



Directory for the Third Synod of the Diocese of Fargo

The Nature and Purpose of the Diocesan Synod

1. A diocesan synod is a canonical institution governed by canons 460-468 of the Code of Canon Law, and the 1997 *Instruction on Diocesan Synods* of the Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The *Instruction* teaches:

The purpose of the diocesan synod is to assist the bishop in the exercise of the office proper to him, namely, that of governing the Christian community.

This purpose determines the particular roles to be ascribed to those priests who partake in the work of the Synod as wise collaborators with the Order of Bishops, their helpers and chosen instruments, and who are called to serve the People of God. The synod also offers the bishop the opportunity of calling to cooperate with him and with his priests some members of the laity as well as some chosen religious. This is a particular form of that responsibility and concerns all of the faithful in building up the Body of Christ.

... The synod is thus contextually and inseparably an action of episcopal governance and an event of communion, [expressing that] hierarchical communion which belongs to the profound nature of the Church. The People of God is thus not an amorphous aggregate of the disciples of Christ, but is rather a priestly community, organically structured from its inception according to the will of its Founder, whose head, in every diocese, is the bishop, the visible source and foundation of unity and its sole representative. Thus any attempt to place the Synod in opposition to the Bishop on the grounds of representation of the People of God is contrary to the authentic order of ecclesial relations. (*Instruction*, I.1. Interior citations omitted.)

This diocesan synod is not a parliament which puts the teachings of the Church up for a vote. Rather, it is an instrument for discerning the best way to make available the gifts of the Church, including her timeless doctrines, sacramental life, and pastoral care, to the people of Eastern North Dakota in our concrete circumstances.

2. The members of the synod engage in free discussion regarding the questions proposed by the bishop, whether in breakout groups or in plenary sessions. After discussion and consideration, each member of the diocesan synod assists the bishop by formulating and expressing his or her opinion ('votum'). This 'votum'

is defined as "consultative", so as to indicate that the bishop remains free to accept or not the recommendations made to him. However, this does not imply that such a "votum" is of little importance or merely an

“external” consultation involving someone with no responsibility for the final outcome of the synod ... In virtue of their experience and their counsel, those who participate in the synod also collaborate actively in drawing up those declarations and decrees, which are properly called “Synodal”, and by which the episcopal government of the dioceses is inspired for the future. (*Instruction*, I.2. Interior citations omitted.)

3. The bishop

directs the discussions during the synodal sessions and, as a true teacher of the Church, he will instruct and correct when such is deemed necessary. Having heard the members of the synod, his [duty is] discernment ... he will scrutinize everything and retain that which is good. At the conclusion of the synod, the bishop, by signing the synodal declarations and decrees, vests with his authority all that is taught or obliged by them. In this way episcopal authority expresses its true character of ministry – which implies hearing its subjects and calling on them to cooperate generously in seeking to discern the will of the Spirit at a given moment in a diocese- and not the imposition of an arbitrary will. (*Instruction*, I.2. Interior citations omitted.)

The Place and Time of the Diocesan Synod

4. The Synodal Assembly of the Third Synod of the Diocese of Fargo will take place on April 11-13, 2023.

5. Due to construction, and as a change from what was initially announced, the Synodal Assembly will take place at Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church, Fargo, ND.

A plenary indulgence is granted a single time to the faithful who devoutly visit Sts. Anne and Joachim during the diocesan synod and there recite an Our Father and the Creed. The usual conditions of detachment from sin, sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intention of the Holy Father are required to receive this indulgence. (*Manual of Indulgences*, Norm 20; Grant 31)

6. The opening Mass of the diocesan synod is Thursday, April 11, 2023 at 5pm at Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church, Fargo, ND. This Mass is open to the public.

7. The closing Mass of the diocesan synod is Saturday, April 13, 2023 at noon at Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church, Fargo, ND. This Mass is open to the public.

8. The remaining events of the Synodal Assembly are reserved to members and other authorized attendees.

Membership in the Diocesan Synod

9. Membership in the synod is determined in canon 463, and includes some members *ex officio*, some by free nomination of the bishop, and some by election. In the Diocese of Fargo, those who attend *ex officio* and *de iure* are:

- the vicar general;
- the judicial vicar;

- the members of the presbyteral council;
- and the deans.

10. Those who are members by reason of nomination from the Bishop of Fargo are:

- Each priest, whether secular or consecrated, with an assignment to active ministry in the Diocese of Fargo;
- Each deacon, whether secular or consecrated, with an assignment to active ministry in the Diocese of Fargo;
- Two priests who have been granted ‘retirement’ and are not otherwise impeded;
- One deacon who has been granted ‘retirement’ and is not otherwise impeded;
- The lay deanery representatives, excluding alternates, of the Diocesan Pastoral Council;
- Certain individuals reflecting the following communities, demographics, or apostolates:
 - Ethnic communities;
 - High school students;
 - Catholic schools;
 - Catholic campus ministries;
 - Home schools;
 - Catholic healthcare;
 - Catholic media;
 - Pro-life apostolates;
 - Catholic Charities of North Dakota;
 - Catholic Daughters of the Americas;
 - Knights of Columbus;
 - St. Vincent DePaul Society.

11. Those who are members by reason of election are:

- Parish Synodal Delegates:
 - Two delegates, elected according to Articles 14-17, from each of the following parishes of the Diocese of Fargo:
 - St. Ann, Belcourt;
 - St. Joseph, Devils Lake;
 - Blessed Sacrament, West Fargo;
 - Holy Spirit, Fargo;
 - Nativity, Fargo;
 - Sts. Anne and Joachim, Fargo;
 - St. Anthony, Fargo;
 - St. Mary’s Cathedral, Fargo;
 - St. John, Grafton;
 - Holy Family, Grand Forks;
 - St. Mary, Grand Forks;
 - St. Michael, Grand Forks;
 - St. James Basilica, Jamestown;
 - St. Therese, Rugby;
 - St. Catherine, Valley City;

- St. John, Wahpeton;
 - Holy Cross, West Fargo.
 - One delegate, elected according to Articles 14-17, from each parish of the Diocese of Fargo not named above.
 - One consecrated person, nominated or elected according to the determination of the Superior, from each of the following houses within the Diocese of Fargo:
 - Carmel of Mary;
 - Franciscan Sisters of Dillingen;
 - Sisters of Mary of the Presentation;
 - Sisters of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity;
 - Union of Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
12. One's membership may be lost by reason of loss of title or office, which qualified one to become a member, or by removal by the bishop for a lawful reason.
13. In accord with canon 464, if a member becomes lawfully impeded from attending, he or she cannot send a proxy, but is to notify the diocesan bishop of the reason for not attending.

The Qualifications of a Parish Synodal Delegate

14. To be elected as a parish synodal delegate, "It is an indispensable requisite that these members ... be in a canonically regular situation ..." (*Instruction*, II.3). In addition, the individual must 1) be a lay person; 2) have completed his or her eighteenth year of age; 3) be outstanding in firm faith, high moral standards, and prudence; 4) be willing to attend the Synodal Assembly.

The Duties of a Parish Synodal Delegate

15. The parish synodal delegate is asked to be centered on Christ, to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in his or her life and over the diocesan synod; receive, read, and reflect on the communications regarding the diocesan synod; assist the pastor in leading a study of the questions proposed by the bishop; and is to attend the Synodal Assembly from the evening of Thursday, April 11 to noon, Saturday April 13, 2024.

The Manner of Election of a Parish Synodal Delegate

16. Parish synodal delegates are elected in the following manner:
- a. If there is a **pastoral council**, either for the parish or the parish cluster, the pastor is to present two or more candidates. The pastoral council will then elect the delegate(s) according to the norm of c. 119, namely, by an absolute majority of the quorum present. If there have been two inconclusive votes, a vote is to be taken between the two candidates with the greatest number of votes, or if there are more than two, between the two senior by age. After a third inconclusive vote, the person is deemed elected who is senior by age.

- b. If there is **no pastoral council**, it is for the pastor to nominate the delegate after consultation with some respected members of the parish.
17. The election of a parish synodal delegate is subject to confirmation by the diocesan bishop. The pastor is to email the name, address, phone number, and email of the parish synodal delegate to Steve Splonskowski (steve.splonskowski@fargodiocese.org) no later than 22 September 2023.

Non-Members

18. Media presence, support staff, and volunteers will be coordinated by diocesan offices.
19. Others invited by the diocesan bishop may attend as non-voting observers. Non-voting observers may participate in break-out discussions, but may not vote, nor address the assembly in plenary sessions.

The Allocation of Costs

20. The parish is to provide for the cost of mileage and lodging in the reserved room block for its clergy and lay delegates to attend the Synodal Assembly. The Diocese of Fargo will provide meals and snacks at the Synodal Assembly. There is no registration fee to attendees.

Registration

21. All attendees must pre-register for the Synodal Assembly.

The Officers and Commissions of the Synod

The President

22. The diocesan bishop presides over the diocesan synod. He may, however, delegate the vicar general or an episcopal vicar to fulfill this office at individual sessions.

The Moderator

23. The moderator is tasked with overseeing the preparatory stages of the synod, coordinating the offices and commissions of the synod, and moderating the sessions of the synodal assembly. Mr. Steve Splonskowski is appointed as the moderator of the Third Synod of the Diocese of Fargo.

The Secretary

24. The secretary is tasked with ensuring that the synod proceeds in accord with the norm of canon law, is to oversee the drawing up of the minutes of the synodal assembly, and the transmission and archiving of documentation. Mr. Timothy Olson is appointed as the secretary of the Third Synod of the Diocese of Fargo.

Facilitators

25. Facilitators are appointed by the moderator to stimulate fruitful discussion and to ensure that each member has the opportunity to be heard in breakout groups.

The Preparatory Commission

26. The Preparatory Commission is principally tasked with matters pertaining to the organization and preparation of the Third Synod of the Diocese of Fargo. It is made up of the following office-holders of the Diocese of Fargo: the diocesan bishop, vicar general, judicial vicar, chancellor, diocesan finance officer, director of the Office of Catholic Education and Formation, and the director of the Office of the Liturgy.

Working Group

27. The working group is tasked with providing initial in-depth consultation regarding the proposed questions for the diocesan synod, and assists with the initial drafting of proposals. The working group for the Third Synod of the Diocese of Fargo consists of the representatives on the Diocesan Pastoral Council, with support from diocesan staff.

Procedural Norms

28. The synodal assembly will be conducted in accord with *Robert's Rules of Order*, as modified below.
29. In accord with canon 833, 1° each member is personally bound to make the profession of faith before commencing synodal discussions.

Expected Mode of Proceeding

30. The president, or one appointed by him, will present a proposal for consideration. Free discussion will then occur for a defined period in facilitated breakout groups. After the time has expired, a plenary session will occur for a defined period to allow free discussion before the entire body. Specific modifications to the proposal are not entertained in the first plenary session. A subsequent plenary session will then occur, whose purpose is to offer specific modifications to the proposal on the floor. Final votes on proposals will be deferred until the last session.

Protocol for Addressing the Assembly

31. In plenary session, a member may approach the microphone on the floor to provide oral interventions before the assembly. When recognized by the moderator, the member is to identify himself or herself by stating name and parish.
32. Unless otherwise permitted by the president:
- Each intervention is limited to two minutes.
 - A member cannot speak a second or subsequent time on the same issue until all others wishing to address that issue have spoken.

The Voting Procedure

33. A vote will be expressed using the following formula:
- Affirmative (i.e., "I agree");
 - Negative (i.e., "I disagree");

- Affirmative with Reservations (i.e., “I substantially agree but have some concerns”);
- Abstain (i.e., “I am not voting”).

34. Votes will be expressed by a show of hands unless the diocesan bishop determines otherwise.

35. A member must be present to cast his or her vote and may not vote absentee or by proxy.

I hereby issue the above Synodal Directory for the Third Synod of the Diocese of Fargo. It is to be promulgated on the website of the Diocese of Fargo.

† Most Rev. John T. Folda
Bishop of Fargo

Given at the Chancery
This 17th Day of August, 2023.

Mr. Timothy Olson, JCL
Chancellor