

TOGETHER

a monthly bulletin insert from the archdiocese



ARCHDIOCESE
of DUBUQUE

Comments regarding this insert may be sent to communications staff by emailing contactus@dbqarch.org or by calling (800) 876-3546 and asking for the director of communications.

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SYNOD REPORT: INSTALLMENT 5 OF 5

What's next?

This report of the synodal exercise on parish vitality doesn't mention every comment or opinion, but is an attempt to summarize general thought trends.

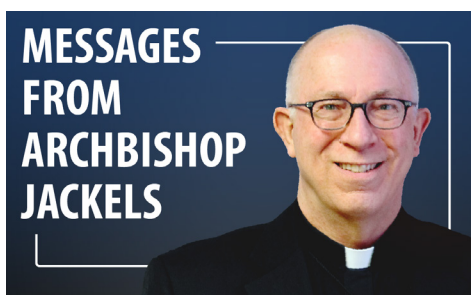
There is an expectation for greater transparency moving forward, and that this exercise will be translated into action on the local level. What follows are proposed action steps:

1. Develop an instrument with markers for parishes to measure their vitality, in order to make individuals and communities aware of where they need to up their game. This should include a review of whether there is enough money to pay the bills, and enough active people to constitute a community and to carry out ministry roles.
2. Following-up on the local use of the above-mentioned instrument, work to develop a plan to address the distribution of priests serving how many parishes. Also, work to enhance the markers for parish vitality to ensure their future viability.
3. Perhaps as an alternative to closing parishes, work with clergy and laity to re-vision parishes so they can operate without a residential and/or regular priest presence, where deacons, religious, and laity can help take care of parish administration, serving the poor, faith formation programming, gathering in church on weekdays for prayer and on Sundays for Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP), if it's a Sunday when a priest can't be there.
4. Continue to promote the 4 archdiocesan ministry priorities: enhance the experience of the Sunday assembly for

Holy Mass; strengthen faith formation programming; teach stewardship as a way of life; promote vocations in general and priesthood in particular.

5. Continue to stress the 3 essential activities of a vital parish community: help the poor; learn and teach the Gospel; gather for daily prayer and Sunday worship.

The entire Synod Report is available on the archdiocesan website at www.dbqarch.org/Synod-report.



GENDER: BEND BUT DON'T BREAK

The discussion

There are some children, youth and adults who suffer from the feeling that their body doesn't match where they see themselves internally along a broad, non-binary sexual spectrum.

Who knows why people experience that, but the suffering they experience is real, and they deserve to be met with respect and compassion, and helped to find relief.

Advocates of gender theory say they can find relief by choosing their gender, and how they express that choice, even to the point of changing their bodies to correspond to that choice.

People who identify themselves as transgender sometimes express themselves with a new name, preferred pronouns or wardrobe, and anticipate that others will respect that choice.

That is a challenge for those who embrace the Catholic worldview, especially in terms of understanding the human person and human sexuality.

The Catholic worldview

Catholics are guided by the Holy Spirit, who Jesus promised will lead us into all truth

(John 16:13). That guidance is given through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

We believe that God created humans in the Divine Image, as male or female, which is both a given and a gift, and having an inherent dignity (Genesis 1:27).

The sexual difference between male and female speaks to their responsible cooperation with the Creator to increase the number of the human race (Genesis 1:28).

The sexual difference also speaks to the complementarity between woman and man, finding in each other an equal and a suitable partner in marriage (Genesis 2:20-24).

In our human nature we enjoy free-will, which isn't a limitless autonomy, but circumscribed by the sovereign will of God (Genesis 2:17).

Our first parents violated those boundaries by trying to commandeer the sovereignty of God, resulting in our soul and body feeling divided (Genesis 3:5).

One form of that divide is feeling shame when naked (Genesis 3:7). Others may feel it as a disconnect between their chosen gender and their body.

Conclusion

Catholics must respect the dignity that every person enjoys, assure them that they are loved by God and us, and protect them from harm, and certainly not be the cause of it.

But at this point in the gender discussion, we aren't able to go along with the idea that people can choose and change their gender, rather than see it as a fact of nature.

We aren't sticks-in-the-mud. We're open to other perspectives, to see if we might find truth there, or to seek common ground, or to promote acceptance, even if we don't agree.

Others may consider Catholics unenlightened, but we too deserve respect when in our various ministries we aren't able to accommodate someone's preferred gender expressions.

What we can do though is imitate Jesus: accompany transgender people, feel their pain, listen to their story, tell them another side of the story, share life and love with them (Luke 24:13).

Michael O. Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque

The following list contains the names and addresses of retired priests who would love to hear from you.

The following priests reside at:

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1155 Mt. Loretta Ave.
Dubuque, IA 52003

Rev. Ardel H. Barta
Rev. Msgr. James O. Barta
Rev. Msgr. Russell M. Bleich
Rev. Dennis H. Cahill
Rev. Dennis R. Cain
Rev. Msgr. Karl L. Glovik
Rev. George W. Karnik
Rev. Msgr. Daniel J. Knepper
Rev. Eugene C. Kutsch
Rev. Paul J. Otting
Rev. Donald J. Plamondon
Rev. Philip F. Recker
Rev. Mark A. Ressler
Rev. Philip E. Thompson

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Rev. Robert R. Beck
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Rev. William P. Cosgrove
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as of November 1, 2022