



+ September 28, 2021

Dear Fathers, Deacons and Pastoral Coordinators,

As was discussed at our recent convocation, Pope Francis has called us as a Church to a “synodal journey.” Catholics across the world will be coming together in a universal process of listening in preparation for the 2023 Synod of Bishops in Rome. With all that is going on in our archdiocese, I see the timing of all of this as providential. The synodal process is offering us a tool with which we can better enact the central focuses of our Pastoral Plan: the encounter with Jesus Christ and each other, the accompaniment of one another on the journey of discipleship, and the living of our faith in the love and joy of the Gospel.

To begin this synodal journey, Pope Francis has called for listening sessions in parishes worldwide beginning in October. Each (arch)diocese in the United States will then present a 10-page summary of parishioner input to the USCCB by April. It is my desire to assist each of you in making this effort a success. To this end, I am asking that you and your parish teams:

- Identify and recruit potential listening session coordinators to oversee the process locally.
- Register these coordinators with the Office of Planning & Mission Effectiveness. (Please email name and contact to [pastoralcouncil@seattlearch.org](mailto:pastoralcouncil@seattlearch.org)).
- Build awareness of the synodal process and opportunities for engagement in your parishes.
- Host local listening sessions in accordance with synodal guidance provided by the Holy See.
- Foster community and model appropriate leadership of synodality at your parish.

The first step in this process is finding individuals to lead the listening sessions at your parish. These coordinators might be found on pastoral councils, on finance councils, on school committees, or serving as volunteers in your various parish ministries. What is most important is that those recruited to be coordinators have strong buy-in from the community and are comfortable modeling appropriate leadership throughout the synodal process. Once identified, training for these coordinators will be provided by the Office of Planning & Mission Effectiveness. Trainings will begin in October and will instruct your coordinators on their role and responsibilities, as well as on what the desired outcomes of our listening sessions will be.

Please know that you are not alone in this process. In addition to the coordinator training described above, chancery staff are working to ensure that you have the resources needed to raise awareness of the synod and run your listening sessions effectively. Supporting documentation will be made available as listening sessions commence, and guidance will be provided on how to report the findings of your listening sessions as they conclude. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) will continue journeying with us during this time to provide support and guidance as needed. If you have any initial questions regarding the synodal process, you can reach the APC directly at [pastoralcouncil@seattlearch.org](mailto:pastoralcouncil@seattlearch.org).

Our goal for the synodal process in the archdiocese is to reach as broad of an audience as possible in service of the universality called for by Pope Francis. This means aiming to reach not only every Catholic in Western Washington, but all of the baptized. There are an estimated 6 million Christians in Washington. This is a chance to connect directly with not only those in our parishes, schools, and universities, but all God's children.

Ultimately, the synodal process must be a grassroots effort driven by the people of God. We must open our hearts to those participating so that we can not only hear how our work has impacted lives to date, but also better understand where the needs of the people lie. The outcome of this cannot be a directive decided from above and externally imposed on the faithful – it must grow out of the experiences of those in our archdiocese, and it must reflect the realities of our current time and place. We are there to listen and learn, not to answer.

In reflecting on this call to synodality, I am reminded of what God tells us through Jeremiah: If we call to God, he will respond with great things – things far “beyond the reach of our knowledge” (Jeremiah 33:3). My hope is that through this process of listening, we will be better suited as an archdiocese to serve our communities, and I will be better suited as your archbishop to support you in your service of Christ. I thank you again, my brothers, for your help in facilitating and listening to what the Holy Spirit has to say to us as Church today.

As always, I remain,

In the Heart of Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul D. Etienne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "E".

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL  
Archbishop of Seattle