



October 5, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I am eager to share with you that on Sunday, October 17, 2021 we will be joining dioceses throughout the world in commencing our own Diocesan Pre-Synod here in the Diocese of Wilmington. Pope Francis has challenged our Church to “journey together” and our Pre-Synod will provide us the opportunity to live out this calling. Please allow me to share with you some context and how we are planning to accomplish this.

Synods and the Church

In the New Testament book of the Acts of the Apostles, we learn of times in which the early Church was “called as a community to discern the will of the risen Lord” (*Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church, 19*). Examples of this are when “seven men of good reputations, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom” (Acts 6:3) were chosen to provide food for those who were being neglected; or in Acts 10, we learn of “the discernment of the crucial question of the mission to the Gentiles” (*SLMC, 19*).

Over the years since these and other events chronicled in Acts, the Church has convoked ecclesial assemblies on a diocesan, provincial, regional and universal level “to discern, by the light of the Word of God and listening to the Holy Spirit, the doctrinal, liturgical, canonical and pastoral questions that arise as time goes by” (*SLMC, 4*). Since the first centuries, these assemblies have been referred to as “synods.” The two Greek roots of the word “synod” mean “walking together on a path.” The word “synod,” therefore, refers just as much to the purpose and process of assembling as the gathering itself.

Synod 2023

It is with this as a background that I bring to your attention information on Synod 2023. Pope Francis has called this Synod to be a time for the Church to focus on the topic of synodality itself. The two fundamental questions that will guide this process are: “How does this ‘journeying together’ take place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal level), allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel?” and “What steps is the Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?” (Preparatory Document, 2).

The opening celebration of the Synod will take place in Rome on Saturday, October 9, 2021. The Synod will then proceed in the following three phases:

1. The Diocesan Phase: October 2021 to April 2022
2. Continental Phase: May 2022 to March 2023
3. Synod of Bishops: October 2023

Diocesan Phase of the Synod

The Diocesan Phase of the Synod, the Pre-Synod will open with the celebration of the 9:30 AM Mass at St. Peter's Cathedral on Sunday, October 17, 2021. All are welcome to join me and participate at this Mass as we especially pray that the Holy Spirit guide and direct us as a diocese and Church in the coming years of the synodal process.

I have appointed Mrs. Arline Dosman from Holy Cross Parish and Fr. Glenn Evers as the Diocesan Co-Contact Persons who will assist me in leading us through this effort. Additionally, a diocesan Synodal Team will soon be formed to help organize and oversee the Pre-Synod and the consultation of our people on the two fundamental questions. Further information regarding this phase will be forthcoming. In the meantime, however, I invite you to pray, both individually and together, the *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus* ("We stand before you Holy Spirit") Prayer. It is the prayer which has been used for hundreds of years at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings.

*We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.
All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.
Amen.*

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Koenig, D.D.
Bishop of Wilmington