



## All Things New Youth Voices:

“Youth who participated in synodal sessions, however, stressed that they should not be seen and spoken of mostly as the future of the Church, but should be recognized for their importance now and given a significant voice in the present. They want to be both seen and heard and included more in Church life, especially by participating meaningfully in parish and diocesan councils and ministries” (*National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Diocesan Phase of the 2021-2023 Synod*, p. 9).

Youth in the Harvest of Hope Area Catholic Community were reached out to throughout the first part of the month of September 2025 by HOH youth ministers Emma Jean Johnson and Emma Morgan with the two questions below. The responses recorded here were returned by 3rd graders through young adults. Youth who have a history of participating heavily in youth ministry and faith formation were reached out to specifically, mostly through parent emails. Notices were sent out on the HOH Youth Ministry Instagram and HOH Facebook pages asking for universal participation from all youth in our community. However, we recognize that, because faith formation and youth ministry had not kicked off for the year yet, our best attempts at inclusive surveying fell short. Therefore, if you did not get an opportunity to express your voice or feel that these responses don't reflect your voice, in a spirit of synodality and listening as a way of being church, we encourage you to reach out to HOH youth ministers Emma Jean at [emma.johnson@hohcatholic.org](mailto:emma.johnson@hohcatholic.org) or 320-316-3320 (call or text) or Emma Morgan at [emma.morgan@hohcatholic.org](mailto:emma.morgan@hohcatholic.org) to share your voice.

### **What does “church” mean to you?**

- “For me, church is home. I know that no matter what mood I'm in or what's going on in life when I go to church, I have my true family there. I have met more lifelong friends through church than any other way and since losing my dad, I have really turned to the church and it has given me a newfound appreciation for church.”
- “Church means a quiet sanctuary where the community gathers to pray.”
- “It is about God. Learning more about Jesus and God.”
- “Church is a place where we worship God and receive communion. Church also refers to all the Catholics around the world.”
- “Church is more than just attending service on Sunday. Church is community. It's getting involved in things to help the church grow and be able to reach out to many people. Church is a great way to bond with people over God's love for us. By building a strong

church community, you can deepen in your own faith and know that you have people to turn to when challenges arise. Church is a family in Christ.”

- “Church means unity with God and fellow Christians. It gives us a time to be present with God as a community and individually.”
- “Church means spending time with God each week. It's a time to work on your relationship with God and to receive the Eucharist.”
- “Church is a place to pray and be with God.”
- “What church means to me is that it is where Jesus is present and it is a place of peace, another thing that church means it is a holy place to gather with the people in our church.”
- “To me, church means having a place where I belong and where I can grow in my faith. It's not just about learning stories from the Bible, but also figuring out how to live my life in a way that's kind, forgiving, and close to God. Church gives me a chance to slow down on my life and school and sports and just focus on what really matters. It's also a place where I can spend time with friends and family and help others in need. Church reminds me that I'm never alone, because God and my church community are always with me.”
- “Church means going to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days and praying with other people.”
- “To me church means a place to worship God and learn more about his word.”
- “Church is a place I can be closer to God and the Eucharist. It is time to think about what God says and see what God has to offer and time for my mind to calm down from the business of life. It is somewhere I grew up with and where I learned a lot about God and can think about life and pray. I can ask myself if something is helping me get closer to God. God isn't technology, God is a being.”

#### **What would make you feel more welcome at church?**

- “I have felt welcome at church always so I'm not sure how to make it more welcome.”
- “Greeters would make me feel welcome at church. A warm smile and a friendly ‘hello’ always make someone feel happy.”
- “I already feel welcome at church because people are friendly and nice. I feel welcome at any church I go to. I know a lot about our church and where things are. I have helped with things at our church so I know where things are and I participate.”
- “I feel welcome because I participate in things like serving and because I know the people there. I feel welcome when people talk to me and take an interest in me.”
- “Church is a place where no one should feel uncomfortable. It's a place where people come to worship Jesus, pray, and find community. You never know what someone's going through. Maybe they just lost someone they loved and they are scraping by. Maybe they have a super stressful job and forgot about church, but showed up late. We should never judge people if they're making an effort to come to church. We should find joy in the fact that God is moving them to seek His love. We should support them and welcome them into our community. What would continue to help me feel welcome is if no one was

judging me for extenuating circumstances. That is what I hope to see from our church for everyone.”

- “The greeters at church always make me feel welcome because their smiles and greetings make me feel like I am part of that community.”
- “Being familiar with the space, people, and/or priest helps me feel welcome.”
- “What helps me feel welcome at church is seeing the cross. It makes me feel peaceful and calm.”
- “Something that would make me feel more welcome at church is more things that have to do with the passion of our lord Jesus and more events at Seven Dolors.”
- “I feel welcome at church when people smile at me and include me in things. I like when kids my age are together with me participating in activities where we can connect. I like helping out and hearing messages that relate to my life. I feel welcome at church when it is friendly, safe, and a place where I can be myself without feeling judged.”
- “Donuts every week.”
- “I do feel welcome at church.”
- “It’s already amazing as it is. It’s like a second home for me. People just know each other and are welcoming, like during the peace sign. We welcome people with open arms like God asks us to do.”