

## **“THE SQUEAKY WHEEL”: CONTRIBUTING TO OUR LOCAL CHURCH**

Canon Law is often opaque, seemingly removed from most people’s daily life. However, that is a mis-read, as it is actually most helpful. For example, many are unaware that the faithful “have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church...” (Code of Canon Law, para # 208, §3) This **little-known** canon from the church’s law ought not pass unnoticed. There was a time when people were **uncomfortable** expressing their views to those in Church authority. Of course, it is equally true that the church is **neither a democracy**, nor is it ever a good idea for the **squeakiest wheel** to always get the grease! “I hate to be a kicker/ I always long for peace/ But the wheel that squeaks the loudest/ Is the one that gets the grease.” Attributed 19th century American humorist **Josh Billings**, it is true that some people make known their views quite readily and forcefully, making others shy to say much of anything.

It has been sarcastically remarked that with respect to large priest gatherings, there are two types of priests who stand up to speak— those who have something to say and those who have to say something. Ouch! I sure hope I am considered the former and not the latter. I suspect we have all had experiences in which someone drones on and on, seemingly holding captive those within earshot. By the same token, it is absolutely necessary at times to step back, **assess** and consider what others are saying and respond accordingly. A Church that **does not listen** will quickly morph into a **self-referential Church** speaking only to herself. It is with this in mind that I issue a **heartfelt invitation** for you to participate in a vitally important facet of the Archdiocesan Synod beginning in mid-September.

Before the pandemic sidetracked the entire Archdiocesan Synod process (causing a year-long delay), thirty (30) Prayer and Listening sessions were held, at which **over 8,000** faithful laity attended. They garnished more than **35,000 comments** reflecting upon the needs of this local church. That is an excellent start. We do not want to lose that momentum, but like everything, we have to “re-start” this fall to make up for lost time. Passivity and apathy lead to the possibility that a small number of people make all the decisions. Though perhaps well-intentioned, they may not have all the **best information** from which to forge a path ahead. And that is **unhealthy**, and why we are in such need of active, engaged, and faithful laity. Vigorous discussion is needed in the Church today because those in Church leadership too often miss important insights from Catholics who view the world through a different lens.

We become **sheltered** in our clerical worldview and **risk missing** important insights. In a little more than a month’s time, you the faithful laity have an opportunity to join in a **six-part series** during which you will receive solid teaching on several aspects of our faith, discuss them in small groups and make some key recommendations that will benefit the planning of the Synod here in the Archdiocese. Never in my 32 years ministering in this Archdiocese have I witnessed such a unique opportunity and I hope that many of you take full advantage. There are three main areas of focus, each of which will be discussed in two sessions. They are: (1) Parishes that are in the **service of evangelization**; (2) **Missionary disciples** who know Jesus’s love and respond to his call; and (3) **Youth and young adults** in and for a Church that is always young.

There will be three meeting times per week from which to choose: **Wednesday evenings, Friday afternoons** and early Saturday mornings. Our steering team desires to provide a variety of times of day as well as days, in order to maximize the possibilities. An early Saturday start time may

seem odd, but I have learned that many people's weekends are packed. Thus, we are trying to **maximize** the time available for your other weekend activities. Do you need to attend all six? No, probably not; however, we hope you will find it so engaging that you would choose to do so! But knowing you may have a conflict on one or more ought not dissuade you from attending those you are free to attend. This is **not about** squeaky wheels getting the grease, but rather about **everyday Catholics** who share their insights, hopes and dreams for the Church in 2021.

For now, **I invite you** to consider two things. First, **sign up** and commit to attending the sessions. Secondly, I am in need of a number of people who would be willing to serve as **facilitators**. This involves a **small amount of training** so that you are prepped on how to facilitate the discussion in a meaningful way at your table. Small groups will be limited to eight people, so that each table's participants may seriously engage the questions posed. Each session begins with the entire group (in Hayden Hall, here) watching a video teaching and then discussing its implications for our Archdiocese. May the Holy Spirit guide and inspire us to respond to His call as engaged and hopeful disciples on the journey.

- The first step is to admit having a problem— with coffee. Or, better yet, **without coffee!** When the coffee maker went on the blink Friday morning, it spelled trouble. A packed weekend made an in-person purchase difficult, and we receive deliveries only during business hours. “Kuerig-it” until Monday? **No way!** What to do? Aha! “Mom, if a package arrives tomorrow for you, it is actually mine.” Her senior residence receives deliveries every day. Crisis averted—next day delivery.”
- I'm feeling sorry for our Olympians. The games have not garnished nearly the attention typical for this **worldwide event**. The Covid-19 delay, absence of fans, and National Anthem controversies haven't helped. There remain some inspiring performances, including those of **Suni Lee**, the pride of the local Hmong community and Maryland Catholic school alumna, **Katie Ledecky** (four more swimming medals), who prays the “Hail Mary” before races. Bravo, Katie!
- **Visitors** have returned to the building! On a single day last week, we accommodated a group from Grand Rapids, MI who called on a whim to see if they might celebrate a Mass here. We found a side chapel for them because another group— from Austin, TX— was scheduled at the same time in the Saint Joseph Chapel. I'll never complain about pivoting when it comes to **welcoming pilgrims** to our church!
- The first phrase I learned in a 1986 summer Greek class was from Aristotle's (†322 B.C.) *Nicomachean Ethics*: “A friend is another self.” (ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός). I never forgot it— he was spot on!
- Speaking of friends. A **dozen priests** concelebrated a wedding here last week— it was amazing! Though the groom had discerned out of the seminary, the couples' priest friends showed up *en masse* to support them! It looked **more like an ordination** from the view behind the altar! Our young adults have made some fantastic connections, and I'll never tire of celebrating such faith-filled weddings!
- Hope to see you next Sunday after the 10:00 a.m. Mass for our Ice Cream Social, held outside in the Cathedral courtyard.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,  
Rector