

Frequently Asked Questions about the Diocesan Synod

What is a diocesan synod?

A diocesan synod is an extraordinary gathering convened by the diocesan bishop for the purpose of advising him in his role as chief shepherd and legislator for the diocese. The bishop can convene a synod as he seeks advice about major issues facing the Church, and how to deal with those issues through major diocesan policies, legislation (“particular law”), and teaching.

Why are we having a synod now?

Bishop Coyne has decided, after consulting the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, to convene a synod to establish a new pastoral plan for the immediate future of the diocese, in order to help the Catholic Church in Vermont to more effectively carry out her divine mission of saving souls by spreading the Gospel (“evangelization”) and bringing people to encounter Christ.

Who will take part in the synod?

The bishop presides over the sessions of the synod, which is made up of delegates from throughout the diocese, including priests, deacons, members of religious orders, and lay men and women. The number is limited because all the delegates are invited to express their opinions on the questions submitted to the synod by the bishop.

When will the synod happen?

The actual synod sessions will take place in 2018. The exact dates have not yet been determined, but the likely timing is in the early fall. An implementation phase will follow the synod sessions, and will include the publication of the synodal decrees and declarations, setting forth the legislation and teaching the bishop decides to issue after hearing the advice of the synod delegates. The preparatory phase for the synod is underway now, and will continue until the first session opens.

What happens during the preparatory phase?

Bishop Coyne has appointed a Preparatory Commission, made up of priests, deacons, religious, diocesan staff, and lay members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, which is helping to guide the planning for the synod. The commission is now planning an extensive process of consultation, beginning in the fall of 2017, involving multiple conversations throughout the diocese, in parishes and at the deanery/regional level. The goals of these consultations are to help refresh and renew Catholics’ understanding of the nature and mission of the Church, to promote a broad-based conversation about the state of our diocese and how to meet the challenges we face, and ultimately to advise the bishop and assist him in discerning the synod’s goals and refining the questions he will submit to the delegates.

Can I participate? Do I get to ask questions and share my thoughts?

Yes! There will be multiple consultative meetings with parishioners throughout Vermont to help you learn about the synod and enable you to raise questions or concerns and share your views. Bishop Coyne has committed to seek input from all Vermont Catholics, to listen to all, and to discern with all. For those who are unable to participate in parish meetings, there will be ways to offer comments online.

Is there anything else I can do?

You can pray! Please add to your prayer intentions the successful planning and celebration of the diocesan synod, for the glory of God, the good of the Church in Vermont, and the salvation of souls. Add this intention to the prayer of the faithful at Mass, make it part of your Rosary or other family prayers, etc. And please pray, by yourself and with others, the official Synod Preparation Prayer: *Almighty and ever-living God ...*