

# The Synod on Synodality, Building the Road for Missionary Transformation, the Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope

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## Montreal, a diocese committed to journeying together in our missionary transformation

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### Document Objectives

This document aims to highlight the connections between the Synod on Synodality, Building the Road for Missionary Transformation and the Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope. It offers a brief account of the initial steps taken since 2018, followed by an explanation of the process that led to the Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope. Finally, it explains how the Synod on Synodality and Diocesan Road-building were combined into one synodal process.

## One-page Summary

In September 2018, Archbishop Christian Lépine inaugurated Building the Road for Missionary Transformation, a process in three steps: SEE-DISCERN-SERVE, to be lived in PRAYER and TOGETHER!

From 2018 to 2020, the archbishopric, parishes, missions and religious communities that serve in our diocese and in our various institutions engaged in SEEING and LISTENING to the “joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted,”<sup>1</sup> as well as the situation of our Church. This step gave birth to a Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope: *In Jesus Christ, let us build a life-giving Church, one that is open to being evangelized, and that is welcoming and close to people.* Almost simultaneously — and certainly providentially — in 2021, our pope led the entire Church into a Synod on Synodality, that is, on our way of “journeying together.”

In order to take advantage of the road already traveled since 2018, regarding the missionary transformation of the Archdiocese of Montreal, and to incorporate it into the synodal process of the universal Church, the next step consists of delving deeper into each element of the Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope (e.g., in Jesus Christ, life-giving, close to people, etc.), assisted by two questions to draw out all their significance.

- The first comes from the Synod on Synodality, initiated by Pope Francis:
  - o In our diocesan Church, what is the current state of our “journeying together” [in relation to this particular theme] and what steps is the Holy Spirit inviting us to take to advance toward this goal?
- The second comes from our diocesan synodal process toward missionary transformation, initiated by Archbishop Lépine:
  - o By listening to the world around us, what are the calls of the Spirit that will guide our missionary action [in connection with this particular theme]?

The responses to these questions nourish our DISCERNMENT. They bring to light some guidelines for “journeying together” and for living our missionary transformation according to the calls of the Holy Spirit for the people here and elsewhere.

Always in synodality, our diocesan process will continue through planning and through the implementation of actions at the local and diocesan levels, so as to SERVE better.

May the Holy Spirit enlighten us, so that we may journey together with Jesus Christ toward the Father.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

## 1. The First Phase of Diocesan Road-building: The Twofold Step of SEE-LISTEN

From 2018 to 2020, we had the opportunity in our parishes, missions, religious communities within our diocesan territory and in our diverse institutions, to SEE the situation of our Church, as well as the “joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted.”<sup>2</sup> But we didn’t stop at the stage of SEEING.

We also undertook the task of responding to the questions regarding the “LISTENING” dimension to round out or further deepen our SEEING. We dedicated time to listen. Like two sides of the same coin, this twofold exercise to SEE-LISTEN allowed us to gather more information on the life of our communities and the needs of our members. All of this data, which speaks of our capabilities and our environment, was compiled by the vicar general’s team into a beautiful synthesis. Aspects of the synthesis can be found in the diocesan toolkit.

## 2. Elements of a Vision of Hope for the Church in Montreal: Synthesis of SEE-LISTEN

It is by allowing oneself to be challenged by the Holy Spirit, by meditating, reading and re-reading the synthesis of the data collected during the twofold phase of SEE-LISTEN that our archbishop and his collaborators identified important elements for a Statement Announcing a **Vision** of Hope for our diocesan Church in Montreal. This statement leads us into the second phase of our road-building: DISCERNMENT. Indeed, it is thanks to the themes in the Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope that we will DISCERN the calls of the Spirit, based on what already has been seen and heard.

On the evening of the launch for the 2021-2022 pastoral year, Sept. 13, which was the vigil of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the archbishop presented some elements of this vision:

*Jesus Christ... Welcoming... Close to people ... Life-giving Church*

What is the process that led us to these elements for a vision and to the resulting statement? How did we come to develop these elements for a vision of hope for the diocesan Church of Montreal?

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

### 3. A Process to Identify the Elements of a Vision of Hope

The archbishop's presentation on the evening of Sept. 13 was the result of the work conducted by the members of a committee composed of the council that surrounds our pastoral leader. This committee adopted the following process, after which it was able to formulate a Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope that will sustain the plan for missionary action.

#### 3.1. The steps of the process

a) An exercise of creativity and innovation.

Considering the data that emerged from SEE-LISTEN, the committee members, submitting themselves to an exercise of creativity, each proposed a metaphor for what the Church in Montreal will be in three to five years. A multitude of images came forth: the Church would be like "a neighbourhood party," "a big house open on all sides," "a crossroad of faith," "a big family that wants to catch up with each other," "a live electrical outlet," "a family restaurant," "a walking trail," "a stew," "a Christ with an extended hand," "a transformative place of encounter," "one body that moves with confidence toward the rising sun." By exchanging on these metaphors, committee members found common characteristics that created a portrait of what the Church in Montreal would be in three to five years.

b) A first statement for a vision of hope.

Based on the characteristics of the Church in Montreal thus imagined, each committee member was invited to propose intuitively a statement announcing a vision of hope. Through an analysis of the different proposals, three large clusters emerged; they were grouped according to how they described the identity and mission of the Church in Montreal.

c) Three clusters ... And then?

Reflecting on the three clusters, the committee members asked themselves the question: "What are the dominant ideas that emerge from each cluster of insights?" The response allowed the following main ideas to emerge:

1. In the first cluster: *diversity, closeness/proximity, contact with people, together, unifying, a taste for life and food.*
2. In the second cluster: *transformation, communion, fraternity, vibrant and listening.*
3. And in the third cluster: *encounter, respect, Christ-centred, openness, celebratory, confidence and welcome.*

These different words were formulated so as to describe the Church in Montreal as it will have become over the period of three to five years. This resulted in, for example: a Church that is diverse, close to people, etc.

d) Toward ONE qualifier.

Considering that each qualifier describes the diocesan Church as dreamed up by committee members, they each chose one single qualifier, as such determining four dominant themes that served to group other related or similar ideas. The following four words were retained: *welcoming, evangelized, close and life-giving.*

Through teamwork, the other qualifiers that emerged through the process were organized under one of the four main themes that seemed related. Thus, the following words were grouped under “**welcoming**”: *joyful, fraternal, communal, in dialogue and inclusive*. Under “**life-giving**,” committee members grouped: *loving, compassionate, nourishing, inspiring and vibrant*. Under “**evangelized**,” they included: *evangelizing, missionary and proclamatory*. And finally, under “**close**,” they included: *unifying, diverse, familial, togetherness, encounter and relational*.

Thereby, committee members had deduced what they dreamed of SEEING in Montreal in three to five years: a Church that is *welcoming, evangelized, close and life-giving*.

e) A draft of the VISION.

Based on these four qualifiers, committee members were invited to come up with a draft statement announcing a vision of hope. They came up with: “*To be a Church that is evangelized and welcoming, that is close to people in order to give Life.*” They were pleased with the statement’s biblical resonance: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10: 10).

### 3.2. *Testing the statement announcing a vision of hope.*

Having developed a statement announcing a vision of hope, it was necessary to test the statement to ensure the process had taken into consideration all of the useful data on hand. The main questions for this testing exercise were:

- Does the statement’s content reflect the issues, challenges and needs of the diocesan Church in the world today?
- Does the statement announcing a vision of hope express the what and the why of the Church in Montreal?
- Were all of the ideas conveyed in the metaphors, insights and main ideas considered in the statement proposed at the end of the process ?
- Is the statement inspiring, catchy, etc.?
- Does the statement need further development? What would that be?

### 3.3. *Refining the statement announcing a vision of hope.*

The test was instructive, as it turned out to be an exercise in humility for committee members. The statement needed refinement, and it was turned over to an *ad hoc* committee and various groups of the archdiocese. The final statement is formulated as follows: **In Jesus Christ, let us build a life-giving Church, one that is open to being evangelized, and that is welcoming and close to people.**

## 4. Putting the Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope in the Hands of the Diocesan Faithful

At the end of this long process — which prophetically was conducted by a team whose process witnessed to Pope Francis’ call to synodality — the committee proposed the Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope to the archbishop, who presented the statement’s themes on Sept. 13, 2021, during the launch of the pastoral year. Through his presentation to the diocesan faithful, in a certain sense, the archbishop put the statement back in their hands — these faithful who, through their participation in the SEE-LISTEN phase of the process, provided the raw material that served in the development of the statement.

## 5. Unifying Pope Francis’ Synod on Synodality with the DISCERNMENT Phase of the Diocesan Guidelines

In 2021, our pope engaged the entire Church in a synodal process on synodality, that is, on our way of “journeying together.” In Montreal, we intend to benefit from the opportunity the synod offers to pursue our efforts by combining these two processes.

This was made possible thanks to the Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope and the fundamental questions of the synod.

The Statement Announcing a Vision of Hope highlights the important themes that emerged in the years in our diocesan process dedicated to SEE and LISTEN.

- “In Jesus Christ,” (Rooted in Jesus Christ)
- “Let us build... “ (Together)
- “One Church” (A people on a journey)
- “Life-giving” (Committed to “life in abundance” for people in our communities)
- “Open to being evangelized” (Moved by the Gospel and its call to conversion)
- “Welcoming” (Where everyone can find their place)
- “Close to people” (In solidarity with the joys, hopes, grief and anxieties of the world)

Two main questions are asked on each of these themes:

- The first comes from the Synod on Synodality, initiated by Pope Francis :
  - o In our diocesan Church, what is the current state of our “journeying together” [in relation to this particular theme] and what steps is the Holy Spirit inviting us to take to advance toward this goal?
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The responses to these questions nourish our DISCERNMENT. They bring to light guidelines for “journeying together” and for living our missionary transformation, listening to the calls of the Holy Spirit for the people in our communities and elsewhere.

## 6. A Firm Commitment That Leads Us to SERVE Better

Always in synodality, our diocesan process will continue through the planning and implementation of actions at the local and diocesan levels that aim to SERVE better. At the end of the implementation of this action plan, we hope the diocesan Church realizes its dream of having truly become, **in Jesus Christ, a life-giving Church, one that is open to being evangelized, and that is welcoming and close to people.**

For more than three years, we have chosen as a diocesan Church to engage in the work of missionary transformation. But when we look further back in our history to the establishment of our diocese, we see that we have always been able to surpass ourselves and to propose Jesus as the way to freedom and responsibility. At the heart of changing societies, where we work to make visible the Kingdom Jesus proposes, it is possible for us, even in our current time of perpetual change and movement, to realize the dream of a life-giving Church that, in Jesus Christ, is open to being evangelized, is welcoming and close to people!