

## ST. MONICA-SPECIFIC SYNOD RESPONSES

### COVID-19

- St. Monica's response to COVID-19 was inclusive and effective as it allowed everyone to be in communion with each other, regardless of health and ability. Particularly, the **outdoor Masses and drive-thru communion** were lifesavers for families, pet owners, and those with health issues. New approaches let everyone continue to partake in the Eucharist during the pandemic and showed great attention and care for the community. St. Monica "saved the spirituality of the family" during the pandemic by **meeting people where they were**: in their homes via livestream.
  - Livestream kept members connected during the pandemic and fed us even though **some were not regular parishioners**.
- While the **livestream is appreciated, it does not take the place of building interpersonal community and connection**.
- One woman shared the story of watching the livestream, eating toast and crying, **longing for the Eucharist**.

### COMMUNITY AND INCLUSION

- St. Monica's catchphrase "**All Are Welcome**" has created a stronger community and a safe space for people who may not feel welcome at other churches. Our parish does a great job of living out our slogan, starting with simple acts like the invitation for a blessing during communion.
- Because St. Monica serves as a **haven from divisive political discourse**, parishioners feel more connected to their parish than the archdiocesan, national, and global Church.
- We have a welcoming pastor. People everywhere love the Monsignor's homilies because he emphasizes the love aspect of our **faith over "rules"** that are emphasized in other parishes.

- **Verbiage** is important, i.e. YMA Vespers saying, “Welcome ladies, gentlemen, and all non-binary people.” These small details really do welcome everyone, especially those who don’t usually feel welcome in churches. When BLM began, having a Church that stands by what it’s like for BIPOC people and defends them is important: “I know people who left their church because they didn’t say anything regarding [BLM or Asian hate]. Having a church that stands by me and hears me is important].”

## LITURGY

- **Loss of familiar faces.** Recent changes in worship and liturgy have meant the loss of friends and familiar faces among the music ministry and the parishioners. People feel less connected to the constantly-changing music, cantors, and bands and miss the choirs that were phased out, disbanded, or disappeared.
- “Vivacious” music makes you want to be engaged and celebrate.
- **More diversity in worship:** different options for people (i.e. some Masses with more music, some in other languages) and have all of that be okay within one Church.)

## MINISTRY AND SERVICE

- Parishioners appreciate the **variety of ministries** at St. Monica. “Volunteers are a great joy to the parish” because other parishioners “appreciate those who donate their time” to serve the community.
- Spiritual groups are especially appreciated as they allow for deeper faith exploration, and many want more **faith-based fellowship groups** to experience the intersection of faith and community: Ignatius Exercises, retreats, Scripture study, Vespers, Theology on Tap, and the bereavement ministry (the place where one person learned that many parishioners were against Pope Francis' teachings on the death penalty.)

- Parishioners appreciate gathering and **community-building** through Advent and Lent small groups, hospitality and Eucharistic Ministers, and Peace and Justice service opportunities.
- Many parishioners appreciate our **faith formation programs**, but are dissatisfied with its execution and outcomes.
  - One parishioner notes that “many teens are just being confirmed because their parents are Catholic, and **many will fall away from the Church** after Confirmation.” There should be more outreach and attention to young people in ministries outside of Confirmation, and “priests should be trained in how to preach specifically to young people.” One young person emphasizes the need for relatable homilies. “Sometimes it’s hard for kids to understand what is being said in the homily.” Others wish to improve the timing and structure of the program.
  - There is often a disconnect between **public school children** and Catholic School children in our Masses.
  - Better promotion of **scholarship opportunities** in Catholic schools.

## GOING ON MISSION

- As a “strong parish,” the challenge for St. Monica is to “**go out and create community elsewhere.**”
- Some want **more mission experiences** in other countries, particularly service-oriented.
- Others say there is a need to focus on recognizing and **helping people within our own parish** who are in need of help and support and **not just others outside of St. Monica.**

## DISCERNING AND DECIDING

- Parishioners feel that St. Monica is losing its community feel and becoming a corporate environment.
  - Many notice a “**hierarchical sense** that those who give more money are more important.”
  - One parishioner wishes for parish dinners that “**don’t have a transactional feeling.**”
  - Another shares, “In the current St. Monica community, there are a **few chosen people who control volunteer life**. Participation used to be open to anyone, but even before the pandemic, everything seemed orchestrated and predetermined with no room for input from the community.”
  - One shares the same sentiment: “I had ideas for communion but **did not feel heard**. More and more people are discouraged from getting involved because their ideas about adapting are ignored.”
- Although St. Monica pioneered it, we sometimes **fall short of “All Are Welcome”**.
  - An African-American woman says “she didn’t feel very welcome” at St. Monica.
  - Another parishioner adds that, “St. Monica is progressive, but there are still some cultural and ethnic divides.”
  - Another person notes that St. Monica’s *Just Faith* ministry “revealed inequalities outside the white establishment.”

## GROWING IN COMMUNION

- The **Synod** is a great process that St. Monica should continue—even independently—in the coming years to build synodality within our parish community.
- Parishioners would like **more listening sessions** beyond the Synod. They promote great conversations and allow us to get to know each other as a community. There was not enough time for sharing, and folks would have benefited from having more time, or another opportunity to share.

## BLESSINGS OF ST. MONICA'S:

- Good internet presence
- **Fr. Dave.** He had so many dreams and energy and brought so much light to the community. Appreciate his willingness to share his spiritual/health journey with the parish, “wrestling with Jesus.” It was both a blessing and grief.
- **Synod** is a great process that St. Monica should continue—even independently—in the coming years to build synodality within our parish community.

## WHAT PEOPLE WANT AT ST. MONICA'S

- More access to **spiritual direction**
  - Would like to see his FIRE program have a reunion of folks, and have opportunities for parishioners to experience Ignatian 19th Annotation and have a spiritual director.
- A young professionals group
- More interactive stuff to do with kids
  - Activities that bring families together for fun (i.e, Octoberfair), pre-Covid – giving bags, the tree where everyone made a leaf with people to remember.
- More **interaction between inter-generational groups**
- A lot of people have not yet returned to the Church (post covid, etc). **We need ideas on how we can invite them back.**
- We need something that helps people linger and engage in conversation after Mass.
- St. Monica can be more **vocal about racial justice.**
- More **connection to other local parishes.**

### **WHAT PEOPLE DON'T LIKE AT ST. MONICA'S**

- There's a lack of disciplinary action within community groups. There are people involved in community groups who make others uncomfortable through unwanted advances or inappropriate interactions. Complaints have been made, but no action has been taken. There should be a greater focus on making sure everyone within the community feels safe.
- There are certain issues that we are really active about, but others not at all – like pro-life movement. We don't do much for that.
- St. Monica is in a silo. The Archdiocese is holding us back, overriding the voice of St. Monica. The NAPA institute does not take the BLM movement seriously and the Archbishop follows these ideas. St. Monica's needs to break away.