



AMERICAN CATHOLIC COUNCIL

*Soundings
of
the
Faithful*

June 2011



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Listening Sessions on the Way to Detroit

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Dear Participants,

Welcome to the **American Catholic Council**, and to the **Listening Sessions Report** of the grassroots faithful, the *Sensus Fidelium*, and their common sense. The Native American phrase, “If you want to hear the future, put your ear to the ground,” became our intention for listening to the People of God who learned from and experienced Vatican II as a model of Church worth reclaiming and living.

Nearly 100 ACC Listening Assemblies have taken place across the US and Canada over the last 18 months. Our aim was always to support the initiative of local organizers who responded to our call that they gather the faithful and “listen.” That was far more important than our imposing rigid guidelines as to size, place and format. In short, we trusted the people to do what they felt best. The Faithful have met in living rooms, parishes, libraries, retreat centers, hotel meeting rooms and universities to dialogue about the state and future of our Church we so love. From groups of four people to five hundred, they gathered in sessions motivated with a desire to live out the model of Jesus, to give voice to their concerns about the Church in accordance with their rights defined by Canon Law, and to put forth possible initiatives addressing a host of issues.

We helped planners by providing a template for Listening Sessions, connected them with one another through the ACC *Assemblies Community Network (ACN)*, and convened numerous teleconferences with planners about the “Nuts and Bolts” of a Listening Session and how to navigate through the ACN and use the online surveys to register the voices from the grassroots on our the way to Detroit.

We do not present this report as research per se. For more scientific statistical analysis, we refer readers to such reputable sources as the *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* (<http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>). Nonetheless, and though our process was not perfect, it most certainly provided several thousand Catholics an important venue for meaningful dialogue and the opportunity to speak their mind and heart as they listened to one another. The data from these sessions, submitted in the form of two instruments (*Participant Surveys* and *Leader/Facilitator Reports*), yielded a trove of testimonials and “Big Ideas.” More than simply collecting quantifiable data, our surveys encouraged open-ended comments as participants described and gave meaning to their diverse experiences of being Catholic and as they put forth their diligent and heartfelt thoughts for the good of our greater Catholic community.

We do not present this report as the final and definitive analysis of the voluminous data we received. This report is but the first gleaning of the data as we put forth a general overview of what seems to be most significant. The “listening” has only begun and will surely continue through this weekend and beyond.

We thank the ACC Planning Committee for supporting and hosting the Listening Sessions. We thank all who decided on their own to gather people to dialogue and listen to one another. Some groups continue to meet! We thank each of you for inspiring possible outcomes both here in Detroit and afterwards. I especially thank the Assemblies Committee for their tireless time and passion amid the work to honor the Christ within each of us. And we thank God for this moment in time to continue the listening and dialogue in the breakout sessions and dialogue circles of this weekend, as we begin to identify actionable outcomes and continue to network among one another.

Blessings,

Peg Bisgrove, Chair
ACC Local/Regional Assemblies Committee

ACC Grassroots Involvement and Listening Assemblies (Stats as of May 23, 2011)

First-time visitors to the ACC main website: 33,613

First-time visitors to the ACC Assemblies Community Network website: 15,290

Master Email Database: 3134 (Includes persons who registered to receive the ACC E-Newsletter, all members on the *Assemblies Community Network*, and Detroit participants with known email addresses; This roster encompasses representation in every US State with the exception Wyoming, as well as 11 Canadian provinces and 15 other countries)

States	Listening Sessions	Listening Session Participants	ACN Members
ALABAMA	-	-	-
ALASKA	-	-	2
ARIZONA	2	62	17
ARKANSAS	-	-	-
CALIFORNIA	13	218	68
COLORADO	-	-	5
CONNECTICUT	-	-	10
DELAWARE	2	59	6
District Of Columbia	-	-	1
FLORIDA	5	333	91
GEORGIA	-	-	8
HAWAII	-	-	1
IDAHO	-	-	-
ILLINOIS	4	423	50
INDIANA	2	21	9
IOWA	-	-	3
KANSAS	-	-	6
KENTUCKY	1	50	11
LOUISIANA	-	-	1
MAINE	-	-	4
MARYLAND	4	97	38
MASSACHUSETTS	4	210	34
MICHIGAN	13	505	85
MINNESOTA	5	541	27
MISSISSIPPI	-	-	1
MISSOURI	1	9	12
MONTANA	-	-	2
NEBRASKA	-	-	6
NEVADA	-	-	1
NEW HAMPSHIRE	-	-	5
NEW JERSEY	2	195	41
NEW MEXICO	-	-	4
NEW YORK	9	703	60
NORTH CAROLINA	-	-	9
NORTH DAKOTA	-	-	0

	Listening Sessions	Listening Session Participants	ACN Members
OHIO	2	90	50
OKLAHOMA	-	-	1
OREGON	-	-	10
PENNSYLVANIA	3	220	28
PUERTO RICO	-	-	0
RHODE ISLAND	-	-	11
SOUTH CAROLINA	-	-	0
SOUTH DAKOTA	-	-	3
TENNESSEE	-	-	1
TEXAS	1	12	12
UTAH	-	-	2
VERMONT	-	-	1
VIRGINIA	1	75	23
WASHINGTON	2	23	10
WEST VIRGINIA	0	0	1
WISCONSIN	1	25	21
WYOMING	-	-	-
Canada			
British Columbia	-	-	2
Manitoba	1	75	1
New Brunswick	-	-	1
Nwfnld/ Lbrdr	-	-	1
Nova Scotia	-	-	2
Ontario	2	45	8
Quebec	-	-	1
Saskatchewan	-	-	1
Yukon	-	-	1
Yukon	-	-	1
Virtual Assembly*	1	199	
Total Listening Sessions: 81			
TOTAL LISTENING SESSIONS PARTICIPANTS: 4190			
AC N Members in other Countries: 15			
Total ACN Members: 825			



ABOUT THE SURVEYS

This report is based on our analysis of two survey Instruments:

Participants' Survey: This survey was constructed around a series of questions that were framed in the suggested format of a Listening Session as documented in the *Listening Session Template*. Not all listening sessions addressed all of these questions in their program format. Persons who participated in physical listening sessions were asked to respond to an anonymous online survey in the days immediately following their listening session. Questions in the *Participants Survey* were both quantitative and qualitative with extensive opportunity to submit opened-ended comments. The survey was comprised of several sections addressing the following primary categories, around which we have structured this report:

1. Demographics;
2. About Your Experience of Being a Catholic;
3. The *BIG IDEAS* gleaned from your Listening Session;
4. Input on themes of Governance, Leadership and Structural Reform of the Church;
5. Input on the proposed ACC *Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities*;
6. Suggested *Local Action Steps* and the *Leadership Challenge for ACC*;

Of the 3991 participants in physical sessions, 1027 responded to the online survey. In addition to those, another 199 persons participated in an online “virtual assembly,” including those who responded to an “open source” link to the survey posted to the *Assemblies Community Network*. In addition, there were several assemblies that submitted manual paper survey data accounting for an additional 279 participants’ input that had to be manually merged into the database. Accordingly, the total number of respondents incorporated into the database of the *Participants Survey* is 1505. Not all respondents replied to all questions on the survey, as many questions were optional. In addition, some of the manually submitted survey data from some sessions did not address all the questions that appeared in the online version.

Facilitator/Leader Report: As a means to expand and triangulate data, a second survey was administered to local leaders and planners of listening sessions, including persons who served as facilitators of small groups in the larger assemblies. There was at least one report submitted for each of the 81 assemblies in our data base. Though the vast majority was submitted online, several assemblies submitted manual reports which were subsequently merged into the electronic database. Our report of the Listening Sessions includes our analysis of 182 such Leader/Facilitator Reports. That data analysis is integrated within our presentation around the 6 categories, as identified above. It is important to note that unlike the *Participants Survey*, which solicited personal opinion, respondents to the *Leader/Facilitator Report* were asked to objectively document what they heard and observed from OTHERS at their respective listening session.

Data Analysis: This report includes both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. In the case of the former, that data is presented in the statistical analysis of demographics as well as in the form of two Likert scales, one on 20 statements impacting Leadership & Governance and the other around 11 statements demonstrating one or more application of the *Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities*. True to the nature of qualitative inquiry, data analysis is far more complex, especially in light of the volume of open-ended statements in the database. As a means to bring forth “first fruits” in what will require ongoing data analysis beyond which can be done at this time, members of our Committee attempted to extract the main ideas that seemed to garner the greatest interest and concern from respondents to the surveys. In many instances, themes overlap across sections, resulting in duplication of similar ideas. We present the data around specific questions, more or less as they were asked in the survey(s), and then offer a short interpretive summary of that data, along with a listing of illustrative statements from the data, demonstrating those main ideas. In many instances, though not all, statements are indexed to a reference number in the database.

A: DEMOGRAPHICS / Respondents to the Participants Survey

A1: GENDER		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
MALE	34.7%	415
FEMALE	65.3%	782
<i>answered question</i>		1197

A2: AGE		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 18	0.1%	1
18-29	0.9%	10
30-44	2.4%	28
45-65	33.5%	387
+65	63.1%	728
<i>answered question</i>		1154

A3: Race/Ethnicity		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
African American	0.4%	5
Asian American	0.4%	5
Hispanic	1.3%	15
Native American	0.8%	9
Non-Hispanic Caucasian)	93.5%	1080
Multi-Racial	0.4%	5
Other (please specify):	3.1%	36
<i>answered question</i>		1155

A4: Educational Background:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
High School or Less	5.1%	59
Associate of Arts Degree	6.2%	71
Bachelors Degree	24.1%	277
Masters Degree	49.8%	572
Doctoral Degree	14.8%	170
<i>answered question</i>		1149

A5: How many years of your formal education took place in Catholic schools and institutions?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
none;	10.1%	171
1-2 years;	3.0%	35
3-4 years;	4.9%	57
5-8 years;	13.2%	152
9-12 years;	19.6%	226
More than 12 years;	49.1%	567
<i>answered question</i>		1154

A6: Which best describes you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Ordained (Bishop, Priest, Deacon);	6.6%	77
Member of a Religious Order (Not Ordained Sister, Brother, etc. ;)	6.4%	74
Lay Person, Single;	26.4%	306
Lay Person, Married;	60.6%	703
<i>answered question</i>		1160



B: Respondents' Experience of Being Catholic

We asked a series of quantitative as well as open-ended questions to assess participants' experience of the Church and how they viewed their relationship to it. The quantifiable questions are presented on this page, with successful pages providing a sampling of response to the open-ended questions. Over 87% of respondents indicated that they consider themselves a "practicing Catholic." A relatively small number represent the extremes of those who accept ALL of the Church's teachings (2.9%) and those who accept FEW of the Church's teachings (8%). The vast majority either accept MOST of the Church's teachings (40.6%) or SOME of the Church's teachings (38.5%)

B1: Think of your relationship with the Catholic Church. Which of the following sentences BEST describes you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I consider myself a "Practicing Catholic" and accept ALL of the Church's teachings;	2.9%	32
I consider myself a "Practicing Catholic" and accept MOST of the Church's teachings;	40.6%	452
I consider myself a "Practicing Catholic" and accept SOME of the Church's teachings;	38.5%	428
I consider myself a "Practicing Catholic" and accept FEW of the Church's teachings;	8.0%	89
I was raised catholic but now consider myself Catholic "in name" only;	1.1%	12
I consider myself a "resigned" or "former" Catholic who no longer practices my catholic faith;	1.5%	17
I consider myself a resigned or former catholic, but my values/spirituality are rooted in my Catholic experience;	6.9%	77
I have never been a Catholic;	0.4%	5
<i>answered question</i>		1112

B2: How frequently do you participate in Sunday Liturgy (Mass)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Weekly;	75.7%	835
At least twice a month;	10.1%	111
On average, once a month;	4.3%	47
Occasionally (less than 12 times a year);	3.5%	39
Rarely (not more than 4 times a year);	4.4%	48
Never;	2.1%	23
<i>answered question</i>		1103



B3: When did you first become a catholic?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Baptized as a Catholic from birth or early childhood;	93.0%	1036
Baptized or converted to the Catholic faith as a teen or minor under age 21;	2.2%	25
Baptized or converted to the Catholic faith as an adult above age 21;	3.6%	40
Other:	1.2%	13
<i>answered question</i>		1114

We asked the question, **What makes you happy about being a Catholic?** It is evident that participants love the church for many reasons. Most could not imagine leaving the church or being anything but catholic. They identify with the church for several key reasons that surfaced time and time again in the data. We share some of those.



1. The Universal Church Speaks to a Broken World.

The global reach of the Church serves as the symbol of unity in a fragmented world (36). The Church can unite people all over the world. The sacramental religion at its best, celebrates the grace present in earthy and tangible things; The Church has a world-wide reputation of caring for the poor; a two-thousand year history of witnessing to the message of Jesus and that has inspired art, music and literature throughout the centuries (282). The sense of mystery and history, of breadth and depth, of living locally with a global perspective (280). The Church affirms the value and importance of the physical world we live and invites us to help God finish creating the universe!

2. We value the Tradition of the Church in the best sense of the term.

Being part of a religious tradition that is thousands of years old and looms large in history (177). The sacraments take the profane and make them sacred (285). The call to relationship with Mystery, the universality of the tradition and its international, multi-cultural flavors ... satisfies and calls me to deepen my hunger for the Sacred (338).

3. We have high regard and expectation for meaningful liturgy.

Good liturgy is awesome (388)! Participating in good liturgy when the community is completely involved and the presider includes the community in the Eucharist is essential. In the context of the Communion of Saints it makes real a oneness with ancestors who handed on, despite considerable hardship in many instances, the Catholic tradition (369). The mass is very meaningful to me with the highlights being the Word being proclaimed, a thoughtful homily, and Communion (650).

4. The Church is a treasure of multi-layered symbols, music, stories, images and understanding.

Underlying the structural iteration of the RCC in the 21st century is a rich vein of spiritual wisdom and practice which are best expressed in the Gospels through wisdom teachers through the centuries (179). I inherited this treasure and I draw upon its limitless gifts to live at this time of history (204). The Church presents a depth and breadth of Catholic theology, a commitment to a sacramental life, social justice, a deep awareness of God's grace and its analogical imagination, a theology of Providence and Redemption, and a long and rich intellectual tradition (55). The treasure includes the richness of *Lectio Divina* and Centering Prayer, the historical contributions of the Church to Western Society, and the grace-filled fellowship of large and small ecclesia throughout the world. The core universality of our church is a powerful sign to all Christians and we have been the font from which unique new expressions of Christianity have emerged (681).

5. The sense of community flows from parish life. The Church is at its best with its commitment to social justice and programs that reach the poor and disenfranchised as well as the universality of the church educational system throughout the lifespan (540). Vatican II gave us a small glimpse of the possibilities for vibrant Catholic Communities. The church of my youth was a Church of "don't touch" awe (44). Connection to a faith community is an alternative way of approaching life, modeled on Jesus, the radicalness of love your enemy, all are welcome, and thus connecting the sacred to the ordinary a way of life (554). I feel a sense of a

place to pray together. Mostly I have loved small groups that have prayed together, had discussions together, done projects together. I feel we are often at our best in community (169).

6. We deeply value the richness of the Catholic “story” and the Church’s intellectual tradition.

The whole Catholic experience forms a dimension of education not available otherwise, encompassing the mystics, the Communion of Saints, the Eucharist, Vatican II, social and justice teaching. ... The stories of saints and sinners are very meaningful (427). I am encouraged by the example of some great Catholics like Dorothy Day, St. Francis of Assisi, Richard Rohr, Joan Chittister, John XXIII, Francis & Clare, Patrick, John O'Donohue, and Hildegard. The story of Jesus Christ and the mystery of the resurrection demonstrate God's abundant and unconditional love. I share with many other Catholics a deeply ingrained "sacramental imagination" to which Fr. Andrew Greeley alluded. Catholics have an abundance and variety of stories that are a natural part of the flow of their lives. I like that. I share with many other Catholics a deeply ingrained "sacramental imagination" of God that is found in these stories of our lives, just as much as he is found in the stories of scripture. (573)

7. Being Catholic Helps Us to Serve Others.

Many are inspired by examples of a lived-faith tradition, the gospel call for peace and social justice, and the witness to the poor. Many remain dedicated to the People of God despite leadership failures in the Church. They are strengthened by Word and Sacrament and are motivated by the action of fellow Catholics. Being Catholic roots me in the call to be for others, it challenges me to live the Gospel. It gives me a community that supports and calls me to be more (67). We are sustained by the gospel calls for peace and social justice and the core value of Eucharist (570). Sacramental practice feeds me, calls me to forgiveness, gives me a voice and binds me to others who will walk with me in communion (665). I work in the health profession ...my life/vocation is to serve others. I think the Catholic sense of the common good helped me decide to spend my life this way (84). Catholicism draws me out of the pervasive narcissism of American culture (771).

B5: Why People Choose to Stay in the Church

*We asked the question, **Why are you still a Catholic?** Despite the 30 million Americans raised Catholic who have left the Church in recent years, the vast majority of participants in the listening sessions have a deep commitment to remain within the Church as they seek to change it. Below are some of the most fertile quotes demonstrating this commitment to remain in the Church.*



1. The Church is like an old mansion with many rooms, providing a rich diversity of spiritual experience.

Catholicism is like an old mansion filled with many dimensions of experience (35). It is an inherited treasure that nourishes and guides me quite apart from hierarchical understandings and pronouncements (204). I am Catholic to the bone. I cannot stop being Catholic as I cannot stop breathing (177). Despite all its flaws, I think the Catholic Church still embodies a larger share of the truth than any other single religious tradition (178). The institutional church bothers me a lot, but I love the history of the church - the art, music and the magnificent churches I have seen in Europe. The church definitely does have a dark side, but the call to purposeful living and a hopeful attitude is ancient (525). Carry on my legacy. I owe a debt to my ancestry who lived and worked within the community, so that their service may never be in vain (458). It's the place where I find the genuine and essential attributes a person needs for a productive life. Its rich culture has been a jewel; no other institution/company could ever be/do the same (493).

2. *The Spirit's movement through Vatican II propels us to grow toward an authentic adult spirituality.*

I have the intelligence to know my faith. I am still a Catholic, because I have deep roots in post-Vatican II growth and openness to the Spirit such that a significant number of members have helped nourish me on my spiritual journey (441). I see the church as a portal through which people can grow in our ability to move closer to God (451). There are ways in which my participation in my local parish have very much helped me do that, so I value the catholic sensibilities and traditions that create that opportunity. I have a commitment to the church family, to those who are dissatisfied with the church, to those who have been hurt or harmed by the church. I am committed to working in and for the church, to make it a real Christian community (499). I am not part of the official church, but I am a member of the Catholic spiritual community that goes back to Apostolic times, trying to live out the teachings of the *Beatitudes* beginning with my family and extending to my community and beyond to the world (460). As a convert to Catholicism, I've "visited" many other Christian religions. Catholicism allows for freedom of conscience, non-literal translation of scripture and Christ present in the Eucharist (655).

3. *The Spirit's movement through Vatican II propels us to renew and transform our Catholic Church.*

I believe that our Church is very valuable, but needs to be reformed (337). The culture of clericalism from Rome to Boston, where I live, is destroying our Church (337). As a woman, the institutional Church demeans me, does not allow me to participate in ALL the sacraments, constantly decrees against my brain, as well as my body. I stay because of my family, the Eucharist, and the tradition (595). The church's position on women makes me full of anger. However, I am a very spiritual person who prays every day. Many of the teachings of the Catholic Church I still believe in (339). Only God knows and he keeps secrets. The preaching is very bad, the pastor is not a good shepherd, and since our former pastor is in prison for child molestation, I stay to help those who can't move on. I attend a Baptist church twice a month to get fed. I'm no longer being fed in the Catholic Church (746).

4. *Despite its shortcomings, we are resilient because the Church gives meaning and hope to our lives.*

I have the patience to seek out the treasure that exists in Catholicism beneath all the institutional, hierarchical, and clericalism that one encounters(356). Though it definitely does have a dark side, the call to purposeful living and a hopeful attitude is ancient. The institutional church bothers me a lot, but I love the history of the church, i.e. the art, music and magnificent churches I have seen in Europe. The selflessness of the saints, both living and dead, famous and just living quietly, make me realize that the church has called out the best in many throughout the centuries, and we should not concentrate solely on current scandals or ancient excesses. I have loved the Church most of my life. The church has called out the best in many throughout the centuries, and we should not concentrate solely on current scandals or ancient excesses (525).). I have great hope that there is still reason to believe that the church can be saved from its institutional self. I believe that the Holy Spirit does work in the world, even when we don't see how that is happening (367).

5. *It is OUR Church and we are in it for the Long Haul.*

The Holy Spirit will correct the horrendous errors of the Bishops and the Roman Hierarchy through the Catholic Laity (216). I am Catholic in my heart and soul but can't abide the hate and intolerance I witness in the church (483). I am too stubborn to go down without a constructive attempt to change the Church. It is my baptismal and Vatican II calling (552). I will not abandon the sinking ship because it is in great need of repair (260). I want to mend it (347). It is MY CHURCH, and there is much work to be done to "fix it" and many skilled and loving people working well together, to get the work done (249). Despite the inevitable ups and downs and apparent retrenchment from Vatican II, I have high hopes that the community of Catholics will prove to be fertile ground for evolving an institutional reality ever less concerned with Catholic identity and ever more concerned for a more fully "catholic" understanding of the People of God (405). I treasure my Catholic faith and although this Roman Catholic church is greatly flawed, and I am so close to giving up on it, no reform is possible if those of us who feel as I do simply leave the Church (159). I want to contribute to a shift that reinvigorates Catholicism as a practice that builds vibrant life within communities that can be seen, heard and witnessed (681).

6. We are sustained by meaningful experiences in parish life and Catholic Christian community.

My faith journey continues to deepen when I participate with the community of my parish in serving the Lord as I exit the "Servants Entrance" of my church each week to try to do His work as best I can (523). I belong to an inspiring and spirit-filled community that is separated from the diocesan structures, but operates according to Catholic tradition while moving forward into the future, rather than backwards ... all are welcome (265). A favorite author of mine says, "Democracy is a terrible system, but it's about eight times better than anything else we've got." I feel that way about Catholicism. I strongly believe that hidden beneath and despite all the regulations that the church now focuses on there is a great truth that we are the Body of Christ as we act in this world (579).

7. Our response to the call to discipleship lies at the core of what it means to be a faithful Catholic Christian.

We need all of us, priests, bishops and popes to walk in Jesus' sandals, not the Pope's Gucci shoes (613). Jesus lived among us human and divine. The Beatitudes summarizes the essence of our belief. The Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus along with the writings of the Bible and the History of the Church can nourish each of us to grow into a holistic person (444). Jesus said "do this in memory of me," (268). Hans Kung has said that the Church exists where Christians try to follow Jesus' ways. That is a good definition for the church today (152).

B6: The People Want a Church That Better Witnesses To Gospel Values

*We asked in the Listening Sessions, **How can the Church more effectively demonstrate Gospel values?** There was overwhelming sentiment suggesting the Church needs fundamental re-alignment, starting with a resounding call to the hierarchy to make the works of charity, justice and mercy more central to their ministry in the Church. The "soundings of the People" underscored the following themes:*



1. The Church should preach the gospel and lead by example.

Jesus calls us to a spirituality based on joining each other at the table, an egalitarian table with room and love for all. Sins were confessed openly and sinners were embraced and restored to communion with others by the grace of God (as expressed by others). That means making communion available to anyone who wants a place at the table; dropping human-made stuff (i.e., celibate male priests, hierarchy, etc.) and using all the energy to preach without ceasing the message of love, love, love (444). The core of the Gospel is about the liberation of the oppressed and being fully alive as human beings (78). Our pastors & leaders need to reflect those gospel values first. It makes no sense to say we're for the poor, etc., and then everyone sees the high-end vehicles, condos, & homes that they acquire (706).

2. The Church should more boldly proclaim social justice.

The Pope and bishops have to speak and more importantly act to promote social justice and human rights on the local and global level as well as on the ecclesiastical level. The church should preach the gospel and constantly set an example of moral behavior for the world by giving expression to the full range of Christian values (270). This has to come from the top. The Church and each of its members have to look into the heart, look into the mind, and ask how we have changed (or not changed), and return to the source and make another leap forward. Re-sourcement and aggiornamento have to be a never-ending process (359). The Church's advocacy for justice needs to include a genuine love for the Earth and all Creation (68).

3. The Church should model a culture of peace and social justice within its own institution.

The Catholic Church needs to be more involved in modeling its great tradition of Social Teaching (324). In Catholic social teaching, it is important to make decisions in a way that every voice matters in the public forum. There is a recognizable disconnect between the hierarchy and those in the pew in regard to equality and justice and notions of subsidiarity and collegiality (226). The church needs to stop blindly following "what has

been" and start acknowledging some of the challenging realities of what it means to be human, i.e. being gay isn't a matter of choice nor is it unhealthy, some women do have a call to priesthood, and pedophile priests and priests with mistresses exist and need to be dealt with, not hidden away and ignored (205). The hierarchy must consider the full range of Christian morality rather than focusing obsessively on(270).

4. The Church must join the world in the movement to democracy, participation and inclusion.

The structure of governance must change and come into the 21st Century (460). It must become democratic in its structures and inclusive in its practices (638). It must allow laypeople to participate in the running of the church (739). The Catholic Church needs to dump its medieval structure and become an inclusive institution (242). Shed the earthly trappings of monarchy and medieval kings (332). Get back to Jesus' simple approach to working for the reign of God (368). Move towards democratic practices in the selection and ordination of priests, bishops, cardinals and popes (401). The dreary mantra, "the Church is not a democracy" must give way to adopting the best a culture has to offer (685).

5. The local Church should be a beacon of the love of Jesus in the community.

Its doors need to be open to welcome everyone who comes in with a sincere interest in learning about the love of God and His Church (395). Focus on the spirit vs. the institution. Focus on the gospel model of inclusion of all, including married priests and women priests. Eucharist must be available for all who believe in Jesus (10). Get the "sensus fidelium" by mandating synods with the full participation of lay men and women in addition to clergy and bishops (15). Move away from protecting institutional reputations and enforcing policy, and move to the margins to create solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

6. Reform the Structure of the Institutional Church.

When church structures, policies and practices exclude people, it works against the Gospel message. Those structures, policies and practices need to be reformed (78). The Catholic Church, as modeled by its leaders, needs to end its personal and professional prejudice against other religions, its racism, and its discrimination against women and sexual minorities. Hate and prejudice do not belong in our church or in our world! Church leaders need to have Jesus as their role model rather than corporation leaders (506). More openness is required for church participation and sacraments. It has become a business that is little related to John baptizing Jesus in the river Jordan (466). Join with other institutions in taking on the social issues of our time, including war, immigration policy, poverty, etc. (717).

7. Dismantle the clerical culture.

There is a basic culture that must change in the Church. Relationships in the church are skewed. The laity is left out of every meaningful decision (377). We have a caste system (laity, religious, priests, bishops) which creates tensions and prevents us from loving and caring for one another (517). We must reverse the disease of corrupt and abusive clericalism (673). A big step would be to allow for meaningful dialogue where all concerned truly value the other as made in the image of God (624). Rome and clericalism must give up its addiction to wealth, privilege, and institutional elitism and arrogance (350). The Church's hierarchy should trust in the Spirit to move through the laity and move forward with the Vatican II vision and understanding of Church as the People of God (236). The hierarchy needs to recognize its own dysfunction and its fixation on rules, secrecy, authority, exclusiveness, etc. Once they do so, they will turn to the laity and religious for guidance and the rest will follow, i.e. optional celibacy, ordination of women, deliberative parish and financial councils, inclusion of remarried Catholics, same-sex marriage, etc. (59). One simply CANNOT preach one message and continue to act so unjustly within its own walls and in opposition to the world and expect to be any kind of reflection of the life and teachings (737). Power must be diffused from the Vatican down to all the people of God, the priesthood of the laity (418). The Church should allow its history to be its own witness, particularly by unpacking its promotion of misogyny to achieve a clerical elitism that models male domination in religious and corporate circles. It needs to recreate an alternate narrative (671).

8. Trust the Laity and Engage them in Dialogue.

The faithful should have a say in choosing the pastor, as well as the bishops. Let's really talk about the shortage of priests honestly and realistically, and consider what will happen to Sunday liturgy and the sacraments as the number of ordained men decreases (542). Allow for meaningful dialogue where all concerned truly valued the other as made in the image of God (624). If the hierarchy could get over its fear of the laity, trust the Holy Spirit to get on with Her work of inspiration, and believe that we are willing to do our best, there would be far more love and respect flowing for human dignity (819). Collaboration between the clergy and laity, not just in Church governance, but in service together would present a powerful witness to the world of how people of faith can genuinely make a difference for the betterment of people everywhere. (732)

B7: What the People Find to be Most Disappointing and Disturbing

*Participants were asked, **What most disappoints you about the Church?** Among the most common response were the following:*

- dishonesty in dealing with the crime of child abuse and the nearly universal lack of empathy for victims;
- secrecy, hypocrisy, and lack of accountability and transparency;
- clericalism which allows the protection of abusers in the face of manifest criminality;
- closed-minded rigidity, patriarchy, sexism, triumphalism, elitism and arrogance;
- an atmosphere of fear promoted by the hierarchy, i.e. the silencing of theologians, the threat of dismissal among lay church employees who dissent, and even the prospect of excommunication;
- sexism, homophobia, a feudal system, and refusal to accept scientific research;
- failure to accept collegiality and disregard for the views and voice of the faithful;
- retrenchment to pre-Vatican II ecclesiology;

We posed a similar question to Leaders and Facilitators of Listening Sessions. They were asked to identify what they heard the laity describe as the most “disturbing issues.” The reports demonstrate particular resonance around the following themes.

1. The hierarchy is unwilling to enter into genuine dialogue with the laity around key issues:

The most overwhelming issue echoed throughout Listening Sessions is the hierarchy's unwillingness to hear what the laity has to say about real issues that impact the faith and morals of real people in the church. For the vast majority of participants in the listening sessions, the hierarchy is remote, disengaged and increasingly irrelevant to the faith lives of rank-and-file Catholics. Many see this failure to engage the faithful as undermining the promise of a more inclusive Church that is so central to the reforms called for by Vatican II. This urgency to engage the Bishops in dialogue is particularly centered on the following issues:

- Expanding the role of women in the church;
- Full acceptance and inclusion of divorced and remarried Catholics;
- The use of condoms for individuals with AIDS;
- Acceptance of birth control methods beyond Natural Family Planning;
- Allowing for a married priesthood of both men and women to serve to God's people;
- Recognition and full acceptance of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered) community; Eucharist open to all who gather around the table;

The following comments illustrate this perception that Laity feels they are not heard by the Bishops:

We have built the churches and kept the lights on, yet are not consulted or empowered in governance issues or financial issues. The Vatican should tithe too (1.20)! Bishops are seen as remote from the people and their real challenges in modern life (1.31). The hierarchy is not interested in our experience and wisdom (1.64).

The tensions are between an hierarchical “imperial “ kind of church governance that assumes it has all the answers and the better educated lay people who have been and are willing to continue to be involved in and support the Church if only they are listened to seriously (1.99). The hierarchy comes across as being insensitive to human suffering, particularly the sexual abuse of children, exploitation of women, AIDS, and homosexuality (1.128). There is a distinct new breed of Roman Catholic fundamentalism evidenced in the retreat of the official Church into past doctrine and tradition and the lack of courage to confront the present age (2.4). Church hierarchy does not appreciate the gifts given to the laity and their wisdom (2.57). The hierarchy is out of touch with the community and gospel values and is more concerned with “rules” than compassion (2.109). The institutional Church seems very exclusionary, particularly of the divorced and remarried and of gays and lesbians (3.53). The hierarchy demonstrates lack of respect for the intelligence, sincerity and good will of the laity. Bishops are simply unwilling to even consider a role for decision-making by the laity. This is especially true regarding the role of that laity can bring to managing funds and the day-to-day administration of the parish (5.38).

2. The hierarchy’s leadership with regard to dealing with the priest pedophilia scandal has failed.

This failure applies not only to the massive cover-up of clerical sexual abuse “to avoid scandal” but also to a devastating silence about social and moral issues (1.4). The bland indifference of the ordained (especially the hierarchy) to the suffering of children and the venerable who are being/have been abused by the ordained (1.63). The failure to release the entire list of priests who sexually abused children in my Archdiocese keeps children at risk; all pedophile priests should be laicized and removed from ministry and jailed (1.70). Rather than evangelizing the world, the Vatican seems to be working toward a more and more defensive “fortress” church, closed in upon itself. In the interests of becoming more Catholic (orthodox) it has become less Christian as it’s focused more on exclusion rather than Inclusion (1.79). The institutional Church preaches morality and justice but the clergy clearly and systematically hide the abuse of children and women throughout history. The magisterium still seeks to shelter the guilty from any active movement toward restitution, apology or restorative justice (3.23). As the result of clericalism, clergy abusers are protected while victims are shunned; the church’s reputation appears to be more important than children; clericalism is marked by immature and unreasonable attitudes towards sexuality; the result is rampant hypocrisy (3.97). The Pope and most bishops have never dealt honestly and compassionately with the survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Compassion and support are preached by them but not lived by them. (5.33)

3. There is deep regret that the spirit of Vatican II has been ignored and suppressed.

A Pope and 2,600 bishops gathered at an ecumenical council which lasted over three years during which they prayed for guidance, wrote, argued, rewrote, and then voted almost unanimously on sixteen documents which apparently are to be ignored. Those of us who take seriously the teachings of Vatican II are considered “anti-Catholic.” Dismay about the institutionalism of the Church and lack of gospel values (1.143); our hierarchy is increasingly rigid and closed minded (1.124); the church seems to be a “non-prophet” organization while the hierarchy seems mostly interested in a profit organization with all the power at the top (2.10). The Church is too doctrinaire, too judgmental, too out of touch (2.32). The *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* no longer studies and consults widely on real problems and issues statements on matters impacting peace and economic justice (2.40). The Church has retrenched to the Council of Trent with increasing emphasis on the authority of the hierarchy and creeping infallibility. The Bishops think and act as if Canon Law trumps the Gospel (2.95). People are heartbroken about the systematic dismantling of Vatican II. We have reverted to a strict top-down regime with no openness, no voice for the clergy and laity (2.129). Many of the new clergy are very conservative and pre-Vatican II in their thoughts.

4. There are many violations of Canon Law carried out by the hierarchy, particularly in the context of proclaiming teachings without attaining the *sensus fidelium*, i.e., the input and reception by priests and lay persons.

5. There is deep concern about the exodus of Catholics from parish life, especially young people. People are concerned that young people are leaving the Church because of the dominance of rules over relevance (1.25). We are losing the young people (1.135). Catholics are leaving the Church because they are tired of injustice and hypocrisy (1.103). There is much sadness among some who have been so disheartened by the action of our church that they are ready to abandon it all together (1.138). Yet, there are so many Catholics that just don't care and don't want to hear about it (2.137). The church is purposefully getting smaller ... and going backwards (2.2). We lament that our children and grandchildren have left the church (2.21). We are losing young church members. We have failed our youth miserably and must concentrate on them (5.41). More and more people, young and old, are seeing the church as irrelevant, and are dismissing it in their lives (5.59). The Church needs to be concerned about the large number of young people (20 somethings) no longer involved with the church. It needs to listen to these young people and find out from them what can be done to renew their interest and commitment to the Church (5.4).

6. There is real concern that priestly vocations mandating celibacy, and the consequential lack of priests, will translate into less access to the Eucharist. The hierarchy's continued focus on maintaining a celibate, male clergy that seeks to preserve its prerogatives and privileges is a major concern. There were strong convictions in our group that the Church must bring an end to barring women from full participation in the Church's ministry (1.82). We continue to systematically exclude candidates for the priesthood due to the continued insistence on celibacy and unwillingness to consider the ordination of women....and most critically-- that these concerns are not discussed (2.72). The Eucharist is becoming less accessible because of church leaders' insistence on a celibate, male priesthood. Please don't sacrifice the Eucharist on the altar of celibacy (4.96).

B8: *If Only I Could Speak to My Bishop*

*One of the most fertile questions posed in the Listening Sessions asked, **If you had an opportunity to speak to your Bishop about your greatest hopes for the Church, what would you say?** The most salient themes include the following:*

1. We need to become a more open and relevant community of faith, willing to ask tough questions.

We are dying and need to resuscitate the Church by becoming an open, inviting Church (538). The Church has often been described as arriving on the scene a little late and a little out of breath (310). Realize that much of what currently passes as truth in the Church is badly flawed; the Bishop should allow and give sanction to legitimate questioning of traditional teachings. "Faith has need of the whole truth." (Teilhard de Chardin) (609). One can only establish authority if it is freely accepted by those who intelligently accept such authority (372). Honor the gifts of ordination that are rising up in the voice of the people (among women and married men). Stop fighting what was the norm in the early church but ignored in this century (677).

2. Create structures that invite regular and formal input from the laity.

Allow for healthy differences to be acknowledged and explored for their richness and sacredness. Lead your people from Gospel values and deep spirituality rather than from a narrow range of moral positions(28). Use the seamless garment approach in addressing broader issues (172). Emulate Bishop John England of Charleston, SC (circa 1820). This Irish immigrant understood America. He established two legislative "houses,"



The House of Priests and House of Laity with himself as the executive. No rules were promulgated without consent of both houses. The Bishop could veto the action but the houses (like Congress) could override. Start by having a diocesan council made up of people elected to represent their parish (481). Open your heart to the gospel. Have courage to enact its message. Stop practicing misogyny. Stop choosing the institution over the gospel of love that Jesus taught (789).

3. Call for Open discussion on controversial issues.

The Church can be a beacon for human rights and peace. The laity's voice must be heard in open dialogue with the hierarchy (487). Please look outward, not downward or inward, or backward either, in your daily workings. Visit with us, dialogue, touch, initiate, encourage, participate and enjoy it all! (489). The collegiality and subsidiarity promised at Vatican II must be restored or the Church, as we know it, will eventually die and the hierarchy of today will have been responsible for its demise (408). Rethink infallibility and absolutist mindsets regarding structure and doctrine. Don't feel threatened by relativism, trust laity as collaborators - not the enemy. Be open and transparent, be willing to risk and be less resistant to urgent need for radical change, i.e., married priests, women's ordination, same sex marriage, artificial birth control, abortion in desperate cases (721).

4. Do not get caught up in the ways of the world (power, prestige and possessions).

Perhaps you cannot see how much you and your magisterial colleagues reflect the very same Pharisees and Sadducees that Christ was justly angry with (340). Power and authority and privilege have a way of insulating, isolating, and deadening people (358). Hopefully, bishops will replace their fear of the Vatican with its obsessive concern for power, control, "orthodoxy" and obedience, and replace it with an attitude and practice of acceptance, inclusion, and trust. Faith only requires that unity be limited to the barest of essentials, and that for love to reign in the church, acceptance of the widest diversity is necessary (442). Remember that love operates around a truly open table (452). My hopes for the RCC are for gender equality in the priesthood and the teaching of ministerial gifts for all. In my church we would all be ordained deacons as we are all called to serve the People of God. Return to the vision of Vatican II. (689)

5. Be courageous and act out of compassion and conviction, not fear.

The bishops are all co-conspirators' by their silence and acceptance of the Vatican's version of the 'good old boys' network. They have done great harm to the Church and the People of God by answering only to the Pope who controls their actions. The need to start answering to the People of God and protecting them first (408). Stop majoring in minor things (307). Stop the posturing and stand up and say 'enough is enough.'" Become an activist for change in line with the principles of Vatican II (507). I would wish that we could reflect a more Gospel-oriented, inclusive model of church, closer to the original communities, yet flexible for our times (344). Have the courage to change direction. The growing chasm is real and it's foolish to think otherwise (478). I would say this is a golden time to really "go forth and teach all nations." The Church truly needs to reach out to all. That means following Christ's extraordinary compassion for those on the margins of society, the lost sheep, those hurting, as well as all who are comfortable within the Church. Get up in the pulpit and explain to everyone that the Church is quite fallible and give historical examples. Pledge to triple the number of priests in the USA within two years through elevating married deacons, bringing back married priests and identifying lay people in every parish who could be ordained after a year or two of study. More priests will mean reopening many closed parishes. Make the Church far more decentralized. Let the parishes do more of the outreach and human services. Cut back dramatically on diocesan administrative structure. Welcome everyone who believes in Christ to receive Communion. Do away with the hurtful restrictions (473). The Church should take the lead in finding new symbols and ways of being Church which would engage people in meaningful ways (329).

6. The Bishop of a community should have input from the community.

The days of appointments from on high are a remnant of medieval times and it needs to come to end. The hope for the future church is that every Catholic's voice may be heard and listened to, respected for each individual believer's needs in the community, the freedom to disagree and the right to all the sacraments

including ordination (632). My greatest hopes for the Church at this time is that our leadership be less monarchical and more reflective of both the inclusivity of Jesus and the democracy/representation of our local context. I yearn for a return to the Vatican II promises of renaissance, where laity are educated and included in their spiritual journey, where our understanding of our faith develops and matures (756).

7. The Bishop must be a pastor, who lives among his people.

You must re-imagine the church as a communion of communions created by people who are all equal in dignity and who are sacramental presences of God in the world. You should create structures that honor that dignity and revere that divine presence in and among your people (222). Honor the gifts of ordination that are rising up in the voice of the people. Stop fighting what has been in the early church and ignored in this century (677). You should preach love, not trying to make everything black or white. In that way the Church can be open to new developments in science concerning the physical & psychological development of humans. The Church tradition needs to consider this. I would hope that the Church can become relevant to young people today (227).

C: A Sampling of “BIG IDEAS” that came out of the Listening Sessions

Participants were asked in the beginning of the survey to first identify some of the “big ideas” they most remember from the Listening Session experience. We provide a small sampling of ten themes. There were countless others!



- 1. Create a community of equals**, focused on meeting the needs of all. Recognize, embrace diversity and eliminate discrimination by recognizing the rights and equality of women, gays/lesbians and people of color; Singing ALL ARE WELCOME is aggravating because it is not true in reality.
- 2. Develop a theology of human sexuality** that relies on the lived experience of real persons. Address moral issues such as sexuality, birth control, and sexual orientation in a more realistic and just manner. Refocus from "Right to Life before birth" to "Valuing life after birth" amid ways to create dignified end of life processes. Get in touch with the rest of society; Please don't call my son or daughter "disordered" and "misguided." They're my children and they are also a creation of God.
- 3. The church should divest itself of a significant portion of its wealth** and endow programs geared toward systematic change that helps the poor help themselves. Do away with the expensive and elaborate "trappings" worn by the Hierarchy! Instead, setup up food pantries and health clinics for the poor; while the laity should be asked to contribute money and time to help the poor, the Church leadership, including the Pope, should set the example. Christ did not live in a palace. Perhaps selling just one item in the vault would make a substantial difference in a world crisis.
- 4. A radical rethinking of the priesthood and the function of bishops is necessary. Tradition is NOT Gospel.** Open the ordained ministry to all the baptized. In the Ecumenical Council of 325 it was declared that a priest was not validly ordained unless the community made the selection. Popes and Bishops were chosen by the people at large. This practice is necessary today. Priests need to be part of the real world: let them marry! The current formation process for the priesthood is unrealistic and has created a generation of attention seeking, power hungry, self-anointed superstars. Alternative ways to make this possible: part-time clergy who also have another profession; people who are trained for shorter periods of time and who can perform certain sacraments but not others; etc. There are many models from which we can get ideas (e.g. thriving Protestant

congregations, religious orders, etc). Do away with the term “Laity” and replace with simply “the Baptized.” We take exception to the statement made when an ordained person is “laicized”. It is painful to hear the words. “The ordained becomes simply like a lay person. The Latin for Laity is ‘Left-over crumbs.’ We need to dissolve the class distinctions in our church, eliminate cleric, lay etc. The distinctions are more polarizing than beneficial.

5. *The future of the Church lies in small Christian communities.* Return to the spirit of the original Christian communities, where everyone was equal; we need a grassroots movement of small communities and house churches that start enacting the change they want to see in the Church. We need a “primer” on Vatican II.

6. *Church leadership has lost credibility; the bishops must be made honest and accountable;* The hierarchy is out of control with hubris and power. The Bishops should be calling Synods for all the faithful to participate. There should be a Lay Synod every 10 years, and a resounding call for Vatican III! Most seemed to believe that there was virtually no honesty and integrity left in the official church. There is, rather, a preeminent preoccupation with protecting the institutional church at all costs, and an unsavory concern for wealth and power. The clerical, “old-boys club” is getting in the way of the gospel. Much greater transparency and accountability is needed in finances and stewardship at parish, diocesan, and Vatican levels; an end to secrecy in all matters, especially personnel matters; more vocal opposition to budget cuts and reduced services to the poor and disenfranchised is needed. When a recommendation for term limits for the Pope and Bishops was put forth in our session, it resulted in applause from the entire group. There was a strong feeling that John Paul II lasted far too long in the papacy, with negative consequences for the entire church.

7. *All Catholics have a right to receive Eucharist.* The Eucharist is not a weapon to control or give as a reward. It is food for the journey of life. If there is not a male priest readily available there should be options available for others to break bread and share it with the baptized faithful. A baptized faithful should not be denied Eucharist because his/her conscience has led him/her to an opinion different from that of the hierarchy. We are told not to judge for only God can judge. Everyone seemed to resonate with the saying expressed by one group, "Don't sacrifice Eucharist on the altar of celibacy."

8. *Church Governance should reflect more inclusive leadership elections and possible term limits.* The job description of bishop needs to be revisited. “Pastoral” became the guiding word in reworking the description. Also, the bishop is a product of his-her community, chosen by the community, not someone sent from an isolated, distant place such as Rome. Awareness of hierarchical hypocrisy throughout the world has increased. Most Catholics want an end to the celibate priesthood (10). There is a call to great aspiration for simplification within the Catholic Church and for less show of triumph and power in appearance (36).

9. *The office of bishop need not be tied to the clerical state.* The people concluded we need a broader understanding of this office. It can be occupied by a male or female, single or married, cleric or lay, gay or straight. The people went on to say there is need to dissolve the class distinction between cleric and lay. At this time, it's causing too much isolation. What flows from this recognition is the understanding of the application of inclusivity. Its advocacy brings people closer to the heart of gospel engagement. They are not merely “pray, pay and obey” Catholics, but people with intelligence, creativity and imagination. Talents exist not simply on paper, but actually are to be engaged in the formation of who we are. The top down process has to stop; this is a very important point (33). There is growing recognition of the need for less of a hierarchical approach and greater participation by the laity in all matters and decisions in the Church (35).

10. *We're not leaving, so we should lead!*

PART D: Focus on Issues of Governance, Leadership and Structural Reform

Respondents were asked to consider a series of "needs statements" impacting issues of governance, leadership and structural reform in the Church, and to rate each as to its relative importance to the future of the Catholic Church for the next generation. Respondents could also include optional comments following each statement. The Likert Scale rating is as follows:

- Not Important=1;*
- Somewhat Important=2;*
- Very important=3;*
- Critically important=4;*
- No Opinion = 0;*

The *Rating Average* is based on the *Response Count* minus the number of “no opinion” responses. The 20 statements are listed below in the order of highest score down to lowest;



#8 Greater leadership role for Women in the Church;							
	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
	4	21	173	827	3	3.78	1028

#9 More laity involved in local parish leadership and planning;							
	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
	6	33	254	731	5	3.67	1029

#19 More dialogue and collaborative decision-making between LAITY and their local PRIESTS;							
	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
	10	33	268	708	7	3.64	1026

#13 Greater financial transparency and accountability within MY DIOCESE;							
	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
	9	55	236	703	20	3.63	1023

#20 More dialogue and collaborative decision-making between LAITY and their local BISHOP;							
Answer Options	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
	15	50	263	675	14	3.59	1017

#11 More input from laity in the selection of their BISHOP;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
21	66	229	697	14	3.58	1027	

#14 Empowerment of Parish Councils beyond simply serving the pastor in an "advisory" role;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
13	67	286	640	18	3.54	1024	

#10 More input from laity in the selection of their local parish PASTOR;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
18	70	277	647	10	3.53	1022	

#16 Empowerment of Diocesan Pastoral Councils beyond simply an "advisory" role to the Bishop;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
19	66	295	595	38	3.50	1013	

#3 Ordination of Women;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
27	74	290	622	14	3.49	1027	

#18 More dialogue and collaborative decision-making between PRIESTS and their BISHOP;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
20	73	309	565	61	3.47	1028	

#2 Ordination of Married Men;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
35	94	314	586	7	3.41	1036	

#7 Expansion of professionally trained lay ministers employed by the Church;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
18	125	381	470	34	3.31	1028	

#17 More dialogue and collaborative decision-making AMONG PRIESTS;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
31	112	358	453	73	3.29	1027	

#12 Greater financial transparency and accountability within MY PARISH;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
67	138	260	522	37	3.25	1024	

#6 Establishment of the Permanent Diaconate for Women;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
77	158	311	435	40	3.13	1021	

#15 Independent incorporated parishes, governed by an elected lay Board of Directors;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
104	137	261	318	196	2.97	1016	

#4 More Vocations to Religious life, i.e. vowed men/women in religious life;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
123	454	295	111	40	2.40	1023	

#5 More vocations of men to the Permanent Diaconate;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
243	366	229	135	52	2.26	1025	

#1 More Vocations to the celibate Priesthood;							
Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critically Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
544	304	94	63	26	1.68	1031	

E: Toward a Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

As the CBRR has gone through at least 4 revisions over the last two years, various listening sessions were exposed to different renderings of the CBRR as it was being developed. Nonetheless, we did encourage all listening sessions to conduct dialogues around a consistent set of 11 statements that reflect some application of one or more elements of the developing CBRR. Participants in the sessions were then given the opportunity in the *Participants Survey* to rate the degree to which they *personally* agreed or disagreed with each statement. Many included optional comments for each statement, but are not reflected in this limited presentation of the data. The Likert scale in the *Participants Survey* was as follows:

Strongly Disagree=1; Generally Disagree=2; Generally Agree=3; Strongly Agree=4;

The *Rating Average* is based on the *Response Count* minus the number of “no opinion” responses.

We begin the analysis of each statement by first reporting the data from the perspective of personal *opinion* as documented in the *Participants Survey*. We note that virtually all 11 statements scored above 3.60, demonstrating Strong Agreement on each. Nonetheless, some resonate more or less strongly than others and garner a higher or lower score. Accordingly, we list each of the 11 statements identified by the number in which they appeared on the survey listing, but in the order beginning with the highest rating down to the lowest rating.

Analysis of the 11 CBRR Application Statements from the Participants’ Survey:

#10 The Church has an important role to play in addressing the needs of the world through social justice, peacemaking, service, and charity. (CBRR #10)							
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
3	2	60	1254	3	3.95	1322	

#11 Recognizing and affirming the diversity of all God's people, the Church should be inclusive and welcoming of ALL persons who seek a religious home in Jesus. (CBRR #2 and #5)							
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
4	5	92	1224	4	3.91	1329	

#9 If accused of wrong doing, Catholics, like all human beings, have a right to their good name and justice by an impartial third party. (CBRR #6)							
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
4	5	105	1116	31	3.90	1261	

#8 Regarding Church matters, Catholics should be free to exercise respectful speech, respectful dissent and public assembly. (CBRR #4 and #9)							
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
6	5	110	1184	5	3.89	1310	

#6 Leadership in the Church should be open to all Catholics who have the appropriate skills and training and are called forth by the community. (CBRR #3)						
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
5	10	148	1151	8	3.86	1322

#4 Catholics have a right to a life-giving Christian community and pastoral care from the Church. (CBRR #2)						
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
7	12	122	1146	16	3.87	1303

#7 Catholics should have a voice in decisions about their Church's money, parish closings, parish policies, and the selection of their pastoral leaders. (CBRR #7)						
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
5	10	165	1163	5	3.85	1348

#5 Catholics have a responsibility to learn about their faith so that they can contribute to the life of the Church. (CBRR #1 & #8)						
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
1	3	175	1114	10	3.86	1303

#1 All Catholics, by virtue of their baptism, have a right to the Eucharist;.(CBRR #2 & #5)						
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
23	22	141	1135	12	3.81	1333

#3 If I pray and study about an important decision, I have a right to follow my own conscience; (CBRR #1)						
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
9	15	240	1076	15	3.78	1355

#2 All Catholics have a right to all the sacraments, including Holy Orders. (CBRR #5)						
Strongly Disagree	Generally Disagree	Generally Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count
29	38	232	984	31	3.69	1314

Further Analysis of the CBRR 11 “application” statements from the Leader-Facilitator Reports:

We also provided a means for leaders and small group facilitators in the listening sessions to provide feedback on the *quality of the dialogue* on each of the above 11 statements to the degree each statement may have been addressed in their session. Leaders and Facilitators were asked to make

two assessments about the *quality of the conversation* as they observed it unfold in their session or small group discussion:

1. How engaging was the conversation on each statement? Engagement was assessed on a scale of 1.00 (Minimally Engaging); 2.00 (Moderately Engaging) and 3.00 (Very Engaging); the overall “Engagement Rating” is the average of all responses (less those who did not discuss that question).

2. To what degree was there consensus around the statement? Consensus was rated on a range of response options including degrees of agreement, disagreement, division and confusion; We present the results of that analysis in the order in which the questions were listed in the surveys:

#1 All Catholics by virtue of their baptism have a right to the Eucharist;			
MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
16	18	52	48
Engagement Rating:			2.42
Responses:			134
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED;		28.0%	28
We STRONGLY AGREED		68.0%	68
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		2.0%	2
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		1.0%	1
We were VERY CONFUSED		1.0%	1
<i>answered question</i>			100

#2 All Catholics have a right to all the sacraments, including Holy Orders;			
MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
4	25	67	35
Engagement Rating:			2.66
Responses:			131
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		32.7%	37
We STRONGLY AGREED		61.9%	70
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		5.3%	6
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.0%	0
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			113

#3 If I pray and study about an important decision, I have a right to follow my own conscience;			
MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
8	30	47	50
Engagement Rating:			2.46
Responses:			135
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		27.5%	28
We STRONGLY AGREED		70.6%	72
We generally DISAGREED		1.0%	1
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were VERY DIVIDED		1.0%	1
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.0%	0
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			102

#4 Catholics have a right to a life-giving Christian community and pastoral care from the Church;			
MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
4	29	50	40
Engagement Rating:			2.55
Responses:			123
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		33.7%	34
We STRONGLY AGREED		65.3%	66
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		1.0%	1
We were somewhat DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.0%	0
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			101

#5 Catholics have a responsibility to learn about their faith so that they can contribute to the life of the Church;

MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
14	24	33	56
Engagement Rating:			2.27
Responses:			127
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		40.0%	34
We STRONGLY AGREED		57.6%	49
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		1.2%	1
We were somewhat DIVIDED		1.2%	1
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.0%	0
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			85

#6 Leadership in the Church should be open to all Catholics who have the appropriate skills and are called by the community;

MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
5	24	80	27
Engagement Rating:			2.69
Responses:			136
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		25.8%	32
We STRONGLY AGREED		71.0%	88
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		1.6%	2
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.8%	1
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.8%	1
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			124

#7 Catholics should have a voice in decisions about their Church's money, parish closings, parish policies, and the selection of leaders;

MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
8	26	76	25
Engagement Rating:			2.62
Responses:			135
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		25.4%	32
We STRONGLY AGREED		73.0%	92
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		1.6%	2
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.0%	0
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			126

#8 Regarding church matters, Catholics should be free to exercise respectful speech, respectful dissent and public assembly;

MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
4	28	62	40
Engagement Rating:			2.62
Responses:			134
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		27.0%	30
We STRONGLY AGREED		72.1%	80
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		0.9%	1
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.0%	0
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			111

#9 If accused of wrong doing, Catholics, like all human beings, have a right to their good name and justice by an impartial third party;

MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
8	23	17	81
Engagement Rating:			2.19
Responses:			129
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		42.2%	27
We STRONGLY AGREED		53.1%	34
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		1.6%	1
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		1.6%	1
We were VERY CONFUSED		1.6%	1
<i>answered question</i>			64

#10 The Church has an important role to play in addressing the needs of the world through service, charity, and social justice;

MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
6	33	59	31
Engagement Rating:			2.54
Responses:			129
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		25.9%	30
We STRONGLY AGREED		74.1%	86
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.0%	0
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			116

#11 The Church should welcome anyone who seeks a religious home in Jesus;

MINIMALLY Engaging	MODERATELY Engaging	VERY Engaging	We did not Discuss
12	27	49	43
Engagement Rating:			2.42
Responses:			131
Consensus:		Response Percent	Response Count
We generally AGREED		29.1%	30
We STRONGLY AGREED		70.9%	73
We generally DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We STRONGLY DISAGREED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were VERY DIVIDED		0.0%	0
We were somewhat CONFUSED		0.0%	0
We were VERY CONFUSED		0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>			103

PART F: *Action Steps & Prospects for the Future*

We conclude our report by overviewing gleanings from the data that speak to the future and the challenges that lie ahead.

Emerging Signs of Hope

1. *Age doesn't matter.*

Even though we seem to be a majority of people between 45 and 65+ years of age, we are models for the young. The youth are our hope and they are watching and listening. Said a young adult at a Listening Session, "You are our role models. We need you!"

2. *Participants in Listening Sessions demonstrated a capacity to think for themselves.*

That we were there, nearly 500 of us, educated, articulate Catholics (including several ordained clergy), and would pay to spend a beautiful autumn day talking about our Church, its needs and challenges, is testimony that the Spirit of Hope is alive (16). Things are not the same; there is change in the air (13). The pastor attended the entire listening session and was favorably impressed. He is well regarded by the people and is known for good homilies and teaching the Scriptures (22). Laity is moving beyond the clergy in thought, practice and level of involvement (7). A couple of priests were present confirming their belief in the message of Vatican II in spite of the possibility of reprisal from the archbishop (43). We need to encourage them and other priests who share the same sentiments (58).

3. *Support for the validation of ordination of women to the ministry of priest and bishop.*

As a gathering of Catholics interested in "Church as a Community of Equals," much hope centered on the archeological evidence that testifies to women priests and bishops in the early Church. Images to support this historical reality include frescos from Christian catacombs, mosaics in churches, tapestries, and figures on sarcophagi. The current Church hierarchy maintains that women cannot be ordained because that is not part of our church tradition. Yet we have evidence dating from the early church to the 8th century and beyond. We have hope that facts will prevail! (1)

4. *We love our Church and we want to be part of reclaiming it.*

If the institution would fail us in such ways as through harmful man-made rules, censorship and silencing of people who speak up against abuse, our faith would still not leave us (44). The group I facilitated all came from a parish that is alive and inclusive and life giving. That such a parish exists in our area filled us all with hope for the larger church. Also, among our listening assembly participants were married priests and their wives and at least one woman priest. These people filled us with hope that what was already happening without hierarchical approval was an image of what will be common in the not too distant future. We were hopeful that we too could "be the change we want to see"(21). The laity is moving beyond the clergy in thought, practice and level of involvement (7). Participants showed determination to stay in the church in spite of the sins of some of the institutional leadership and in spite of the structure that allows rampant abuse of power (47). We are grounded in well informed consciences and we are not controlled by directives from Rome (64). We love the church, and it is time to encourage the clergy to reflect on their spirituality, not the sum of commands, rules, and dictatorial behavior that is neither pastoral nor Christ-like (89).

5. *There are signs of Spirituality in Action that encourage us.*

We find hope in our American women religious standing up to the "Inquisition" and the Pope possibly supporting the use of condoms for AIDS prevention. Some participants do have priests who interpret directives in the spirit of the law rather than literally and they are open to erring on the side of compassion (82). The great examples of discipleship, both past and present in our midst, make us happy to be one with them in the

Catholic faith, e.g. Francis of Assisi, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Julian of Norwich (85). We have conviction to struggle on with hope, knowing the reality that it will take time for change in church structures. Love of God and of neighbor is our constant guide post (55). In our listening session, it was a wonderful sign of hope how frequently we heard mentioned the many small faith communities, house churches, and Intentional Eucharistic Communities. They point a way to be future (74).

6. *There are encouraging signs of faithful Loving Resistance to unjust Church actions.*

A group of 16 participants from Trinity Parish in Wilmington (DE) reported on their reaction to a new pastor who attempted to do away with all the "good stuff" they were doing in their parish. A large number rose up and told him that they simply were not going to accede to his wishes. That pastor was gone within a year. Resigned? Transferred to another parish by a reasonable bishop? (32)

7. *Continue the Listening Sessions!*

This listening session was seen as very positive; a chance to gather together and discuss honestly and openly, and to have some direct input into the process. It was doubly good that our main organizer had managed to get at least 3 clergy, including theology professors, to take part as participants. People who had been feeling isolated realized they were not alone

8. *We can choose to be authentic self-determining adult human beings, and still be Catholic.*

A man who in our group said 4000 men control one billion Catholics. I found this statement to be incredibly interesting and worthy of contemplation. But I concluded, at least in my case, it isn't true. They don't control one billion anymore, although I think they think they do. Actually, their very authoritarianism has forced me, and I can only speak for myself, to turn to Jesus as my ultimate "authority" and the more dogmatic they get, the freer I become. I feel sorry for anyone who lets them "rule" their thinking in this day and age. The hierarchy is acting out of fear of losing power and control. If one is in Christ and has a personal relationship with Christ, the Church can act as a guide, but never again as a tyrannical authority. We need to convert more people to being Christian first and Catholic second.

9. *Many had new discoveries and awareness as a result of the Listening Session.* Our session included an educational component delivered by a theologian/archeologist, which gave powerful evidence of women priests and bishops in the early church. Many were surprised by this information and wondered why we have never learned of it before. And why are we learning of it only now, an outside of a "sanctioned" Catholic gathering?

10. *A new awareness of God and Church as "process."* The current chaos and dissension are merely steps on the way to a new thing the Spirit was birthing.



Local Action Steps

Many listening sessions included a final component to address what steps might be taken in local communities to move forward the reform of the Church we envision. A small sampling of suggested actions now follow.



1. Develop initiatives that nurture adult spirituality among the Faithful. Strengthen lay spiritual practices in prayer and social justice (332). Start or join a prayer group, faith-sharing group, house church, or a parish within a parish (494). Celebrate Eucharist in these communities and share ideas about organizing a movement for reform and acting on it. Alongside studying and praying the Gospel, learn about the principles of non-violent resistance for social change.

2. Publish the outcomes of these listening sessions. Circulate them among the larger Catholic community and the public at large (10).

3. Educate, Educate, Educate, especially about the Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. Educate the laity to take charge of their church. Hold adult-education lectures, discussions, and other events aimed at raising parishioners' consciousness about their rights and responsibilities as Catholics and the need for church reform (115). Develop follow-up educational sessions at regional ACC meetings on contemporary theology (111). Sponsor adult faith formation classes or book clubs on the vision of Vatican II (54). Get the Vatican II documents into the hands of the laity. Redesign Catholic education. Educate the laity to understand their equal standing, equal responsibility, the power of their *sensus fidelium*.

4. Money speaks. Withholding money from the parish and channeling it to a non-profit (501(c)(3) can limit the power of the priest and may assist the community of believers in being heard. It can also remove the control of the bishop. Keep parish funds locally. Consider creative ways to contribute to the support of the Parish Campus without money going to the Bishop. The fact that bishops must take an oath of loyalty to the pope when they become bishops could compromise a bishop's ability to be true to his own conscience.

5. Don't give up on Dialogue with the hierarchy. Continue to speak out, to try, even though it may seem in vain most of the time, to engage the leadership in dialogue.

6. Be the Change You Want to See in the Church. Believe in yourself as a prophetic voice (278).

7. Get young people involved in this movement. (101)

8. Support priests and women religious who call forth church reform in the Spirit of Vatican II. Support women religious and women in general in assuming leadership roles (261). Publicly acknowledge and honor priests of integrity who work for Church reform (14).

9. Continue to support, with time and treasure, progressive Catholic groups. (121)

10. Stop participating in the clericalism of the church. Call deacons, priests and bishops by their first name with no honorific title such as "Father."

The Leadership Challenge to ACC: Looking Beyond Detroit

Our survey of participants in listening sessions included a final question that asking participants to consider what might be the leadership challenge for the future of the *American Catholic Council*. There were many constructive comments and recommendations put forth. We list a few here. There will be many more that will surely come out of this weekend and give shape to what lies ahead.



- 1. The ACC is a movement of the "baptized" who are finding their voice across the US. This is happening, it is real, and it is a time of grace not to be missed. The permission of or the blessing of the hierarchy is not required! Raise awareness of the *Rights and also the Responsibilities* of all baptized catholics and give the attendees the tools to go back home and work on these same issues with fellow -parishioners and others.**
- 2. ACC can provide lay people with a structured and legal forum, where their voice and concerns can be heard. ACC is challenged to move the minds and hearts of complacent Catholics to realize that they are Church and they can reclaim their church as they would reclaim a home taken from them.**
- 3. So many are leaving the church thinking that they are alone in their disenchantment. Advertise the *American Catholic Council, VOTF, CTA* and other groups under a unified heading in newspapers in dioceses across the country. Tell Catholics what we are doing and invite them to join in a coordinated movement for renewal. Very few Catholics even know we exist because the bishops and pastors don't tell their parishioners that there is hope for change. Invite the bishops as well**
- 4. ACC needs to focus on one immediate realizable goal. There are going to be all kinds of causes, resolutions, agendas, etc. proposed at the meeting in June, all or most of them worthy, but all told, ACC will accomplish little or nothing unless priorities are established and focused in a single, concrete, and realizable goal.**
- 5. Bring all reform groups together to find common ground on one or two objectives that ALL can agree on and work toward.**
- 6. Find strategies where you can effectively speak truth to power. We need to engage professionals, i.e. community organizers, political strategists, etc. who can help to infuse the message.**
- 7. We need to talk about these things in a way that doesn't frighten and alienate the bishops and those Catholics who disagree with us. We need to find a way to work Cardinal Bernardin's "Common Ground" initiative effectively.**
- 8. Strength in numbers is the only way the lay faithful will be heard. One or two can be ignored, dismissed, marginalized, or excommunicated, but hundreds and thousands banding together cannot.**
- 9. Get people to read, think, pray and discuss our faith and our governance. Form groups small enough so everyone can be heard and having a fluidity between groups. Incorporate diversity.**
- 10. Be relevant for a younger crowd who did not live pre-Vatican II times and do not share the same fervor.**

SUGGESTED TEMPLATE FOR LOCAL LISTENING SESSION ASSEMBLIES

This is an abbreviated version; for the complete Template and other resources that were provided to local planners of Listening Sessions, go to <http://acn.americancatholiccouncil.org/page/tool-kit-resources>

A. GATHERING SONG & OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION (10-20 min)

B. WELCOME and INTRODUCTION (10-15 min)

The Leader/Facilitator of the session overviews the purposes of the Listening Session. The following or similar comments may be helpful prompts. ☒ We are here to talk about the kind of Catholic Church we desire and envision in the future. We gather out of a sense of urgency given the signs of the times, and a shared responsibility to build a better Catholic Church grounded in the reforms of Vatican II. Our vision of that future church is particularly driven by two primary questions:

- *What kind of Catholic Church do we wish to pass on to our children and grandchildren?*
- *How might the future of the Catholic Church here in the United States be shaped by the cultural context of our unique experience as Americans?*

Our dialogue is informed by three fundamental tenets drawn from the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (Vatican II). These three tenets define our identity and responsibility as adult members of the Catholic Church:

- *As baptized Catholics, each of us shares in the ministry of Jesus;*
- *The common sense of faithful Catholics (sensus fidelium) is a legitimate agent of the Holy Spirit and serves to inform Church practice and teaching, in tandem with Scripture, Tradition and the magisterium;*
- *As adult Catholics, we are called to nurture an informed conscience that holds us accountable for our actions;*

C. EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT (20-40 min)

Format might include a Speaker, Panel Discussion, or Video; the purpose is to begin with stimulating input that prompts the dialogue processes that follow; Local Planning Committees might focus content of this component on one or more themes from the list of Suggested Topics in the Toolkit. Ground the themes and content in Vatican II documents.

D. Dialogue PART 1: Building on the Positive (30-60 min)

Participants gather in table groups of 7-10 persons, each with a facilitator and recorder; this segment has three components: Personal Reflection/Writing; Sharing; and Dialogue.

1. Personal Reflection and Writing Exercise: Begin with 10 minutes of personal reflection. Everyone is asked to write their personal responses to the 4 questions that follow:

- *What makes you happy about being Catholic?*
- *Why are you still Catholic?*
- *How does being Catholic help you in serving others?*
- *What concrete elements would make the Church more effective as a sign of Gospel values?*

2. Sharing: Following the personal reflection/written exercise, each person takes a minute or two to share his/her responses with the whole group;

3. Group Dialogue: The facilitator leads the group through a discussion of what is most significant in the comments previously shared. The Recorder drafts notes on which to base a forthcoming summary narrative of this exercise. That content will be subsequently documented in Leaders/Facilitators Report.

E. Dialogue PART 2: The Needs and the Challenges (60-90 min)

This dialogue should allow more time than in Part 1. Participants gather again in the same or alternate table groups of 7-10 persons, each with a facilitator and recorder; this segment has the same three components:

1. Personal Reflection and Writing Exercise: Begin with 10 minutes of personal reflection. Everyone is asked to write their personal responses to these 3 questions:

- *What changes in church practices would you recommend?*
- *What disappoints you most about the Catholic Church?*
- *If you had an opportunity to speak to your bishop about your greatest hopes for the church, what would you say?*

2. *Sharing*: Following the personal reflection/writing exercise, each person takes two or three minutes to share his/her responses with the whole group;

3. *Group Dialogue*: The facilitator leads the group through a discussion of what is most significant in the comments that were previously shared. The Recorder drafts notes on which to base a forthcoming summary narrative of this exercise. That content will be subsequently documented in the Leaders/Facilitators Report.

F. Dialogue PART 3: Toward a Catholic Bill of Rights & Responsibilities (60-90 min)

The focus of this session is to invite dialogue and feedback on the draft of the ACC document, *A Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities*. This document will be “front and center” at the National ACC gathering over Pentecost Weekend in June 2011. This segment has four components: Personal Reflection, Short Presentation, Small Group Discussion, and Feedback in the Large Group. The content in this section will be reflected in the Participant’s Survey (Survey A) as well as the Leaders/Facilitators Report.

1. Handout and Personal Reflection (10 min): Facilitators distribute hard copies of the document (*A Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities*) and allow everyone 10 minutes to read and reflect on it, inviting all to make notes on the handout as they read through the document. Each participant is also asked to identify THREE of the TEN statements in the document that they would like to see discussed in the small group. Using an index card, each person writes down the three numbers corresponding to those three statements within the document. The Facilitator collects the index cards.

2. Short Presentation on Background to the Bill of Rights & Responsibilities (10-15 min): This can be in the form of a short talk by a knowledgeable person, or perhaps the video tutorial on this topic by Anthony Padovano; The Video is available on the *Assemblies Community Network*. During the presentation, the facilitator tallies the “votes” for the three statements that folks would like to see discussed and identifies the three that garner the greater votes.

3. Small Group Discussion (40 min): Following the presentation, groups now engage in a dialogue on each of the three statements identified in the foregoing exercise.

4. Feedback to the Large Group (15-30 min): The main facilitator of the entire process now invites a representative of each small group to share one or more “BIG IDEAS” that surfaced in their small group; Depending on time and facilitator skills, this may prompt an “open mic” where anyone can speak to the entire assembly as to the implications of the “Bill of Rights and Responsibilities” and what role this document may have in the development of the American Catholic Council. Speakers should limit their remarks to 1 minute.

G. CLOSING PLENARY SESSION (15-60 min)

There are four components to the Closing Session: (1) Overview on the ACC & Detroit; (2) Directions for submitting the online surveys; (3) Reflection on the Significance of this Listening Session; and (4) Closing Prayer. We include in this version of the template only #3:

Evaluating the Significance of Today’s Listening Session:

Participants in the large group, participants are invited to respond to each of the following three prompting questions, with 5-10 minutes devoted to each question. Respondents speak via “open microphone” engaging the entire audience of participants; Respondents are asked to limit their comments to 1 minute; these questions are reflected in the post-event survey forms.

- **SIGNS OF HOPE**: As you observed the actions, comments and behaviors of others in your group/assembly, what stories, themes, issues, events or experiences seemed to generate the greatest HOPE, ENTHUSIASM and EXCITEMENT?
- **GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURAL REFORM OF THE CHURCH**: Based on what you heard in your discussions at the Assembly, what themes and issues seem to be of greatest concern in the area of governance and that call for structural/institutional reform of the Catholic Church?
- **LOCAL ACTION STEPS**: What concrete “Action Steps” might be taken in our local community to move forward on the issues and concerns expressed today?

Local/Regional Assemblies Committee (LRAC) ***American Catholic Council, Inc.***

CONNIE ALIGADA, St. Paul, Minnesota:

Networking support to local planners of Listening Sessions; Data Analysis; Report Narratives and Summaries;

PEG BISGROVE (Chairperson), Bonita Springs, Florida:

Design of Listening Session Template and Local Organizer's Toolkit; Data Collection and Analysis; Report Narratives and Summaries; Fostering a collaborative work style, building consensus through prayer and dialogue, honoring the work by listening, and making the Christian choice as a team.

JOHN FRANK, Ed.D, (Consultant) Jacksonville, Florida:

Ongoing support to the LRAC; Design and administration of the ACC *Assemblies Community Network* (ACN); Facilitator of *Local Planners* Telecons (Survey Administration and ACN Tech Support); Survey Design, Data Collection and Data Analysis; Powerpoint and Video Presentation; Editor of the Listening Sessions Report.

SHEILA PEIFFER, Goshen, New York:

Design of Listening Session Template and Local Organizer's Toolkit; Networking support to local planners of Listening Sessions; Facilitator of *Local Planners* Telecons (Nuts & Bolts of Listening Sessions); Data Analysis; Report Narratives and Summaries.

LINDA PINTO, Shohola, Pennsylvania:

Networking support to local planners of Listening Sessions; Data Collection and Analysis; Report Narratives and Summaries.

BOB ROWDEN, M.D., San Rafael, California:

Networking support to local planners of Listening Sessions; Data Analysis; Report Narratives and Summaries.

About the *Assemblies Community Network* (ACN):

The *Assemblies Community Network* is a social networking site operating within the main website of the *American Catholic Council*. The site serves four primary purposes:

- It serves as the “nerve center” for grassroots communications among U.S. Catholics who are invested with the mission and agenda of the ACC;
- It provides information about the Assembly/Listening Session process, including access to the Listening Session Design Template and other resources in the Listening Session “ToolKit;”
- It provides access to online survey instruments and other tools used for the collection of data relevant to the listening assembly process and ACC organizing;
- It provides a secure but transparent means for facilitating interactive communications and support among leaders and groups involved in planning local/regional assemblies, including a private messaging system, public discussion forums, and private planning group forums, among other features.

For more information about the *Assemblies Community Network*, go to:

<http://acn.americancatholiccouncil.org>