

## **Here is the Montreal synodal Summary!**

This document has been compiled from numerous sources, including parish and mission groups in our diocese, members of the institutes of consecrated life and other groups of faithful of varying ages and diverse origins. Responses from individuals are also among the source material collected.

Despite a rather low overall rate of response on the part of our diocesan faithful to the process of reflection begun last fall, [the synodal meeting on June 11, 2022](#), supported the findings as presented in the Summary and added some remarks pertaining to the remainder of the work to be done (see Appendix 'B' attached).

This document holds great importance for us, as it does for the Catholic Church in Quebec, in Canada and for the Church as a whole! Indeed, the conclusions presented here will continue to stimulate reflection at both the diocesan and the provincial levels, among the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and even in Rome, as we look forward to the 2023 Synod of Bishops to be held in October 2023.

So let's keep listening to one another and listening to the Holy Spirit, as we move towards a synodal and missionary transformation of the Catholic Church, here in Montreal... and around the world!

We hope you have an enriching read!

**Summary**

**Synod 2021 – 2023**

**For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission**

**Prepared by: The Catholic Church of Montreal**

**June 17, 2022**

June 17, 2022

To the members of the Drafting Committee of the Summary for Quebec  
Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops  
3331 Sherbrooke St. E.,  
Montreal QC H1W 1C5

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

I am happy to be forwarding to you this Summary prepared by the Catholic Church of Montreal as part of the 2021 – 2023 Synod: For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission.

This summary represents the fruit of a synodal approach that has without any doubt been of great assistance to the Catholic Church of Montreal in becoming a more synodal Church.

I hope and believe that this summary will enable our Catholic Church of Montreal to commit itself, reflecting its potential, to the universal missionary appeal announced by the Pope.

Appendix B of this document constitutes a continuation of our synodal approach, supplying additional reading provided by the synodal assembly held June 11, 2022.

Together on a mission,

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## Table of Contents

1. <a href="#">Introduction.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
2. <a href="#">Current state of synodal health in our diocesan Church.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
3. <a href="#">Forward-facing conclusion: paths and approaches to transformation.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
 <a href="#">APPENDIX A: Analysis of contributors and their contributions (see PowerPoint Presentation).....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
 <a href="#">APPENDIX B: Continuing our synodal approach and additional reading for the Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>

## Summary of the Synod on synodality

Review of the current situation “Walking together” in the Church of Montreal

### 1. Introduction

In reading through the work accomplished in the Spirit, by those who took part in this synodal reflection, a common path is revealed to us, in which renewal, unity, hope and listening are essential elements in attaining our desire to “walk together.”

Launched in 2018, this journey underwent a setback with the pandemic, during which period the faithful could not attend their churches, with the result that normal religious practices were curtailed, and pastoral and social commitments experienced a decline. At the same time, however, some of the people of God displayed their innovative spirit, putting technology to use in order to keep up those connections of which the pandemic was depriving the faithful. Revelations of abuse, the discovery of tragedies experienced by Indigenous people and the observation that diverse communities were being excluded all had an impact on the synodal will to “walk together.” Thus we find that less than 20% of parishes and less than 15% of sanctuaries and missions responded. In spite of this, parishes comprise 39% of the responses gathered, followed by groups of faithful and individuals at 36%. Groups of consecrated persons made up 14% of responses, missions 4% and sanctuaries 1%. Such, then, is the basis on which this Summary was assembled.

Deep reflection and an open and welcoming attitude were required of the contributors who participated in formulating this Summary. Led by the Spirit and guided through the themes recommended by the Holy See, our Montreal experience of “walking together” is building our Church’s future here in unity and hope, albeit affected by the various ills besetting her.

## **A note on methodology**

A hard look at these ills that afflict the Church and that have, in the lives of many, led to the weakening of our divine filiation (our condition as children of God), can nonetheless provide us with a source of hope. With humility, the synthesis presented here exposes all the Church's weaknesses.

The entirety of the contributions<sup>1</sup> (online forms and documents received by email) was read, analyzed and organized, in order to present a synthesis that would reveal what each individual wanted to express. To identify and index the elements of discernment collected from the respondents, we put together a document referencing all the responses and conducted an analysis of their content, categorizing them according to keywords.

These keywords emerged from the overall semantic analysis that was performed. To maintain neutrality regarding the content, a sensitivity indicator (positive or negative) accompanied each individual contribution. Four axes were established to direct the reading process and the subsequent reflection process identifying concrete action or paths of transformation to be taken. Taking SWOT as our basis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, we assigned each of these terms to key indicators: “joys (forces for action), difficulties (weaknesses), transformations (opportunities), leading to hope in the synodal collaboration) and the consequences (threats resulting from inaction).”

<sup>1</sup> In whatever form received

## **2. Current state of synodal health in our diocesan Church**

Jesus Christ is our constant fellow traveller, yet few of the contributors mention Him as being the way of synodality. There is above all an awareness of the necessity for change, devoid of any nostalgia for the past; and the “re-” in *renewal*, *rebuild* and *return* (as in “*giving back*”), in relation to something different from what exists right now, illustrates to what extent a real desire for change is being expressed.

### ***Isolation, abandonment, discouragement***

Despite this eagerness to move forward, many expressed a feeling of discouragement, of having been abandoned, of being in a difficult place, while the Church, in the persons of her priests and bishops, is not present. These respondents feel alienated and barely listened to. They don't see young people around, and they think that the liturgy, as it is often experienced today, which is to say *passively*, poses an obstacle for young people, who want to be involved in action and innovation.

Many of the participants in the synodal reflection report that they feel isolated, living their faith isolated within their own parish, and sometimes just by themselves. Meanwhile, they feel that other parishes, their actual brothers and sisters in Christ, and ecclesial bodies are absent. The Christian life is at times experienced as a kind of solitude, from which the universality of the Church is missing and where fellowship is only rarely glimpsed, inside an archaic setting that is discouragingly exclusionary.

A considerable number of contributions point out that the Church should be evolving through the acknowledged involvement of its members - particularly its women members. The inclusion of women at all levels of responsibility in the Church would free us from its patriarchal and misogynistic image, reflecting the dignity and importance of the contributions of women as reflected in the Gospel and in the words of Pope Francis.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>“And, just as women had an essential role in the story of salvation, their importance for the church and the world today must be recognized,” Pope Francis, Address at the Marianum, Oct. 24, 2020

The fact of encountering differences in a Church that is exclusive and unwelcoming, all too often seeking the company of others “like me,” demonstrates how this experience can be a real opportunity for renewal, for the revelation of Christ, through testimony that takes form in action. For instance, the LGBT communities often have the sense that they are different in the eyes of God because of an unwelcoming attitude on the part of a Church that sits in judgment and condemns them. In a Church that is excessively rooted in tradition, witnessing and the Christian experience are essential realities supporting the communication of the faith.

### *Lack of leadership*

The participants often make reference to the early Church in which, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, all Christians lived in the communion of the Spirit and were welcomed in all their differences, and where Peter himself was the one leading and extending the welcome. Everyone sees him- or herself with their particular identity as a person beloved of Christ, supported and accompanied by Him; but they do not feel the same attachment to the ministers of the Church. The absence of any attentive listening, the sense of distance and the entrenchment in a daily routine that is practised but not really lived are disheartening to the faithful. They feel pushed away from the very Church that is supposed to gather the People of God together. There is a sense of walking parallel to the priests and bishops and fellow laypeople, but without any kind of actual connection. People miss a closer contact with diocesan bishops and the capacity of the priests to bring people together.

Indeed, there is a perceived lack of availability on the part of the Church’s ministers. Beyond this lack of availability, however, there is really a sense that it is ritual, in the form of the liturgy and sacraments, which takes precedence over the person being welcomed. These vulnerable members of the faithful feel that they are simply there, along with so many others, and that their humanity is



not taken into consideration. Over time, their burning desire for God has cooled, and this eventually contributes to their increasing sense of alienation from the Church.

The fact of not being listened to and the inertia that follows after meetings or the planning of projects, also contribute to the fact that volunteers are less and less inclined to become involved again.

There is an overall sense that cohesion is lacking between the diocese and the parishes, with the latter being viewed somewhat as disparate islands where each priest is free to do fairly much as he pleases, with no concern for the collective dynamic. Furthermore, a frequent concern is that the diocese orients itself in one direction and then suddenly changes focus or announces a new direction without really lending support throughout the change.

Thus, there is a real distance separating the parishes, the communities and the Archdiocese. The feeling of being left on one's own, of being alone in one's desire for a life in the Church, tends to take the wind out of one's sails.

Many hope that the baptized will be able to move beyond this experience of disconnect with their ministers. Active laypeople desire above anything else to live in fellowship with their ministers, to accompany them and assist them in this transformation. There is no question of a power struggle. It is rather a sense of sadness at seeing the life of the Church wane due to a lack of openness to sorely needed transformation.

It was also pointed out that authoritarianism is not exclusive to the clergy. Indeed, certain lay personnel carry out their missions with a questionable attitude towards parishioners and can have a negative impact on their communion with God and their desire to contribute.

Communication is another area that comes up as a concern among participants in the synodal journey. There are real examples of the lack of communication within some parishes, as well as between neighbouring parishes. But what mainly comes out of the comments is the lack of communication with the archdiocese. Priests and laypeople alike feel isolated and left to themselves. Sometimes the messages received are contradictory, the tone of the communication is overly administrative and not friendly. Emails left unanswered, a lack of politeness in responses and insufficient thoroughness in follow-ups to conversations, all of these situations are detrimental to our unity in Christ.

### *Lack of welcome; liturgical mediocrity*

The lack of interest in the Gospel can be perceived in the inability to convey the joy of Christ, and this becomes evident through inferior homilies, a hesitancy to be welcoming and a lack of enthusiasm in communicating. Boredom often afflicts the faithful during a Mass that is dull and devoid of the love with which the Eucharist could fill us.

Some other examples of being inadequately welcoming include the following:

- 1) many churches are closed through the week;
- 2) the sacrament of reconciliation also presents a number of difficulties for many of the faithful, in terms of the priest's availability and the method employed. Some individuals feel they are being judged and would prefer that this sacrament be approached with respect for their privacy, in order to be able to feel completely open in their confessions. This presents an obstacle to trust, that essential element in "walking together." People feel the need to experience confession as a personal closeness to God and without judgment or blame, but with the perception that the minister responsible is completely present in the sacrament;

3) The inert, not to say archaic, character of some regular church-goers (in terms of their longstanding attendance) can convey a cold reception that discourages newcomers among the faithful, particularly dissuading young people from continuing to participate in parish life. The authoritarian manner of certain individuals may even motivate some of the faithful to leave Catholicism behind and join other Christian movements where the importance of a warm welcome, of listening and sharing, is emphasized.

It was mentioned that the act of welcoming others, humanizing the interaction with a smile and showing brotherly love while meeting them, are all gestures that give the Church a loving and welcoming face.

Unity can bring cohesion to this lack of welcome, provided that each member of the faithful, in his or her own particularity, is truly accompanied by the priest within the parish. And by that token, accompanied also by the Archdiocese in a closer relationship conducive to enabling both the older and newer parishioners to experience that unity together, converting hearts with an actual plan of action that is thought out and built on friendly collaboration.

A welcoming reception is decisive in giving life to parish unity and, thereby, to unity in and with Christ. An abiding welcome, particularly one that is constant through difficult experiences, and ongoing support on behalf of the people of God, demonstrate the desire to walk together and help contribute to the growth of that desire. These actions reveal our faith, as St. James says (Jas 2:18), and encourage us all to live together in brotherhood.

### *Some encouraging aspects*

Aside from these seemingly negative observations, the laypeople who are committed and active remain faithful and resolute in their hopefulness. The fact that laypeople mobilized to preserve our fraternal bonds during the recent trials (such as the pandemic) and that they experienced the

support of the Archdiocese (through the presence of the bishop) illustrates the way grace fortifies those who go out to the peripheries. Many different innovative solutions were proposed by our laypeople and adopted to help foster bonds with those faithful who kept away during the pandemic (via Zoom, YouTube, prayer videos). These innovations were seen as opportunities and were embraced by priests, which in turn boosted the general attitude of commitment and participation.

Despite this desire to move forward together, there remains the sense of a lack of cohesion, at both the parish and the diocesan levels. Although some projects would appear to show that the desire for transformation was shared collectively (for instance, the training sessions concerning abuse), there was nonetheless a lack of personalized communication from the archdiocese to the laity, the communities and the priests. At times, the words could even be inappropriate for encouraging those going through the experience, on account of the mandatory character of the training sessions concerning abuse.

### *Joy, youth, hopefulness*

Young people, with their attentive and ever-listening ears, are seen as a path forward for renewal, change and abundant life. The embrace shown by our communities' younger members of the faithful in their parishes is bringing about an opening up of attitudes towards differences. It is felt that these youth should receive support in order to become dynamic leaders of faith and an example of the joy and love of Christ.

It was also mentioned that participation by the faithful in retreats in active communities and parishes provides an opportunity to experience moments of spirituality that are so valuable in the development of love, discernment, unity and “walking together.”

On another note, the pandemic provided the catalyst that prompted us to adopt the use of social media in the Church. These have now become indispensable and, for some priests in particular, a

contemporary means to reach large numbers of participants, not least among whom are the young. YouTube clips help support the Church's work in spreading the Gospel to the peripheries, and a forum for evangelization has been created on social media platforms. By the same token, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and other communication platforms are providing spaces for questions and dialogue that are not available in the parishes, or are even unknown. These new virtual spaces, with their freedom from shaming and judgment thanks to the anonymity they guarantee, can help allay many fears and frustrations. Despite their limitations, these media open up the possibility, for those who may not yet be quite inclined to take part in the Church, of becoming acquainted with other baptized individuals - priests, bishops, religious brothers and sisters from our communities, charismatic parishioners who are becoming Christian "influencers" - in an encounter that offers the living joy and the overflowing love that every one of us needs in life. The need to be listened to, supported, to feel a look of loving-kindness turned towards one - these are the feelings of the real presence of Christ.

### *Authority, diversity, organization and division*

Many participants bring up the fact that the Church has formerly had a considerable negative impact, leading to the diminished interest that can be observed today. The Church is seen as a kind of secret society or organization without transparency, where no one feels that he or she is actually represented. It is seen as a society of power and corruption and wealth that pressures its members into observing certain obligations (tithing, alms-giving, the Mass), but it is not seen as the work of God. People often feel lost during the Church's liturgy; it does not speak to them, with the result that they become bored.

Many laypeople, and particularly those who have had a negative experience with the Church, see no benefit or relevance in its existence. They prefer to espouse “values,” rather than a religion which in our day is seen to embody a contradiction between the founding message to which it claims to be committed - the Gospel - and the reality that confronts one in the kind of welcome that they receive in certain pastoral settings.

In general, laypeople who have no direct relationship with the Church, as well as those who are still faithful, are not hostile to the Church’s presence. Even the most alienated are still not categorically anti-Church. On the whole, they are convinced that the Church still has a real role to play, although she must really undergo a transformation. That must begin with the laity being visible at all levels of the organization, in order to legitimate the choices that are made. Likewise, the Church must embrace the visibility of young people in parish and diocesan life.

The Church’s lack of a stance on important debates and the continuing conformist messaging in the public arena serve to alienate the laity from the Church. This failure to stand up and be clear indicates that the system is archaic and at odds with the world of today.

Many hope to see a spirit of “Youth” emerge with updated codes of communication, in order to bring about a longed-for renewal, particularly regarding the sacraments and the liturgy. The practices of the Evangelicals and Protestants were mentioned as examples of Churches that have begun this transformation and that attract more people for that reason.

It is not by resting on its laurels that the Church will revivify faith and make the presence of God and the desire for Him more available. The entire organization of the Church must undergo a revision, beginning with the abolition of a “hierarchy” (Church ministers) that creates separation and division in the relations between the faithful and God. The Church must rediscover its true identity, by founding a new construction in which every person is seen as a Son or Daughter of God in Christ. The ministers must be real witnesses of the love of God as they welcome the faithful, comforting them, listening and proclaiming the Word to them. They must also undertake a

renewal in which brotherly closeness is developed, along with continuing education and discernment.

### ***Results: our Church's state of synodal health***

To give a proper diagnosis concerning our “walking together,” we will base our results on the themes briefly referred to already. We are also able to see an “absence.” We in fact observe that some subjects were left untouched. Certain topics among the 10 proposed in the Roman synodal approach were either barely addressed by the participants or not at all. As examples, let’s take ecumenism, the dialogue with society, or the assessment of the activities of the “organs” or synodal bodies in place in the Church, such as the parish pastoral councils and other committees acting at the various levels of diocesan life. It is noted that no serious reflection was devoted to the real circumstances of exclusion or the inadequacy of efforts in the areas of welcoming and accompaniment. Comments on specifically Montreal-related questions were also lacking, such as the challenges of intercultural encounter between cultures, whether in society or within the Church. At this point in our analysis of the contributions, we cannot determine the reasons for this situation, but as our diocesan journey of missionary transformation continues, we will be able to reflect further on the matter.

Nevertheless, in light of the findings presented to date, we may state that the synodal health of our Montreal Church is uncertain and that it is affected by serious problems requiring immediate attention. It is not enough simply to observe and prepare plans for further down the road. We must act on the entirety of the problems discussed, employing concrete and robust measures and involving the baptized, the faithful laity and ministers in communal collaboration.

### **3. Forward-facing conclusion: paths and approaches to transformation**

At the conclusion of this synthesis, and in accordance with the fundamental question posed in point no. 26 of the Preparatory document, we can identify some steps that the Spirit encourages us to undertake in order to grow in our “walking together.” These directions and paths of transformation have been distilled from the contributions that were forwarded to us. Some are more pragmatic and are suggestions for concrete action formulated as: “we could do such-and-such, or we could think about such-and-such.” We have attempted to categorize them under the different themes that reflect the points brought out in the preceding pages, necessarily including some repetition and overlapping of points. Other directions will be identified in the coming phases of our work.

#### ***a. Listening, encountering/welcoming/sharing activities***

As we listen to our brothers and sisters in the whole human family, we must take into serious consideration the human dimension, not only of their suffering but also of their hope, because their faith is a gift from God. This delicate faith should be perceived like Rachel’s cry as she wept for her children (Jer 31:15) and was comforted by those who surrounded her and offered their acts of kindness.

Homilies should be opportunities to experience togetherness with the laypeople and to understand the richness of faith by combining a story that focuses the attention and points to a simple message (just one message is sometimes enough) that will lead to reflection without arousing any feelings of guilt or any judgment about some incapacity. Personal experience, just like testimonial, allows the faithful to see themselves in the situation, as well as feeling closer to the priest and, through him, closer to Christ.

Going to the peripheries is the rediscovery of that closeness which the People of God knew in the early days of Christianity. The victory of love in the perfect and virtuous gift, the



encouragement and the fellowship of the ministers of the Church, in welcoming the other, the one who is different, would be a first step towards reconciliation with the faith.

Along with the retreats already possible in numerous places, we must invest in spaces for friendly dialogue, where sharing and exchange can take place, as well as communion in the Spirit, opportunities for social connections and closeness extended to everyone.

***b. Inclusivity towards everyone: women/ youth/ consecrated life***

The inclusion of young people at all levels in the Church, in gestures of welcome and love, reflects an acute awareness that the Church has been “greying” and has lost the sense of its mission. We must invest in the potential of our young people to become witnesses of conversion and of a life offered up to Christ.

Desiring to unify the Church and animate pastoral care in order to reach the immediate peripheries, the encounters and the lived synergies among the members of our institutions of consecrated life (particularly the women’s), the laity and those most vulnerable or most excluded can strengthen fraternity by putting into practice community charisms that have always been committed to hospitality. Involving members of consecrated life in the life of the parish, not only as participants in the Mass, but also in pastoral leadership, welcoming and fostering unity, can be an opportunity to witness to the Word.

***c. Communication/emphasis on testimonial/open spaces for those in the peripheries***

Sharing information, catechesis and other teachings in today’s constantly evolving world of communication is a challenge that the Church must embrace in order to be able to reach out to young people, engage with the peripheries and mobilize the parishes in interaction and ongoing proclamation, harnessing the leadership of each individual to serve in witnessing, in the shared common identity of the Church’s charisms.

The Church’s openness to contemporary social media, coupled with the potential of young people as they give voice to this rapidly unfolding era, invites us to look differently at the

Church, faith and the Gospel. The accompaniment of older members of the parish and priests in listening and conveying the faith can provide elements of wisdom and goodwill necessary in assimilating these new tools.

The example of faith as conveyed through the testimonial of a baptized person allows everyone to share in the realization that every human being can encounter Christ. All the People of God must be invited to share their experiences of the faith, of encounter and of God's love, each one through the prism of his or her own heart: a human encounter granted to us by God in each person's experience of conversion.

Leadership must be factored into the communications undertaken by the diocese and in the parishes and communities. Those who express themselves well and those who are blessed with charisms should be identified and promoted in order to make the Church cohere together with all the various gifts that exist among the People of God.

Just as with a testimonial, when a personal experience is shared in a homily, it allows the faithful to see themselves in the situation and to feel closer to the priest and, by extension, closer to Christ. Homilies should foster this sense of proximity between ministers and the laity as they provide an opportunity to better comprehend the richness of our faith. This can be accomplished by incorporating a seed idea into our homily, such as a story or a personal experience, which captivates the listener's attention and opens them to receive a simple message to stimulates reflection (sometimes just one message is enough), without creating feelings of guilt or inadequacy.

And so, in the lectorate, aside from the priest, leadership must step to the fore, so that the faithful may experience the proclamation fully. This means living the Word through a recounted experience that is accessible and with which they can identify. The proclamation

of the Word is a moment of sharing, of listening, but the real communication happens when the lector has the ability to convey what is written with the necessary charisms to “embrace the liturgy as one embraces the Christ.”

*d. Closeness to the ministers*

In order to live experiences that foster change and transformation, each person must feel involved, and this comes about when the message is conveyed within a context of closeness where sharing can occur. The Church’s duty, and in particular that of her ministers, is to be watchful over her entire flock, to really know and care for those who are close by, as well as for those who are distant or gone astray. In this opportunity offered by the Christian life to experience abundant joy, everyone (priests, bishops, deacons and other members of the faithful) should be witnesses to the Good News, leaving behind any strictures, divisions or separations, and being open to the other in his or her difference. This joy should be expressed in the offerings of the heart that each person is able to give, beginning with the ministers who must be the living examples of Christ.

*e. Leadership review/training leaders and the people as a whole*

Ministers should indicate the path, rather than directing through the imposition of their own ideas. The formation of priests remains one of the guiding ideas of “walking together,” along with the involving the laity in diocesan bodies and structuring the whole so that good leadership helps to unify, instead of disappointing hopes and leading to a sense of abandonment.

Organization, image and identity must be the pillars of the Church’s transformation. This begins with ensuring that exchanges are followed up between the Archdiocese and the parishes, in order to demonstrate a real fellowship.

Theme-based seminars available to all would help to encourage the experience of proximity that unites all the faithful, including priests and bishops. This includes continuing formation that can foster the development of love and brotherhood. Likewise, the liturgy (music and readings) should be renovated, understanding of the Scriptures better meditated and the catechesis communicated through the sacraments, in order to make it more manifest that God is near.

*f. Dialogue to enhance cohesion*

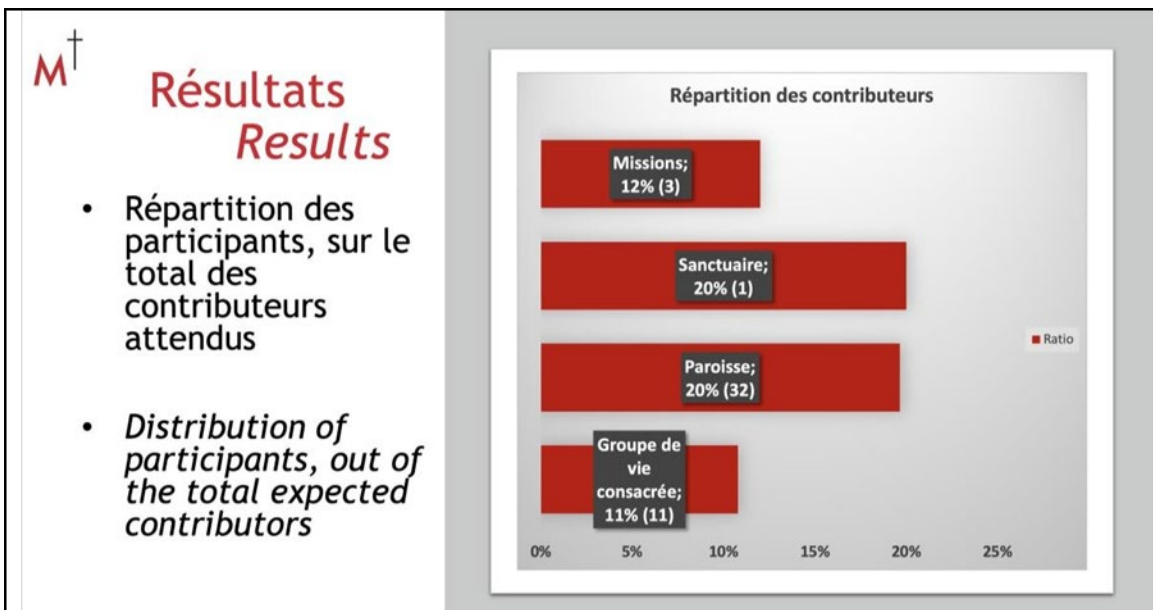
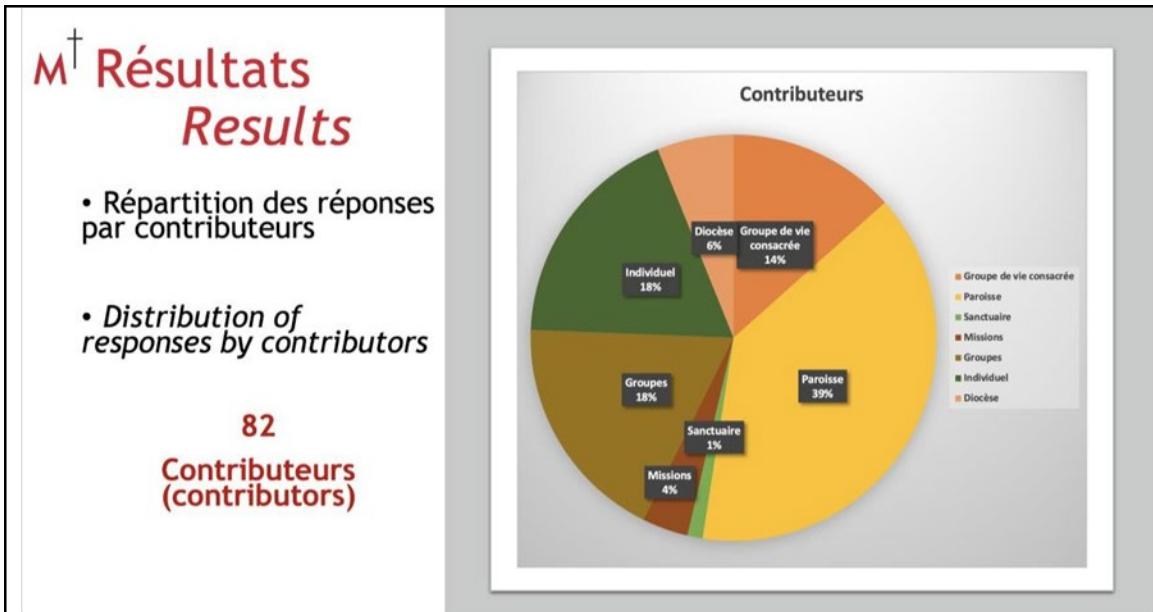
Communion is important as it is the foundation of the common Christian identity. But there is a plethora of different perspectives, at times contradictory. The Church must present herself as a community that is welcoming, organized and alive through one and the same living breath, that of the Spirit. Cohesion must be tangible in the parishes as a whole, along with the Archdiocese, with visible outcomes and a perfect integration of all the faithful, so that the Church is faithfully represented by the People of God, and not only by her ministers.

We can see that the various themes and approaches converge; they often seem to allude to each other and respond to each other. We can also foresee that these synodal approaches will become missionary approaches. We can see where our future work lies.

June 3, 2022

**APPENDIX 'A'**

**Profile of contributors and contributions (see PowerPoint presentation)**



## APPENDIX 'B'

### Continuing our synodal approach and additional reading for the Summary

At the synodal assembly of the Diocese of Montreal held on June 11, 2022, the Summary that we present to you here, as well as the editorial methodology behind it, were pooled together to stimulate reflection on the entirety of the work contributed by each of the participants. After an initial first draft put together by a lay person on his way towards the diaconate, the steering committee's contribution, guided by the Spirit, made way for a broader perspective on the text, in order to preserve the momentum in "walking together." On June 11, a reading of the document served to shed light on the Diocese of Montreal's synodal state of health and to identify some convergent patterns and to enhance the synodal experience.

Thus, when the Summary had been read and submitted to a review by the synodal assembly, the text brought to light certain convergent reflections, as well as certain omissions. This pronouncement on the subject's state of health was welcomed as an honest and courageous statement. However, the summary revealed that certain themes, such as ecumenism, prayer, social justice, the sacraments and the work of God's hand in all things, were seldom touched on or were even absent from the contributions collected. Furthermore, there was a rather 'ecclesio-centric' or parochial vision of the state of health of the Diocese which emerged from this text, and a diminished perspective that could suggest that the contributions indicate a crisis, a state of suffering in the wake of two years of pandemic and paralysis having contributed to this lethargic attitude towards the transformation that is needed in the Church.

Although an analytical perusal of the SWOT axes (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) pointed out some opposing positions, conscious attention to the content of the contributions reveals that hope remains where each one strives, through quite circumscribed actions, to implement solutions that foster the continued desire to live in the Church.

Still, the low rate of participation could lead us to consider this summary to be incomplete.

Nonetheless, the contributors who did wish to express themselves reflect views guided by the Spirit and that we must certainly not ignore.

Although the text seems to be a sufficiently representative indication of the state of synodal health, there remain subtle and more equivocal elements which, however, may not be included until a later point, when concrete actions have been set in motion, addressing the points brought up and approaches suggested in this summary.

In the opinion of the synodal assembly, all of these approaches, in terms of the topics they raised, reflect the reality on the ground, but they must be developed in detail and fleshed out with more specifics connecting them with the respective structure to which they belong, which governance body, location, group (parish, consecrated life, mission, English-, French- or Spanish-speaking groups, etc.) or individual.

Synodality is a continuation of the desire to journey together. It is made up of steps of welcoming, listening and acting, encouraging us to live deeply the transformation of the Church, so that she may be, in the image of Christ, the one who welcomes, who listens, who leaves no one behind, who forgives, who meets all challenges and who discovers the love of God in every person, in this desire for unity.

Having noted, through the summary, the elements of continuity in our synodal approach, we reviewed the approaches that emerged, in order to identify the convergences among participants around the topics mentioned and to identify together some elements to be developed in greater detail, respectfully reflecting the sensibilities of each participant in the resulting themes.

### ***Listening:***

Listening remains essential and must be taken in its largest sense as we define its purpose, its context and the person who is the object. Listening must be done with respectful attention to fraternity and solidarity, in order to effect deep transformation in the Church. But we have to live our own personal transformation through learning to listen to one another and in learning all together. Listening is also a missionary activity, being the prologue to all action.

### ***Inclusion:***

Aside from the responses dealing with the inclusion of the faithful in the structures of governance, according to an 'ecclesio-centric' vision, there is an obvious lack of inclusivity of an intergenerational nature, which deters the presence of young people and undermines the inclusion of different communities or 'classes' who seldom express themselves in the Church. Does this lack of representation result from these communities' declining to express themselves? And how should we encounter and reach out to this difference?

### ***Communication:***

It is difficult to bring into focus the scope of such a vast subject as communication. Indeed, it is sometimes a struggle to distinguish whether the problems are relational or institutional. In spite of everything, it is clear that language and vocabulary must be revised in order to accommodate everyone, and that one must possess the words and the content in order to be able to speak of the love of Christ or to experience a liturgy that has meaning. The setting up of a sort of narthex and a public square ("*parvis*"), whether virtual or formal, opens up a freedom of encounter and exchange in which everyone can express himself or herself without violating any taboo.



***Closeness:***

This is above all the closeness of all the baptized putting their charisms into practice, sharing their weaknesses and their humanity with the lay people and ordained clergy alike. It is also the closeness of all the faithful in the world. This can only be experienced provided that stability exists in the parishes and in the receptiveness of the laity. Closeness is also recognizing each individual's respective limits in the encounter with diversity. Living together is living in connection, in the desire to be One, in communion in the love of God.

***Leadership:***

When leadership is exercised well, it allows the meaning of the Church to be revealed and contributes to the enhancement of her image. Leadership must be shared with everyone (participation leadership) and encouraged through the fostering of vocations, the sharing of experiences, witnessing and the development of the charisms possessed by each individual person. Leadership must also be developed through group training and with candidates for the priesthood or the diaconate. This creates the opportunity for mutual evangelization. It also makes for efficiency in governance and in the ministers' functions. Leadership must exist among the holy People of God and in the ecclesial community, as well.

***Cohesion:***

First we must mention consultation, which is the basis of any cohesion. Interaction must translate into real dialogue if it is to be credible in any course of action. Interaction is a dialogue that takes place in unity, but not in uniformity. Consultation must be entered into in full transparency, embracing the various actors who make up the Church, and not merely a leadership above all concerned with the "magisterium."

Consultation is a process which is lived in communion.

*Additional suggestions:*

It is important to proclaim Jesus Christ employing all the approaches presented above. Our future reflections can make use of the following points:

- Incorporating prayer and the spiritual experience into the synodal process;
- Being attentive to couples and families;
- Putting spiritual momentum into any transformation process through applying synodality;
- Remembering that the Church must remain humble and must resist clericalism, while fostering responsible pastoral ministry;
- Being attentive and welcoming to other religions;
- Promoting continuing formation in the proclamation of the Gospel;
- Reflecting on the reasons for the absence of any responses on some of the subjects that were not mentioned;
- Reflecting on why many people did not participate in the synodal activity.