About this journal
Each month will begin with a specific intention for our Archdiocesan Synod. We encourage all the faithful of the local Church to join us in praying together for that intention.

There will be a brief reflection for each week followed by a recommended Scripture passage for the day and a prompt to get you started. Since the Scripture passages will come from the daily Mass readings they can be found here: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings.

Please remember that this journal is a meant as an offering, not an obligation. We encourage you to use it in whatever way serves you best.

Why Pray?
The very first paragraph of the Catechism of the Catholic Church begins:

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength (CCC 1)

God is drawing close to us. Are we willing to seek him, to know him, to love him with all our strength? We begin the journey of seeking, knowing and loving him in prayer.

What is prayer?
God desires each of us to enter into a vital and personal relationship with him. This relationship is prayer (CCC 2558). Just as each relationship between two people is unique, so is each relationship between a person and God. Consequently, there is not a given formula for prayer. It is more important that a person prays than how a person prays.

We have the gift, however, of being able to learn from one another, from the saints and from people in the church who are particularly gifted at prayer. Therefore we will be offering suggestions from the experts to help us get started.

We encourage each person to discover how God speaks most clearly to him or her. Feel free to try different forms of prayer, but do not feel pressured to try them all. In fact, if you find a particular way of prayer leads you to intimacy with God, continue to pray that way until God draws you in a new direction.

Finally, it is good for us to remember that prayer is God’s gift to us:

“If you knew the gift of God!” The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: There, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. (CCC 2560)

How to Pray?
Since prayer is going to flow from our unique relationship with God, it is up to us to discover how God wants to communicate with us. To do this we seek to learn to listen to his voice in our hearts. The following is one method that might be helpful for us as we begin:
Always begin by recalling that you’re in the Presence of God: It’s easy to launch into prayer without realizing that you are called to enter into a conversation with God. One priest remarked that for many people, prayer is just “worrying on one’s knees.” Take a moment to recall that God is always with you and that he desires this time with you even more than you do. Ask him to help and guide you as you pray.


Acknowledgment: After you become aware of God’s Presence, it’s important to become aware of your own heart. Take some time to acknowledge your thoughts, feelings, and desires as you begin to pray. Acknowledge your physical and emotional needs (“I’m tired; I’m hungry; I’m worried; I’m excited; I’m lonely;” etc.), but try to also acknowledge the spiritual stirrings within you (“I want to be free from this temptation to sin; I feel God is leading me to do this; I want more of what God wants to give me;” etc.) If there is a particular grace you are seeking, write it down. Perhaps it will be answered immediately. Perhaps you will see over time that God is putting a certain desire into your heart to prepare you for what he wants to give you.

Relate: Once you have acknowledged the stirrings of your heart, relate them to God. It’s easy to just think about these things and assume God knows them, but he wants you to share them with him. Tell him what is in your heart. Ask him about anything that’s troubling you. Share your desires with him. He loves having a “heart-to-heart” with you!

Receive: After sharing your heart with God, allow him to share his heart with you. This is a time to quiet your own heart and mind and listen to God who loves you. Perhaps he will speak through a reflection you read, or a scripture passage, or simply with a “still small voice” inside you. (See 1 Kings 19:12-13)

Respond: To end your time of prayer, respond to God. Thank him for what you received; resolve to do what he asks of you; tell him how much you love him.

Journaling is a great way to conclude your prayer time. It often helps to process what took place during your conversation with God. It also can be very helpful to refer back to your notes in future times of discouragement or discernment. Many times God is doing a work in you that takes days, months, perhaps even years. Journaling can help you learn to recognize the subtle ways God is carrying out his good purpose in you. (See Romans 8:28)

A Word of Encouragement from Saint Ambrose

God’s temple is holy; you are his temple.

My Father and I will come and make our home with you. Let your door stand open to receive him, unlock your soul to him, offer him a welcome in your mind, and then you will see the riches of simplicity, the treasures of peace, the joy of grace. Throw wide the gate of your heart, stand before the sun of the everlasting light that shines on every man. This true light shines on all, but if anyone closes his window he will deprive himself of eternal light. If you shut the door of your mind, you shut out Christ. Though he can enter, he does not want to force his way in rudely, or compel us to admit him against our will.

... It is the soul that has its door, its gates. Christ comes to this door and knocks; he knocks at these gates. Open to him; he wants to enter, to find his bride waiting and watching.
Prayer Intention for August 2020:

That engaging one another in the Synod process will transform us so we can see each person as a beloved son or daughter in whom God is well pleased, we pray to the Lord.

Opening Reflection

Lord, at your Transfiguration Peter, James, and John heard the Father say, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” (Matthew 17:5) Transform our hearts so that we may see one another as you see us, as your beloved children.
August 2-8, 2020: “Jesus said to them, ‘There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.’ But they said to him, ‘Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.’ Then he said, ‘Bring them here to me,’” (Matthew 14:16-18)

One of the few stories found in all four Gospels is the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. Therefore it would be good for us to ask ourselves why this account is emphasized. Here is what the Catechism has to say:

_The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread of his Eucharist… (CCC 1335a)_

Jesus takes the simple gifts of five loaves and two fish and multiplies them superabundantly! So also he receives our humble gifts of bread and wine and miraculously transforms them into his very body, blood, soul, and divinity that he might superabundantly nourish us.

As Catholics we profess that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” (Lumen Gentium 11) Another good question to ask ourselves is how our lives give witness to this great gift. During the month of August the Catholic Church encourages devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Let’s ask the Lord how he might be inviting us to do so – and receive the superabundance he is offering us.

**August 2:** Lord, let us ‘come to you that we may have life’ as we pray with Isaiah 55:1-3.

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**August 3:** Lord, help us to keep our eyes fixed on you instead of the storms around us as we pray with Matthew 14:22-36.

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**August 4:** Lord, as we pray with Psalm 102 on this memorial of Saint John Vianney, we lift up our priests and ask that you equip our Local Church to pass on the faith to future generations.

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**August 5:** Lord, as we pray with Jeremiah 31:1-7, let us ‘go forth dancing, for you have loved us with an age-old love!’

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**August 6:** Lord, as we pray with Matthew 17:1-9 on this feast of the Transfiguration, transform our Archdiocese so that people see your magnificent Presence in us.

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**August 7:** Lord, show each of us the particular cross you have for us to carry as we pray with Matthew 16:24-28.

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**August 8:** Lord, on this memorial of Saint Dominic, encourage us to come to you boldly in faith as we pray with Matthew 17:14-20.

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August 9-15, 2020: “Peter said to him in reply, ‘Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.’ He said, ‘Come.’” (Matthew 14:28-29a)

There are times in our lives when we find ourselves facing storms. Our readings this Sunday give us examples of such times: We see Elijah, who has fled from Ahab and Jezebel who are seeking to kill him. While taking refuge in a cave he hears God asking him, “Why are you here, Elijah?...Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord; the Lord will pass by.” (1 Kings 19:9,11) So Elijah goes out and experiences a violent wind, an earthquake, and fire. But God is in none of these. In the second reading we hear Paul say, “I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart.” (Romans 9:1-5) And finally in the Gospel we see Peter stepping out of the boat to come to Jesus on the water. “But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’” (Matthew 14:30)

One of the great gifts of these readings is that they also show us how God wants to meet us in the storms: After the wind, earthquake and fire, Elijah finally hears a tiny whispering sound – and recognizes the voice of the Lord. Even though Paul is saddened by his people rejecting God, he is “convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39) Peter is immediately caught by Jesus when he cried out “Lord save me”, is brought back to the boat and the wind dies down.

The Responsorial Psalm captures the essence of what God wants to bring us: “I will hear what God proclaims...he proclaims peace.” (Psalm 85:9) Yes, in life we will face storms; but let us invite the Lord to be with us in the storms and fill us with his peace.

August 9: Lord, teach us to recognize your voice as we pray with 1 Kings 19:11-13.

August 10: Lord, help us be like St. Lawrence and follow you as we pray with John 12:24-26.
**August 11:** Lord, on this memorial of St. Clare, help us to receive the little ones as we pray with Matthew 18:1-14.

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**August 12:** Lord, may we as an Archdiocese act with justice and compassion as we pray with Matthew 18:15-20.

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**August 13:** Lord, teach us how to forgive as we pray with Matthew 18:21-19:1.

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**August 14:** Lord, we thank you for Saint Maximilian Kolbe. May we find our courage and strength in you as we pray with Isaiah 12:2-6.

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**August 15:** Lord, we honor our Mother today as we celebrate the solemnity of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We praise you in gratitude for her as we pray with Psalm 45:10-16.

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August 16-22, 2020: “Then Jesus said to her in reply, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.’ And the woman’s daughter was healed from that hour.” (Matthew 15:28)

Our first readings this Sunday are all about God bringing salvation to all the nations. In Isaiah we read, “my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” (Isaiah 56:7) Paul, who refers to himself as the apostle to the gentiles, says, “For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.” (Romans 11:32) And the refrain for our responsorial psalm is “O God, let all the nations praise you!” (Psalm 67:6)

Contrast these readings with Sunday’s Gospel. A Canaanite woman comes to Jesus asking him to heal her daughter who is tormented by a demon. Jesus responds that he was only sent to the lost children of Israel. But the woman continues to beg the Lord to help. He then says, “It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” To this the woman answers, “Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.” (Matthew 15:24-25)

It’s important to note what happens next. “Then Jesus said to her in reply, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.’ And the woman’s daughter was healed from that hour.” (Matthew 15:28) Jesus’ initial words to the woman may have seemed harsh, but by not healing the girl at her mother’s first request, he reveals to the rest of us the incredible depth of her faith. Contrast her example to Peter sinking in the storm last week, or the Gospel story for Monday (Matthew 19) where the rich young man chooses his possessions over Jesus. Each of us has a choice to make. Let us be like the Canaanite woman that the Lord may say of us, “Great is your faith!”

August 16: Lord, strengthen our faith as we pray with Matthew 15:21-18.

August 17: Lord, give us the wisdom and strength to choose you as we pray with Matthew 19:16-22.
August 18: Lord, open our eyes to what we need to sacrifice in order to enter the kingdom of heaven as we pray with Matthew 13:23-30.

August 19: Lord, lead our Archdiocese and refresh our souls as we pray with Psalm 23.

August 20: Lord, as we pray with Ezekiel 36:23-28 on the memorial of St. Bernard, we thank you for Archbishop Bernard Hebda and ask that you place a new heart in our Local Church.

August 21: Lord, show us how to love you and love our neighbor as we pray with Matthew 22:24-40.

August 22: Lord, as we pray with Psalm 85:9-14 on this memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may Our Lady lead us to the glory of the Lord.
August 23-31, 2020: “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

How providential that we have this Gospel as we transition to the next phase of our Synod process – a time of more intentional intellectual and spiritual preparation for the Synod. Jesus, in his infinite mercy and wisdom, didn’t return to his Father in heaven without first establishing his Church. He knew how important it was for his followers to unite and work together to carry out the mission entrusted to them.

He also knew that it was important to establish leadership. It’s interesting to note that he didn’t choose his leader based on wealth (a poor fisherman), schooling (“uneducated, ordinary” – Acts 4:13), or how perfectly he followed (“...you will deny me three times” – Matthew 26:34). Jesus chose Peter after he made a profession of faith: “[Jesus] said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter said in reply, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.’” (Matthew 16:15-18, see also CCC 552)

Each of us is necessary; God equipped us with unique gifts and opportunities that he wants us to share with the world. We are blessed in this Local Church that God has chosen and equipped Archbishop Hebda to be our shepherd. Let us continue to pray for him and for one another, that the Holy Spirit will bless our Synod. And let us continue to ask our Blessed Mother to intercede on our behalf – Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us! And seek, too, the intercession of her Earthly spouse; St. Joseph, pray for us!

August 23: Lord, help us come to a greater knowledge of who you are and how you are calling us to serve as we pray with Matthew 16:13-20.
August 24: Lord, on the feast of Saint Bartholomew, help us to invite others to “come and see you” as we pray with John 1:45-51.

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August 25: Lord, encourage and strengthen our hearts as we pray with 2 Thessalonians 2:14-17.

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August 26: Lord, show our Archdiocese how to walk in your ways as we pray with Psalm 128.

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August 27: Lord, may we follow the example of Saint Monica and pray for conversion for our loved ones as we pray with 1 Corinthians 1:1-9.

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August 28: Lord, on this memorial of Saint Augustine, may we diligently seek truth and wisdom as we pray with 1 Corinthians 1:17-25.

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August 29: Lord, as we pray with 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 on the memorial of the Passion of Saint John the Baptist, may we 'consider our own calling.'

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