



Diocese of Palm Beach Synod Listening & Discussion Session Information Packet

Background & Introduction:

Pope Francis has convened a Synod on Synodality to take place starting in October 2021 and culminating in a Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2023. The Synodal process begins at the local or diocesan level across the whole world, then proceeds to the national conference level and culminates in the universal phase in Rome where Pope Francis plans to discern the consultations and issue a final decree on the Synod.

Simply put, *Synod* describes a church assembly and comes from a Greek word meaning “journey together” but can also refer to Jesus Himself, who is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14,6). The objective of this current Synod is to listen, as the entire People of God, to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church regarding how we should support and strengthen each other in our faith.

In keeping with the overall objective of listening, the guiding theme for this Synod is “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” These three dimensions can briefly be described as:

Communion – God graciously invites a diverse people into one faith through the covenant by which he gathers his people. The Word of God and the living Tradition of the Church inspire and ground us in that one faith. The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity.

Participation – All the people who belong to God- laity, consecrated and ordained- are called to participate and respectfully engage in this dialogue, to be heard by one another.

Mission – The Church exists to evangelize, and we, the baptized, are called to witness to the love of God in our lives to the whole of humanity.

The Synod process is not a matter of gaining a consensus opinion, but of hearing everyone speak. It is not an exercise in parliamentary governance or a debate about the teachings and practices of the Church. Rather, as articulated by Bishop Gerald Barbarito in his *Living the Truth in Love* column on the Synod, “it is the means by which, as members of the Church, we make ourselves available to each other so that we can hear what each person has to say as a possible expression of the Holy Spirit.”

Ultimately, the Synod is a means for welcoming, acknowledging and expressing that we all belong to Christ and his Church and that we are called to discern how the Spirit invites us to be the Body of Christ.