



2021 Synod 2023  
For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

# Diocese of Raleigh Next Steps in Synodal Process

Plans are underway in the Diocese of Raleigh to respond to Holy Father Pope Francis' call for a two-year process of preparation for the 2023 XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, under the guiding title, *"For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission."*

Each diocese is being called upon to create opportunities for listening and dialogue on the parish and diocesan levels. The processes implemented in each diocese will be followed by national and regional discussions leading to the Synod itself which will take place in Rome in 2023.

While the term "synod" is not a familiar one to most Catholics, it is rooted in Greek, meaning "to walk with" or "journey together."

Throughout our history as Catholics, synods have been convened to walk with one another in the Holy Spirit, to listen and discern how the Church is being called in communion, to respond in faith and to participate in the work of the Gospel and the mission that Our Lord has entrusted to us as the People of God.



Synod  
2021  
2023

**Gatherings of leaders have been a part of Church history since its earliest beginnings, usually distinguished as a “council” or a “synod.”** While the results of a council are binding to the universal Church, a synod typically focuses on new approaches to issues, rather than binding law. A unique aspect of this Synod is that the process of listening well and dialogue is for the conversion of the entire local Church, not just local leadership, and not for the production of a report or a document.

Most important is the “process of humbly learning together **how God is calling us to be as the Church in the third millennium.**” (1.1 *Vademecum*). At the 2018 Synod on Young People, for instance, Pope Francis explained that, “the first step in helping the journey of faith” is “listening.” It is “the apostolate of the ear: listening before speaking.”

**Beginning in December,** everyone in the diocese, including those no longer affiliated with the Church, those from other faiths, or no particular faith, will be invited to provide their thoughts regarding Communion, Participation and Mission in the Church. A web-based electronic questionnaire will be used to gather information and to issue randomly selected invitations to those open to attending in-person listening and dialogue sessions.

**“We are already seeing the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our journey together at this time,”** said Bishop Luis Rafael Zarama. “I had called for a meeting of the priests of the diocese to take

place early next year to look at a range of issues unique to our diocese and to work together to seek a path forward. That meeting will also provide an opportunity to listen to my brother priests as part of the synodal process. But that is just one small part, one small group, in our family as we make our journey of faith together.

Reflections on the processes implemented, the fruits from listening to one another and to the Holy Spirit, will be summarized and become the Diocese of Raleigh’s contribution to the 2023 XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

“The purpose of this process is to listen and journey together,” said Bishop Zarama. “I look forward to that journey and to sharing ways that we may all play a part. **Most of all, I ask for your prayers.** To pray with open ears and open hearts that we may hear what the Holy Spirit is telling us as we walk this path.”



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**“We are already seeing the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our journey together at this time”**

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, the first word of the Latin original meaning, “**We stand before You, Holy Spirit,**” which has been historically used at councils, synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, being attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (560 - 636).

As we are called to embrace this synodal path of the Synod 2021-2023, we invite the Holy Spirit to operate within us so that we may be a community and a people of grace.

**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.**

**R: Amen.**



### **December 2021 - January 2022**

Information gathering via electronic questionnaire

### **February 2022**

Presbyteral Consultation (meeting of all diocesan priests)

### **February 2022 – May 2022**

Diocesan Listening Sessions (various times and locations throughout the diocese)

### **August, 2022**

Diocesan report issued to be included among the report of US Bishops

### **Fall, 2023 - 2023**

XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome

