



Pope Francis invited the global Catholic Church to gather and reflect on communion, participation, and mission within the Church. The two-year process of listening and dialogue is themed, For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, & Mission being referred to as the “synod on synodality,” which the Holy Father officially opened with Mass at Saint Peter’s Basilica on October 10.

Currently, dioceses throughout the world including our own are beginning the next phase of the synod which includes consultation and dialogue. Using a preparatory document and questionnaire to guide the discussion from the Holy See’s synod office, this phase runs through April 2022.

What is a "synod" and what does it mean?

It’s a meeting of bishops from all over the world established by Pope Paul VI, 15 September 1965, in response to the desire of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to discuss doctrinal or pastoral matters. Synods offer suggestions to the pope, which may or may not become official teachings at a later time. Literally speaking the word “synod”, derived from two Greek words syn meaning “together” and hodos meaning “road” or “way”, means a “coming together.”

What is different about this Synod?

This Synod is unique for two reasons. One, the Holy Father is asking that the entire Church participate in this Synod. The faithful, clergy and religious are invited to pray, listen, and talk together with the Bishops before the 2023 gathering of Bishops in Rome. In our Archdiocese, we will pray, listen and talk with one another through parish listening sessions and Archdiocesan listening sessions.

Second, this Synod is a unique gift for our Church. It is a gift of time – a chance to take a step back and reconnect. It is an opportunity to invite people not only back to Sunday Mass but also to parish life. This invitation to parish life starts with listening – listening to each other’s joys, hopes, sorrows and anxieties. Listening to each other is the basis of dialogue, friendship and community life. This Synod is not about changing doctrine or church structures, but rather encountering each other as brothers and sisters in Christ in a post-pandemic world.