

## Minutes of the Synodal Assembly meeting, June 19, 2023

The purpose of this meeting was to examine the reasons for the lack of interest in the diocesan missionary transformation project on the part of parishes/communities/missions in the diocese of Montreal.

Approximately 40 people were in attendance, representing the various diocesan councils and offices, members of the steering committee and individuals who had contributed to the consultation/diagnosis process.

### AGENDA

- Word of welcome and prayer
- Introduction of the participants
- Goals and proceedings of the meeting
- Background of the missionary transformation project
- Summary of the consultation / diagnosis
- Workshop discussions on the consultation / diagnosis (SEE)
- Feedback / sharing with full group (JUDGE)
- BREAK
- Root causes of the issue (continued) (JUDGE)
- Workshop and full group discussion of solutions / ideas for action (ACT)
- Conclusion
- Prayer of thanksgiving / Acknowledgments

### BACKGROUND OF THE MISSIONARY TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

An account was given of the origins and evolution of the diocesan missionary transformation project between 2018 / 2019 and the present. The distinctions and links between that project and the Synod's approach to synodality in 2022 was also explained.

### SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION / DIAGNOSIS

Results were presented from the telephone survey conducted with visitors to 68 parishes and missions. The main findings are included in the document previously sent out: *“Preliminary Analysis of Survey: Responses about Encouraging Participation in the Diocesan Missionary Transformation Project.”*

## WORKSHOPS: SUMMARY - PART 1

During the first session of the workshops, participants identified two issues as being major and widespread (in the consultation summary or not). The resumé below highlights the communication difficulties between the archdiocese, the parishes, the missions and the communities identified by the workshops and broken down according to the conventional communication model: SENDER (archdiocese) - RECEIVER (parishes, missions, communities, etc.) - COMMUNICATION / message

### 1- SENDER (archdiocese)

Clearly, the archdiocese is the main sender.

- The sender should not be only the archdiocese; parishes should also be regarded as senders. This implies more mutual and open dialogue in communication. The archdiocese should confirm that the message has been received and understood, and that appropriate action is being taken.
- The bond of trust is broken between the archdiocese and those working in the field.
- There is a lack of support for those working for change. Support was needed for the work of missionary transformation, but the arrival of visitors came too late in the process.
- The so-called “top-down” style of communication does not foster a real dynamic of dialogue and active participation.
- It is crucial to include newcomers, to keep communities’ spirits up and to encourage their active participation from the outset.

### 2- RECEIVER (parishes, missions, communities...)

Those who receive these messages - parishes, missions and communities - confront challenges also.

- It is difficult to mobilize pastoral staff, and there is a lack of interest on the part of parishioners.
- The absence of clear leadership, especially on the part of the parish priest, can lead to accountability problems.
- Projects sometimes take too long to put into practice, which leads to a slackening of interest.
- Some communities are very fragile: lack of organization, lack of resources, general lack of funds, ageing population, etc.
- Do people have the feeling that they are involved? We have to relate to people’s experience; communities must have the sense that a need is being met, that this is not merely another job.
- Parishes have the impression sometimes that they are disconnected and isolated, and this is aggravated by information overload
- Additionally, disappointed expectations lead to lowered motivation.

### 3- COMMUNICATION / message

- There is frequently too much "noise" surrounding the message, which makes it difficult to understand.
- Messages are dense, complicated, overly generic.
- Difficulty accepting / understanding the missionary concept and the idea of combining synodality and missionary transformation - when you don't feel you are part of a communion, it's difficult to see yourself as a missionary.
- The messages must touch people's hearts and address their daily realities.
- There is a problem of nearness and presence: the archbishop and those who work with the archbishop, especially priests, in the archdiocesan offices seem disconnected from the rest of the diocese.
- Emails or long documents are not always the best means of communication.
- Not a living, breathing system, unresponsive (consultation tables, not exactly functional)

### 4- THE SOURCE

One of the main causes identified by workshop participants is that the transformation project does not stem from a need identified by the community, but is imposed from the top down.

### SUMMARY OF WORKSHOPS - PART 2

In the second plenary session, the following areas for reflection were identified, along with potential solutions (broken down into groups according to similar characteristics):

- **The relational aspect / encounter:** It is first of all essential to reach out to others, particularly for archdiocesan leaders to connect with the faithful. They should create opportunities to meet, to experience things together, in communion, moments of unity and of quality time. We need to live synodality, not just have a document about it. We need a place where we learn to be together. Such an encounter must be founded on listening, fraternal communion and mutual recognition.

- **Begin with what is needed:** at the beginning there must be a need. The hopes, sorrows, needs and expectations of the faithful must be heard, in order to be able to respond appropriately and to the point. This listening must be followed by concrete and rapid action to prevent any sense of frustration or abandonment. The Diocesan Pastoral Council should be involved in implementing projects that are nearer to people's reality.

- **Dialogue (two-way communication):** It is crucial that everyone, whether in the archdiocesan offices or in the parishes / missions / communities, can be both sender and receiver, in order to foster genuine dialogue and to develop a vision together.



- **A clear and simple message / improve the messaging:** aim for something less cumbersome and complex, timed appropriately and with the right approach.