



Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

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For the opening of the Diocesan Phase of the Synod—October 17, 2021

To the people of the Diocese of Little Rock:

Last month Pope Francis announced a process of reflection leading up to a meeting of the Synod of Bishops to take place in Rome in October of 2023. He announced a diocesan phase starting now, then national and regional phases to follow. Our diocesan phase is opening with a special Mass in our Cathedral today. The word *synod* means *journey together* and the purpose is to help us be more inclusive as we look to our future as Church, and that we pay special attention to those on the margins whose concerns and perspective are so often overlooked. The three touchstones of this process are communion, participation and mission.

Communion: the blessing of unity amid diversity. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people. Synodality—journeying together—seeks to hear what everyone has to contribute, especially those whom we don't hear from much.

Participation seeks the involvement of everyone in a process of deep, respectful listening to each other. In this way we create space to hear the Holy Spirit together and get a sense of the direction the Church should take at this moment in history. Synodality seeks to include not only those who are very active in our parishes and the silent majority who despite it all come faithfully to Mass every weekend, but also those who for whatever reason have quit coming or even feel excluded—people who feel pushed to the periphery in the Church and in society.

Mission: Once we have a shared sense of direction, the Holy Spirit leads us forth to share the love of God with the whole human family...and especially those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical and existential peripheries of our world.

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” In Arkansas our participation in the synod will consist of a series of meetings between now and April in order to reflect on the following questions: **How does this “journeying together” happen in our local Church?** And **What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in journeying together?**

I invite everyone to reflect on these questions and then participate in the discussions which will take place in various groups in your parish and on the diocesan level, sharing your thoughts and listening to what others have to say. Let us dream together! Truth is horizontal as well as vertical, and it takes humility to truly listen with an open heart to others whose life experience and perspective on things may be very different from our own. Yet the Holy Spirit is there as well—he's everywhere! I pray that through this synodal process we will better discern what God is asking of us today.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Anthony B. Taylor
Bishop of Little Rock