

WELCOME TO THE PATH!

On Saturday, May 28, the Catholic Church in the Outaouais met in synodal assembly. It was a beautiful and great moment of diocesan joy. It was a time of welcome, of meeting, of listening, of speaking, of discernment, of prayer, of fraternity. This approach, at the request of Pope Francis, allowed for a promising experience of encounter and reflection, the first fruits of which we have begun to reap in our parish communities and in our daily lives. A desire for a Church that listens and is fraternal and missionary, participatory and synodal, was expressed.

The assembly brought together close to 200 delegates at Saint-Alexandre College, designated by their communities and invited by Bishop Paul-André Durocher. They came from all corners and sectors of the Church in the Outaouais, from various diocesan movements, religious communities and even from some community organizations. The assembly closed the diocesan phase of the Synod of Bishops launched by Pope Francis, to be held in 2023 in Rome.

In all the dioceses of the world, Christians participate in these meetings. Synodality is not a new reality in the Church. But Pope Francis wanted to put it at the heart of the agenda of the next Synod of the Catholic Church. According to him, it is important that Christians learn to walk together again by listening to each other.

In our diocese, about 500 people took part in one or other meeting organised between autumn 2021 and spring 2022. They freely chose to discuss one of the six themes selected and proposed by the diocese. In total, almost 120 reports from parishes, movements and communities were written and sent to the diocesan centre.

A synodal team dedicated to the organisation of the assembly collected and collated the various reports from the parishes and drew up an initial synthesis. This synthesis bears witness to a free speech, presented with method, and to the various proposals put forward by diocesan men and women who are thirsty for a renewed life of the Church. The synthesis was sent to all the delegates.

The purpose of the synodal assembly was to receive this synthesis, to validate it and to discern in which direction the Holy Spirit is proposing to move forward. What was validated at this assembly will be sent to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops as the contribution of our diocese.

FIRST MOMENT OF THE DAY: THE SYNODAL MEETINGS



The morning of 28 May was devoted to the synodal meetings. The 200 delegates were divided into several small teams for exchange and sharing in workshops. Their task was to bring out the salient points contained in the synthesis. Back in the large group, the teams took turns presenting the results of their members' exchanges.

The work of the assembly was led by Ms. Chantal Beauvais, Rector of St Paul's University. As moderator, she ensured that the meeting ran smoothly and guided the work, facilitating interaction so that the participants could properly experience this moment of discernment. This first part of the day ended with a synthesis that Ms. Beauvais presented: this synthesis was a kind of external view that she brought on the work of this assembly.

SECOND MOMENT OF THE DAY: THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORD



The celebration was built around two biblical texts, two gestures and the Song of the Three Children, adapted to the reality of our diocese. The first reading (Acts 2:41-44) recounts the life of the first Christian community in Jerusalem, while the second reading (1 Corinthians 3:5-9) reminds us that, whatever their allegiance (to Paul or Apollos), Christians are God's collaborators, and they are a field that he cultivates, a house that he builds.

Some objects symbolising the first Christian community were brought in procession. A tree (the synod tree) was also planted by Bishop Paul-Andre in collaboration with some diocesan men and women. The Canticle of the Three Children served as a link between the two readings. The names of all the parishes in the diocese were spelled out in place of various elements of the universe. In this way, our entire diocese blessed the Lord, to whom "high glory, eternal praise" belongs.

THIRD MOMENT: A TIME TO FRATERNISE



The family picnic, which followed the first two events, was attended by almost 300 people. What could be more beautiful than to see several diocesan men and women picnicking together, in a good-natured atmosphere, on the college grounds under a radiant sun! Parents, adults, young people and children gathered around a BBQ, hosted by the Knights of Columbus, and around two huge cakes of the most appetizing flavours.

The picnic was punctuated by activities for the children with a treasure hunt. Also, during the picnic, the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Bishop Paul-André Durocher and his birthday were celebrated.

FOURTH MOMENT: A CONCERT THAT ENGAGED US



In the evening, Robert Lebel gave a wonderful concert in the church of Ste-Maria-Goretti. It was his first post-covid concert in the region. Accompanied on the piano by Sylvie Payette, the prolific creator of French-language religious songs allowed us to revisit his rich and vast repertoire. He performed some of his most popular and well-known songs. During this evening, we also prayed for peace in the world. Judging by the reactions of many participants and the comments from all over the world, it was a beautiful and precious moment of prayer, communion, and commitment at the close of the diocesan synodal assembly.

THE ROAD HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN...



In a speech given in 2015 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis said: The Synod is the fact that in the Church "each one listens to the others, and all together listen to the Holy Spirit." To make Synod is to walk together.

Along the way, the Church can learn or relearn what can really help it to live communion, to achieve participation and to be open to mission. To make synod is to learn or relearn how to listen better to the Holy Spirit by listening to each other; it is to relearn how to express ourselves in Church, to discern together, to carry out the mission in co-responsibility, to celebrate together. To walk together, to make synod is, in fact, what manifests the true nature and face of the Church as the People of God, pilgrim and missionary.