In Your Midst

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“I am in your midst as one who serves.” From the great oculus high above the altar of St. James Cathedral, these words of Jesus communicate His abiding presence among us. This inscription gave us the name for our Journal and continues to be our guiding inspiration.

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In Your Midst June 2022
When James Joyce referred to the Church as “Here comes everybody” he wasn’t paying us a compliment. Even so, I view it as one. We are “everybody!” And “everybody” quite aptly describes the rich mix of our parish, as the reports from our recent synodal gatherings make clear.

Reading over the reports and reflecting on them, I found myself thinking how blessed I am to be pastor of a parish that is full of people who love the Church so much that they embrace it, affirm it, celebrate it, and thank God for it, but at the same time are not at all afraid to criticize it, challenge it, question it, and express anger, disappointment, and frustration with it. The gospel story of Jesus—in an outburst of righteous anger—casting out the money sellers from the temple comes to mind. There is room for that sort of righteous anger since, as in the case of Jesus, it is prompted by love, not hate.

I find it quite daunting when I think that this is the parish I am called to lead, to serve, and to address Sunday after Sunday in my homilies. Daunting is one word; humbling is another. So many of the voices you will hear in what follows— informed, articulate, passionate, faith-filled—have a right to a ‘pulpit’ as much as I do. And even though the pages of In Your Midst aren’t exactly a pulpit, they are Holy Ground (to quote one of the contributors) where the voice of God is audible, arresting, demanding. We tune it out to our own peril. Tune it out we must not.

The gospel tells us that “With God, all things are possible.” I can’t say that the same is true for the Church! We have to be realistic in our expectations. But isn’t it wonderful that Pope Francis is determined to hear from the whole Church and not just the hierarchy? The idea is revolutionary. To my knowledge, an effort of this sort and on this scale has never been undertaken by the Church—not even in its earliest days when the numbers were modest. And not only does Pope Francis want to hear from the whole Church, he wants us—who are the Church—to listen to each other. And that is precisely what happened during our parish’s synodal process. And it is clear that those of you who accepted the invitation and came together to listen to each other in prayerful, respectful dialogues, were surprised by what happened, delighted by what happened, changed by what happened. I think our parish can never be quite the same as a result, and I’m willing to bet that the same is true for the entire Church.

As we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost, let us pray earnestly that the gifts of the Holy Spirit will enlighten and enliven the entire Church as, together, we take the gospel of Jesus Christ out of hiding and into the open!

Father Michael G. Ryan
my first reactions when hearing about the Synod and the parish listening sessions were not faith-filled. And they weren’t particularly open minded or open hearted. They were, however, very human. When I saw the announcement in the bulletin, I responded with cynicism. And when I received an invitation to serve as a facilitator, I pulled a quilt over my head and said (aloud) “no, no, I’m out of practice with people!” All these weeks, and all these listening sessions later, my reaction is a prayer of gratitude. Thanks be to you, O Holy Spirit, for your gifts, your guidance, and your willingness to work with and through our humanness. And I’m sorry for underestimating you.

The listening sessions were little miracles. People from the parish and people who found us via livestream during the pandemic did what I thought was unthinkable. They showed up. They listened. They prayed. They told their stories of hope and heartache. Themes emerged. There is a hunger for community, for communion, and for inclusion, especially the inclusion of women, LGBTQ people, and divorced people. There is also great sorrow over the clergy abuse scandal and a wish for a true apology—and meaningful repentance.

What happens next is up to the Bishops. My hope and prayer is that the Holy Spirit works with and through their humanness and sets them on a path of prayer. We’ve done our part. And we’ve learned: never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peggy Jarrett

My experiences of facilitating small groups of St. James parishioners were graced opportunities to meet new people and widen my vision of Church! We were like “the disciples on our way to Emmaus.” By prayer and honest sharing from our hearts, our joys and thanks, our struggles, longings and hopes for our Church, we recognized the presence of the risen Jesus walking with us on our way. By attentive listening to one another with our eyes and ears open, we heard and felt the presence of the Holy Spirit, opening up to us a Gospel vision of the Church: that through the Eucharist, we sinners and saints, all the baptized, may grow in unity and faith to become more fully the Body of Christ in our world.

Sr. Judy Ryan

It has been an immense privilege to listen to the stories of so many fellow parishioners. So often when we look around the Cathedral on Sundays, we see each other and nod, smile, or say hello. What we can’t see in one another’s faces are the struggles, the wounds, the disappointments, the joys, the hopes, that each one of us brings with us to Mass. So many people shared stories of family members who had drifted or been driven away from the Church; of children who had wholly left off the practice of their faith; of deep disappointment in Church leaders who too often have seemed tone-deaf, indifferent, out of touch with lived human experience.

What was universal in these sessions was a deep love of the Church, a longing for community and Eucharist, and a profound desire to share the beauty of our tradition—and the transformative power of faith in Jesus—with everyone whose lives touch ours. I realized that far from sitting passively in our pews, we are truly a community of what Pope Francis calls “missionary disciples.”

During the synodal gatherings, I felt I encountered the Church itself, in a way I never had before. The experience brings to mind the words of St. Teresa of Avila, who died under the shadow of the Inquisition, aware that many were suspicious of the reform she dreamed of bringing about. Her last words were, “I am a daughter of the Church.” We, too, are children of the Church.

Maria Laughlin

Each of us is on a unique faith journey. The Holy Spirit brought each one of us together in our small group listening sessions, at that particular time and place to share our faith journeys. The participants were open to sharing in a non-judgmental, active listening environment.

There are a variety of ways participants were drawn to the Catholic Church and especially St James Cathedral. Some of these included: liturgy—especially the Eucharist, prayer, the many outreach ministries, Catholic social teaching and social justice, as well as music and worship.

Some of the issues that were raised as concerns include: the role of women in the Church who are seen as second-class citizens and not included in Holy Orders, a disconnect between many U.S. Bishops and the people in the pews, the sexual scandal, not reaching today’s youth, and the need to be more inclusive—especially to LGBTQ community.

Participants were appreciative of the opportunity to share, but questioned what difference it will really make. They shared both the good things and the bad things. Participants are active in the Catholic Church today in spite of their concerns.

How do we journey together, especially in a large parish like St James Cathedral? A good way to build relationships is to be involved in ministries which allows one to get to know others on a deeper, more personal basis. Praying for each other is a blessing as well.
There is always hope. The Holy Spirit was clearly present in the listening sessions. May we be open to the Holy Spirit leading us individually and as Church, the body of Christ.

Jerry Wiesner

What a blessing the Holy Spirit accorded us this great, historic and unique opportunity through Pope Francis, to be a part of the synod. That our input is truly going to be considered. How amazing!

I was privileged to participate in about 16 sessions of the synodal gatherings at St. James Cathedral, Seattle as a notetaker, a facilitator and coordinator. It was a graced experience to listen to participants share their stories from their hearts, and how passionate they were in sharing whatever was important for them about the church. What was even more amazing in my view was that they took the time out of their busy schedules to participate. That is a great act of love for the church!

What I heard most from participants was their great love for Fr. Ryan and for the Cathedral, and dissatisfaction with the universal church on different issues including but not limited to: too many rules, some seemingly hypocritical, “boys’ club” needing to end, and the leaving of so many groups on the margins.

I want to recognize the contribution of Corinna and Maria as the coordinators of this effort. The way they designed the gatherings was not only beautiful but very effective, and was the reason for the great participation. The process was very liberating to both presenters and the listeners.

Once again, I am so thankful for the blessing to have been a part of this historic synodal process in the various capacities I participated in.

Caroline Okello

I’ve known the Holy Ghost as the third name I say when I crossed myself for as long as I can remember. Come Holy Ghost, Creator Blest has always been one of my favorite hymns. I was blessed to be able sing it with my siblings at the bedside of each of our parents when they were dying. But I never really thought of the Holy Spirit as a presence in my life. Not like God, Mary, and Jesus. Until I began facilitating for St. James’ synodal listening sessions. The format was designed to put the Holy Spirit at the center. As Pope Francis intended, I’m sure. Sessions weren’t about the notes taken or where they’d go next. They were about coming together in the silence where the Holy Spirit lives, in each of us, in all of us together. They were about us speaking from our hearts, listening with our hearts. Some of us never had struggles with faith or church hierarchy and teachings. Some of us left the Church because of the pain we experienced. Many of us feel on the outside, judged, not welcome at the table. Many of us are painfully aware of the barriers Church teachings and rules put between some members of the Body of Christ and the sacraments. And yet we all came together because I believe, the Holy Spirit called us to share our stories, our hopes and dreams, our skepticism, our fears and despair. Called together to listen without judgment, without analysis, with love and acceptance. Session after session I saw hearts open and trust, deeply. The Holy Spirit showing us a way to know that we are the Body of Christ, all of us. Always. And these conversations are just the beginning of the Holy Spirit at work within us and among us. We are the Church.

The personal gift for me of facilitating listening sessions is a trust I couldn’t have imagined that the Holy Spirit is indeed alive and well and always with me/ us.

Postscript: I left the Church for 40 years and came back because I longed for a sacramental life. I’m a lesbian in a 30 year marriage and nobody can tell me I don’t belong.

Chris Galloway
I was pleased that our parish organized a synodal process and that I was asked to help facilitate listening groups. I worried that small groups might expose me to Covid but I was inspired by excellent preparation materials and a training session. I facilitated two listening groups in April during which each participant shared stories, concerns, and hopes while the others listened without comment. After everyone had spoken, we again took turns naming what we heard that had moved us. Finally we talked together about what the Holy Spirit might be asking of us as church. The hour-long experiences were powerful and we seemed to connect with one another in profound ways. Overall, the Synodal Process showed how we could journey together toward a more inclusive and listening church.

I learned several things from these synodal experiences. First, prayerful preparation and deep listening enabled me to thoughtfully consider and appreciate stories, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs that were different from my own. Second, I learned how much I valued being in community with other parishioners after two years of near-isolation due to Covid.

I was surprised by the power of prayer, preparation, structure, and community to lead to an emotional and inspirational listening, reflection, and dialogue experience. I was also surprised to realize that I could still contribute to parish life despite my advancing age and declining health.

I hope the parish will have the resources and motivation to support future synodal listening groups. Perhaps such groups could meet quarterly to consider topics such as increased support for the elderly and infirm, or attracting and retaining young parishioners. I believe the synodal process could help our church address the challenges we face, and I would gladly participate in future listening sessions.

The four synod sessions I led were different from each other, which should be no surprise because they were made up of different people with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and preferences. As James Joyce wrote in Finnegans Wake, “Catholic means, ‘Here comes everybody.’”

There were, however, some common qualities in each session: Each participant shared generously and thoughtfully, with vulnerability that touched hearts. Nearly everyone voiced serious concerns about the Church’s need to live the Gospel more perfectly, especially in terms of inclusiveness, mercy, and integrity. Some have been deeply hurt by rigid interpretations of who’s in and who’s out. Most participants expressed gratitude and awe for the sacraments and liturgy, the substantial nature of Catholic traditions, and the value of community. A number of people noted that the Church as a whole has a powerful role to play in moral leadership based on its well-developed Social Teaching, but too often it lacks courage, initiative, or credibility because of its own scandals. Just about everyone expressed appreciation for our own gifted pastor, capable staff, and Gospel-rooted programs at St. James. They were grateful for this Synod sharing opportunity to listen to one another, to learn, and to journey together through sometimes rocky terrain. Many are hoping for more opportunities to meet with fellow parishioners in similar ways.

The most common thread in my sessions was each person’s profound need to be recognized, embraced, understood, valued, and forgiven by their beloved Church. From deep within, they treasure their spiritual home and expect the best from it. They hold the Church to the highest standards—its own standards—and most are here because they want to participate in the ongoing building of the Kingdom Jesus came to establish: one of inclusiveness, acceptance, justice, and unconditional love.

Debby Walsh

Since participating in the synodal listening sessions, I’ve noticed I’m developing a new habit. Whenever I get frustrated or angry with someone, particularly a stranger, I try to take a deep breath and remind myself that every person has a story, and chances are if I knew that story, I’d probably view their actions less harshly.

During the synodal process I was blessed to hear a lot of people’s stories. There were stories of pain: of rejection felt by LGBT+ people unwelcomed by the Church, of exclusion felt by divorced persons and women disqualified from receiving sacraments, and of loss of faith in the face of life’s most challenging moments. There were also stories of grace: of finding a spiritual home, of finding a soulmate, and of finding strength in young people. As we shared stories, even the hardest of hearts were softened, and participants left with a shared sense of love and commitment to encounter one another more authentically.

Our stories helped us to see the inherent dignity and grace in every one of us. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we were moved from disagreement and distrust to candor and community. To make that move, we needed to share, but we also needed to listen. It was in listening that I felt the Holy Spirit’s presence more powerfully than I ever have before, and I strongly believe that our Church needs to listen to more stories too, so it can feel the reinvigorating presence of the Holy Spirit.

Paul Snow
I hope our Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, is continually transformed by our stories, but I also don’t think the journey ends with us sharing our world with the Church. Rather, we also must take the next step: we must share our church with the world so that the same transformation can happen in us.

John Engel-Kemnetz

I facilitated several Synod groups composed of guests and volunteers of the Cathedral’s outreach ministries, in keeping with the Synod’s call to “reach out to the peripheries, to… those who experience poverty or marginalization.” The underlying theme of the sessions was one of appreciation. Every single guest exuded a deep sense of thanks for being made to feel welcome at St. James. They don’t have much to offer to show their thankfulness, but they all professed that they care for the Cathedral, which has become a home and a sanctuary where they feel protected and comforted. Some guests also shared that at St. James, they can shed their tough exteriors, and become vulnerable, sharing some of their personal sufferings and challenges with volunteers and staff who they know care for them. For this beautiful community, they are most thankful.

Patrick Barredo

Our ancestors’ Exodus journey began as an unexpected disruption. On a typical day of shepherding, a fiery bush caught Moses’ curiosity. Suddenly, the Holy One spoke through the flames, “Moses, take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is Holy Ground!” And on that Holy Ground, standing in unshod awe, Moses listened to God recounting the sufferings of the enslaved Israelites, calling and sending him to lead a broken people out of slavery to a Promised Land.

Moses’ story came to mind as I heard Pope Francis inviting us into a revolutionary “burning bush” encounter in our own time—a Synod on Synodality. He invited all of us, laity, ordained, hierarchs, nobodies, active, inactive, enthusiastic, disillusioned, young, old, rich, poor, to take part in an extraordinary disruption of ordinary church life—to take off our shoes and stand on the Holy Ground of our own and others’ joys, hopes, heartaches, wounds, and dreams experienced as members of God’s pilgrim Church. He asked us to share courageously and to listen deeply to each other. And, as we listened, he asked us to be on the lookout for the Spirit pointing out surprising new paths forward in the wilderness, beyond the seeming obstacles and the fog in front of us.

It was a profound privilege to serve as one of the facilitators for our St. James Cathedral “burning bush” sessions. Before each gathering, I prayed to be able to take off my shoes in holy awe to behold the courage and power of each participant’s sharing. And unfailingly I was overwhelmed with gratitude and renewed hope by sacred stories that had been blessed and broken open, poured out, full measures of remembered joys, consolations, deep love for liturgy, passion for service and justice, sorrows, challenges, doubts, laments, and dreams of a more just and inclusive future road. We reaped tears and laughter, anger and regret, and an impossible unquenchable hope. And we heard God’s Spirit drawing our attention to new directions in the wilderness for St. James, for our Archdiocese, and for our global Church. Holy Ground indeed!

It is my profound hope that our church leaders will approach this “burning bush” moment with the openness of Moses and of so many parishioners who participated in this unexpected “disruption.” I pray that our own bishops can be humble and open enough to take off their shoes in holy awe to behold the courage and power of each participant’s sharing. And unfailingly I was overwhelmed with gratitude and renewed hope by sacred stories that had been blessed and broken open, poured out, full measures of remembered joys, consolations, deep love for liturgy, passion for service and justice, sorrows, challenges, doubts, laments, and dreams of a more just and inclusive future road. We reaped tears and laughter, anger and regret, and an impossible unquenchable hope. And we heard God’s Spirit drawing our attention to new directions in the wilderness for St. James, for our Archdiocese, and for our global Church. Holy Ground indeed!

It is my profound hope that our church leaders will approach this “burning bush” moment with the openness of Moses and of so many parishioners who participated in this unexpected “disruption.” I pray that our own bishops can be humble and open enough to take off their shoes and stand on the Holy Ground of our collected hopes and dreams, as well as our hearts broken by ecclesiastical exclusion, racism, and lack of transparency. I pray that they can stand in awe of the flock entrusted to them, paying special heed to the undaunted faithful commitment of women, People of Color, LGBTQ members. I pray they can hear without fear the Spirit speaking new possibilities through the fierce cries of the laity, including our youth, to be seen, heard, and celebrated as gifted co-laborers and leaders on the journey into a future full of hope. I pray that together we can let the Spirit lead us into new freedom and possibility.

Patty Repikoff
Beginning in Lent and continuing through May, St. James Cathedral hosted twenty-four synodal gatherings, some in person, most on Zoom. Twenty-one parishioners pitched in to facilitate small groups or take notes. In all, around 400 people participated.

The central question explored in the synod was this: A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”? A guided meditation by parishioner Patty Repikoff helped each participant prepare carefully for the process.

Each session began and ended with prayer, and was structured in three “rounds.” In the first round, each person took turns sharing the fruit of their prayer and reflection. There was no discussion or response in this round; all participants simply listened to what each person had to say. This round was followed by a brief silence. In the second round, each participant shared what struck them most in the first round and what moved them during the time of silence. Finally, in the third round, participants dialogued freely on what resonated in the conversation, and where the Holy Spirit might be calling the Church.

In each small group, either the facilitator or a designated notetaker took careful notes on the session. In all, sixty-nine reports totaling 243 pages and some 98,000 words were prepared. The goal of these reports was not to be scientific: this was not a “pew study” or a Gallup poll. Rather, notetakers jotted down the words of participants, brief stories that were shared, and themes that emerged. It was an organic approach to an organic process.

All these reports have been sent off to the synod coordinators at the Archdiocese of Seattle, to be read along with reports from parishes across Western Washington, and ultimately distilled into a diocese-wide synthesis.

It would seem to be an impossible task to reduce so much material to a few pages. However, reading through the reports, some themes emerge very strongly. The following pages provide a synthesis of the Cathedral’s many synodal gatherings, in the words of the participants themselves.

As you have read in the reflections by our facilitators, there was a lot of grief and heartache shared, as well as joy and gratitude. Above all, there was a strong sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit, “filling the house in which they were.” The gifts of the Holy Spirit—wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord—were palpable in these gatherings and in the brave, touching, honest words of those who participated. One facilitator summed up the sessions in this way: “The Holy Spirit was extremely present and at work during this session. Everyone was listening attentively and several people expressed how they felt changes of heart during the conversation. Participants left full of hope and love for their faith.”

The following extracts are grouped by theme, and come verbatim from the reports on our Cathedral synodal sessions. These comments are representative of many others, and capture in a powerful way the themes and ideas that emerged from the sessions.

Maria Laughlin
The Synod

Many shared feelings of reluctance, skepticism, and hope about the synodal process itself.

- There was a feeling of pessimism that there is nothing that is going to change no matter how much is said during these synodal gatherings, but for whatever the worth, sharing is good.

- A young man shared that when preparing for the session he had thought “this all sounds like corporate gobbledygook,” but upon hearing others’ stories, he felt inspired.

- The synodal process is great, but it will all end up in the theology machine, ‘the usual Catholic style.’

- The synod is seen as a healthy way of addressing divisions and disagreements. It is an official, Church-sanctioned conversation in which there are no taboo subjects, no off-limits subjects, no wrong answers. This is a healthy way to talk, rather than simply forbidding dialogue about some topics.

- The synod is teaching us how to listen to what God is saying.

- The worldwide Synodal process is a huge blast of oxygen in our Church.

The role of women in the Church emerged immediately as one of the predominant themes in virtually every session hosted at St. James Cathedral.

- Ordination does not impart all of the gifts needed to build the Church. We need to honor and call forth the voices of women.

- I feel the exclusion of women from ministry is arcane and ill-founded, and is a waste of talent.

- To only hear the preached experience of men Sunday after Sunday, no matter how good they are, to have to listen to non-inclusive readings day after day wears us down, and deadens our spirits, especially when there can be no discussion. This is sinful.

- As a single mother, sometimes it seems to me the Church is out of touch with human life. There is still so much that I love, but I hear the leadership—the bishops—make statements that feel inhuman, distant from my lived experience. I want the Church to be a place for my daughter to grow, where she will have role models.

- The Church as an institution is losing its credibility, because it clings to practices that cannot be found in Jesus’s life, words, or actions. I find no way to justify the exclusion of women from leadership and the ordained ministry. It’s too hard to explain that away. For me, the closer I come to Jesus the further I feel from the institutional Church. I would like to have that gap lessened for me.

- An elderly woman shared how her granddaughter had asked her a lot of hard questions about Catholicism, and despite her best efforts to provide answers, her granddaughter said, “I cannot be confirmed because I cannot say in truth that I believe everything the Catholic Church teaches,” specifically citing the limited role of women in the Church. The woman found this heartbreaking, but was energized by her granddaughter’s well-formed conscience, and agrees that “we wouldn’t have the crisis of too few priests if we understood the untapped vocations of women.”

- One thing I was really struck with was that the reason I’m still Catholic is that I’ve had strong women in my life, keeping me with a deep sense of the true Church. I’m at a place where I love my faith, but the institution: what do you do with an institution that doesn’t really believe that you are the Church?

- If this was given to me as an adult, I would never join an organization that was run by men only, and not by women and men. I love what it’s about, the people you meet, the goodwill. The fact that it’s just men really bothers me. I have lots of strong women in my life, from my marriage, to my family.

The inclusion and acceptance of LGBTQ community was a theme that came up in every session.

- A young man shared that the day he and his husband were civilly married, they visited the outside of the church to pray with family and friends and were joined by a priest. Unbeknownst to them, their photographer was a Catholic who had been struggling with her faith because of the Church’s exclusion of LGBTQ people, and she cried seeing the commitment of the couple and the attendance of a priest, finding renewal in her faith through that.

- The Church is a family and we should be able to get along. My gay, lesbian, divorced friends do not feel welcome in the Church. God does not divide people—people do.

- An older woman shared she is a lesbian and the Church’s teachings have been hurtful. She has never had a problem with God, but she had to leave the Church for a long time. She returned because she missed the sacraments. She looks forward to a welcoming church someday—a church that takes barriers away rather than putting barriers up.

- My LGBTQ friends don’t feel welcome in the Church—they are told from a very early age that they’re sinners, and they feel unwelcome. I think that’s very sad and I believe the opposite. I believe the Church should welcome everyone.
I have two family members who are gay/lesbian. Because of that, not only have they stopped going to the Catholic Church, but so has one of their mothers. She feels she cannot be Catholic because the Church doesn’t accept her child.

The crisis over the firing of two gay teachers at Kennedy Catholic was a painful moment, as hundreds of young people came and protested at the Cathedral, moved by compassion and the love of Jesus. They were doing what we taught them, they were advocating for justice for the marginalized.

God loves everyone, no matter what, no matter what type of person you are. My daughter is gay. I have no idea where that came from, but I realized: God loves everybody. I don’t see the Church being open to embrace gay people. That hurts.

My two children, as they grow older, they have both developed relationships and would call themselves gay. Their relationships are meaningful and loving, and yet, they’ve pulled away from the Church because the language is so harmful. My husband, in support of the kids, has pulled away also. On top of that, the abuse scandals have been very difficult. The structures of our family fray a bit. That mystery of forgiveness has been even more important to experience.

Racism in the Church was mentioned repeatedly.

An older black man recalled how after George Floyd’s murder, the bishops suddenly decided to start talking about racism, but they talked to Catholics about George Floyd’s murder much more as if they were talking to the police who had murdered George Floyd than to George Floyd himself. He shared that ‘the bishops defaulted to the idea that the ordinary, acceptable, normal Catholic person is white—they weren’t looking at my face, or at the black people in the pews.’

One woman shared that she has experienced much racism, especially during the sign of peace. White people would shake each other’s hands around her, but not hers, even when she had her hand out. “To be honest, I like that with the pandemic we do a touch-free sign of peace,” she said.

How is there not a single saint of African-American descent? Are we saying that none of these people lead good holy lives to become saints? Just how far does racism go, up to heaven?

Where was the Church in summer 2020, when the whole world was talking about racial justice and Black Lives Matter? Jesus was always with the marginalized.

My mother was a staunch, devout Catholic who was absolutely committed to raising us in the faith. Being African American, most of my friends were not Catholic. They wonder how I can stay with ‘that church.’ It’s tough to deal with racism in the Church. It’s difficult to talk about racism because not everyone sees it, experiences it, or recognizes it. The synod, though, is the time to bring it up, difficult as it is.

Communion and inclusion were constant themes.

It is heartbreaking when individuals are not welcome. Everyone should be welcome to come to the table where we share the body and blood of Christ.

The treasure of the Church should be shared widely and freely. You shouldn’t have to feel you are perfectly pure to approach Jesus. We should not guard the treasure, but share it.

I am very disturbed at how some of our US Bishops have politicized communion. It should be offered to everyone, regardless of marital status, and political beliefs. We all need it. Have mercy on us all, O God, for we are sinners.

There are too many cases of sacraments intended to pour out grace instead being ‘weaponized’ to exclude and divide communities.

It is a huge problem when we prevent people’s access to the grace of the sacraments. If we exclude people from the Church, where can they turn in
times of tragedy and suffering? They will not be able to access the grace and mercy in their times of need. The disciples of Jesus’ day did the same thing, trying to keep people away from him, telling them to shush, wondering why Jesus would bother talking to certain people, eat with certain people, touch certain people.

- Why don’t headlines read, ‘Jesus is Really Present in the Eucharist!’ instead of ‘Politician Denied Communion’? In the Gospel we read that Jesus welcomed sinners and dined with them, but too many are denied access to the Eucharistic table, not by Jesus, but by us.

- Everyone should be able to come to the table. Jesus is the example. He reached out and ministered not to the rule-followers, but to the outcasts.

The abuse crisis was a constant theme, as was the Church’s loss of credibility and trust in the wake of scandals.

- I am a cradle Catholic. I was educated at Catholic schools, and I have been a Catholic school teacher for more than 30 years. I love the Church, but I am still grieving and heartbroken about the priest pedophile issue. I’m still angry. I think about Jesus and the children, and then I think about what happened to children; what an outrage that people in charge just let it happen. To me, the people in charge who moved the priests around makes me angrier than the pedophiles themselves. I love the people in the pews next to me, I love Father Ryan. As a teacher, I know we have done things to prevent abuse from happening, but I’m not sure we have ever truly grasped it. It’s heartbreaking when I love the Church so much. For a time, I was ready to quit my job and find a different Church, but still, I love the Church, and I know so many good people who love kids. I’m still processing it; I don’t know if I ever will truly process it. I’m not sure it’s something you can ever put behind you.

- Transparency is key. There is so much secrecy about things that don’t need to be secret. The appointment of bishops, for instance. There should be broader consultation.

- I had an experience where I was sitting in Church during a protest by Native American communities, when they left children’s shoes outside the door. I had the feeling of being on the wrong side: usually we marched for justice, and here we were the ones being protested against. That hurt so much. I remember wishing the ground would just open up.

- The scandals, the residential schools came down on me like a ton of bricks. Why would I stay in this Church?

- The Church has a responsibility to be a place of healing. We need to be forthright and transparent about the sins of the Church. We can’t let the story end there.

- We say fallen away Catholics, but that’s a euphemism. Many Catholics have been driven away. We’ve heard a lot of apologies. We have lists of the credibly accused. We have advisory panels. But it’s not enough. We need reconciliation and healing that can only come from an expansive outreach. We need to listen to victims. There needs to be more structural change in the Church.

- A middle-aged man shared that his former parish priest was the source of one of the first major public abuse crises and was arrested and charged, which caused him to leave the Church. After a rough period in his life, he returned to the Church and, despite still being mad at the continued abuse scandals, looks to devotion to the Eucharist and service to find healing.

Where are the youth and young people? A another theme that emerged very strongly was the sense of loss over fallen away Catholics and younger generations who are disconnected from the Church.

- We raised our son in the practice of the faith. He’s 27 now and he loves the rituals, but he is not happy with the Church and rarely goes to Mass.

- Kids and others who struggle to make sense of life... don’t feel the embrace of God in Church for who they are, their questions, their feelings, their self-doubts, their differing opinions. They don’t feel the Church journeying with them.

- A lot of young people are missing out on what the Church has to offer—that peace. I teach confirmation and in that group I encounter an increasing number of kids with a spiritual malaise—it’s challenging to help these young people find the peace, the community that comes with participation in the Mass.

- I asked my daughter what the ideal church would look like. “The Catholic Church isn’t a happy place,” she told me. “There’s nothing for me there. I find God in the outdoors.”

- One thing that makes me so sad is that my siblings, nieces and nephews, and one of my kids have stepped away from the Church. They can’t see beyond the troubles the Church has. They are big troubles, but I also feel that those troubles are not the Church—the people are the Church.

- Today, a deep concern is my family members, especially nieces and nephews, who no longer participate in Catholic worship. I don’t know how I can bring back the rest of my family to the Catholic faith.
• Even though I’m the only active Catholic, it’s been a connection to the Church for my whole family.
• One elderly woman knows that no one in her family will ever set foot in a Catholic church again unless it is for her funeral. Her siblings and their children struggle with the church approach to divorce and remarriage, as well as issues of clergy sex abuse, and the lack of transparency around it.
• I feel like my core values—justice, love, care for humanity—are from my faith, and inspire my work in the non-profit world. But growing-up experiences put a lot of distance between myself and the Church. When my parents divorced, it was the right decision for them, but it was really difficult in the church community and the family community. It was the best thing they could have done, but there was zero support. As an adult, I discovered I was queer, and that made it even more difficult to be in Church. My kids are Alaska natives. I know the Pope apologized to the native peoples, but I have to wonder how I could put my kids in a place where there is that legacy of harm.
• My daughters no longer practice their faith. I wish I could share my experience with them. I love arriving early to Mass, watching people slowly fill the Church. It feeds my soul.

“How can you still be Catholic?” is a question many participants get from friends and family.
• How can you be so modern and open-minded while being part of a faith that is so backwards?
• I know the kids I teach in a public school know I am Catholic, and I never want to hurt them or lead them to believe that just because my Church isn’t transparent, or because it publicly considers homosexuality a disorder, that I do not love them in all their diversity, their questions, their doubts, and their ideals. I don’t want them to think that I am in agreement with those hateful and hurtful stances of the hierarchy in many places.
• She has found herself asked why she remains a part of a Church that has seen so much scandal, rejects LGBT people, and only allows men to lead. She said she didn’t have good answers for her friends.
• St. James is more open than most other Catholic Churches, yet we can get lulled into thinking this is normal. It’s like a gated community, and we forget what’s out there. When the wider church published and continues to publish screeds against gay marriage or women using their consciences, or communion wars; when the Church thinks it can hide sex abuse for decades, and calls gay friends ‘disordered,’ when women continue to be excluded from leadership, she stopped going to Mass and found other wells to refresh. “The things that sent me away are the things that those who stay are valiantly struggling with. Your choice to stay is inspiring to me. Yet I rest peacefully with my decision to leave.”
• I tell my daughter, when you see me praying, it’s not what it looks like. It’s not easy. We have a Church and it’s a human institution. It’s broken, just like all of us are as humans.

Treasure of the Tradition In the midst of many voices calling for reform and change, other voices expressed fear of rapid change and loss of our tradition.
• I am worried about losing all the good old stuff if we change too quickly.
• We need to understand the truth that Jesus gave us. If you’re tolerant of everything, you believe in nothing. We need to put Jesus on top and recognize that everything else is secondary.
• Change is always a mixed bag. I feel as though Catholics want perfection. We’re very hard on ourselves. We’re a work in progress. There is so much good the Church does.
• The rules, formality of the institution have protected the Eucharist; that structure is the reason we still have Eucharist. But how do we honor conscience, where is that place where we protect and find beauty in that conscience.

The Eucharist Many participants expressed their love and gratitude for the Eucharist.
• Catholicism is madness. We believe in the body and the blood of Jesus. No wonder we don’t talk about it. People would think we are out of our minds! But that’s why we’re here. The Eucharist. We have this great treasure. But how do you tell people that? I don’t know anything except that I’m not good at it.
• To be a Catholic has everything to do with the Eucharist, because it’s what brings us together, and it’s what makes us into Christ. It sends us out to be prophets and people who stand for really important issues in our world today—war, peace.
• It was a strange thing not having Eucharist all those many months. It was like someone died in your intimate life, and you kept looking for that person but couldn’t find them. The greatness of Catholicism is the sheer physicality. It’s a religion of the body, it’s sacramental.
• I still have a lot of questions about the Church. Lots of hurts, too. What keeps me in is the Eucharist. I don’t mean just receiving the Body of Christ at Mass, but being a part of the Body of Christ,
throughout the world. I can’t imagine being elsewhere.

**What is your dream for the Church?**

- A Church that reflects openness to change, nimble and adaptable.
- A church that is more centered on humility, a poor Church, for the poor, more centered on mercy.
- A Church which celebrates the gifts of women as leaders, as priests and deacons, as equally chosen by God as their brothers.
- A church where everyone feels like they belong equally.
- A radically welcoming Church.
- I want the Church to be a refuge. A place for all people, for people of color, for LGBT, I want them to find peace here. I want people to know that they are accepted and loved, that they have wings covering them, that they are watched over.
- I’ve left the Church and come back; hated it, loved it. I was angry with the Church for years because a priest encouraged me to stay in an abusive relationship. The last time I came back to stay. I would like the Church to avoid dualistic thinking. No one of us is better than the other.
- I think too often in the Church, we may settle for a false unity, but that unity came at the cost of avoiding conflict, avoiding differences of opinion, rather than letting people come together and voice their views.
- What is your dream for the Church? That question really spoke to me. I think of my children. I have two boys. I have been fortunate that my parents have passed on their faith. I want my children to have that deeper relationship with Jesus as well.
- I’ve been awakened to a God that pleasures in all of us, not just the ones that conform, but also the ones who are on the outside looking in. That is my hope for the Church. I long for the voices of those who are marginalized, because they hold truths that I’m impoverished by not knowing. I’m looking for the voices of women, of people of other cultures, other races, other sexualities, other genders. They are all rich gifts to me, and I want the Church to be able to embrace all those voices as something dazzling, like Revelation gives us, in that wonderful city that is so filled with love. I look for newness, freshness, inclusion, joyful belonging from those who long for the rules, and those who long for no rules.
- I think we’re all looking for a place to belong, and having that community, and that’s what I want for my sons. I want them to grow up in a place where they belong to a community. We talk about the merciful God, and hopefully a merciful Church as well.
- I think what the Church needs to hold, in spite of the history, is that Catholicism is love. That’s what we do—we love everybody. The Church is always there. I know it was there for me when I lost my parents and nephew. One of the things the Church can do is embrace, and not judge. God is the one who judges. Just being a beacon of light, hope, and love. That’s my hope for the Church, because that’s what I feel the Church has been for me. Being a loving, nourishing, awe-inspiring place where everybody is safe.
- When I think about the Catholic church, it matters to me that it is one global church, that really matters to me. I don’t want to see Germany leave, or Nigeria leave. I do have fear there. As we journey together, I think what we should be doing is show Jesus to the world. I feel we do that better by serving than by preaching.
- I want the Church to take care of people here in this life, not just in the next life. I want my Church to be “Big Tent.” I want the Church to embrace liberals and conservatives; I would also like the Church to embrace everyone, including gay people, divorced people, people who have gone through the trauma of abortion. In other words: everyone.
- We are the Church, and by changing ourselves, we are changing the church.
After two years of pandemic, it was a joy to gather once again at O’Dea Gym for the Blessing of Palms, followed by the solemn procession (center left). On Wednesday of Holy Week, we celebrated the traditional Holy Week Office of Tenebrae (center right). The washing of the feet returned to the solemn Holy Thursday Mass (bottom left). Good Friday liturgy began with the prostration of the clergy before the altar (bottom right). Opposite page: The Veneration of the Cross is the heart of the Good Friday liturgy (top). At the Easter Vigil, all hold candles, lit from the Paschal Candle (center). It was a joy to celebrate the Baptism and Confirmation of our Elect, who spent many months preparing for the sacraments. The Cathedral was full for the first time in two years on Easter Sunday (bottom left). The neophyes, those newly-baptized, joined in the celebration of Easter Vespers, which marked the end of the Triduum, the holiest days of the Church’s year (bottom right).
Welcoming the Stranger

St. James Cathedral parishioners welcome refugees from Afghanistan

In Tattoos On The Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion, Father Gregory Boyle writes about the transformation possible when we practice the concept of “kinship”—when we live out the belief that we belong to one another. It has been an honor to witness this sense of belonging modeled by St. James Cathedral’s Refugee Support Team, the two families from Afghanistan they are accompanying, and the many other groups who are welcoming Afghan families to our community. As you’ll read in the reflections that follow, the learning has been constant and we’ve come to expect the unexpected! The volunteer team has walked alongside the two families to navigate new systems, enroll in benefits and insurance, secure temporary and long-term housing, furnish apartments, facilitate community orientation, obtain employment, connect to community resources and much, much more. Throughout all these steps, relationships and community are being formed and nurtured because it’s true—we do belong to one another. I hope you’ll have the opportunity to connect with members of this volunteer team, to hear the countless stories and contributions along this journey.

Erica de Klerk, Refugee Welcome Coordinator

As a newer member to the St. James parish, serving on the St. James Refugee Support Team has awakened my awareness to the impact individuals can have on each other’s lives when we see one another as equals. I quickly learned the meaning of “journeying together” upon welcoming two Afghan refugee families to Seattle. Despite language, culture and reading barriers, each of the committee members found common ground with the families by leading with open hearts and connection through faith. Small gestures such as welcoming them with familiar foods, discovering each others’ traditions, and exploring the city together created harmony and inspiration for a new life elsewhere.

My experience working with the St. James Refugee Support Team heightened my level of faith and expectation of myself as part of this culturally-rich community. I have never witnessed such a level of acceptance and respect for others, and at scale. There are no words to describe the joy one can experience by changing someone’s life through values of faith, respect, tolerance and hope.

Sherri Pimentel

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matthew 25:35)

Meeting Jesus is challenging. Jesus shows up in someone who is poor, who is without a home or a job, who doesn’t speak English and isn’t Christian, who prefers to drink strong green tea, and eats seated on the floor. This is a partial description of the young couple that I welcomed into my home for three weeks.

I live with extra bedrooms. Why not offer to take in strangers? It was harder than I could imagine, but the right thing to do. Welcoming the stranger is the way to build bridges of understanding and trust where those are lacking. I was not alone on this adventure. Google Translate helped, sometimes. The people at my neighborhood medical/dental clinic (Country Doctor) were thrilled to finally have Afghans; they knew refugees were coming and were eager for their arrival. Neighbors in my “Buy Nothing” group were generous with housewares, clothing, and gift cards.

I believe that wars will end, and peace will thrive when we know “the other,” when we have eaten together, walked in the park, done laundry and struggled to communicate. Let it begin with me.

Mimi Krsak
Serving as a Sponsor Circle volunteer has been challenging, fun, frustrating, gratifying, and humbling all at once. I came in with absolutely no experience but with a strong conviction that I needed to do something. My mom’s experience helping her friend shelter asylum seekers inspired me, and the news from Afghanistan broke my heart. I’m grateful for the opportunity to take on small tasks with the support of an amazing team.

In reflecting on the things I’ve done so far, a light rail ride stands out in my mind. Pretty much everything that could go wrong that morning did, and nothing went as planned. Instead of going to see the cherry blossoms at the UW quad with two families, I ended up getting off the train in Pioneer Square with the father of one of the families on a cold, windy day. I got to be there when he saw skyscrapers up close for the first time and took his picture in front of several of them. Seeing his fascination made the whole morning worthwhile!

Getting to know my fellow volunteers has also been rewarding. I began attending Mass at St. James during the pandemic and have been pretty much anonymous. After some wonderful conversations over tea, now I recognize a few faces around the cathedral!

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After greeting my husband Dick Hopp with a gracious bow, right hand over his heart, and the greeting of peace, “Salaam,” Mr. D. said, “I have so many questions.” The purpose of Dick’s first visit with the family was to help them arrange for health insurance in a system so different from the one they were accustomed to in Afghanistan. Eager to extend hospitality, the couple offered tea and a meal as they and Dick struggled to explain the hoops to jump through in establishing health insurance. Over the course of the next few months, working together on banking and a budget, the language barrier, mitigated only somewhat by translation apps, continued to impede these processes. Dick’s efforts to reassure and explain and demonstrate succeeded only partially to ease the couples’ bewilderment.

Fortunately, some aspects of communication transcend language. When I met this family, bearing basic supplies I’d purchased for their new apartment, their gratitude blossomed. Mr. D. proudly showed me pictures of his brothers in Afghanistan and managed to ask me about my siblings. Their toddler daughter lit up the room with her welcoming smile and dancing brown eyes, charming us all. When Dick took Mr. D. to an Afghan bakery to purchase bread, Mr. D. offered Dick a piece of the warm delicious naan, and the two shared a bonding moment in the breaking of the bread. Language and cultural barriers persist, but so does mutual kindness on a shared journey.

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In January a group of Cathedral parishioners formed a Sponsor Circle under the direction of Erica de Klerk to help two Afghan families relocate to Seattle. Our families each have a toddler, and one will soon have an infant, as well. It’s been a very long journey of unspeakable hardship for them, and it will be a longer journey yet to assimilate into our totally foreign culture, to learn to speak English, and to obtain jobs.

Their lack of English and ours of Dari or Pashto is a big obstacle. Both families are taking ESL lessons from St. James tutors. We volunteers and the Afghan families have a translation app loaded into our phones. The translations aren’t always great, but for the most part we still make ourselves understood. Having an open heart and mind, and willingness to understand goes a long way in communicating with each other.

These are very hospitable people. They have so little but are so willing to give generously of whatever little it is that they do have. It’s very humbling. Our families are genuinely and deeply grateful for everything that we do for them. They have willingly put their trust in us, who just a few months ago were strangers.

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Vicki Nelson

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Ann Pool

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Debby Walsh

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Vicki Nelson
The call for Catholics and all Christians to address racism resounds, following the recent racially motivated mass shootings that targeted African Americans at a market in Buffalo, the persistent violent attacks against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and ongoing discrimination against Hispanic sisters and brothers.

On May 25, 2021, our Cathedral hosted a prayer service commemorating the first anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. Archbishop Etienne presided as Church leaders and parishioners from the South Seattle Deanery prayerfully gathered and pledged to continue working to eradicate racism in their parishes. As we mark the second anniversary, the ongoing work of the St. James Racial Solidarity Team is one way our parish honors its commitment.

The group states its purpose as, “Grounded in the Gospels and prayer, to help our parish bravely, boldly, and successfully weave the many threads of our diverse cultures into the fabric of our shared faith community—through our liturgies, ministries, and social action.”

Increasing awareness of how People of Color experience racism is integral to the work. Education takes many forms. Since November, the Racial Solidarity Team and committed parishioners from various outreach ministries have gathered with members of the Native American Catholic community in ongoing roundtable discussions. The gatherings help inform what we understand about the first peoples to live in this region, and who still live here. Some conversations have been devastating, particularly those related to findings on the Native American boarding schools and gravesites and our Church’s hand in those atrocities. The sessions have begun to build community, friendship, and tender sprouts of trust. For me, the gift of these conversations and their impact is beyond measure. I am grateful to serve with co-lead Emeline Whalon, staff lead Patrick Barredo, and all who work with the Racial Solidarity Team.

Lisa Matchette

I believe that Jesus is active in the world today (as throughout faith history), and works to bring healing, love, and restoration to our parish community, our city, and our culture. The need for healing, love, and restoration across racial lines is more evident than ever to our society at large, as our nation struggles with police violence.

Lisa Matchette, co-chair of the Cathedral’s Racial Solidarity Team, offers a prayer at the May 25 Vigil for Racial Justice at Immaculate Conception Church, on the 2nd anniversary of the murder of George Floyd.

To learn more about the work of the Racial Solidarity Team or to become a part of it, contact Lisa Matchette, lmatchette@hotmail.com or Emeline Whalon, emelinewhalon@msn.com.
against people of color, racial wealth gaps, Native boarding schools used for cultural eradication, and myriad other racist systems and structures. I serve on the Racial Solidarity Team because my heart longs to see our church play a relevant role in reversing all these impacts of white supremacy, America's original sin.

As the Racial Solidarity Team at St. James—which is located on the traditional homelands of the Coast Salish and Duwamish people—we have been honored to hear personal stories of our Native American Catholic brothers and sisters, who are Lummi, Swinomish, Ojibway (Chippewa), Duwamish, Ute, Zuni, Laguna Pueblo, and Navajo. They have shared with us how their communities have struggled for survival in the face of legalized cultural destruction and forced assimilation, aided and abetted by the Catholic church. In spite of these great pains, and personal insults and slurs they have endured from fellow parishioners, their Catholic faith in an active Jesus who can bring healing shines through in a beautiful way. In their stories are a truth that we need to hear, a truth we must be brave enough to face. They bring to us the truth that will set us free to reconcile our parish and archdiocese to our past, restoring us to ourselves. We need to see and hear them, and they need to be seen and heard.

So I listen, I learn, I stand in solidarity with the Catholic Native American community of the Seattle Archdiocese. And in doing so with an open heart, I witness Jesus bringing healing, love, and restoration.

Brook Riggio

For me, the Racial Solidarity Team has been a meaningful opportunity to join with others of like mind who desire to see justice for those who have grievously suffered in the misguided culture of racism. The group meetings have offered occasions for loving, listening, learning and looking into the hearts of those who have been historically oppressed, and continue to feel the impact of that oppression today. It is a deeply moving experience to hear the stories shared by a living generation.

Joy Sherman

Serving on the racial solidarity team means living out my faith as Jesus would have me live. I am privileged to serve in a group that is concerned with racial equity and how we treat one another inside and outside our church walls. This group gives me the opportunity to be part of our community and serve Christ in a meaningful way. I feel connected to our church because I have gotten to know people in our group and it’s been a pleasure working and learning together. I feel joy to be living out my faith with like-minded folks, even amid difficult work that will not end during our lifetime. Jesus personally knew political and racial strife and did not shrink from it and I will follow his example to be loving as best as I am able.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13: 34-35

Kim Aguilar Gregor

Over two years ago, our country was caught in the beginnings of the Covid pandemic. That time of stress seemed to exacerbate underlying tensions in our country. As many of us saw on our televisions, acts of violence erupted, and unfortunately, much of it was fueled by racial conflict.

Since then, I’ve been involved in the Catholic Church’s response to eradicating racism (if that’s even possible). It has been a blessing to collaborate with local Catholic parishes in anti-racism work, modelling a Church that can be a prophetic witness to the social sin of racism. I also sit on an Archdiocesan ad hoc team tasked to undo the structures of institutional racism. That is no small task.

This brings me back to how St. James Cathedral has accompanied our sisters and brothers of color who have suffered from the effects of racism. It is important to share our histories—that of the land upon which we live, of our larger country, of our families of origin, and of our own individual selves. Understanding our history allows us to move forward, especially as we strive to actualize our new parish Vision Statement, which includes a call to make racial and cultural diversity and inclusion in leadership a reality.

More than anything else, we need to listen to one another. As a Pentecost people, let us silence ourselves so we can hear the whispers of the Holy Spirit, who urges us to live in solidarity with those most harmed by racism.

Patrick Barredo
May 3 was a joyful day for the Archdiocese of Seattle as one of our own, Frank Schuster, was ordained a bishop to serve as auxiliary in this local Church. 

Top left: Father Ryan greets the Bishop-Elect on the steps of the Rectory before the Mass of Ordination. Top right: servers bring in the insignia of the bishop – crozier (pastoral staff), miter, and ring. 

Center left: Representatives from some of the many cultural communities that make up the Archdiocese of Seattle participate in the entrance procession. Center right: Archbishop Etienne (center) was the principal consecrator, with our Archbishop Emeritus, Archbishop Sartain, and Bishop Joseph Tyson of Yakima serving as co-consecrators. 

Bottom left: Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, is the representative of the Holy Father. Bottom right: Bishop-Elect Schuster shows the papal bull appointing him a bishop.
During the prayer of ordination, deacons hold the Book of the Gospels over the head of the new bishop, one of many distinctive moments in the rite that point to the bishop’s solemn responsibility to preach the Gospel of Christ. Archbishop Etienne pours the sacred Chrism over the head of the new bishop. The new bishop takes his place among the bishops. Bishop Schuster speaks at the end of the liturgy. Bishop Schuster with Archbishop Etienne, the visiting Archbishops and Bishops, and the altar servers of the Ordination Mass. Ad multos annos, Bishop Schuster! The photos on these pages are by Stephen Brashear, included with his permission.
December 2021
4. *Madre de las Americas* is a wonderful multicultural celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Americas. Hundreds of dancers joined in a festive procession to the Cathedral, and Bishop Elizondo celebrated a vibrant midday Mass.
8. The *Year of St. Joseph* drew to a close on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.
17. Our Service of *Readings and Carols* returned!
22. We marked the Cathedral’s birthday—the *Solemnity of the Dedication* is celebrated every year on December 22, the day of the Cathedral’s dedication in 1907 and rededication in 1994. This year Archbishop Etienne joined us for the 12:10pm Mass, after which the new Cathedral Columbarium was blessed and dedicated.
24-25. *Christmas at St. James Cathedral.* “This journey we are on is... a journey to the kingdom, God’s kingdom, but the stopping-off place today is the manger. It is there that we can lay down our burdens as the Magi laid down their gifts. We lay them down before the Child who accepts whatever we bring—this Child who is one of us yet so much more than us, this child who reveals to us the most unbelievable sort of God: not a remote, thundering, demanding, omniscient Being before whom we can only cower in fear; no, a tiny, vulnerable, utterly helpless baby in the arms of his mother. All the power of the Godhead in a powerless infant – as if to say, who can be afraid of a God like this?” (from Father Ryan’s homily for Christmas Day)
26. On the Feast of the *Holy Family*, a major snowstorm hit Seattle, snarling traffic and leading to the cancellation of many events, including our own New Year’s Eve Gala.

January 2022
17. The Cathedral was privileged to host the Funeral Mass for *Father Jan Larson.*
22. Archbishop Etienne presided at the *Mass for Life* in the Cathedral. In his homily, he said: “We pray, too, that we be able to at least hear what their rationale is, and that, in solidarity, we can advance, through dialogue, a proper understanding of the human person. We have such limited lens of seeing things in this world at this time. We need the grace of God to recognize, first and foremost, the handiwork of God; we need the grace of God to be able to walk in solidarity with one another, because we are one family. We need to walk in solidarity with one another because we all share the same dignity.”
25. An eight-week *Grief Support Group* began today, led by Nancy Granger and Kevin O’Keefe.

February
19. Archbishop Etienne presided at a special *Mass for Healthcare Professionals.*
23. On the eve of war, the Cathedral hosted a special interfaith prayer for *Peace in Ukraine.* In his introduction to tonight’s prayer, Father Ryan said: “At this perilous moment with the forces and weapons of war poised and ready for action, and with untold numbers of innocent human lives at risk, we feel helpless and impotent. There is so little we can do. But the one thing we can do, the one thing we must do, is pray. And our prayer tonight is neither narrow or sectarian: it reaches far and wide across many of the great religious traditions and we believe this prayer...
reaches to the heavens. May our prayer, silent and spoken, awaken us to the enormity of what is how unfolding across the world from us, a world that is smaller than we know and more interconnected than we realize. May it unite us to one another and to our brothers and sisters who are in harm’s way, and may it keep the flame of hope alive even as the winds of war threaten to extinguish it.”

24. Some 90 young people from St. Philomena in Des Moines were confirmed at the Cathedral.


March

2. Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of the season of Lent.

11. The statewide mask mandate ended.

3, 5, 12. We celebrated the Rite of Election in the Cathedral, with hundreds of catechumens and candidates from parishes around western Washington. This year, Father Ryan was delegated to preside at the Rites of Election on March 3 and 5.

April

7. The Chrism Mass brings priests and people from every parish in the Archdiocese for the blessing of oils to be used in sacramental celebrations at Easter and throughout the coming year. In his homily, Archbishop Etienne challenged those present: “who was the last person from your parish who chose a vocation of service in the Church as a youth minister? A teacher in a Catholic school? A woman religious? Or a full time lay ecclesial minister in the Church? How many people do you know who work for our Catholic Community Services or Catholic Housing Services to provide services to the less fortunate and poor? In a culture that is so focused on self, we are called to so much more. Every Christian vocation is at its heart a life of generous service of others – because this is what it means to share the life of God, the life of the Risen Jesus, the anointing of the Holy Spirit! The Church and society need us to live our Catholic identity as true disciples of Christ Jesus and servants of his Gospel.”

10. Palm Sunday. It was wonderful to have hundreds join in our traditional Palm Sunday procession from the O’Dea Gym at the 10:00am Mass, after a two-year hiatus owing to Covid-19 protocols.

13-16. The Sacred Triduum was celebrated with beauty and dignity. See the album on pages 18-19 of this journal. It was a special treat to welcome Father Tom Lucas, SJ, who preached this year’s Tre Ore.

17. Easter. In his homily for today, Father Ryan said: “My friends, the Resurrection is mystery and miracle, but it is not metaphor. And it is also Mission. That is why, like those three women at the tomb, we need to carry from this place the good news that is our belief in the Risen Christ. We need to proclaim that faith. And how do we do that? Probably not by standing on the street corner or by Facebook or Instagram posts. That’s not our way. I like the way Carlo Carretto, a favorite spiritual writer of mine, puts it: Every time we forgive an enemy, every time we feed the hungry, every time we defend the weak, we proclaim our faith in the Resurrection. When we have the courage to marry, when we welcome a newly-born child, we proclaim it. When we wake at peace in the morning and sing Gods’ praise at the setting of the sun, we proclaim the Resurrection.”

May

3. The Episcopal Ordination of Father Frank Schuster was a joy-filled celebration for our local Church. See the album on pages 20-21 of this journal.

8. We celebrated First Holy Communion with eleven beautiful children.

26. The Cathedral hosted two Baccalaureate Masses today. Congratulations to the Class of 2022 of Holy Names Academy and Seattle Preparatory School!
Hunthausen Charity Golf Tournament

St. James Cathedral and Pagliacci Pizza present the 25th Annual Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen Charity Golf Tournament

benefiting the Cathedral Kitchen and other outreach ministries

Monday, August 29, 2022
Glendale Country Club, Bellevue

INFORMATION
www.stjames-s-cathedral.org/golf
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