



Diocese of Shreveport

Office of the Bishop

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To be read at all Masses in the Diocese of Shreveport the weekend of October 16-17

**I encourage you to make this letter public and on your parish
websites.**

To the people of the Diocese of Shreveport:

This past September Pope Francis initiated a process of reflection throughout the world which will lead to a meeting of Bishops in Rome 2023. This meeting of bishops is called a “Synod,” which means the process of journeying together. It has as its purpose to draw us together as a diocese, as the people of God in the Catholic Church and therefore begins with us – you and me – a diocesan phase beginning this weekend. Later that process will become a national and regional series of phases. In my Mass this weekend, I am opening the diocesan phase at the Cathedral during the White Mass which is held each year. And while the White Mass is one in which we ask God’s blessings upon those in the medical field, I am also using this opportunity to announce the diocesan phase of the Synod.

The expression “journeying together” is more than a nice phrase. For the universal Church, starting on the diocesan level, it means looking at one another, especially those who live at the margins of our Church, and who oftentimes have no voice in the Church and to listen to them, as indeed we should. In order to make this process work, we will touch on three important aspects of Church life: Communion – Participation – and Mission. What do these terms mean?

When I think of “communion” I immediately think about how different we are, yet how we are called to live a special kind of unity with one another.

The word “Participation” invites everyone to have a voice in the Church, calling upon the Holy Spirit to guide the direction the Church will take in the future. “Synodality” is not a word we use frequently. An important part of this participation means that “synodality” seeks to listen to the voices – not only of those who seem to be the most active in our churches, but especially those whose voices we do not listen to as much. Their voices are at least as important as the rest of those we hear.

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“Mission” is the product of what happens when we as a Church journey together as a result of a shared sense of direction guided by the Holy Spirit. In other words, a synodal Church is one in which we listen to one another and together arrive at the destination the Lord wants for us.

I can tell you that this is not just another program in the Church, but rather a new step of encountering one another on the parish level, listening to one another, and adding our voices to those of our brothers and sisters so that the Church changes as the Lord wants it to throughout the world. One great theologian in the last century said, “we don’t need a new Church, we need a different Church.” And so we begin – in a synodal process to become that new Church for one another.

From now until next April we will have a series of meetings and discussions in which we will be asked to reflect upon questions like, “how does this “journeying together” happen in our parish Church? What steps are we being invited to take by the Holy Spirit in order to grow in this journey together?

You are going to be hearing from me regularly as we begin our synodal process, our journeying together in faith, which is already marked by our journeying through the holiday season in which we do so much together socially and spiritually. We will be asked to follow the lead of Pope Francis, through me as your bishop, and with oversight of your pastor – in a process of listening to one another, growing together, and adding our voices to the millions of Catholics throughout the world, but starting on the parish level, journeying together into a future where the Church, our spiritual home, calls us together as a people of faith.

Your brother in Christ,



+ Francis I. Malone, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Shreveport