



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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September 17, 2021
Memorial of Saint Robert Bellarmine

Reverend and dear Fathers; dear Pastoral Administrators:

As you may be aware, Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has convoked the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, from October 2021 through October 2023. The first phase is the “diocesan synodal phase” which will begin in October 2021 in all dioceses throughout the world under the theme: **“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.”**

This first phase is described as “listening to one another and walking forward together, guided by the Holy Spirit” (*Vademecum*, no. 4.1). The Synod then will proceed to a continental phase, and finally conclude with an Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2023. From its theme, we understand that Jesus Christ is “the absolute protagonist who takes the initiative, sowing the words and signs of the coming of the Kingdom without ‘showing partiality’ (cf. Acts 10:34)” (*Preparatory Document*, p. 20).

In response to the request of our Holy Father, I have appointed two Diocesan Representatives, Mr. Bernard Grizard, Director of Pastoral Services, and Dr. Shannon Kilbridge, Associate Director of Pastoral Services, who will foster “a broad consultation process in order to gather the wealth of the experiences of lived synodality” (*Preparatory Document*, no. 31; *Vademecum*, no. 1.5). The information gathered will be used for the creation of a ten-page report (as instructed) that is to be submitted to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in April, 2022. I have attached a preliminary timeline for the first stage of the synodal process. Mr. Grizard and Dr. Kilbridge will send additional information in the coming weeks, inviting your participation and describing possible means of extending this invitation to others.

While this is an initiative for the Church throughout the world, it also comes at the same time as the Catholic Church in the United States has been preparing to begin the *Eucharistic Revival*, which will take place from July 2022 to December 2024. In this regard, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* cites the Second Vatican Council’s teaching: “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” (*CCC*, no. 1324).” Thus, these two initiatives necessarily complement each other, for once we have come to truly know, love and bond with Jesus, we appreciate the call of every baptized person to participate in His life which culminates in Eucharistic Communion, which then embraces the mission: the charitable service we render to our sisters and brothers in God’s family and the invitation extended to all people, especially the poor, the suffering,

the outcast, the forgotten, the foreigner and the alienated to encounter the Risen Christ, visible in the Most Holy Eucharist, His voice heard in Holy Scripture, and His love felt through their sisters and brothers in the family of God.

Invoking the intercession of our Diocesan patron, Saint John Fisher, I remain, with an assurance of my prayers,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Salvatore R. Matano*

*The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester*

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