

Opening Remarks – Bishop Joseph Dabrowski
Knights of Columbus District Deputies Organizational Meeting
8-10 July 2022

In October 2021, Pope Francis launched the path of synodality. The theme of the Synod is *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*. So, from 2021 until the Synod, which will take place in 2023, the entire Church is embarking on a journey of sharing, reflecting, and listening.

Through this Synodal process, the Church worldwide has been asked to reflect on and discern how journeying together is happening in the Church today. Dioceses across the province have completed the Diocesan phase of the synodal process and submitted their synod reports to the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario.

I hope you had a chance to participate in a Listening Session. If you didn't, even though the official Listening Sessions are completed, you could offer a Listening Session to your members, because it helps you to understand where your brother Knights and fellow parishioners are at.

From the summary of the Listening Sessions across Ontario received by the bishops, we learned of some of the main joys, difficulties, obstacles, and hopes that Catholic families expressed. Let me share some of them with you.

Joys of Being Catholic

A significant majority of participants across Ontario expressed a profound desire for more community, and at the same time expressed a deep gratitude for their parish community. If we learned anything from the pandemic, it is that the Church is a community, the Church is the Body of Christ, and the Church is the communion of saints.

As one respondent stated, speaking unknowingly for many others, "the Church was there for me at my lowest points." There is joy in participating in bible studies, formation courses, Eucharistic Adoration, and ritual and devotional life.

Difficulties of Being Catholic

There is a desire to have more lay involvement in the Church. You, we need you! Also, the scandals of the Church, especially the recent discoveries at residential schools, have caused great pain. The Church must take responsibility for its mistakes and repent for the wrongs committed.

We often struggle to be a welcoming Church. People have left the Church and it has left people questioning not their trust in God, but trust in the organized Church.

Young people are absent from our churches, and also many Catholics don't know the faith. One respondent at a Listening Session said, "After 12 years of religious education and 37 years attending Mass, I don't feel prepared to be a missionary disciple".

I am not going to talk about peoples hopes and dreams because the challenges and difficulties *are* their hopes and dreams. I want to thank you for helping us by your work and ministry to build a more welcoming Church.

Thank you for all of the support you offer to us bishops and priests in our common mission to bring the Good News to the world! I leave you with a quote from Pope Paul VI who said, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses".

God bless you.