

Session 12: Build Parish Community

Proposition Definition: Provide opportunities for parishioners to connect in order to foster relationships and support one another in their walks with Christ. Building relationships with fellow parishioners deepens a sense of belonging within the parish.

- Efforts at building a parish community might include hosting events and social gatherings, especially after Mass.
- Building up a parish community might mean forming small groups based on the interests of the parishioners. This would unite them more deeply to their faith and to each other as they discuss shared interests.

Other Key Points:

- At the conclusion of those events, Archbishop Hebda discerned three focus areas that would guide the next round of consultations and the discussions at the synod assembly in 2022.
 - Forming parishes that are in the service of evangelization.
 - Forming missionary disciples who know Jesus' love and respond to his call.
 - Forming youth and young adults in and for a Church that is always young.
- Building Parish Community is clearly connected to each of those focus areas. In fact, Archbishop Hebda's pastoral letter called for the implementation of small groups in every parish. But even more can be done to build community in a parish.
- In 2020 the Vatican put out a document on the importance of the parish: "The Parish community is called truly to master the "art of accompaniment." If deep roots are planted, the Parish will become a place where solitude is overcome, which has affected so many lives, as well as being "a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey and a center of constant missionary outreach." (Congregation for the Clergy)
- We hear much today about loneliness; some even call it an epidemic.
- The Vatican document from 2020 encourages parishes to tackle loneliness head on by creating a "culture of encounter." It says: "The 'culture of encounter' is conducive to dialogue, solidarity and openness to others, as it is person-centered. Naturally, a Parish must be a place that brings people together and fosters long-term personal relationships, thereby giving people a sense of belonging and being wanted."
- We all know that we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, but we often forget that we also encounter Jesus in each other. Creating a culture of encounter in a parish starts with seeing Christ in other people and fostering an environment that is compassionate, welcoming and encourages dialogue and solidarity - an environment in which people feel a true sense of community.

Reflection Questions:

1. What are some of the key characteristics you would use to define a healthy parish community?
2. Who do you know who has mastered the "art of accompaniment" that's critical to parish life?
3. Where might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to share your gifts or talents to foster greater unity in your parish(es)?