



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

January 4, 2022

Dear Fathers, Parish Director, Parish Life Coordinators, Deacons, Lay Leaders, Business Administrators, Sister,

I am pleased to announce to you our diocese's plans for participating in the Synod on Synodality called by Pope Francis this fall.

Our diocese formally began its participation in the synod with an opening Mass at Our Lady of the Lake in Ashland on October 18th. Since then, we have been praying the Synodal Prayer to the Holy Spirit and offering specific petitions for the synod at parishes across the diocese. If you are not offering those prayers at your weekend liturgies, I ask that you please begin doing so.

We are now ready to begin the next phase of our participation, which will consist of coming together to discern the movement and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Leaning on the principal of subsidiarity (the most effective solution to any challenge is always the most local viable solution)¹, we are going to do all of our listening sessions as local parish clusters. We hope that in so doing new relationships will be created and existing relationship strengthened.

Our reflections as a diocese for this synod are centered on a simple but very beautiful passage from the Gospel. In this passage, Mark 2:1-12, four friends bring a fifth friend, who is paralyzed, to Jesus for healing. Undeterred by the crowd and the fact that there was no room in the house where Jesus was, they climb up to the roof with the man on the stretcher, tear a hole in the roof and lower their friend to Jesus. These friends serve as a perfect witness for the mission of the Church: recognizing the needs in their local community, knowing how and where to bring their friends to Jesus, and courageously persevering in that vital task.

A guide for holding these sessions is attached to this letter. Additional resources are also available on our diocesan website's dedicated Synod page. These sessions are to be held sometime during January and February. After hosting those sessions, each cluster is asked to submit a report to the diocese by March 1st. Instructions for compiling these reports will be included in the guides for hosting these sessions.

We will also be opening up an online portal for anyone in the diocese that would like to participate virtually. This will be open during the same time frame as the parish listening sessions in January and February. My hope for the online portal is that people will truly participate in the process of synodality via the portal -- praying, listening, discerning and sharing. Accordingly, the portal will include the same opportunities for prayer, questions, scripture reflections, etc. that will be utilized at the in-person gatherings.

Please share these opportunities on your parish websites, social media, and in your bulletin -- as always, personal invitation is the most effective means. These opportunities are for all the baptized and people of

¹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1883.

goodwill. I encourage you to find innovative ways to reach out not only to regular parishioners, but also those on the margins of parish life.

Each cluster will also be asked to pick two delegates from their cluster (along with their priest(s), parish life coordinator, or parish director) to attend a follow-up session with the bishop, diocesan staff and delegates from other parishes. These gatherings will serve as opportunities for each parish to hear from other parishes and for diocesan leaders to hear and dialogue with the parish delegates and leaders as well. The dates and locations for these are:

Sunday, March 13th – 2pm at St. Joseph in Shell Lake


- **Saturday, March 19th – 1pm at Holy Family in Woodruff**
- *Saturday, March 26th – 1pm at Woodruff if earlier date cancelled due to inclement weather*
- *Sunday, March 27th – 2pm at Shell Lake if earlier date cancelled due to inclement weather*

After the conclusion of the follow-up sessions, the diocesan staff will synthesize all of the reports from the clusters, submissions to the online portal and gathered feedback from the follow-up sessions and submit a report to the USCCB. This report will then be synthesized with reports from all of the other dioceses in the United States and sent to Rome to be included in laying the groundwork for the gathering of bishops in 2023.

My hope for this Synod is that, guided by the Holy Spirit, we might take those friends from the passage from Mark 2 as our example. And we might encounter the needs in our community honestly and openly, build relationships, and live our call to missionary discipleship across the Diocese of Superior by bringing our friends to our Lord Jesus!

Come Holy Spirit!

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Most Rev. James P. Powers
Bishop of Superior