

Archbishop Bernard Hebda, the Shepherd of our local Church, the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, has called a Synod for the year 2021. I would like to explain to you what a Synod is, the purpose of it, and some of the events that will be leading up to it and that will begin this Fall.

So, what is a Synod? Here's how our Archbishop defines it: "A Synod is a formal representative assembly designed to help a bishop in his shepherding of the local Church. Its purpose is to discern and establish clear pastoral priorities in a way that will promote greater unity and lead us to a more vigorous proclamation of Jesus' good news."

Leading up to the Synod will be a listening process. It's designed to provide the opportunity for sincere and respectful mutual listening, with the assumption that everyone involved has something to learn. And it's not just listening to one another, but also to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17). As Saint John writes: "**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**" (Revelation 2:7)

The actual Synod Assembly will take place on Pentecost weekend in May of 2021. The pre-Synod process will occur over the next two years, and will involve laity, clergy, consecrated men and women, and bishops. In Year One, there will be twenty prayer and listening events, between September 24, 2019 and March 14, 2020. Everyone is invited to attend one. (See the insert in this bulletin for dates, times and places.) Archbishop Hebda is scheduled to attend all of these events to pray and to participate in the listening process. There will be 11 additional listening events for particular groups such as youth, the elderly, priests, religious and Catholic school principals. The purpose of these listening sessions is to identify an initial set of focus areas to discuss during Year Two.

In Year Two, small groups will meet in parishes across the Archdiocese in the Fall of 2020 to pray, study and discuss the focus areas identified in Year One. Next, using comments and ideas from those small groups, pastors and ten or so parish representatives will gather at the Deanery (regional) level in January and February of 2021 to pray, study and discuss the proposed Synod topics. The Deaneries will then pass on their own comments and ideas for the next step, the Archdiocesan Synod Assembly, which will meet on Pentecost weekend in May of 2021.

At that Synod Assembly, approximately 500 invited delegates—including two from each parish—will get together to pray, study and discuss the Synod topics. They will also vote on pastoral priorities to be recommended to Archbishop Hebda. Having considered those recommendations, the Archbishop plans to write a pastoral letter intended to lead an Archdiocesan pastoral plan to move our Archdiocese into the future. He intends to issue that letter in November of 2021, on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

So how can you participate in the Synod? To start with, you can pray for the Synod and for the Archdiocese. You can attend one of the twenty prayer and listening events that will be happening between September 2019 and March 2020. And you can join one of the parish small groups that will be meeting in the Fall of 2020. You can find more details and ways to pray and participate at archspm.org/synod.

I look forward to what I am sure the Lord will do through this Synod to help us better serve Him and one another in this wonderful adventure of being missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Father Rudolph