

# The Catholic Spirit

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## THE CHURCH PREPARES

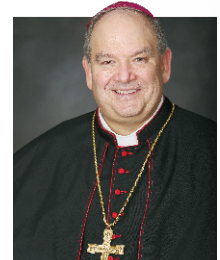
**19 Prayer and Listening Events. 11 focus events.  
8,173 participants. 35,026 comments.**

**Last year, Archbishop Bernard Hebda called for the archdiocese to embrace becoming a ‘listening Church’ in preparation for an archdiocesan Synod.** From September 2019 to March 2020, thousands of Catholics shared what was on their hearts and minds when it comes to their parishes and the Church, and listened to what others had to say. Archbishop Hebda listened, too, and also tasked a team to code and analyze the information received. **After prayerful discernment and consultation, the archbishop has determined which topics deserve a deeper dive as the local Church looks to its future.**

**A**t the beginning of May, I shared with you that I was poring over the input that had been gathered at the 2019-2020 Pre-Synod Prayer and Listening Events and through the Disciple Maker Index survey. Not surprisingly, your feedback was superb and really insightful. Thank you! I was happy to learn that so many of you share my assessment that there are many indicators of vibrancy in our archdiocese, but we could be strengthened and enriched by a Synod process that would intensively address a limited number of targeted areas.

Having reviewed your comments, I am now pleased to announce that the 2022 Archdiocesan Synod will focus on three areas: 1) Forming parishes that are in the service of evangelization; 2) Forming missionary disciples who know Jesus’ love and respond to his call; and 3) Forming youth and young adults in and for a Church that is always young.

For those of you who participated in the Synod prayer and listening events, the three focus areas chosen should not be surprising: We heard those three broad themes as priorities time and again. There was an awareness that we would be a stronger Church if we would focus our time and attention on these three areas in the next five years, giving us a foundation for addressing more vigorously some of the other areas of concern that surfaced at the prayer and listening events.



— Archbishop Bernard Hebda

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**FOCUS AREAS**

**This present moment**

By Archbishop Bernard Hebda

**W**hile the terminology might be contemporary, the underlying issues of our three focus areas are challenges that the Church has faced from the day of the Ascension: How are we to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them what Christ had taught, and remembering that Christ would be with us always?

Archbishop John Ireland, who led our archdiocese from 1884 until his death in 1918, understood the fundamental importance of the great commission given by Christ to the Apostles in Matthew 28, and had the first few words inscribed in Latin above the entrance of our Cathedral to remind us always of that mission. Coming more than a century after the completion of the Cathedral, the Archdiocesan Synod is our contemporary response to that mission and challenge.

I wonder, however, if Archbishop Ireland could have imagined just how great the challenge would be in 2020. He died just before the 1918 flu pandemic began to take its toll. While it fell to him to lead a largely uneducated and immigrant Church in an era when Catholics were sometimes seen as un-American and faced significant prejudices, his experience of the Church had been primarily one of great growth, as reflected in his ability to build contemporaneously the Cathedral and Basilica, two of the most magnificent Churches in our country. Today's circumstances (an archdiocese emerging from bankruptcy and scandal, showing a decline in Mass attendance and financial support, now exacerbated by COVID-19, as well as significant reduction in the numbers of baptisms and weddings) would have been outside his wildest imagining. He would likewise be shocked, I suspect, to see the steady rise in the percentage of Americans, particularly young Americans, who indicate that they have no religious affiliation. He would surely share in our tears as we witness the ongoing effects of racism, or recognize the ways in which violence, addiction and abuse have impacted so many of our families and communities.

There is no question that we live in an age in which the need for personal conversion and institutional renewal is great. It is in moments such as these that the Church has the opportunity return to her roots and allow the power of Christ to shine through our weakness. Because of the potential for renewal, I feel blessed to be in this archdiocese precisely at this time.

In addressing the challenges before us, I realize that I have human resources available to me that Archbishop Ireland could never have imagined. Thanks to his ground-breaking vision for our archdiocese, and the teaching of the

**Focus areas: A deeper dive**

Archbishop Hebda is particularly looking forward to hearing responses to the following questions.

**1 Forming parishes that are at the service of evangelization.**

**1. Welcoming parishes**

What can we do to make parishes more welcoming and accessible? Are there those who feel excluded from parish life? How can we address them? What have we learned from livestreaming parish events to build inclusion?

**2. Collaboration in parish ministry**

How can we promote a greater sense of ownership of parish activities? How do we call forth the gifts that God has given us to strengthen our parishes? How should parishioners be involved in setting a vision for the parish? How does a parish regularly assess its performance? How can a community provide for continuity when clergy and staff regularly change?

**3. Liturgy and the Sunday experience**

What needs to happen for Sunday liturgies to more completely satisfy spiritual needs and send us forth for service? How should we address the needs of multicultural, multilingual communities at Mass? Are there ways to create an Archdiocesan liturgical identity so that we feel at home in any one of our parishes? What would be important components of that identity?

**4. Parishes as "central driving force" of evangelization**

How do we foster the "pastoral conversion" of parishes to more fully serve the Church's evangelizing mission? How can parishes train parishioners to be evangelizers, especially in homes and neighborhoods? What are parish practices that have worked in bringing Catholics back to the Church or in attracting new members?

**5. Bringing the implications of the Gospel into our communities**

How can parishes be instruments of Christ's healing? How do we transform parishes to be attentive to the needs of others and to engage in the work of justice and racial equality?

**2 Forming missionary disciples who know Jesus' love and respond to his call.**

**1. Personally encountering Jesus**

What resources and experiences facilitate the personal encounter with Christ that is at the heart of missionary discipleship? What are concrete ways that our Church can credibly proclaim the core message of our faith (the "kerygma") in ways that lead to real conversion?

Second Vatican Council that confirmed his instincts, we have extraordinarily creative lay leadership in this local Church. There's a remarkable foundation of collaboration between clergy and laity that gives me great hope.

Think of the now national impact that the Jeremiah Program has had on young moms and their children, or the hope provided to families in search of affordable housing in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa because of CommonBond Communities. Take a moment to imagine the number of teenagers around our country who have had their faith renewed because of NET Ministries, or university students who have encountered Christ on college campuses because of Saint Paul's Outreach. I'm the envy of my brother bishops when I speak about the Catechetical Institute or pull out photos of the new Dorothy Day Place, or talk about the impact that the Aim

Higher Foundation and Catholic Schools Center of Excellence (CSCOE) have had on stabilizing enrollment in our Catholic schools. We're getting inquiries all the time from around the country about Extreme Faith Camp, the Seven Sisters Apostolate, the Chesterton Schools Network, Women in the New Evangelization (WINE), the Catholic Watchmen men's apostolate, the Cana Family Institute and the Catholic Community Foundation of Minnesota. That all of those initiatives arose in this archdiocese speaks volumes about the types of passionate Catholic problem-solvers who have been nurtured in this local Church.

When I reflect on the phenomenal response that we received when we asked the priests and faithful of the archdiocese to come together for the Prayer and Listening Events, I know that those creative problem-solvers are still out there, and I become excited to think

about what might emerge from the next steps of the Synod process. The focus areas might seem somewhat predictable, but I am anticipating bold proposals for concrete action. My hope is that through the Synod process we will together be able to discern new and creative responses to a few issues that have challenged, and continue to challenge, this local Church. Even in an era marked by COVID-19 and limited financial resources, the potential is boundless when we all put our heads and hearts together and allow the Holy Spirit to lead.

While the first phase of our process was focused on casting the net broadly to see what was on the minds and hearts of the faithful and thereby determine the topics for our Synod, the next phase needs to be more focused and go deeper. In particular, the 2021 deanery and parish consultations will focus on how we can take action to address those topics. At the deanery level next January **3A>>**

**2. Tools to foster discipleship**

How can we offer meaningful life-long formation for discipleship? What are useful resources and experiences for learning how to pray, especially with sacred Scripture? What retreat experiences have borne fruit? How can we encourage faith-sharing in small groups? How can we encourage mentoring in the life of virtue and accompaniment at difficult moments?

**3. Enhancing adult formation**

How can we promote a deepening in our understanding of the content of our faith? How can we more effectively meet the need for adult faith formation?

**4. Fostering the universal call to holiness**

How do we deepen our understanding of the family as the domestic Church and our appreciation of marriage as a path for lifelong sanctification? How can the Church better accompany couples in living out their vocation throughout their marriage? How can we be more responsive to the spiritual needs of those who are single, separated or divorced, or widowed?

**5. Joyful service as a Gospel imperative**

How do we strengthen the tie between discipleship, love for neighbor and joyful service? How can we encourage individuals to manifest their faith in their works? How can we promote a greater sensitivity and response to the needs of others?

**3 Forming youth and young adults in and for a Church that is always young.**

**1. Supporting parents as primary educators**

How can we better assist parents in forming children as disciples who know and love Jesus and his Church?

**2. Helping the young encounter Jesus**

How do we give pre-teens a personal encounter with Jesus that fosters spiritual growth? How about teenagers? How should we teach them to pray or help them grow in virtue?

**3. Education at the service of encountering Christ**

How can Catholic schools and religious education programs more effectively facilitate a relationship with Jesus? Do our sacramental preparation programs open young hearts to God's grace and call?

**4. Ministry to millennials**

How can we minister more effectively to college-age Catholics and single young adults? How about young married couples and young families?

**5. Rethinking structures of young adult ministry**

What should be the role of peer ministry and young adult leadership in this apostolate? Is there a need for a more regionalized approach? What are avenues for developing young leadership and opening Church structures to the insights of young adults? How can we better use social media to nourish young adults?



**YEAR TWO: THE CHURCH PREPARES**

**JUNE**

Mass marks the beginning of Year 2

**AUGUST**

Archbishop Hebda announces Synod focus areas

**SEPTEMBER**

Praying with Scripture virtual series begins Sept. 13

**OCTOBER**

Healing and Hope virtual retreat begins Oct. 18

**JANUARY/FEBRUARY**

Faith and Culture series  
Deanery Consultation occurs over four Saturdays in social-distanced environment

**FEBRUARY**

Lent: Synod at Home

**SPRING**

Live events on the Focus Areas

**JUNE**

Year 3 begins



**YEAR THREE: THE CHURCH ENGAGES**

**SEPTEMBER**

Parish Consultation with Small Group Process begins

**JUNE**

Synod Assembly takes place Pentecost weekend

**NOVEMBER**

Archbishop Hebda releases pastoral plan