

FAQs: Synod 2021-2023

General Synod Questions

What is a synod?

For our purposes, it is two things:

The synod is an **event** that happens at regular intervals when the Holy Father calls the bishops from around the world to gather with him in Rome to discuss and discern important matters of faith and the life of the Church.

On October 10, 2021, Pope Francis opened the 16th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. It will culminate with the assembly of bishops gathering in Rome in October 2023. This most recent synod is being referred to as Synod 2021-2023.

A synod is also a **process** of walking or journeying together. In the Church, we are not meant to walk our journey of faith alone. We walk with others on the same road that leads us to Christ and to proclaim Him to others; yet how we walk or journey on that shared road varies based on our individual experiences and in the different areas around our world.

Why does this synod matter to us in the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth?

This particular synod matters because Pope Francis wants input from Catholics (and others) from all over the world, hence Synod 2021-2023 is a two-year process.

Pope Francis is inviting the faithful to more intentionally live the synod; to move it from being an event to being a process. His hope is that this synodal process will lead us to live out synodality. Synodality in this context means a process of discernment that is led by the Holy Spirit and involves clergy, religious, and laity – each according to their gifts and charisms. In more simple terms, it means taking the time to listen to the living church experiences of all and paying particular attention to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in those experiences.

Set before us is a two-year synodal journey that happens in three phases of consultation and discernment: diocesan, continental, universal. The diocesan consultation period begins in October 2021 and goes until April of 2022.

Archbishop Dunn opened the synod process in our diocese at our annual Assembly on October 15-16, 2021. During this time, Parish Synod Teams gathered to learn more about the process and prepare to lead small groups in every parish of the diocese.

What will the Parish Synod Teams do?

A synod involves bringing people together for prayer and listening. Our Parish Synod Teams help create opportunities for this to happen by leading local listening sessions with pastoral councils, youth, families, and other groups in each parish. This input will be submitted to Pope Francis. However, this is important input for us locally also. Archbishop Dunn hopes to use the results of these sessions to help form the next steps for our diocese.

What is the purpose of the synod?

The short answer is: to bring about an understanding of what it means to live as a synodal Church.

Pope Francis hopes this new way of preparing and conducting a synod will help the faithful come to a place that leads us towards synodality, a true walking together and active participation in the mission Christ to which all the baptized are called. Through intentional prayer and listening to the experience of the people that make up the Church in the world today, we can encounter Christ and discern the direction needed to renew our Church.

Not only has the Holy Father asked for this worldwide process, it also comes at an important time for our local Church. The entire diocese is emerging from a merger process, lengthened and exacerbated by a global pandemic. Now is the time to begin looking forward and create a plan to advance the Archbishop's pastoral priorities over the next few years. Our responses will be used to help formulate the next phase in our pastoral planning.

You keep referring to "journeying together." What does that mean exactly?

The word synod means to walk together. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24. 13-22), we are walking on the same road toward Christ – talking and listening each other, encountering Christ, and hopefully listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in the midst of our encounter.

When the Pope calls the bishops of the world to assembly in synod, they are bringing with them the experience of the Church, journey of faith, in their local areas: the living voice of the Church. Pope Francis wants to hear this voice more directly for Synod 2021-2023. Thus, he is asking all the faithful to share how they are journeying together, and what are their real experiences – joys and challenges – of being a part of the Church where they live.

How do I participate in the synod process?

Locally, listening sessions will happen in small groups at each parish. The diocesan synod team is organizing listening sessions with Indigenous peoples, students, other Christian leaders, clergy, and religious. Additionally, the diocesan team is preparing a short survey to help reach out to those who may not be willing or able to attend a meeting. All of these insights will be added to the parish submission to help form our diocesan response.

Will my/our input really make a difference?

Yes! Locally it will help shape how Archbishop Dunn and his staff will support the people and parishes of the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth. Knowing what people think, feel, and experience in relation to the Church in this diocese is an important factor that we need to take to prayer and reflect on as Archbishop Dunn determines how best to support and pastorally care for the people of God entrusted to his care.

In terms of our universal Church, we know a hallmark of Pope Francis' ministry is doing things a different way. He has invited feedback from everyone who is baptized, and even those who are not. He is inviting us to take a step in the direction to making a different Church – a Church of people who journey together to actively build up the kingdom of God where they are at this particular time. We can offer the feedback as asked and pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to guide the Holy Father and all with whom he consults.

I want to know more about Synod 2021-2023. Where can I find more information and resources?

The General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops has developed a website specifically for Synod 2021-2023: www.synod.va

Locally, you can follow along with our diocesan consultation process and synod activities by checking out www.halifaxyarmouth.org/synod

I'm on a Parish Synod Team....

How many Synod sessions should a parish conduct?

There is a very short time frame in which to gather the input for the diocesan consultation. Sessions can begin in October of 2021 and should be concluded by the end of January 2022. Because of this we have asked each Parish Synod Team to hold between three and four sessions at the parish targeting youth, families, pastoral and/or finance councils.

Parishes are welcome to conduct more than four sessions if they wish.

How many people should be in a small group for the synod sessions?

This small group process works well for groups of six to eight individuals.

If you feel you have the capacity within your Parish Synod Team, you could call together a larger group of people and split that larger group into small groups of four or five and lead them through the synod session process from the front of the room as was done at the Assembly.

Your PL&NE contact person (see following question) is happy to help you brainstorm ways to organize your parish synod sessions.

Can we hold the parish synod session via Zoom?

The process of listening and discernment that Pope Francis invites people to take part in is rooted in prayer; specifically praying with scripture with time for personal and communal reflection. This time of prayer sets the atmosphere for the deep listening that needs to take place. This can be hard to accomplish using Zoom.

We encourage you to do this synod session in-person as you are able.

The Diocesan Synod Team are also looking at other ways that input could be gathered to make this the wide reaching consultation that Pope Francis hopes it will be.

Where can I find more information, answers to my questions, assistance with my parish synod sessions... HELP!?!?

Each parish has a member of the Office of Pastoral Life and New Evangelization who is assigned to walk with them. You will find the PL&NE contact person for your parish in the listing below:

| Parishes | PL&NE Team Member | Contact Information |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| Christ the King, Divine Mercy, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Immaculate Conception | Elizabeth Craig | ecraig@halifaxymouth.org (902) 429-9088 ext 311 |
| Notre Dame d'Acadie, Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, Saint Ambrose | Wanda Comeau | wcomeau@halifaxymouth.org (902) 769-3844 |
| Corpus Christi, Saint Benedict, Saint John the Apostle, Saint Mary's Cathedral Basilica | Chris O'Hara | cohara@halifaxymouth.org (902) 429-9800 ext 322 |
| Good Shepherd, Holy Apostles, Saint André Bessette, Saint Francis & Saint Clare of Assisi, Saint Ignatius | Aurea Sadi | asadi@halifaxymouth.org (902) 429-9800 ext 310 |
| All Saints, Holy Trinity, Saint John of the Cross, Stella Maris | John Stevens | jstevens@halifaxymouth.org (902) 429-9800 ext 331 |

Throughout the diocesan consultation period (October 2021-April 2022), you will find updates and resources on our diocesan synod website: www.halifaxymouth.org/synod

