Listening Sessions reveal that the Archdiocese of Winnipeg are a people of deep faith, committed to living out their Catholic values and learning more about the Catholic Church and how to make these teachings and practices more a part of their life.



This compiled feedback is a valuable asset for the future of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg. This information can play a vital role in furthering the Archdiocese’s ministry, engaging parishioners, and advancing the mission of the Church through evangelization.

### **PREVAILING THEMES**

This section outlines the top five responses from the Archdiocese to each of the questions and discusses the prevailing themes.

***Question 1: What do you appreciate most about the Church in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg; especially those things that help you grow in your faith and as a disciple of the Lord?***

<b>Response</b>	<b>Additional notes for clarity</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Welcoming	friendliness, generosity, openness, loving, welcoming, hospitality	160
Number and quality of formation programs	for all ages, adult education, retreats, bible study, small group study	150
Availability of sacraments and prayer	Mass (daily), adoration, reconciliation, missions	95
Diversity	Immigrant and Refugee Population, work with First Nations	88
Priests	dedication, availability, faith, loving, fellowship, willingness to engage the tough topics, cont. ed.	75

A sampling of comments in this section:

- Since I came to Canada, particularly in my parish, I know I belong...[I appreciate] the sense of belongingness, being part of a bigger family.
- I appreciate how the parish tries to implement indigenous views/perspectives in Mass, meetings, etc. Our priest does a very good job of this. (First Nations session)
- Opportunities to develop my faith beyond Sunday Masses: spiritual exercises, retreats, missions.
- Community is first and foremost in the Church and Archdiocese.
- The ministry to the First Nations People. Ministering to them [and experiencing their traditions and culture] has deepened my faith.
- Diversity—different cultures share their experience of how they can grow in faith.

**Question 2: Where are we going? What is your vision for the Archdiocese in the coming years?**

Response	Additional notes for clarity	Number of Responses
Evangelization	New Evangelization, ecumenicism, fallen-away Catholics, grow the Church, Open Door, emphasis on mercy & welcoming, Church as community	172
Education and Formation	youth, adults, Catholic education, catechesis, formation programs, retreats, speakers	167
Youth ministry	Retreats, evangelization, education/formation, programs, outreach; CYO; more involvement in parish life/liturgies, more leadership opportunities	152
Social Justice and Outreach	poor and marginalized, elderly, families, First Nation, struggling parishes, LGBT, divorced, immigrants, prisoners	122
Support for Diverse population	evangelization; support for immigrants; reconciliation with First Nations	99

A sampling of comments in this section:

- Outreach beyond our walls. Love is what the focus has to be. Acceptance, *not* more barriers! We need to be open to understand those who have life experiences we may not understand.
- We need to be more visible, present, active and a leaven in the greater community.
- Truth and reconciliation for all Archdiocese so that people can understand and feel our history. (First Nation)
- Acceptance. The Church needs to consider fringe groups, as well as the LGBT+ community in greater detail, as well as realize that discrimination based on gender identity/sexual orientation is not okay.
- I would like to experience the Church take a more active role in reconciling with those it has alienated. A more radical embrace of those experiencing indignities in society.
- We need to facilitate our youth with greater opportunities to participate in our diocese and individual parishes.

**Question 3 : What is our responsibility? What do you see as the 3 priority areas that the Archdiocese should focus on? What would you like to accomplish in these areas?**

Response	Additional notes for clarity	Number of Responses
Education and Formation	adult formation, small faith groups, retreats, catechesis, education, bible study, RCIA	263
Youth ministry	Evangelization, catechesis, programs, outreach, involvement, trips, leadership	228
Social Justice and Outreach	environment, immigration; addiction; outreach to poor, elderly, community service, stewardship, mission work, parishes outside diocese, minorities	176
Sacraments and Worship	Reconciliation, standard Sacramental Prep throughout Archdiocese, more modern music, relatable homilies that speak to people’s lives.	139
Inclusivity/Diversity	Empower women in leadership, LGBT, First Nations, immigrants	78

A sampling of comments in this section:

- Learning more about poverty and the poor. Reducing fear of the homeless and those who are disadvantaged or “different.”
- Outreach to young families; married couples—help to find ways to integrate faith and life that become supports to each other.
- [Priests] can include better homilies that are directed more to living a Catholic life and applying the faith instead of just explaining it.
- Create a youth council in each parish to represent the voices of the youth.
- I would like to see the Church become more welcoming of all sectors (youth, the poor, the marginalized) and more relevant. I would like to see the Church become aware of the issues our communities are facing and how we can be there to be of assistance.
- A stronger support of social issues from a point of mercy.

**Theme 1:**  
**Education & Evangelization**

Education and evangelization ranked among the top two responses in each of the questions as both something that is appreciated as well as something that needs to be improved and prioritized.

- 20% appreciate the Archdiocese’s focus on education through programs such as retreats and bible studies.



- 22% envision more formation and education that includes all ages, the use of catechism and more formalized catechesis with a focus on practical aspects of living a Catholic life.
- 23% feel that a focus needs to be made on reaching out beyond the parish to welcome people of other faiths and young people. New ways of ministry and outreach in order to cross interfaith lines and bring back fallen away Catholics were envisioned.
- 34% believe education and formation should be a priority in the next few years.
- 30% of respondents feel that Youth Ministry and youth formation should be a priority in the next few years.

## **Theme 2:**

### **Social Justice and Outreach**

Participants expressed a desire to see the Archdiocese reach out into the community and make an impact. They seek meaningful ways for the Catholic Church to be a positive presence in the local community and the world.

- Only 6% believe the Archdiocese does a good job providing social services and opportunities for outreach.
- 16% want to see the Archdiocese provide more services and opportunities, as well as to have priests be leaders in their parish on issues such as the environment and immigration.
- 23% want to see service and outreach as a priority moving forward.

## **SESSION SPECIFIC RESPONSES**

Several unique and targeted Listening Sessions were held, which asked questions tailored to their demographic. The major themes are recorded below.

### **First Nations:**

The First Nation Listening Sessions revealed more work needs to be done in serving the Native populations. While those who attended these sessions largely feel the Archdiocese does a good job reaching out to and including them, they feel separated from the larger community. They want to see more effort to bridge this gap. They are especially grateful for the Archdiocese's attention and the "Truth and Reconciliation" efforts. The First Nation respondents would like to see more effort made to integrate their culture and educate other parishes. They do not always have opportunities for Mass, and are burdened with other community issues such as poverty.



### **Youth and Young Adults:**

Three youth sessions were held, with ages ranging from 14-mid-20s. One session was held exclusively with 119 high schoolers at St. Paul High School. 200 young people total were recorded. It is clear from these sessions that the young people of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg view the Church in terms of "community." To them, it is a place where they do not have to worry about being judged for their faith. This emphasis on a lack of judgement is very important. When the youth responded with their visions and priorities, they spoke primarily in terms of expanding the circle of community to be larger and more inclusive. The young people want to see the Church grow, work with people of other faiths, and reach out to those who do not practice.

A large number are also concerned about the rights and wellbeing of LGBT youth and other marginalized groups. Young people want to see women more empowered—respondents feel the time has come for women to have more influence and have their voices more heard in the Church. This sensitivity to diversity was a significant theme. The youth also want to be more involved, to better understand their faith, to have more events with them in mind, and to be more visible and well heard. They also explained that as young adults (early-mid 20's especially) they feel that the Archdiocese offers them very little—with most of the attention going toward school age children, families and older members of the Church.

Participants at youth sessions frequently verbalized a desire to see the church "modernize" for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, though usually without specifics for what that means. 40% specified more contemporary and upbeat music to make Mass more engaging. 15% cited a desire to hear homilies that were more relevant to their lives.

50% want to see more ministries and programs specifically aimed at young people, with opportunities for meaningful leadership in the Church. They want these opportunities to come from their involvement, leadership, and ideas. When it comes to education they want a focus on the "why" of doctrine, so that they can articulate what they believe, as well as education on how to make their spirituality a part of every day life.

### **Incarcerated Men:**

One session was held with incarcerated men at Stony Mountain Institution. There were 11 participants. Due to the unique nature of their situation, specific questions were raised. The things they most appreciated about the chapel at Stony Mountain were: a sense of community, that it is a place where they would not be judged and they could let their guard down, the



library, acceptance, and that it was a place where they could escape the fear that they feel at the Institution. Their hopes for what will result from their participation in chapel events were: planting seeds for further growth, a sense of peace, the chance to teach lessons to others since they have grown, reestablishing within the world that which was taken from them (dignity, love, confidence). When asked what points the Church should focus on, the respondents said: embracing the return of the Prodigal Son; evangelization; breaking barriers; to love, accept, and forgive others; make the faith more available and inviting to all people.

### **Our Place/Chez Nous Drop-In Centre:**

Two sessions were held at the Chez Nous Drop-In Centre. The 41 participants were asked only one question: “What do you think about the cross (Chez Nous)?” The respondents feel that “It is a place where people gather and find mutual support.” It is a place of acceptance, where people feel safe and are free of judgement. They gain opportunities to learn life-skills and find treatment. It is a place where deep hurts can be mended.

### **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the listening sessions and the feedback gathering is to give voice to the Archdiocese of Winnipeg and allow those voices to assist in shaping the future of the Church. This feedback will prove to be valuable as priority planning begins. A strong emphasis on education and evangelization as well as social justice and outreach are needed to bolster the Archdiocese as it moves forward. With special attention to the needs of young people, the First Nations, and the marginalized, the people of God seek to build the Church in Winnipeg.