The plea of Bartimaeus in today's Gospel - “I want to see” - is echoed in the needs of people today.

I want to see... that God loves me.

I want to see... that my life has meaning.

I want to see... that my sins are forgiven.

I want to see... the faith passed on to my children.

I want to see... that God is near to me.

I want to see... God at work in my marriage.

I want to see... God present at my loved one’s deathbed.

I want to see... that there’s meaning in my sufferings.

In so many concrete ways, both big and small, the Catholic Church helps men and women to see Jesus revealed in the midst of the world.

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Pope Francis has asked the whole Church to take part in a "Synod on Synodality". It may sound confusing, and when they had the press conference at the Vatican to announce this, one of the reporters asked the Papal Spokesperson "What is Synodality?" And she could not define it.

What I think the Holy Father is asking of the whole Church is something we in the Oakland Diocese and the whole USA have been doing for decades since the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965. And that is inviting the laity to become full members of the Church -- each person finding a place at the table -- to share their expertise, their charisms, their gifts, their time/talent/and treasure -- for the good of the whole parish, diocese, and Church.
I think the Holy Father's Roman Synod in 2023 will be successful if the Vatican and Roman Curia can incorporate more talented lay people and women religious in the Vatican departments and decision-making processes. Like we have in Oakland. Let me give you an example:

1. When we realized some of our inner-city Catholic schools were failing, and some closing each year for lack of enrollment, we didn't just want to stand by and watch them die one by one. So we formed a commission of lay people, religious, and pastors -- all people with a love and expertise in Catholic Education --to advise us what to do. That commission made a report to me and the diocesan consultors, and we followed their recommendations. The result: We formed the "Lumen Christi Academies" to consolidate, support and care for our families, students, and schools in neighborhoods and parishes of the diocese that need them most.

That is how our diocese operates: We have 84 parish councils, one in every parish - to consult the laity. We have a diocesan school board, diocesan finance council, cathedral corporation board, Catholic Charities of the East Bay Board, St. Vincent de Paul, -- all composed and led by lay people using their expertise to guide and support the church's mission. Lately we established a Racial Justice Task Force, and a Mission Alignment Commission (MAP) to study the allocation of parish, catholic school, and diocesan resources - to make sure our assets are placed where the needs of the people are.

Things can always be improved, especially through the power of the Holy Spirit discovered through prayer and reflection.

With the advice of the diocesan Presbyteral Council we are following the Holy Father's wishes by appointing two co-directors of our Synodal Process: Cristina Hernandez, head of our diocesan Office of Life and Justice, and Fr. Jimmy Macalinao: Director of our office of Faith Formation and Evangelization. They are assembling a "Core Team" of lay advisors together with a few pastors, to make recommendations on how we can implement the Synodal process.

We bishops of Northern California met recently to share ideas on how to do this. I heard two excellent ideas -- and I passed them on to the Core Team:

1. People want to be listened to. So use the consultative bodies and groups we already have: parish councils, boards, -- and reach out to all our Catholic organizations and their leadership teams. This includes every Catholic group: Knights and Ladies of St. Peter Claver, the Italian Catholic Federation, Knights of Colombus, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Young Ladies Institute, and all Catholic groups. -- Respect the lay people we already have engaged. Especially those groups that serve the poor.

One bishop said: No more meetings! Just add the Synod question to an existing meeting you already have planned.

2. Another bishop said there were over 30 questions the Vatican suggested could be discussed...but if you have to pick up the kids at soccer, and get dinner ready for your family, or
coach a CYO team, you may not have time for 30 questions. So one bishop said we concentrated all those 30 questions into 1:

"How can the Church better proclaim Jesus Christ in today's world?"

That's the key question. We look forward to your participation.

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