

The purpose of this Synthesis is to summarize the ideas expressed during the diocesan meetings held in the course of the missionary shift begun in 2018 and listed here:

- ✓ Launch of the diocesan roadwork project at the Feast of the Glorious Cross, September 14, 2018;
- ✓ Launch of the 2019-2020 pastoral year on the Feast of the Glorious Cross, September 13, 2019;
- ✓ Meetings with pastoral teams, October 8, 16 and 24, 2019;
- ✓ Consultations with members of the Orders of consecrated life, organized by the Office for Consecrated Life and held from 2019 to 2021;
- ✓ Meeting with the priests of Angus Square, December 11, 2019;
- ✓ Meeting with the presbyterium of Montreal, February 5, 2020;
- ✓ Meeting with pastors, organized by the OPP, February 2021;
- ✓ Meeting with deacons, March 2021;
- ✓ Evening launch of "Together on a Mission" during the Feast of the Glorious Cross, September 13, 2021.

The Synthesis is based on the transcripts of these meetings, used to derive the several subjects of the vision tool of the Church of Montreal:

In Jesus Christ, let us build a life-giving Church  
one that is open to being evangelized,  
that is welcoming and close to people.

The meetings mentioned above did not deal with these subjects per se. They arose in the course of answering other questions.

Each subject begins with an observation and then presents areas for reflection, points to be examined and ideas to be explored.

**In Jesus Christ**

As Christians, we recognize Jesus Christ to be the centre of our faith, the One upon whom we depend for everything. It is essential that we remain grounded in Him, that we place Him above all other concerns and that we make Him the foundation of all our actions.

**Several approaches are discussed:**

- Rediscovering one's relationship with God through prayer and the study of the Scriptures is at the forefront. A few concrete examples include supporting the diocesan roadwork process through personal prayer, giving prayer a more prominent position in diocesan life (at meetings/gatherings), becoming reacquainted with silence and studying the Word of God daily.
  - It has frequently been suggested that churches should extend their opening hours (outside of Masses). Doing so would allow the faithful to meditate and encounter Christ in his real presence (Eucharistic adoration), in the sacraments (reconciliation) and in praying together (praying the rosary).
  - The content of liturgical celebrations has also come under scrutiny. This is where praise and songs belong, as well as the joy that a community shares together and the celebration. How can these liturgical celebrations be made to convey more truly the Word of life, inviting participation and the fuller presence of Christ? The challenge is of great importance, particularly with respect to the faith life of younger people.
  - From a personal point of view, regularly setting aside time for one's own spiritual renewal (through retreats, parish missions) is essential in nurturing our commitment to Christ and his Church. This is where the entire mission has its origin. Each member of the faithful and every leader must be able to do this.
  - Finally, always as a background to our attachment to Christ is the more ascetic aspect of our faith: fasting, penance and the ongoing work of the mission.
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## **Together**

Moving forward together, making commitments together, being brothers and sisters: among Montreal Catholics, the desire for unity and communion is strong. Still, that need does not minimize the vast diversity that is present in the diocese, where so many realities exist and coexist: states of life (clergy, laity and consecrated persons), cultural and linguistic communities, women and men of all ages, rich and poor, parishes and

religious communities - and the list goes on... At times, these disparate groups have a difficult time coming together and uniting as one body, whether at the level of the diocese, the parish or the community.

Two major and mutually supportive paths of reflection open up: the rebuilding of the unity of the diocese while preserving the particular character of the complementary component groups and what they contribute to the whole.

- To constitute one single people is indeed a daunting challenge. Considering the disparities, the divisions and, sometimes, the indifference separating the various realities within the diocese from one another is for many of us painful. The worst casualties arise in relations between clergy and laity, in the respective status of individuals (women, the poor, youth, the elderly) and, finally, in communications among the different cultural communities of the diocese. There is a great desire to see an end of divisions among these groups and a joining together in collaboration.
  - Our hope is that we may achieve communion. This communion does not rule out finding strength and support in a group or network based on shared background, whether at the personal level among people of the same or differing affiliations, or at the parish or diocesan level. Such smaller groups, by providing a real experience of Christian fellowship, foster the emergence of communities of disciples and the integration of all members within the community.
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### **Let us build**

Being together entails the desire to act together, to build something together. But building anything takes time, if we are to lay foundations that are solid and lasting.

The various actions and suggestions make up a **multi-phase process**.

- First of all, a great need for formation was expressed. The people of God in its entirety is concerned: youth, adults, couples, families, lay people, priests - everyone. Formation provides fresh momentum to the life of faith, revealing new riches and new talents in oneself and in others. Emphasis was placed on the importance of a strong initial formation, as much for the youngest as for future

priests. And this formation must be refreshed in order to be a real basis on which to build; indeed it must be maintained throughout life, reviving and renewing our knowledge of the Church and its teaching. Transmission of the faith must receive particular attention: from parents to their children and from priests to the laity, yet even more, from one Christian to another. Moreover, a special effort is required to strengthen preventive measures against abuses in our Church by means of providing adequate training to those concerned.

- Building also means ensuring that everyone is involved and that everyone becomes a builder. Here it is important to identify each person's specific talents, bringing them out and putting them to work, but not confining ourselves to addressing only those needs that have been recognized (in the parishes, in the Church). It is important to consider the marginalized and those whom society excludes, and not merely the people we know.
  - Finally, action in the short term is a good catalyst for longer-term action; the former allows us to become acquainted with each other and to try out ways and means of working together. And in this way, longer-term issues such as the environment or poverty can eventually be addressed.
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## Church

The Church! She is the edifice we must build to last. But the reality is not reassuring, and her image is not very positive - more like a huge and slow-moving machine, opaque, morally burdensome and complicated. Her priests are inaccessible, overworked and burnt out. The Church is, in a word, this cumbersome structure that actually inhibits life. Moreover, revelations of abuse within her walls have tarnished her reputation and severely compromised her credibility.

### **Still, dreams go on:**

- There is a strong desire to restore the Church's human face, at both the personal and the institutional level. In human terms, a Church made up of happy witnesses, that does not moralize and that speaks of the encounter with God, would be greatly appreciated. In more structural terms, allusion is often made to simplifying the Church. Grouping together the various parish administrative services would facilitate concentrating on the work of ministry. It is often suggested that the character of the early Church should be rediscovered, in which people lived their faith in small communities. It was also stressed that the focus should not be

exclusively on the Church's material aspects, such as buildings, administration and expenses, etc., but that the potential of the parishes and what they are currently experiencing should be examined before they are grouped together.

- With respect to the pastoral personnel (priests), the hope is to be able to train missionary teams, not confining them to parish life, as there exist other charisms, encouraging them to work together as pastoral teams, not withdrawing into clericalism.
- On the issue of abuse, what is desired is transparency.

**And yet some questions arise:**

- How can the Church be a community? What makes that happen? The notion of 'the parish' was brought into question (people go to the church they like and not necessarily the one closest to where they live). There is a desire to create real, living places that facilitate sharing, including for the administrative staff.
  - How can we involve the new volunteers, those who arrived during the pandemic, in longer-term forms of commitment?
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## **Life-giving**

Faith in Christ calls us to go beyond ourselves, to give of our entire selves in whatever situation and to serve in whatever way He may desire. This leads to the desire for a Church that is open to change, a Church that is prepared to reinvent itself in order to breathe life into the world.

**Some related observations and hopes:**

- Worship and liturgy are of course important, but they do not constitute the entire life of the Church. Everyone, whether priest or faithful, wherever he or she may be, is a transmitter of life, and this should be reflected in the actions and in the life of each one. The Church, meanwhile, being the salt and light of the world, makes possible the true encounter with Christ. Participation in the sacramental life that nourishes this encounter should therefore be encouraged.
- Make way for the transforming Holy Spirit! The faithful have ideas and concerns, including justice, environmental issues and immigration. These concerns should be taken into consideration in a way that is free of clericalism, without assuming

that only the priest can have the solution. The result may be the beginning of an invigorating social or humanitarian commitment.

- A refurbishment of the spaces in places of worship would be a manifestation of vitality and would invite everyone to express their creativity.
  - A good news bulletin serving the parish and the diocese would keep readers informed about activities and achievements going on elsewhere, as well as revitalizing the missionary momentum by force of example.
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### **Open to being evangelized**

To evangelize, to spread the Good News, is to proclaim Christ himself. The Church is his messenger and therefore has to be faithful to this mission, truly living the Gospel, without being fearful of sharing it. Here, as in other instances, renewal is essential and pressing.

Some courses of action suggest themselves:

- Evangelization is in every Catholic's DNA. As we develop a missionary direction, we extend the invitation to others to change themselves, to undergo profound transformation. They may then go on to contribute to the transformation of their environments. It is also good to embrace the disruption caused by the prophets in our own settings, for instance, young people concerned for the environment. It is, incidentally, important to approach evangelization starting from where people are at that moment. From another perspective, the issue of abuse calls for a profound conversion on the part of everyone, in order to ensure that instances of abuse never occur again.
  - The face the Church shows the world sometimes seems rather bland. Highlighting different aspects could make for a change of image, both internally and externally. Some suggestions: find ways other than the celebration of Mass alone to reach out to the world; show our social commitment in tangible ways; bear witness to the joy we have in belonging to the Church.
  - There are several training courses, some of which were shared at the diocesan level, including the course on transformative leadership. It would be good to do some follow-up on them and add some new momentum.
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## **Being Welcoming**

The missionary spirit means that we must be prepared to welcome all those who knock at our door. The Church of Montreal is characterized by a real thirst for diversity. Youth, immigrants, non-believers, women, families and LGBT+ people: all these realities are changing and evolving, and they are at our doorstep. The diocesan Church, by opening itself in this way, is greatly enriched and better equipped to understand the reality of the city of Montreal.

A prerequisite: listening

The cry is resounding: Listen! Hear us! Listen to us! The Church should be the first to respond to this enormous need on the part of society. Let the Church listen to the world first, so that she can better welcome the world without judgment. Let the Church hear the world's questions, its thoughts, its sufferings. Let her be touched and moved, in order then to act more effectively. That cry clearly comes from the related question: Is the Church (meaning the archdiocese, the people in charge) ready to listen, to hear what the grassroots have to say? There is indeed the sense of a lack of response from the archdiocese (experienced as a failure to listen).

What are some ways to listen and be welcoming?

- Some concrete ideas: places for listening between parishes and the Archdiocese, in the parishes (parishioners and leaders) with permanent locales set aside, not merely as a temporary initiative, but as a serious project on the part of the diocese. This could also be done on the Web (perhaps call it: "The Church is listening").
- This all presupposes comfortable places of welcoming, where everyone feels at ease. The time selected for the audience should also be chosen carefully. Highly recommended are the hours just before and just after the Mass.

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## **Being close to people**

As she welcomes those who come to her, the Church fulfils her calling to be closer to the world. In doing so, she bears witness to Christ's love for all people, especially the most vulnerable. She humbles herself, in his likeness, and continues to broaden the dimensions of this openness towards all of humanity.

Some aspects proposed for exploration:

- A first step would be really delving into what constitutes people's daily lives and thus being able to examine with them their concerns, their joys and sufferings, with a view to articulating these in the Mass. Becoming knowledgeable about humanity and not using that knowledge to look down on the world. Particular attention must be paid to victims of abuse in the Church: listening, compassion and professional assistance should be the minimum offered to these people.
- We must be able to go and encounter people where they are. Be it physically or virtually (on social media, for instance), that is our mission. It is therefore important to change up our habits, get out of our comfort zones, in order to reach as many as possible.
- Finally, the great hope of bringing them together in fellowship and joy. Some ideas: social activities, such as meals, meetings for various age or interest groups, concerts; delegating responsibilities; putting together dialog groups. Varying modes of gathering is also important. Since the pandemic has forced us to innovate, communicating through social media, radio and internet, etc. has become part of our new normal habits. Let's continue to use these means to reach the most people possible.