Preparatory process begins this year

On June 8, Catholics from around the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis will gather at St. Peter in Mendota to pray with a particular intention in mind: to invite the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout an archdiocesan synod process starting this year.

With the 7 p.m. Vigil Mass for Pentecost, our local Church will officially mark the beginning of the two-year process of prayer and consultation that will culminate in the archdiocesan synod — the first the archdiocese has held since 1939.

The process is designed for Catholics to have ample opportunities to share their views on the pastoral needs of the local Church, beginning this fall with prayer-infused listening sessions.

Scheduled for Pentecost weekend 2021, the synod assembly will gather delegates representing all facets of the local Church to help Archbishop Bernard Hebda discern and shape pastoral priorities for the following five to 10 years.
Moving forward together

At this year’s Vigil of Pentecost, I will be formally announcing that our archdiocese is embarking on a synod, our first since 1959. A synod is a formal representative assembly designed to help a bishop in his shepherding of the local Church. It is my hope that the process outlined in these pages, involving prayer and participation in our archdiocese, will help us over the next two years to draw on the gifts that have been bestowed in such abundance on the faithful of this archdiocese to discern and establish clear pastoral priorities in a way that will promote greater unity and lead us to a more vigorous proclamation of Jesus’ good news.

When St. John Paul II promulgated the new Code of Canon Law in 1983, he recognized that the laws of the Church needed to take into consideration the “new way of thinking” that was emerging from the Second Vatican Council. In particular, he identified a need for new canonical structures to reflect the conciliar teaching that presented the Church as the “People of God” and as a “communion,” as well as the doctrine by which “all members of the People of God share, in a manner proper to each of them, in the threefold priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ.”

One of the structures that took on a new prominence in that purposeful revision of the Code was the diocesan synod, a traditional structure for consultation and participation in the Church. The fruits of the synod was broadened and reconfigured precisely to serve as a tool for the bishop to engage the People of God (laity, clergy, consecrated men and women, and bishops all walking together) in exercising the responsibility that flows from our communal baptism. Always in the context of a communion that is the Church. Since the reboot of this ancient structure, diocesan synods have consistently served as important instruments in effecting conciliar renewal within the local Church.

In the time that we have served in this archdiocese, I have come to believe that our local Church is particularly ripe for a synod. After the listening sessions that were held in 2015 when I was still serving as the temporary administrator, I drew up suggestions for the next archbishop, never thinking it would be me. As the top of the hierarchy of an archdiocesan synod. We are blessed here with a particularly well-educated and articulate laity with a strong tradition of service to the Church, who along with their clergy and consecrated brothers and sisters, want to be involved in shaping the future, seeing that appropriately as both their right and their responsibility.

After the pastoral pause necessitated by the bankruptcy and related issues, I have sensed that many of you seem to be ready to roll up your sleeves to address some of the pastoral needs that had been placed on the back burner. The enthusiasm surrounding the new Lay Advisory Board and articulating laity with a strong tradition of service to the Church, who administrator, I drew up suggestions for the next archbishop, never thinking it would be me. As the top of the hierarchy of an archdiocesan synod. We are blessed here with a particularly well-educated and articulate laity with a strong tradition of service to the Church, who along with their clergy and consecrated brothers and sisters, want to be involved in shaping the future, seeing that appropriately as both their right and their responsibility.

It is in that context that I have been hearing Pope Francis’ repeated articulation of the need for us to be a “listening Church.” While stressing this “discernment of the Spirit,” he would urge the Church to listen in a “spirit of humble listening” and “humble dialogue,” that is, in a spirit of “humble listening.”

The Holy Father has emphasized that he is not talking about listening that is merely “pro forma,” but rather a sincere and respectful “mutual listening” in which everyone has something to learn. Moreover, it is not just listening to one another but to the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17), to know what the Church is “saying to the Churchers.”

The pre-synod process that we will be using over the next year has been designed to help us as a local Church to listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit. It reflects not only the excellent organizational work of the executive team headed by Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Therese Coons and Father Joseph Bambenek, but also the insights from members of a prayer group who have been meeting for the past seven months and supporting this effort in their daily lives. The team has made sure that the 31 regional or focused listening opportunities that will shape our future discussion and deliberations will all be grounded in prayer and in God’s will.

The central goal of that process has been to craft an archdiocesan-wide discernment process that allows the Holy Spirit to speak. “A synod is a consultation process that the Church gives as a tool for a bishop to be able to discover what the faithful want and others think about particular topics,” Bishop Cozzens explained. “Archbishop Hebda wants to use a synod to identify pastoral priorities that can direct the Church in the coming years, he added.

Theresa Coons, the executive committee director, explained that the synod is a “spiritual strategic plan” for the archdiocese. Fellow committee member Debbie Keller, former president of the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women, thinks of it as a family meeting within the local Church, where the conversation is informed by membranes’ ideas and experiences, rather than assumptions. The synod is expected to take place over Pentecost weekend in 2021 and involve around 500 invited delegates from across the archdiocese.

The “pre-synod” process begins with a June 8 Mass, but will get underway in earnest with a series of more than 20 prayer and listening events this autumn and winter. The three-hour events have been organized to take place in each part of the archdiocese and at various days and times to make them accessible to as many people as possible, Coons said.

The aim of the pre-synod prayer and listening events is for Archbishop Hebda, Bishop Cozzens and the synod’s consultative bodies to hear the needs expressed by Catholics and to discern with the Holy Spirit which topics should be addressed at the synod.

This approach is unique to the archdiocese’s synod and pre-synod process, Cozzens said. “Many other dioceses have done very successful synods recently,” he said. In those other dioceses, he added, “The premises of their leadership determined the synods’ themes at the onset. “What’s unique to our process is that Archbishop Hebda has decided he doesn’t want to determine those priorities, but wants to spend time broadly listening to the people to determine these priorities,” he explained.

Archbishop Hebda described the local pre-synod and synod process as following Pope Francis’ “listening Church” model. “It’s the confidence that comes from believing that the Holy Spirit works in the faithful, and it’s in sharing those things that are most important to us that we’re able to recognize the promptings of the Holy Spirit,” he said.

The executive committee decided to use the pre-synod process to take a hard look at the current pastoral priorities and ideas around those priorities through a parish consultation process — which will include small groups and a deanery consultation process, leading up to the synod assembly itself.

Also unique to the local synod is the participatory approach, said Father Joseph Bambenek, assistant director of the synod and outgoing pastor of St. Pius X in White Bear Lake. “We have a workload already carried by pastors and parish staff, the parish processes are being intentionally designed to minimize the burden placed upon pastors and parish staff.”

In addition to the executive team, other groups, such as the recently formed Lay Advisory Board and executive committee, will be assisting the pre-synod process.

Canon law values consultation, especially for a diocesan bishop, said Amy Tadlock, a canon lawyer.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3A
director of the archdiocese's tribunal and a member of the synod's executive committee. It mandates that the bishop consult advisory bodies, such as the diocese's college of consultors or presbyteral council, before making certain decisions. The synod is a means for the diocesan bishop — in the case of the archdiocese, Archbishop Hebda — to expand his base of consultation, she said.

The local pre-synod consultation process outlined by the executive committee — including the fact that the synod’s topics are not predetermined by archdiocesan leadership — is very exciting, Tallock said. “It speaks to the importance of the role of the laity,” she said. “This is actually a really exciting time for the lay faithful to be involved and to exercise this right that they have.”

The synod’s leaders are hoping to hear not only from Catholics who are active in their parish and regularly attend Mass, but also from those who have irregular Church participation. “This is also part of the prayer team, said she has heard the Church could be, this new way of being Church,” said Amy Tadlock, a 26-member prayer team specifically for the synod that began meeting monthly seven months ago to reflect, pray before the Blessed Sacrament and share what they were hearing. And that’s also why the pre-synod process is officially opening with a Mass of the Holy Spirit on the Vigil of Pentecost, the Church’s commemoration of Christ’s gift of the Holy Spirit to his Apostles, and why the synod will take place over Pentecost weekend in 2021.

Archbishop Hebda emphasized that the synod isn’t just an “organizational structure,” but rather a process that is rooted in the Catholic faith.

“The goal isn’t the synod,” he said. “The goal is renewal that takes place after the synod.” Bishop Cozzens said he expects the pre-synod process and the synod to result in several “byproducts” that will strengthen the local Church, such as unity, healing, evangelism, strengthening marriages and families and other committee members said they’ve been inspired by the multi-year V Encuentro process recently undertaken in the U.S. by Latino Catholics. It involved local and regional meetings that informed a larger gathering.

Executive committee member Estela Villagrán Manancero held various leadership roles in V Encuentro. She is excited for the local Church to engage in similar consultation and discernment, because she found it to be an experience of “the Church fully alive.”

“The listening sessions will bring hope for everyone, because at that moment they’re all dreaming about what the Church could be, this new way of being Church,” said Manancero, director of the archdiocese’s Office of Latino Ministry. Fellow committee member Yen Fasano, a Catholic speaker who is also part of the prayer team, said he has confidence in the process because it’s been driven by prayer. “What is special about our bishops’ (vision) is that it’s not just this to-do list, and it’s not just an action course to take, but that it’s a very meaningful and purposeful process (meant) to be inclusive of our entire Catholic Church,” she said, “so that everyone has a voice and an opportunity to take ownership of their faith and where it is that the diocese and the priorities of the archdiocese should be set to best serve our local Church in the upcoming years.”

Her perspective was echoed by Pat Millea, a member of the executive committee and prayer team who is the senior high youth director at St. Joseph in West St. Paul. “It gives the bishops a chance to listen in a really focused and particular way, (and) it gives the faithful a chance to speak in a way that is genuine and in a way that they know they’re being heard, which I think is really valuable,” he said. “It gives the Holy Spirit a chance to work in both ways.”

### ARCHDIOCESAN SYNOD

#### Synods around the United States

In the Archdiocese of Detroit, parishes and schools may no longer schedule Sunday sports games or practices, according to a policy Archbishop Allen Vigneron recently established to encourage Catholics to reclaim Sunday as a day of holiness, rest and family. The policy is a direct response to questions about living the sabbath that arose during that archdiocese’s synod, held over three days in November 2016.

The policy illustrates how tangible directives that come out of diocesan synods can be, said Amy Tallock, a canon lawyer and member of the synod’s executive committee.

“That’s a concrete result of that process of consultation — listening to the people saying ‘this is something that’s important to us,’ and a bishop taking action and hearing that … and putting something in place to support it,” she said.

In the past decade, several U.S. dioceses have held diocesan synods. In addition to Detroit, others include Bridgeport, Connecticut; Burlington, Vermont; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; San Diego, California; and Washington, D.C.
Synod 101

For Catholics familiar with the term, a "synod" evokes the idea of the Synod of Bishops, a gathering of bishops at the Vatican to discuss a particular topic, sometimes over several weeks. Recent synods of this kind include the Synods of Bishops on the Family in 2014 and 2015, and the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment in 2018. At those synods, the participating bishops voted on recommendations for Pope Francis, who later issued documents known as post-synodal apostolic exhortations on the topics discussed. “Amoris laetitia,” or “The Joy of Love,” was released in 2016 as a response to the Synod of Bishops on the Family, and “Christus vivit,” or “Christ is alive,” was released in March 2019 as a response to the Synod of Bishops on Young People.

In 1965, with the Second Vatican Council’s call to revive structures that deepened the communion of bishops, Pope St. Paul VI established the structure for the World Synod of Bishops. There are three types: ordinary general synods, which address a theme chosen from bishops’ recommendations; extraordinary general synods, which address an urgent need in the Church; and special assemblies, which are limited to a certain region in the Church, such as the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region, which is scheduled to meet in Rome in October.

Since 1967, popes have convened 15 ordinary general synods, three extraordinary general synods and 10 special assemblies, including one in 1999 on the Church in America.

So what’s a diocesan synod?

Simply put, a diocesan synod is a coming together of the local Church. According to Canon 460, a diocesan synod is an “assembly ... of selected priests and other members of Christ’s faithful of a particular Church which, for the good of the whole diocesan community, assists the diocesan bishop.” The 1983 Code of Canon Law also allows each diocese’s bishop to determine the timing and frequency of synods.

Diocesan synods have a long history in the Church for establishing local Church law and pastoral priorities, and they follow structures outlined in canon law. The 1983 Code of Canon Law — the most current promulgation of the Catholic Church’s law — was inspired by the Second Vatican Council to renew the concept of diocesan synods and dedicate eight canons (460-468) to outlining their norms. Unlike previous versions, the 1983 Code requires that lay people be involved in a diocesan synod, and it permits the involvement of non-Catholics.

A synod is not a process for changing Church teaching, or wielding or amassing influence or political power. And while the synod itself will include voting, it’s also not a democratic exercise, Auxiliary Bishop Andrew Cozzens said. “It’s meant to be a spiritual exercise,” he said. “It’s a process of discernment that is meant to help the shepherds be better shepherds.”

Is it like a Church council?

Synods — whether of bishops or on a diocesan level — are a type of Church council. The best known Church councils are those known as “ecumenical councils” held periodically since the time of the Apostles. The Book of Acts records the first council, the Council of Jerusalem, which met around 50 A.D. to debate whether circumcision was necessary for non-Jewish converts to Christianity.

There have since been 21 ecumenical councils, some focused on Church doctrine, others on pastoral issues. The better known among them are the First Council of Nicaea in 325, which established the date of Easter as well as the wording of the Nicene Creed, and the Council of Trent from 1545 to 1563, which launched the Counter-Reformation in Europe. The most recent councils were the First Vatican Council from 1869 to 1870, and the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965.

What form will it take locally?

Church documents recommend the synod takes place at the cathedral, and require that the archbishop presides over the gathering. Official synod delegates invited from all areas of the local Church attend. While the details are yet to be determined, delegates may hear presentations and engage in discussion on the synod’s topics, and then vote on recommendations to be made to the archbishop on those topics.

Following the synod, Archbishop Bernard Hebda and his consultative bodies are expected to reflect on those recommendations. Ultimately, he anticipates publishing a pastoral letter addressing the work of the synod. That letter may include a pastoral plan to guide the work of the archdiocese over the next five to 10 years.

What’s the role of the laity?

Not only does canon law allow lay Catholics to participate in a synod, the archdiocese’s pre-synod process and synod itself are designed to leverage as much input as possible from Catholics in the pews, executive team members said. The prayer and listening events, the faithful consultation process and synod consultation process aim to engage lay Catholics to share their perspectives and ideas, and lay Catholics will be among the official delegates at the synod. That letter may include a pastoral plan to guide the work of the archdiocese over the next five to 10 years.

Prayer and listening events

Twenty prayer and listening events are scheduled around the archdiocese in fall 2019 and winter 2020. The three-hour events will include prayer, a presentation or reflection, and discussion. Archbishop Hebda or Bishop Cozzens plan to attend each event, along with members of the synod’s consultative teams. The prayer and listening events will inform the themes chosen for the synod assembly in 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tuesday, Sept. 24, 6–9 p.m.</td>
<td>St. Victoria</td>
<td>8228 Victoria Drive, St. Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Saturday, Sept. 28, 9 a.m.–noon</td>
<td>St. Michael</td>
<td>11300 Frankfort Parkwy NE, St. Michael</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Friday, Oct. 11, 6–9 p.m.</td>
<td>Guardian Angels</td>
<td>8260 Fourth St. N., Oakdale</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Saturday, Oct. 12, 9 a.m.–noon</td>
<td>Our Lady of Guadalupe</td>
<td>401 Concord St., St. Paul Bilingual (English and Spanish)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Saturday, Oct. 26, 9 a.m.–noon</td>
<td>St. Peter</td>
<td>1250 South Shore Drive, Forest Lake</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tuesday, Oct. 29, 6–9 p.m.</td>
<td>Divine Mercy</td>
<td>139 Mercy Drive, Faribault</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Thursday, Nov. 7, 6–9 p.m.</td>
<td>St. Wenceslaus</td>
<td>215 Main St. E., New Prague</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Friday, Nov. 15, 6–9 p.m.</td>
<td>All Saints</td>
<td>19795 Holyoke Ave., Lakeville</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Saturday, Nov. 17, 1–4 p.m.</td>
<td>St. Anne-St. Joseph Hien</td>
<td>2627 Queen Ave. N., Minneapolis Bilingual (English and Vietnamese)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Sunday, Jan. 5, 1–4 p.m.</td>
<td>Holy Cross</td>
<td>1621 University Ave. NE, Minneapolis</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Saturday, Jan. 25, 9 a.m.–noon</td>
<td>St. Peter Claver</td>
<td>369 Oxford St. N., St. Paul</td>
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Eleven other prayer and listening events will be held for particular focus groups: priests, retired priests, deacons, consecrated religious, archdiocesan staff, parish staff, Catholic school principals, youth, deacons, consecrated religious, archdiocesan staff, parish staff, Catholic school principals, youth, college students, the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women, and seniors at various retirement and assisted living facilities.