

Synthesis report of the diocese of Pembroke 2024

Fruits of the diocesan reflections

Our diocese has selected two themes from the discussions that are particularly relevant to our local situation: 1) The Church as a Place of Healing and Discipleship; 2) Missionary Mindset. These themes are essential as we strive to renew our Church life and witness in the world. In our diocese, two parishes and the diocesan evangelization team participated in these discussions.

The Evangelization Team

Theme 1: The Church as a Place of Healing and Discipleship: The team discussed the concept of the Church as a wounded healer, suggesting that the Church's understanding of its own wounds positions it better to be instruments of healing. The importance of trusting in the Lord in all aspects of life and encouraging openness to the new things God may reveal was emphasized. The discussion touched on the idea of being vessels for God's new revelations and the need to serve others authentically, guided by the Lord. The team proposed creating spaces for sharing struggles, establishing healing ministries, and addressing various needs such as financial, relational, addiction, and abuse. The idea of assessing and responding to the needs of individuals in the Church was also discussed. Practical suggestions included creating small groups for people to share struggles, doubts, and sufferings, and providing training and formation for leaders and clergy on listening, empathy, and pastoral counseling.

Theme 2: Missionary Mindset: The team highlighted the importance of having a missionary mindset, suggesting that it can happen organically as individuals personally encounter the Lord. Greg expressed the notion that God loves everyone equally, regardless of their relationship with Him, and encouraged openness to the new things God may reveal. The discussion also touched on the idea of being vessels for God's new revelations and the need to serve others authentically, guided by the Lord. The team expressed concerns about the lack of a clear plan for outreach and missionary efforts. Practical suggestions included engaging with the local community beyond church walls, developing workshops and training on healing, evangelization, the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and spiritual conversations, and commissioning lay missionaries to actively participate in outreach efforts.

English Language Synodal Consultation- Fort-Coulonge

Theme 1: The Church as a Place of Healing and Discipleship: The Church should be more centralized, with Fort-Coulonge being the one church in the area, with a Mass on Saturday evening and another Mass on Sunday morning. Weekday Masses should be in the evening for the sake of greater accessibility for working people. The use of media should be increased to spread the message. Meet people's needs, such as providing Knights of Columbus food baskets at Christmas. Studies show that regular churchgoers live longer, are more healthy, and have fewer mental and emotional problems. Daily TV Mass should be available when unable to go to Mass in person. People should be convinced that going to Mass will enhance their overall well-being.

Theme 2: Missionary Mindset:

More dynamic people should be involved in missionary work. Introverts should find ways to be missionaries, even if it's in a quiet way. The Gospel can be summed up in one word: "Reconciliation." Other words suggested were "Love" and "Hope."

French Language Synodal Consultation- Fort-Coulonge

Theme 1: The Church as a Place of Healing and Discipleship: For the Church as a place of healing and formation in discipleship, participants emphasized the need for celebration, personal invitations, witnessing peace, and education for healing. Suggestions included publishing short witness accounts in the parish bulletin, using media and technology to spread the Gospel, and finding an attractive website for children. The group also discussed the importance of being visible, pastorally innovative, and promoting places of pilgrimage.

Theme 2: Missionary Mindset: Regarding the missionary mindset, the group emphasized the need to evangelize with a spirit of celebration, love the Church, and be an example for others. Suggestions included broadcasting the Easter Mass on Facebook, putting up posters about church-related events in local businesses, and praying with others. The group also discussed the importance of overcoming shyness and asking young people for their ideas. The consensus was that it takes adults who exercise responsibilities of all kinds to be disciples, and the focus should be on nourishing people's spirituality and not just healing them.

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish

The discussion was mostly guided by a vocal and passionate minority of participants who wished to express their woundedness with the Catholic Church, focusing on sexual scandals, disappointment that women could still not become priests, and anger that the Church was still ostracizing and alienating the gay community. However, some practical suggestions were made, such as holding Bible courses at Lourdes on a regular basis, bringing back greeters at the front of the Church before Masses, inviting newcomers to stand and be recognized during weekend Masses, converting the basement into a temporary gym to attract more children, and offering coffee and snacks before Mass.

In conclusion, the Church's understanding of its own wounds can make it a better instrument of healing, and practical suggestions include creating healing spaces, training leaders in empathy, and establishing healing ministries. The missionary mindset can be fostered through personal encounters with the Lord and community engagement. The need for increased accessibility, visibility, and innovation in pastoral approaches is also highlighted, including the use of media and technology, engaging with the local community, and providing spiritual workshops. However, challenges such as a lack of clear outreach plans and woundedness expressed by some community members are acknowledged.

This Synthesis was prepared by Pierre-Alain Giffard for the diocese of Pembroke
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