

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

Bishop Douglas J. Lucia
"Carry the Light of Christ"
October 7, 2021

Communion, Participation, & Mission

Dear Diocesan Family,

This weekend, October 9 & 10, Pope Francis will convoke the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome that will run from October 2021 to October 2023 with the theme: ***"For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission."*** Next Sunday, October 17th, the synod will begin locally in each diocese throughout the world with a special Mass. Our local celebration will be held Sunday, October 17 with a Mass of the Holy Spirit at the 5:10 pm Mass at our diocesan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Syracuse. All are welcome to join in this historic gathering of the People of God in central New York! The Mass will be livestreamed on our diocesan YouTube channel if you are unable to join us in person.

For the Diocese of Syracuse, this liturgical celebration will also mark the beginning of our diocesan synodal journey that will coincide with the worldwide synod. During the next two years, Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect on our ***"Communion, Participation, and Mission"*** that is seen as decisive for the Catholic Church both universally and locally. In our local Church, the synodal process reaches its culmination in 2024 with our own Diocesan Synod which will take the labors of the worldwide synod and apply it to the everyday life of our parish communities.

There is much work ahead that will be both challenging and exciting. I am grateful that Sr. Katie Eiffe, CSJ, is leading the process as the Diocesan Director of Synodal Planning. Interestingly, the original announcement of the worldwide synod came literally days after I had announced in my Ash Wednesday Pastoral Letter, *In the Name of Jesus*, my intention to call a Diocesan Synod in preparation for our 140th anniversary as a Diocese. In that letter, I spoke of our diocesan Mission – ***"Our Catholic Faith: Know it – Live it – Share it"*** – and the need to look at our **Communion** as a diocesan Church and how we all can better **participate** to make the Church's **mission** of being a living Gospel come alive.

Coincidence – I don't think so! Divine Providence – Absolutely! I believe God is gracing both the Church universally and locally with an opportunity not to be missed! Some may be wondering what the word, "synod" actually means, besides being another meeting. Pope Francis in the Preparatory Document for the 16th Synod of Bishops speaks of a synod as a "journeying together." He states: ***"This journey, which follows in the wake of the Church's 'renewal' proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, to open Herself to mission. Our 'journeying together' is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God."***

Faith • Hope • Charity

You may be wondering what this journeying together looks like? Well, it begins with listening to one another. Therefore, in all Catholic dioceses throughout the world between now and April, diocesan bishops are being asked to convene listening sessions of the faithful to foster our reflecting together. Again, turning to the Preparatory Document it describes this phase in the following manner:

- recalling how the Spirit has guided the Church's journey through history and, today, calls us to be, together, witnesses of God's love;
- living a participative and inclusive ecclesial process that offers everyone—especially those who for various reasons find themselves on the margins—the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard in order to contribute to the edification of the People of God;
- recognizing and appreciating the wealth and the variety of the gifts and charisms that the Spirit liberally bestows for the good of the community and the benefit of the entire human family;
- exploring participatory ways of exercising responsibility in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the effort to build a more beautiful and habitable world;
- examining how responsibility and power are lived in the Church as well as the structures by which they are managed, bringing to light and trying to convert prejudices and distorted practices that are not rooted in the Gospel;
- accrediting the Christian community as a credible subject and reliable partner in paths of social dialogue, healing, reconciliation, inclusion and participation, the reconstruction of democracy, the promotion of fraternity and social friendship;
- regenerating relationships among members of Christian communities as well as between communities and other social groups, e.g., communities of believers of other denominations and religions, civil society organizations, popular movements, etc.;
- fostering the appreciation and appropriation of the fruits of recent synodal experiences on the universal, regional, national, and local levels.

Here in the Diocese of Syracuse, these listening sessions will give me an opportunity and a structure to go out to the local Pastoral Care Areas (PCAs) to hear individuals' reflections not only on the Church in general, but on the local Church in particular. At the heart of this listening is the question I posed in my pastoral letter: *“Though we are many parts, how can we better reflect the presence of the Risen Christ as Church – as His Body – in the 21st century?”*

The sole purpose of these sessions will be for me to simply listen to the People of God - the response will follow through the workings of our own Diocesan Synod. In addition, I will have listening sessions with all the existent consultative bodies of the Diocese such as, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Council of Priests, and the Council of Deacons; along with Religious, Young Adults, and High School Students. Finally, as recommended in the Preparatory Document, it is my hope to have a listening session with other religious leaders and interested persons in the Church's mission in the world today.

Underlying and bolstering this journey together will be prayer, especially prayer centered in the Holy Eucharist. The synodal process in the United States will also be accompanied by a three-year “Eucharistic Revival.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that the Eucharist is the “Source and Summit of Ecclesial Life.” It states:

1324 The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.

1325 The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

1326 Finally, by the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all.

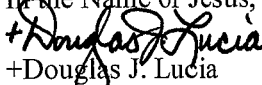
1327 In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking."

In the *Liturgy of the Hours* for Sunday, October 17th, one prays the words of Psalm 118: "*This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad*" (v. 22, 24). We are very much aware what divides our world, let us in this time and place use this God-given opportunity to build up the Kingdom of God that "is so near and at hand" (see Mk 1:15 or Mt 3:2).

Our Holy Father invites us to use throughout this synodal journey the prayer to the Holy Spirit that was prayed each day at the Second Vatican Council and so let me conclude my words to you with that prayer:

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. Amen.

Please consider this letter my personal invitation to you to walk the synodal path with me and the other members of our diocesan family. Let us accompany and support one another on the path of life that God shows us, today!

In the Name of Jesus,

+Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse