



DIOCESE
of
LAFAYETTE-IN-INDIANA

October 16, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The October 3rd edition of *The Catholic Moment* provided some details about the latest Synod of the Catholic Church. A synod is a gathering for meeting and listening in order to guide the Church's next steps in its mission. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church discerns how to share Christ in each present age.

Pope Francis gave a speech on September 18th to the Diocese of Rome. In this lengthy address, the Holy Father recalls that the synodal model did not begin with the Second Vatican Council. Rather, we find the model in the Acts of the Apostles, and it has continued since.

We are beginning the first stage of this process in local dioceses. We listen inside the Church and outside to see where the Good News and the healing power of Christ may be leading us. And how the Holy Spirit is manifesting gracious gifts.

As the Pope said in his speech, a synod is not a parliamentary procedure where votes are taken. It is not to measure things by who is a majority and who is a minority. It will prayerfully account for where we find ourselves, highlight spiritual gifts to be shared, and make visible the challenges and wounds both within the Church, and within the hearts of all human communities.

Another concept of synod, besides being a listening event, is that it energizes our journeying together. It strengthens Church communion through our Baptism in the Risen Christ. This particular synod invites more than bishops and clergy and theologians, but all of us.

My offices have yet to finalize how we will collect our input, both online and in person. I have deputized a priest and three lay Catholics to assist with this process. A diocesan report of ten pages will be submitted to Rome by April 2022.

We are not starting from zero. The chancery offices and parish leaders have been listening to you all for many years. Consultations have been ongoing in each parish since 2014. Not long ago, every Catholic in our diocese had a chance to submit via computer their dreams and desires. The content of those communications is still referenced and useful.

When we read the Pope's speech, we notice pastoral guidance that is essential. We start by submitting our heart and will to the Holy Spirit, and trust that the Spirit will lead us past fear and uncertainty. This means more than just praying. It means that we ourselves engage the process as prayerful persons. For this reason, we enter a Synod that does not have a fixed to-do list. Our list comes after listening.

In Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy Doherty
Bishop of Lafayette in Indiana