

June 2, 2023

LAUDD Synodal Session Synthesis

May 30, 2023

Lay Associates United in Diversity/Discernment

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There were ___ attendees, mostly people already involved in one of the many Lay Associate programs or other lay organizations that may or may not be associated with an order or parish. There was a smaller number of Women Religious and a couple of priests. Most were over 60 years old. Most were from the western Pennsylvania, Ohio and Kentucky. A few were from Canada, California and Texas, etc. Those from further distances had only heard about the event at the last minute through the encouragement by the Leadership Collaborative.

The topics were “co-responsibility”, “taking the mission to the margins”, “and learning to be an experiential church.” The topics were suggested by the North American Continental Report as key issues that had yet to be worked out.

This synthesis does not imply that all participants were in agreement. It takes pains to point out discrepancies where they were observed. But it also demonstrates the wisdom of listening together.

Thanks are due to the Spiritan Lay Associates and Lay Associates United in in Discernment/Diversity for organizing the event. Please consider sharing it with your pastor or bishops and/or organizations you may be associated with.

Co-Responsibility: Tensions!

“No one ever really invited me into co-responsibility.

“It is a new concept. It feels familiar, but it is new in my experience.

““Our associates support the sisters. I never heard about 'co-responsibility' in the Church.

“Many priests don't understand or acknowledge lay co-responsibility.

“Some priests and bishops fear it and try to hold on to power.

“Some laity don't want responsibility.

“Some laity only want to attend mass. It's easier.

“In my parish, I offered workshops on the teachings of Pope Francis. The first pastor promoted it but he was transferred. The new pastor quashed it. I don't know if he was more concerned with me or with Pope Francis, but I suspect the latter.

“Women need more opportunities.

“Will church leaders be willing to get out of the way to share space with women?

“We have activity in our parish, are these ministries?

“Co-Responsibility” Solutions?

“We need to enter more deeply into the meaning of Church.

“You don't learn co-responsibility until you try it. It is a do-it-yourself project.

“Engagement in the Church is up to us, the laity, we can't depend on church leadership to connect us.

“Empowerment will not be a gift given. It has to be asserted.

“The charisms of our communities connect us.

“As Associate communities, we are finding new opportunities.
"Priest, prophet, king" makes us co-responsible in this Church.
“In our charisms we connect to the Church. They help us maintain the mission the way we engage with each other and how we reach the peripheries.

“We need to welcome everyone, accepting lay preaching at Mass, and accepting the associates in planning. They do this in my parish!
“In whatever way I am participating, I need to feel I/We are truly building-up the kingdom.

“When a group of parishes in our city merged, we were surprised to learn that when we asked for scholarship to train new leaders, the Diocese gave it to us.

Synodality tensions!

“I have never saw or heard the word “synod” in our parish.
“Conservative Catholics don’t seem to believe in Synodality.

Synodality solutions?

“We are creating something new, weaving a common thread with our parish, the priests, the sisters and the marginalized. We are creating a tapestry.

“Ministering to the margins” Tensions.

“Little is done for mission, especially for those on the margins.
“The Church has blinders on regarding the youth.
“Youth and young adults are hurting. They are thirsty for connection in a culture of divisions.

“How do we make youth and others on the margins feel invited?”

“Who are those on the margins?”

“The Church is no longer meaningful for me or attentive to my needs.

“I feel the pain and ache of just hanging onto the formal Church.

“I am an elderly white person, just barely inside the margin myself.

“Priorities seem to be for Black and Hispanic ministries.

“I was hurt when support for Cursillo was withdrawn.

“I was drawn back into the Church for its Social Teaching but feel very much on the margin.

“I had to search for an “alive” parish, namely one that reached out and welcomed me.

“It’s difficult finding my place in my ‘parish tent’, a place for me to grow. I have to move around a lot.

“We are a Church for Immigrants.

“How can I take ownership for the mission of the Church. We need to not only be receivers of ministry but take co-responsibility for facilitating ministry. Areas of ministry that I think are especially important to the synod are caring for those on the margins such as young adults and LGBT people.

“Ministering to the margins” Possible solutions?

“We have informal ministries to those on the margins.

“I found engagement and community in our Associate community, at once healing, reconciling, inclusive and welcoming, not available elsewhere. (Repeated often).

“Being an Associate stretched me beyond my comfort zone. I discovered how I was connected with others throughout the world. I have grown in my faith and developed a deep sense of trust.

“We evangelize by attraction.

“The church is much bigger than the walls of the parish.

“We need to go there, to the margins!

“To listen carefully to discern actions.

“The margins are where we grow.

“We need to both listen and speak out, to listen to their pain and invite them into dialogue.

“The challenge is to speak out in ways that allow the other to receive what is being shared.

“We need to be welcoming, to grieve with those who feel excluded and to demonstrate we’re trying to meet needs, regardless of status.

“We need to listen AND to pray with them, especially with them!

“I need to start with myself. I have to check my stereotype of those on the margins.

“I feel a call to try to welcome those who feel shut out or unaccepted, especially the separated/divorce/remarried, LGBTQ youth.

“We have opportunities to engage the young on campuses where there is an interest in reaching the marginalized.

“I am surrounded by the urban poor and African American. I try to respond with service.

“My charisms provide me with what was missing in my parish.

“We offer a food pantry. It reaches a lot of people.

“We partner with the Lutherans. We help each other out.

“To make a difference – Be the Light, Pray.

“My sister is an SND Nun. Witnessing their work with the poor, the unwed, and those in India called me to be an associate.

"Forming a Church not only abstractly but also experientially in mission":

“Pentecost is now! What does that mean for Associates?!

“We need to explore our understanding of being church ‘experientially’.

“Sometimes we have to let go of the past and our own desires to make space for the ‘more’.”

“Through our Charisms, we have been formed and ready to participate.

“Our approach has to be pastoral, welcoming without judgement. To be the fire for the Spirit. To experience our joy and share it with others.

“We help each other out, cultivate a generosity of Spirit, focus less on questions and more on actual listening.

“We are creating something new, weaving a common thread with our parish, the priests, the sisters and the marginalized, into a tapestry.

“Outreach is so necessary but it can become routine, not always reaching the current need.

“We need a roadmap in the church to show us how to do God’s work and how to reach all communities.

“We need to know the rules before knowing how to break them properly.

“The wedding at Cana tells us - ‘do what He says’ that is what we do when led by the Spirit.

“We must listen to the Spirit and act on the voice we hear.

“Encounter others: Notice how the Spirit works in them, how they are Jesus to me and how Jesus is in me.

“Our ‘presence’ (encounter) includes BOTH our becoming aware of the needs around us AND being the recipient of those in need ‘inspiring us.’

“There are a lot of people in the Church doing the outreach we desire, but we need to better connect with them, lift them up and invest in them with our time and talents.

Many doing this outreach are Women Religious and Associates, we need to spread the word.

“We won’t always be successful, but as in soccer, we will miss all the goals we never try.

OTHER NOTES

A Sister of the Blessed Sacrament focused on her ministry to the poor and oppressed. She cares for 22 faith communities which involve soup kitchens, food pantries, and serving people in the border of Texas. She is especially interested in race relations, and human trafficking.

Important ministries: Prayer, People are poor and hungry, therefore we feed them.