

A word on Synodality: Earlier this year many, if not most of us, participated in synodal discussion circles, where we were given the opportunity to share about our experiences of the Catholic Church – the good and the bad – and to share hopes and ideas as to how the Spirit might be leading us forward. An extraordinary effort went into ensuring that we heard from as many people as possible. You might even say we “punched above our weight” in terms of representation, hosting no less than 26 facilitated gatherings! Our final report was submitted to the archdiocese last spring, and is well worth the read, if you have not yet seen it.

Yet it seems clear that synodality is about more than a report. It is a calling, a way of being, and a way of journeying together. Recently, I was honoured to facilitate a retreat for the parish pastoral council and members of the parish synodality committee. As an invested collection of “do-ers,” many of us were ready to approach the gathering more like a planning workshop than a retreat. It took considerable – and concerted – effort to put down our laptops, our notebooks, our phones, and our job titles, to grab a “cuppa” (as we say in Australia), to sit together, and talk.

Modelling our day on *Indigenous Talking Circles*, each person was invited to speak without interruption or debate, and to share authentically. At the same time, the rest of us were challenged to listen intentionally, with compassion and generosity, giving the speaker the gift of our attention. It wasn't easy, and it wasn't meant to be. Yet we were taught an important lesson about our compulsion to look immediately for “solutions” and our urge to jump at the quick fix, even before truly hearing what has been said.

We agreed that synodality is not about “doing” but about “being.” Not a “product” but a “process.” What does this mean for us at Canadian Martyrs? Well, amidst these busy days of activity, it means that we stop – just for a moment – and make that choice to become present to one another. It is as simple and as difficult as that.

You will, of course, hear more over the coming months (and years, we hope) about where the synodal journey is taking us as a parish. Let's start with listening.

Merry Christmas!

Sue-Anne

(For those who are interested in diving deeper into understanding synodality, there is an abundance of information available online through the Canadian Martyrs website.)