

***For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission***  
***Archdiocese of Baltimore Synodal Process***  
***Frequently Asked Questions***

**What is a Synod?**

“Synod” is an ancient word in the Tradition of the Church whose meaning indicates the path along which the People of God walk together. It also refers to the Lord Jesus and to the fact that Christians, His followers, were originally called “followers of the way” (cf. Acts 9,2; 19, 9:23; 22,4; 24, 14.22).

**What is the theme of this Synod?**

The theme of this Synod is: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.” The three dimensions of the theme (communion participation, and mission) are profoundly interrelated. They are the vital pillars of a Synodal Church, with no hierarchy between them. Rather, one enriches and orients the other two. There is a dynamic relationship between the three that must be articulated with all three in mind.

**What is the timeline for the Synod?**

The first phase of the Synodal Process is a listening phase in local Churches and begins in each diocese on October 17, 2021. The Archdiocese of Baltimore will formally initiate its Synodal Process with an Opening Liturgy (for all the faithful) on Sunday, October 17 at 11:00 a.m. at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen. Local (parish level) listening sessions will take place in November, followed by regional (inter-parish) listening sessions in January and February. Diocesan-level conversations will take place in spring 2022, prior to the drafting and submission to the Holy See of a synthesis of all conversations by the faithful of the Archdiocese.

**Who is able to participate in the Synodal Process?**

The purpose of the first phase of the synodal journey is to foster a broad consultation process in a prayerful context in order to gather the wealth of the experiences of lived synodality involving the priests, deacons and lay faithful. Religious communities, lay movements, associations of the faithful, and other ecclesial groups are encouraged to participate in the Synodal Process. Each diocese is called to aim for the widest participation possible, including by those on the periphery who are often excluded and forgotten. The Diocesan listening

phase is to include discussions among parishes, lay movements, schools and universities, religious congregations, neighborhood Christian communities, social action, ecumenical and inter-religious movements, and other groups.

### **How can the faithful participate in the Synodal Process?**

The People of God of the Archdiocese can participate in the Synodal Process by engaging in parish level and other local conversations and by submitting summaries of those conversations through a special online submission form found on the Archdiocesan website. Other sources of information and updates about parish conversations include the parish bulletin, Mass announcements, MyParish App, The Catholic Review, and parish and diocesan social media channels.

### **What are the parameters for the Synodal Process at the local level?**

The unfolding of the Synodal Process at the local level must involve discernment, accessibility, cultural awareness, inclusion, partnership, respect, accurate syntheses, transparency and fairness. The process should also reflect Pope Francis' vision for the practice of synodality, including those attitudes outlined by the Holy Father as instrumental to promoting genuine listening and dialogue. Being synodal requires time for sharing; humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking; dialogue leads us to newness, openness to conversion and change. Synods are an ecclesial exercise in discernment; we are signs of a Church that listens and journeys. We must leave behind prejudices and stereotypes, overcome the scourge of clericalism, cure the virus of self-sufficiency, overcome ideologies, and give rise to hope. Synods are a time to dream and "spend time with the future."

### **How can people learn more about the Synod and remain updated on the Synodal Process?**

The Archdiocese of Baltimore will compile resources, information and regular updates on its website. As well, Archbishop Lori, Bishops Lewandowski and Madden, as well as members of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council will provide updates throughout the diocesan Synodal Process. Other sources of information and updates include the parish bulletin, Mass announcements, MyParish App, The Catholic Review, and parish and diocesan social media channels.