



### **General Introduction:**

In the October 18, 2021 edition of the *Catholic Virginian*, Bishop Knestout introduced the Synod to the people of the Diocese. He explains: “‘Synod’ is a Greek word that literally means ‘on the same path’ so the Holy Father has asked the whole Church to ‘journey together’ on the same path in communion with one another. In communion, we join with one another to listen to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and prayerfully discern God’s will for us. Our mission, as a faith community, is to act upon what we’ve heard. Synodality is an ongoing process expressed in our willingness to journey together. The 2023 World Synod of Bishops will not be an end, i.e., an outcome, for the process. Rather, it will mark a continuation, as we continue journeying together as a Church.” We are being asked to reflect on the synod’s three themes of Communion, Participation, and Mission.

Through all of this we seek to answer the Fundamental Question:

**“A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, ‘journeys together’: How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your particular Church?**

**What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?”**

### **Communion**

This first grouping examines the idea of Communion in a particular way. The themes draw us into discussion on what it means to journey together, listen to each other, and celebrate together.

#### **Questions:**

**How would you characterize your Church community-the people who are journeying together?**

**What persons or groups are left on the margins?**

**How is your parish inviting those on the margins into relationship?**

**Do our liturgies promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy and encourage them to live lives of faith? Does the homily draw from the Word of God and inspire the faithful?**

## **Discussion and Dialogue**

For a synodal process that is focused on participatory opportunities for discussion and dialogue this grouping will look into how we accomplish these ideas on a regular basis. We are encouraged to be rooted in the Holy Spirit and guided by courage and a boldness to speak out to those we encounter, whether in the pews or distant from their faith. The Church and society find themselves facing division and conflict on a regular basis. Our ability to share about ourselves and enter into dialogue with others will help to determine how effective we are at spreading the Gospel message.

### **Questions:**

**Under what circumstances and in what ways are Catholics communicating in the world today?**

**How does the prevalence of digital and social media affect communication?**

**How is the Church dialoguing, collaborating, and resolving conflicts among its own members in the Church?**

(Consider this question on different levels: within your parish, locally, within your deanery, between dioceses, between different ecclesial movements, or globally.)

**How is the Church dialoguing, collaborating, and resolving conflicts with members of other Christian denominations, people of other non-Christian religious traditions, and people with no religious affiliation?**

**What benefits have been the outcome of that collaborating?** (Do you see your community working together with other churches in your area? Have there been any benefits from that collaboration?)

**What areas and issues in the wider society is the Church focused on? Are there areas or issues we need to pay more attention to?** (Consider politics, economics, culture, outreach, etc.)

## **Participation and Mission**

All members of the Church are called to participate in the Church's salvific mission, but we must face the reality that many people feel unprepared and ill equipped to live a life of public witness or to serve the Church in leadership roles. The parish plays an important role in forming the faithful for lives of mission and service and to encourage people to utilize their different God given talents to answer God's unique call for them.

### **Questions:**

**How is the parish equipping and empowering people to go out and be on mission for Jesus Christ in their regular lives?**

**What obstacles do the faithful face in living and professing their faith publicly?**

**What opportunities is the parish providing to help the faithful face those obstacles? What is still needed?**

(Do the faithful have opportunities to learn how to pray, learn how to discern, and learn how to live as a Christian witness?)

**How are lay leaders given responsibility and to what extent do they have the authority to make decisions?**

**What opportunities does your parish or community offer to raise people up into leadership positions?**

**How are those in leadership roles formed to make them more capable of journeying together?**

**How are decisions made for the parish or community?**

## **Fundamental Question**

**A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, 'journeys together': How is this 'journeying together' happening today in your particular Church?**

**What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?**