

“For Now We See Through a Glass But Dimly”: The First Synod of the Diocese of Calgary and the State of Post-Vatican II English-Canadian Roman Catholicism

NORMAN KNOWLES
St. Mary's University College

Between 6-9 April 1994 the Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary held its first diocesan synod. The synod, convoked in December 1990 by the Most Rev. Paul O'Byrne, involved three and half years of extensive planning and consultation. The bishop hoped that such a gathering of clergy and laity would provide an opportunity to reinvigorate the diocese, overcome division, reach out to the alienated, engage the laity in the life of the Church, and breathe new life into the directions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Like many dioceses in the Canadian church, the Diocese of Calgary experienced declining lay participation, dwindling numbers of priests and religious, inadequate financial resources, and growing disunity between liberals and conservatives in the decades that followed Vatican II. A close examination of this diocesan synod thus provides a unique lens through which to explore the issues and developments that have shaped and defined English-Canadian Roman Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council. The resolutions and deliberations of the synod are especially important for the insights they provide into the concerns and priorities of the laity. The exclusion of many of the resolutions approved by the synod from the bishop's promulgation and the frustration and disappointment experienced by many delegates sheds considerable light on the continuing tensions that exist within the Canadian church.

Historical Papers 2005: Canadian Society of Church History

Although diocesan synods have a long history in the Roman Catholic Church, such synods have not been a common occurrence in the life of the Canadian church. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) in fact required that a diocesan synod be held once a year. According to Trent, bishops were to summon the vicar-general, the members of the cathedral chapter, holders of benefices, and all others who have care of souls. Lay persons could be invited to attend but had no right to be summoned. Although the decrees of Trent have never been revoked, the custom of holding annual diocesan synods had fallen into abeyance in many areas by the eighteenth century. Diocesan synods were rarely held in Canada. With the Second Vatican Council's commitment to collegiality and shared responsibility among bishops and priests and the new emphasis on lay involvement in the life and ministry of the Church, diocesan synods became more common in some areas. During the pontificate of John Paul II, however, officials in Rome became increasingly concerned that diocesan synods threatened to erode the authority of the bishop and the *magisterium* of the Church, encouraged competition between different interests in the Church, and created false expectations of change among the laity. In 1983 a new Code of Canon Law set out the juridical norms that were to govern diocesan synods. The Code and a subsequent set of instructions prepared by the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples reasserted episcopal authority, clearly defined the purpose and composition of diocesan synods, and demarcated the nature of lay participation in such assemblies.¹

The period following the Second Vatican Council was one of dramatic and sometimes unsettling change in the Diocese of Calgary. The number of priests and religious in the diocese failed to keep pace with the growth of the Roman Catholic population of southern Alberta. Between 1968 and 1990 the Catholic population in the diocese more than doubled but the number of priests declined from 150 to 95. Not only were there fewer clergy, but the average age of priests had climbed to sixty. The declining health and imminent retirement of many priests and the widening generation gap between clergy and laity presented serious challenges to the diocese as did the dwindling number of vocations. In 1968 the diocese reported seventeen seminarians; by 1990 there were only seven men from the diocese training for the priesthood. The ranks of the clergy were further thinned by the laicization of a significant number of clergy who left the priesthood to marry or out of frustration with the lack of reform in the Church. The demands placed upon the clergy increased

dramatically during this period. In 1968 there was one priest for every 757 persons in the diocese; by 1990 the ratio had increased to one priest for every 3,266 persons. Such trends threatened to diminish the priestly role to the simple dispensation of sacraments to people whose daily pastoral care was increasingly entrusted to others. At the same time, the image of the clergy was seriously damaged by revelations of past abuses by priests and religious employed in orphanages, reform schools and Native residential schools. These pressures contributed to an increase in stress, burnout and poor morale among a clergy already caught up in a crisis of change. In the wake of Vatican II, many new priests were often unsure of what was expected of them and many older clergy frequently found it difficult to adjust to the Church's new ways.² The lack of vocations forced the diocese to look farther afield to recruit priests from Poland, Vietnam and the Philippines. By 1990 nearly a third of all the priests in the diocese were foreign-born. The importation of clergy from overseas was often followed by a difficult period of adjustment for both priest and parishioners. The religious orders that had historically sustained many of the Church's schools, hospitals, and social service agencies also suffered from dwindling numbers. In 1968 there were 243 sisters and more than twenty novices from thirteen different orders. By 1990 several orders had ceased operation in the diocese, the number of sisters had declined by 44 per cent and there were only two novices. Decreasing numbers forced several orders to consolidate, reduce or abandon much of their former work in the diocese and longstanding Catholic institutions such as the Holy Cross Hospital were secularized.³

As the number of clergy and religious declined, the diocese increasingly looked to the laity to become more involved in the ministry of the Church. The Second Vatican Council's affirmation of the Church as the whole people of God and its emphasis on the equality of all Christians in baptism promised to temper the hierarchical, authoritarian and clerical structures of the past with a more open and inclusive church that recognized and encouraged the participation of the laity in all aspects of church life.⁴ Innovations, such as the establishment of parish councils, however, often led to tension rather than a shared sense of mission. Some clergy, used to running their parishes as they saw fit and unaccustomed to lay input, were uncomfortable with the new spirit of inclusion and consultation and resisted the formation of pastoral councils in their parishes or refused to support their work. For many within the laity, the creation of the new pastoral councils was a sign of the Church's democra-

tization and recognition of their right to be consulted in parish affairs. Not surprisingly, conflict often resulted as clergy confronted determined parishioners empowered and emboldened by the Vatican Council's emphasis on equality and lay inclusion.⁵

Ironically, as opportunities for lay involvement in the life of the Church increased, active participation in the Church began to decline. In 1968 nearly 70 per cent of all Roman Catholics in southern Alberta were considered active within the Church. By 1988 only 44 per cent were classified as active. Sunday Mass attendance experienced an equally dramatic decline from nearly 40 per cent of the total Catholic population in 1970 to less than twenty per cent in 1988. Even though the total Roman Catholic population increased significantly during this period, the numbers of persons baptized and confirmed each year remained stable.⁶ If the Second Vatican Council sought to engage the Church in the modern world through the active participation of the laity, the results in the Diocese of Calgary were disappointing as increasingly large segments of the Roman Catholic population became inactive in the Church. Decreased attendance had a direct impact on diocesan and parish finances. Annual deficits forced the diocese to cut back on programs and staff. While the diocese succeeded in balancing its books, several parishes came uncomfortably close to defaulting on building loans and rural depopulation and the shortage of priests resulted in the consolidation and closure of some missions and parishes.⁷ Continuing financial difficulties limited the ability of the Diocese to introduce new initiatives or to respond to population growth and changing demographics.

The diocese was further beset by intensifying divisions between liberals and conservatives within the church. Liberal Catholics, inspired by the Second Vatican Council's spirit of openness to the modern world and tolerance of diversity, challenged the Church to further reform especially on matters of discipline and moral teaching. Some liberals urged the Church to reconsider its teachings on contraception and divorce, to expand the ministry of women and to abolish compulsory priestly celibacy. To conservative Catholics such ideas represented a dangerous challenge to Church tradition and moral teaching. Conservatives critics charged that in trying to be modern and relevant, liberals threatened to erode Catholicism's distinctive identity and the Church's traditional claim to moral authority. Questioning the consequences of the liberal agenda of openness and tolerance, conservative Catholics called for a return to ethical absolutes reflecting traditional teachings concerning family,

sexuality and moral discipline. Conservatives sought to redefine the Second Vatican Council on their own terms and to return the Church to its “orthodox” roots through movements such as *Opus Dei*, the Legionnaires of Christ and *Regnum Christi*. While conservatives tended to look to the past, liberals challenged the Church to address present realities. For many liberals, this meant putting the cause of social justice at the heart of the Church’s mission.⁸

The arrival of the charismatic movement further added to the Church’s diversity in southern Alberta. By the mid-1970s, charismatic renewal constituted a powerful and sometimes divisive influence in many parishes. While some parishes were reinvigorated by the charismatic movement and the experience of tongues, prophecy and healing, others were deeply divided. Some Catholics were suspicious of the demonstrative style of charismatic prayer and its intense emotionalism. Others charged that the movement threatened traditional ecclesiastical authority and doctrine and that its preoccupation with individual experience detracted from the Church’s call to social action and community. Still others criticized the movement’s fundamentalism and tendency to proclaim the superiority of charismatic piety over all other forms of prayer and worship. Despite these objections, the movement attracted a large following in the diocese, especially among those disturbed by the forces of secularization in society and liberalization in the church.⁹

The Diocese of Calgary was shepherded through this period of dramatic and sometimes unsettling change by Paul J. O’Byrne. O’Byrne was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Carroll on 22 February 1948. As a parish priest, Paul O’Byrne displayed a “lively wit, enthusiasm and spontaneous warmth for people” and demonstrated a keen interest in “relating the gospel to the daily life of his people and their communities.”¹⁰ Wherever he served, Fr. O’Byrne displayed an avid interest in youth and social action. His involvement with youth and work in the community made him deeply aware of the need for the Church to come to terms with contemporary realities. Convinced of the need for change and innovation, Paul O’Byrne welcomed the winds of renewal that began to blow through the Church with Vatican II and which was then being implemented in the Diocese of Calgary by Bishop Klein. He was concerned, however, by how the spirit of reform would be practically applied at the local level. Paul O’Byrne’s reputation as an effective parish priest and a thoughtful advocate of reform resulted in his election in 1968 as chair of the Priests’ Senate, a new body recommended by the Second Vatican Council and

instituted by Bishop Klein. It was hoped that the Priests' Senate would help to move the Church away from the hierarchical and authoritarian church structures of the past towards a more collegial and consultative model of church life.

Bishop Klein died on 3 February 1968 only nine months after his installation as the fifth Bishop of Calgary. Following the death of Bishop Klein, the Diocesan Consultors chose Fr. Paul O'Byrne to be administrator of the diocese until a new bishop was appointed. The appointment was a recognition of O'Byrne's energy and abilities and a sign of the high regard in which he was held in the diocese.¹¹

The manner by which Bishops were to be chosen had been a subject of discussion both during and following the Second Vatican Council. Some believed that the process needed to be opened up and made more democratic. It was in this spirit that the clergy of the Diocese submitted a brief to the Apostolic Delegate to Canada requesting that they be consulted in the selection of the new bishop. The Apostolic Delegate responded favourably to the request and agreed to meet with the clergy of the diocese. During the meeting, the clergy made it clear that they wanted their new bishop to be a native of the diocese, or at least to be from western Canada and familiar with its ways and culture. There was also a strong desire that the new bishop be pastorally minded and accessible to the clergy and people of the diocese. At the end of the proceedings, the Apostolic Delegate invited the clergy to write to him with the names of individuals they felt were suited to the position and promised that he would forward the names to the Vatican. Throughout the proceedings, one name kept recurring – Paul O'Byrne who was named Bishop of Calgary on 21 June 1968. It was one of the first times that a bishop had been appointed after such open consultation with the diocesan clergy.¹²

In many respects, Paul O'Byrne was a new kind of bishop. Determined to remove any barriers that might separate him from the people he was called to serve, Bishop O'Byrne eschewed the pomp and trappings that had surrounded the office in the past. He dressed in priestly black and abandoned the Bishop's residence in Rosedale for a modest apartment not far from the Diocesan Pastoral Centre. His office was simple and unimposing. From the beginning, Bishop O'Byrne resolved that he would emphasize the pastoral dimension of his new office. He genuinely enjoyed meeting people and made a point of visiting parishes and meeting with the clergy as often as possible. Paul O'Byrne's "post-Vatican II style" certainly differentiated him from his predecessors and generated consider-

able expectations of change and renewal in the diocese.¹³ Beneath this optimism and enthusiasm, however, lay serious problems which were not long in rising to the surface. By the 1980s the Church in southern Alberta had to cope with the reality of decline, dissent and diversity. Bishop O'Byrne recognized the need for reconciliation and renewal in the diocese and in 1988 he approached his advisors with the idea of holding a diocesan synod. The bishop hoped that such a gathering would provide an opportunity for a renewed sense of vision, increased involvement in the mission and ministry of the church, and a heightened sense of communion and solidarity. After consultation with the Priests' Council, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and other groups, the bishop named Sr. Maria Nakagawa as Synod Coordinator in July 1990. In the autumn, a coordinating committee was struck with representatives from the Social Affairs and Religious Education Councils of the diocese, the universities and colleges, the separate school boards, youth, religious and each deanery. The bishop formally convoked the diocese's first synod in December 1990.¹⁴

Three and half years of careful planning and preparation preceded the meeting of the synod. To focus planning and discussion, organizers chose "Our Place in God's Family" as the synod theme. Organizers recognized from the start that the success of the synod depended on involving as many persons as possible in the process. To facilitate communication with the parishes and generate interest in the local church, a synod coordinator was selected in every parish. A preliminary survey was conducted to identify issues and concerns. Further input was received from small dialogue groups, led by trained facilitators, formed in the parishes and from open deanery meetings. All individuals in the diocese were invited to write to the synod coordinator to express their concerns, opinions and recommendations. In the end, more than 3,000 parishioners, including some 600 youth, participated in the process.¹⁵ On the basis of this feedback, organizers established seven commissions dealing with personal faith, the family, the parish, the diocese, the universal Church, education and youth. Each of the commissions reviewed the input received, identified key issues and produced a draft report with recommendations. In November 1993, the draft reports were circulated to all clergy and parish synod coordinators for their responses. Parishioners throughout the diocese were invited to respond to the commissions' recommendations by completing a survey. A series of resolutions was prepared for the synod based on the responses received from the clergy, parish coordinators and the 925 completed surveys. Delegate selection occurred in January 1994

and pre-synod workshops held in each deanery during February and March. The formal synod took place between 6-9 April 1994 and was attended by 132 voting delegates. Delegates passed 112 of the 113 recommendations brought before the synod. To ensure broad consensus, a 70 per cent approval rate was required for all resolutions.

Diocesan Administration

The resolutions adopted by the diocesan synod provide considerable insight into the concerns and priorities of active Roman Catholics in southern Alberta at the end of the twentieth century. These resolutions revealed a strong desire for reform of diocesan structures and procedures. During the discussions that preceded the synod, many participants expressed a wish for more “consistent direction and planning” from the diocesan administration and greater lay participation in diocesan decision-making. The Diocesan Pastoral Council, established in 1974, was to have provided a means for long term planning and lay input into administration of the diocese. The information gathered prior to the synod indicated that the “general faithful” appeared “to know relatively little about the role of the Diocesan Pastoral Council” and that the Council, while active, had “not communicated its work to the parishes” effectively. Delegates to the synod stressed the importance of gathering “input from the faithful” whenever the diocese considered major issues or changes of policy, if bitterness, resentment and misunderstanding were to be avoided. This was particularly critical before the Diocese made “any major changes” involving parish closings or amalgamations. Pre-synod consultations revealed that rural Catholics felt especially isolated from the diocese. Rural parishioners often complained that they were excluded from important decisions and that diocesan services were not easily accessed by country parishes. The resolutions approved by the synod expressed a strong desire for a more inclusive, effective, visible and accessible diocesan administration with a clear sense of direction and purpose.¹⁶

Pastoral Leadership and the Laity

Many participants in the pre-synod consultations indicated they felt that a new style of pastoral leadership was needed to carry parishes into the twenty-first century. To achieve this objective, the synod recommended that the seminary training of priests be updated and that the clergy

be provided with opportunities to develop their gifts throughout their active ministry. The synod encouraged all seminaries “to provide seminarians with leadership training” particularly in the areas of “listening skills, facilitating skills and conflict resolution.” Another motion urged seminaries and the diocese to provide training “to improve the standard of preparing and presenting homilies offered in the parishes.” This resolution reflected the increased importance that the laity attached to preaching and teaching. The faithful expected more from their priest than simply presiding at the liturgy and administering the sacraments. These changing expectations of the clergy resulted in a desire for greater lay input into the selection and appointment of priests. The synod requested lay representation on the Diocesan Vocation Formation Committee examining candidates for the priesthood and stressed the need to involve parish communities in the selection and appointment of their pastor. Of the 113 resolutions brought to synod, only the resolution advocating a voice for parishioners in the appointment of parish priests fell short of the 70 per cent support needed for adoption. Although the synod did not vote according to lay and clerical houses, it was clear that opposition to this resolution came primarily from the clergy. The isolation and increasing demands placed upon the clergy disturbed synod delegates. Although delegates expressed concern for the many pressures placed upon the clergy, especially by the shortage of priests, the resolutions also indicated a desire for a different type of pastoral leadership. During the extensive consultations that preceded the synod, many participants in the process identified priestly celibacy, and some the exclusion of women from priestly orders, as issues that the synod should address in light of the urgent need for more priests. Both issues lay beyond the authority of the bishop and the diocese and were not discussed during the synod although delegates did urge the bishop to consider calling single and married men to the diaconate to relieve some of the burden carried by priests.¹⁷

The Second Vatican Council encouraged lay involvement in all aspects of parish life. The feedback received prior to the synod indicated, however, that many persons in the diocese felt a need for greater collaboration and co-operation between the clergy and the laity in the parishes. It was noted that considerable confusion existed about the role and authority of the pastoral councils established in most parishes. Some questioned the representativeness of the councils and expressed frustration with their inability to function effectively. To address these concerns, the synod resolved that the nomination and selection of members for parish pastoral

councils should come from the parish community. In many parishes, the parish priest appointed the pastoral council. The synod further recommended that members of the pastoral council be “in touch” with their parish community and serve staggered terms to ensure a measure of continuity. Delegates stressed the important role that the pastoral council, working in collaboration with the clergy, should play in providing leadership and direction for the parish.

During the pre-synod consultations it became clear that many parishioners felt that the liturgy did not reflect the needs of the parish community. To ensure that worship reflected the needs and diversity of the whole community and utilized the gifts of the people, the synod encouraged more “collaborative decision-making” by parish liturgy committees. The synod also called upon the parish community to “take responsibility for the administrative and secretarial functions of the parish” in order to provide priests with more time to carry out their pastoral and sacramental duties. With more participatory decision-making, the potential for conflict increased. Delegates to the synod recognized this possibility and appealed to the diocese to establish a conflict resolution committee to help mediate disputes.¹⁸

Education and Formation

The input received prior to the synod clearly indicated that the people of the diocese wished to play a more active role in the life of the Church. Many participants also indicated, however, that they felt ill-equipped to give witness to their faith and to exercise their baptismal ministry. The synod challenged parishes to become effective learning and formation centres that transformed their members into mature Christians equipped to live out the Gospel. To achieve this, parishes were to identify the educational needs of their parishioners and then establish programs of spiritual formation and provide opportunities for adult education. Pre-synod discussions revealed that many faithful were unclear about the Church’s teaching on important theological, social and moral issues. For the sake of clarity and unity, the synod stressed that all educational materials used in the parishes should be approved by the bishop. To provide effective support and training to the parishes, the synod recommended that the diocesan Religious Education Office be expanded and that the diocese “find the ways and means of training clergy, religious and laity to be spiritual directors.” Delegates to the synod attached tremendous

importance to the family as a primary centre of spiritual development. The information gathered before the synod indicated that the reality of family life in the diocese often differed from the ideal of the family upheld by the Church. Since the 1960s, the traditional nuclear family had been eroded by rising rates of divorce, remarriage and single parenthood. Marriage to non-Catholics had become much more common. During this period, social and economic factors compounded the stress experienced by the family unit. To increase awareness of family issues, the synod invited the diocese to implement a family educational program for clergy and laity and to investigate the services that other dioceses provided to families. The synod believed that the creation of healthy and stable family units required that parishes “implement quality marriage preparation courses led by qualified couples” and provide for the “ongoing formation of married couples” through “relevant and meaningful courses.” Delegates further challenged the Church to do more to address the problem of family violence and to provide greater support to families in times of crisis. Because parents played such a critical role in the moral and spiritual development of their children, the synod believed that Catholic families needed to be equipped better to put their Christian faith into practice at home and to counteract negative societal influences. The synod called upon the diocese to make existing resources better known and more accessible to parents, to investigate successful family programs offered elsewhere, and to provide the support needed to implement these programs in the parishes. While the synod called upon the diocese to do more in this area, it also recognized that parents needed to be reminded of their responsibility to “witness their faith in all aspects of their lives” and to participate actively in the spiritual formation of their children.¹⁹

Youth

The motions adopted by the synod revealed considerable concern for the place of youth in the Church. Some 600 young people participated in pre-synod discussions. At these meetings, many youth voiced the isolation and frustration they experienced in the Church. Youth frequently complained that the Church seemed to recognize only the gifts of adults and that their abilities and ideas were often ignored or overlooked. Young Catholics lamented that the Church’s teachings were not communicated in a relevant or meaningful manner and that the Church’s worship often failed to reflect the needs and experience of youth. To respond to these

concerns, the synod advocated the creation of a diocesan Youth Ministry Office and the appointment of youth coordinators in each deanery. The synod urged parishes and deaneries to encourage and support youth groups and organizations, to develop and promote youth leadership workshops and volunteer programs and to provide opportunities for youth to worship and celebrate their faith. If youth were to feel included in and valued by the Church, it was essential that young people be invited to contribute to all aspects of parish life. The synod resolved that youth should be represented on the parish council and other committees and provided with the opportunity to participate in Church ministries. Delegates directed pastors to dialogue with the young people of their parishes and to take more seriously the perspectives and insights that youth had to share with the church. Closely connected to the question of youth in the Church was the issue of Catholic education. The synod consultation process revealed a perception among many parents that the religious education programs offered in the Catholic schools did not adequately teach Catholic doctrine and that teachers were not sufficiently qualified to teach religion. In response to these concerns, the synod recommended that only religious education programs approved by the bishop be adopted in the Catholic schools of the diocese and that the diocese work with the Catholic school boards and St. Mary's College to develop programs to equip teachers of religious education better. The synod hoped that together these measures would ensure that the faith was handed on to the next generation.²⁰

Social Justice and Ecumenism

Two other priorities for the Church became evident in the synod's deliberations: social justice and ecumenism. In its report to the synod, the Commission on the Universal Church Family asserted that social justice was "an integral part of Jesus' teaching and example." It was thus imperative that the church be a leader in social justice and do more to address the problems that afflicted society both at home and abroad. To achieve this objective, the synod urged the diocese to re-establish a Social Action Office. As part of its effort to economize, the diocese had dismantled its Social Justice Office in 1991. With the closure of this office, many in the diocese felt that they lacked the resources, awareness and direction necessary to apply gospel values and the social teachings of the Church to current social issues. The synod hoped that a new Social Action Office could correct this situation by providing information,

facilitating workshops, public forums, courses and retreats, networking with other organizations and drawing attention to social justice issues through the media. To be effective, however, these efforts needed to be supported by active commitment at the parish level. The synod thus advised parish pastoral councils to form a social action committee whose purpose was to make the parish aware of injustices in their community and the world, to reflect on a Christian response to those needs and to support appropriate action.²¹ Whenever possible, the synod felt that the diocese and parishes should work with other Christian denominations to address the problems that afflicted our society. This recommendation reflected the broad support for ecumenism that was evident in pre-synod discussions. Participants in the consultation process often expressed a desire to work more closely with other churches but were unclear about their own church's views on ecumenism. The synod challenged parish pastoral councils to make ecumenical issues and activities a priority and urged the diocese to consider constructing joint-use facilities whenever new developments were planned.²²

Implementation and Impact

Anxious that the synod's recommendations were acted upon, delegates called upon the bishop to appoint a Synod Implementation Coordinator. The synod challenged all persons and bodies named in the adopted resolutions to take immediate steps to develop an implementation plan and to report back to the Synod Implementation Coordinator by 31 October 1994.²³ Most delegates left the synod confident that the Church in southern Alberta would emerge strengthened and renewed by the collective efforts of the past three and half years. Robert Schulz, chair of the Synod Coordinating Committee, observed that the synod "has given people a sense of taking ownership for their part of the church." He predicted that parishioners and priests would come to work more closely together as a result of the synod and that lay persons would "recognize that they have a lot more they can do, a lot more that they want to do, rather than just relying on the priest."²⁴ To many delegates, the synod was a "wonderful experience of Church as the Body of Christ journeying together" that promised to reinvigorate the life of the diocese. Beneath this optimism and enthusiasm, however, lay some potential pitfalls that threatened to impede the implementation of the reforms approved by the synod. When asked to evaluate the overall synod process, many delegates

commented how difficult it was “trying to get people involved” and “to convince them of the importance and value of the process.” The “apathy” and “lack of response” at the parish level was compounded by the “lack of enthusiasm of many priests.”²⁵ Such indifference jeopardized the model of participatory decision-making and collaborative ministry envisioned by the synod. If the laity was not activated and if the clergy did not buy into change, the overall impact of the synod would be quite limited. To some, these fears seemed to be confirmed in the bishop’s official promulgation of the resolutions of the synod in October. Notably absent from the official promulgation was any mention of the resolutions passed by the synod calling for greater lay participation in diocesan decision-making and reform of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.²⁶ The Synod Implementation Committee nonetheless strove to keep the spirit of the synod alive and worked closely with diocesan agencies and parishes to develop action plans. The committee reported considerable progress at the diocesan level at a day-long celebration and conference held on 17 June 1995 to mark the first anniversary of the synod. To implement synod resolutions, the diocese established several new agencies including a Family Resource Centre, a Youth Commission, an office of Adult Religious Education, a Social Action Office and a spiritual direction committee. Significant steps were also taken to improve the diocese’s communications capacity and access to diocesan resources. In response to a key recommendation of the synod, the diocesan administration announced the creation of a task force to develop a diocesan mission statement, review policies and establish both short- and long-term goals for the diocese.²⁷ Progress at the parish level was more mixed. A survey of parishes conducted by the Synod Implementation Committee revealed that 42 parishes had not done anything to enact synod resolutions. While some of these parishes had simply not completed the survey by the due date, the results nonetheless indicated considerable indifference to the whole synod process. Participants in the anniversary conference held in June 1995 attributed this disengagement to a lack of time, resources and leadership, different parish priorities, opposition from the parish priest, changes in clergy, and theological division within the parish community. Although some parishes appeared to be untouched by the synod, others displayed signs of renewed life and vigor as they endeavoured to implement synod resolutions.²⁸

What was the legacy of the 1994 diocesan synod? This is a difficult question to answer. There is no doubt that the synod contributed to a renewal of the diocesan administration based upon the priorities identified

during the whole synod process. The diocese expanded its activities and improved its effectiveness in many areas. The impact at the parish level is less clear. In some parishes, the range of parish activities and opportunities for lay participation expanded significantly. In other parishes, little had changed from before. The success of the synod depended on high levels of both lay and clerical participation. The relatively low rates of lay involvement in the pre-synod consultations indicated widespread disinterest among the laity. It was equally clear that some among the clergy distrusted the process and refused to support it. This detachment limited the synod's overall impact. Bishop O'Byrne hoped that the synod would help to heal the divisions between liberals and conservatives in the Church and help to restore a common sense of purpose and mission to the Diocese. There is no doubt that the synod provided an opportunity for different interests within the Church to listen to one another and to have their concerns heard. The good will that this generated proved to be temporary, however. By 1997, rival liberal and conservative groups were circulating petitions throughout the diocese. Catholics of Vision, a reform group based in Ottawa, began a national petition calling for a return to the "spirit of Vatican II." Conservatives within Human Life International responded by circulating a "real Catholic" petition to counter what it described as the "dissenters" within the Church. Bishop O'Byrne urged Catholics to ignore the petition campaigns and to make peace with one another in a pastoral letter circulated throughout the Diocese.²⁹ Another primary objective of the synod was to restore those alienated or inactive in the Church. There is little evidence to suggest that this occurred. The number of active Catholics and Sunday Mass attendance continued to decline in the years following the synod. This should not be a surprise. Almost all of the participants in the synod process were already committed to the Church and active in some way. The voices of the inactive Catholic majority were simply not heard at the synod. Consequently, the synod offered little insight into the reasons behind the decline of the Church in southern Alberta. The synod experience generated considerable expectations among those who took part. For many, the diocesan synod represented a step towards a more inclusive, collegial and collaborative Church and a fulfillment of the vision of the Second Vatican Council. As is often the case, these expectations often exceeded results and contributed to disillusionment and frustration among those who hoped for more. Despite Paul O'Byrne's intentions, the first synod of the Diocese of Calgary did not succeed in reversing the church's fortunes in southern Alberta.

Endnotes

1. On the history of diocesan synods see Norman P. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History* (New York: Crossroads, 2001); and *Instruction on Diocesan Synods* (Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1997).
2. On the challenges facing the priesthood see Donald B. Conzzen, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood: A Reflection on the Priest's Crisis of Soul* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000); Karl Rahner, ed., *The Identity of the Priest* (New York: Paulist Press, 1969); Karen Sue Smith, ed., *Priesthood in the Modern World* (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 1999); and *The Catholic Priest in the United States: Sociological Investigations* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1972). On sexual abuse see Michael Harris, *Unholy Orders: Tragedy at Mount Cashel* (Markham, ON: Viking, 1990).
3. The statistics on the number of clergy and religious, seminarians, and religious vocations have been gathered from the general statistical questionnaires completed by the Diocese and submitted annually to the Vatican and the recapitulation printed each year in the *Alberta Catholic Directory*.
4. On the role of the laity in the Church, see the Dogmatic Constitution of the Catholic Church *Lumen Gentium*.
5. *Western Catholic Reporter*, 27 November 1972; *Pastoral Reporter*, October 1985. On the difficulties that accompanied the reforms of the Second Vatican Council see Langdon Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); Mary Jo Leddy, Bishop Remi de Roo and Douglas Roche, *In the Eye of the Catholic Storm: The Church since Vatican II* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1992); and Franz Joseph Van Beeck, *Catholic Identity after Vatican II* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985).
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7. *Calgary Herald*, 10 November 1973.
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9. On the history of the charismatic movement in the Catholic Church see James Hanrahan, "The Nature and History of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Canada," Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Historical Studies* 50 (1983): 307-24; Fay, *Canadian Catholicism*, 297-301; and Edward D. O'Conner, *The Pentecostal Movement* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1971). On the impact of the charismatic movement in the Diocese of Calgary see *Western Catholic Reporter*, 23 August 1976; 21 August 1978; and 23 November 1986.
10. *Western Catholic Reporter*, 27 November 1972.
11. M.B. Venini Byrne, *From the Buffalo to the Cross: A History of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary* (Calgary: Calgary Archives and Historical Publishers, 1973), 139.
12. Byrne, *From the Buffalo to the Cross*, 1973), 139-41; *Calgary Herald*, 25 August 1968; *Western Catholic Reporter*, 28 August 1968; and *Calgary Herald*, 14 August 1993.
13. *Calgary Herald*, 24 August 1968; and *Western Catholic Reporter*, 6 December 1970; 27 November 1972.
14. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 3-5, Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary Archives (hereafter RCDCA).
15. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, "Synod Survey Summary," A1, RCDCA.
16. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 35-38, RCDCA.
17. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 27-29, RCDCA.
18. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 22-27, RCDCA.
19. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 14-21, RCDCA.
20. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 45-54, RCDCA.
21. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 41-42, RCDCA.

22. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 43, RCDCA.
23. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, 55, RCDCA.
24. *Calgary Herald*, 2 April 1994.
25. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Delegate's Manual*, Appendix, "Feedback Regarding the Synod," RCDCA.
26. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Promulgation*, October 1994, RCDCA.
27. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Implementation*, 1995, 7-11, RCDCA.
28. Calgary Diocesan Synod, *Implementation*, 1995, 13-19, RCDCA. Also see Parish Synod Implementation Chart.
29. *Calgary Herald*, 14 March 1997.