



Synod 2023 – For a Synodal Church: communion | participation | mission

Pope Francis invites every Catholic around the world to have a say and play their part in helping to shape the life and mission of the Catholic Church. He is doing this by calling a Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2023. This continues his efforts to renew the Catholic Church in accordance with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. His aim is to involve the whole church at the parish, diocesan, national and continental levels through a process of “encountering, listening and discernment on the important theme of synodality: “For a synodal church: communion, participation and mission.

The word synod, derived from the Greek *sunodos* (sun – “together” and *hodos* – “way”) means gathering or a meeting. The Synod of Bishops is an advisory body to the Holy Father who alone decides (*taking into account the sense of collegiality and the voice of the people*), on how to implement any recommendations of the synod. What is different with this particular synod is that Pope Francis is consulting beyond the sphere of the bishops and inviting every parish in the world to provide feedback that will ultimately be discussed at the General Assembly in October 2023. The Holy Father believes that Catholics need to walk together on their journey of faith. “Our “journeying together,” is in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.”

WHAT IS “SYNODALITY?”

All of us are called by virtue of our baptism to be active participants in the life of the church. In parishes, small Christian communities, lay movements, religious communities and other forms of communion, women and men, young and old, we are all invited to listen to one another to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit who comes to guide our human efforts. The Synodal process is first and foremost a spiritual process. We listen to each other, to our faith tradition and to the signs of the times to discern what God is saying to all of us. If listening is the method, discerning the aim, then participation is the path. Participation leads us out of ourselves to involve others who hold different views than we do. In a nutshell, “Synodality is a model that includes listening to a broad range of people and then discussing the issues together with the goal of hearing where the Holy Spirit is calling the church.

Last Sunday, October 10, Pope Francis solemnly opened the Synodal Path to Rome. This Sunday, October 17, each bishop will open the synodal path in his diocese with a time of reflection on the process and a celebration of the Eucharist. The diocesan phase runs through April 2022. The continental phase will run from September 2022 through March 2023 and will conclude in the universal phase at the Vatican with the Synod of Bishops in October 2023. It is

reasonable to expect that Pope Francis will follow documents submitted by the bishops with an apostolic exhortation outlining his takeaways and decisions from the synod a few months later, as he had done for previous synods.

In our Diocese of Camden, Bishop Sullivan will open the synod process on Sunday, October 17, with a 3pm Mass at Saint Agnes Church, Our Lady of Hope Parish, Blackwood. Pastors have been asked to appoint four lay delegates from their parishes. These delegates will have the responsibility of gathering groups of parishioners to discuss the synod document and its questionnaires. In addition, they will complete an online response to the synod questionnaire for their parish by December 8. They will also represent their parish at deanery-level meetings in February 2022 to help synthesize the responses of the parishes. The official response of the Diocese will be submitted to Washington by Bishop Sullivan no later than April 1, 2022.

YOU will be seen and heard...

At Christ Our Light, our **Youth/Young Adult**, ages 12 to 35, Listening Session is currently scheduled for

- **Wednesday, November 3**, at 7 pm in St. Mary's Room in the Parish Center

At Christ Our Light, our **Parish-wide** Synod Listening Sessions are currently scheduled for

- **Saturday, November 6**, from 9:30 am to 11:30 am in the Church (following 9:00 AM Mass)

- **Wednesday, November 10**, at 7 pm in the Parish Center Gym

- **Wednesday, November 17**, at 7 pm on Zoom

The fundamental questions for discussion are: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together." How is this "journeying together," happening today in your local Church, keeping in mind, communion, service and participation? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together?"

In responding to this question, we are invited to:

*** *Recall our experiences:*** What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?

****Re-read these experiences in greater depth:*** What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?

****Gather the fruits to share:*** Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our local Church?

Never before have we, The People of God, been given an opportunity to have our voices heard and to be listened to – the emphasis being on EVERYONE. This is our chance to help shape the way the church moves forward in the 21st century.

For more information, please use the following resources:

<https://www.synod.va/en/news/preparatoty:document.html>

<https://www.americanmagazine.org/faith/2021/10/10/pope-francis-opening=synod-synodality-encounter-listen-discern-241608>