



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

REQUEST FOR INPUT REGARDING THE SYNODAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH

To: The Clergy, Religious and Faithful of the Diocese of Honolulu

From: Bishop Larry Silva

Date: October 17, 2021

Peace be with you!

Pope Francis has announced a Synod of Bishops, which is to take place in October 2023 in Rome. In preparation for that Synod, he has asked every diocese in the world to conduct its own consultation process between October 17, 2021 and February 2022. I therefore invite all in our diocese to carefully read this Request for Input and to respond as requested. The documents issued by the Vatican describe a rather complex process, and anyone who wants to read them can do so at [Documento Preparatorio della XVI Assemblea Generale Ordinaria del Sinodo dei Vescovi \(vatican.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/doc/2021/10/17_documento-preparatorio-della-xvi-assemblea-generale-ordinaria-del-sinodo-dei-vescovi_vatican.va) and [For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality \(vatican.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/doc/2021/10/17_for-a-synodal-church-communion-participation-and-mission-vademecum-for-the-synod-on-synodality_vatican.va) I have attempted to simplify the process to make it more effective in our diocese.

The Synod consultation process involves these steps:

1. Pray, using the Scripture readings provided.
2. Reflect on the readings, on the Synod questions, and most of all on the **ONE KEY QUESTION** being asked of everyone in our Diocese of Honolulu.
3. Have a discussion with ANY group on the ONE KEY QUESTION. (E.g. parish pastoral council, finance council, school board; Legion of Mary, Knights of Columbus, Filipino Catholic Clubs; households; neighbors; a small group from your parish; a small group at your workplace; attendees at youth sports; youth groups; young adult groups; senior groups; etc.) The objective is to be as inclusive as possible.
4. Collate responses in a brief summary and submit them to <https://bit.ly/SynodResponses> .
5. Repeat this consultation process with other people or groups, especially with those who are not a part of our normal parish groups.

Responses submitted will be collated into a diocesan report of ten pages or less and submitted to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The USCCB will summarize all reports from the U.S. dioceses. A continental consultation will follow, when the Canadian Catholic Conference will join in with the USCCB. Then all the combined summarized reports will be sent to the Vatican in preparation for the October 2023 Synod of Bishops, where representative bishops and others from countries throughout the world will meet with our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

Thank you for your participation in this Synod consultation process. May it bear much good fruit for our diocese and for the Catholic Church throughout the world!

Prayer for the Synod

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life

and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,

in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

SYNODALITY IN THE CHURCH

Diocesan Phase in the Diocese of Honolulu – October 17, 2021 to February 28, 2022

Scriptures for Reflection (from the New American Bible, Revised Edition)

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-6,12

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. ... As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.

- John 6:48-51

“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven: whoever eats this bread will live forever. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

- Matthew 25:31-40

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

KEY QUESTION:

How can all the members of the Catholic Church be more effective in proclaiming the living Jesus Christ to the world?

Discuss this question with as many different groups and people as you are able and send a summary of your discussion to <https://bit.ly/SynodResponses> no later than February 28, 2022.

APPENDIX

Questions from the Synod of Bishops Preparatory Document from the Vatican (for information only in preparation for answering the KEY QUESTION above)

The questions accompanying each of the following ten themes can be used as a starting point or helpful guideline. Your conversation and dialogue do not need to be limited to the following questions:

1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY *In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.* In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

2. LISTENING *Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.* How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

3. SPEAKING OUT *All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity.* What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

4. CELEBRATION *“Walking together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.* How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy? What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

5. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION *Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate.* Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptised from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY *Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.* To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.? How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

7. ECUMENISM *The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.* What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING *In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.* What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning. How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?

The Synod website provides suggestions on how to pose these questions to various groups of people in simple and engaging ways. Each diocese, parish, or ecclesial group should not aim to cover all the questions but should discern and focus on those aspects of synodality most pertinent to its context. Participants are encouraged to share with honesty and openness about their real-life experiences, and to reflect together on what the Holy Spirit might be revealing through what they share with one another.