



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

27 September 2021

Our participation in the Synod on synodality

Our Holy Father Francis (God preserve him) is planning a Synod on synodality. Most of us will probably respond to that news by saying: Huh? I know I did.

Synodality is a process of consulting, arriving at a decision, and then communicating the results. And a Synod is the gathering of people for the process of synodality.

We might not use the word, but we practice synodality when we ask for counsel from councils, like the Priest Council, Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, parish council, etc.

Basically, the Pope wants us to talk about talking, listening, and decision-making in the Church. That's a little abstract, don't you think, and hard to get people interested.

It needs a concrete, practical context. So, in the Archdiocese of Dubuque we'll talk, listen, and proceed to decision-making about the topic of the parish community:

What makes for a viable parish? How is it determined which parishes will be closed, merged, or remain the same? How many parishes can one priest reasonably serve?

We'll listen to all the voices that speak to the matter, collaborate on setting the criteria for decision-making, and work to help everyone own the results.

This is an issue that has to be addressed. Jeff Henderson was hired as the Director of Pastoral Planning and Leadership Development in order to drive that bus.

The Pope's Synod begins in October 2021, when each diocese in the world is asked to have an Opening Mass and First Session to launch the consultation on the local level.

Ours will be on 14 October 2021, piggy-backing on a study day for parish leaders and staff, which by happy coinky-dink identified the parish community as its basic theme.

We'll celebrate the Mass for the Sunday to follow, and post it on the archdiocesan website, on the 16-17 October 2021, as has been our practice during the pandemic.

Also, everyone is welcome to listen to any or all of the study day sessions by visiting www.dbqarch.org/synodal-church. They will be posted there after 14 October 2021.

Ideally, consultation is done with people gathered in person. But that's not prudent due

to the on-going pandemic, and so our consultation will take place mostly virtually.

The time allotted for consultation concludes at the end of March 2022, when we're asked to submit a report on our experience of the process of synodality in the Church.

Michael O. Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque