

# A Proclamation on the Synod of Synodality



For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission



Homily from October 9 & 10, 2021

By Most Rev. Robert M. Coerver

Bishop of Lubbock



# Prayer for the Synod: Adsumus Sancte Spiritus

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer Adsumus Sancte Spiritus, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal journey from 2021 to 2023, we propose to the following simplified version,<sup>1</sup> so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray it more easily.

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.

From the VADEMECUM FOR THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

<sup>1</sup> The original version of the Adsumus Sancte Spiritus can be found on the Synod website.

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“I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me...”  
So began our First Reading a few moments ago.

So I could imagine Pope Francis proclaiming as Chief Shepherd of the Universal Church,  
today.

So I must preach as he is preaching this weekend and he has asked all bishops to preach in the  
coming week.

We are, as always, to preach as inspired by God’s Word— God’s word which is living and  
effective. God’s word which is penetrating. God’s word which we treat with special dignity, hear  
with longing to know God’s presence and listen to as faithful believers in and followers of the  
Word.

God’s Word for us in today’s Gospel reminds us that mere adherence to the dictates of God’s  
Word and God’s Law is not sufficient.

“As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him,  
‘Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’”

The teacher responds by stating the ten commandments of the Law.

The man seeks to go deeper, go deeper in his journey — he longs for a deeper experience of  
God, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.”

In response, Jesus teaches that discipleship entails more than keeping rules. Discipleship  
involves going deeper — deeper commitment, engagement of the whole person in encounter  
with God.

In Christ’s name, inspired by Divine Wisdom, and exercising graced prudence, Pope

Francis is inviting us to go deeper on our journey of faith, as  
individuals and, especially, as Church community.

A document from the Vatican’s office of the Synod of  
Bishops published just a few weeks ago tells us:

... Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect  
on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: “It  
is precisely this path of synodality which God expects  
of the Church of the third millennium.”

This journey, which follows in the wake of the  
Church’s “renewal” proposed by the Second Vatican



Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live communion, to active participation, to open Herself to mission.

Our “journeying together” is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.

The synodal moment to which Pope Francis is calling us — at this moment — as we journey together to deeper experience of and commitment to God, to fulfilling our role as missionary disciples, is characterized by three key elements: Communion, Participation, and Mission.

## **Communion**

We are spread out across the twenty-five (25) counties of our diocese, but God unites us as one. Our aim is not for all of us to be the same, but for us to walk forward together, sharing a common path and embracing our diversity.

The communion that God builds in our midst is stronger than any divisions which we might create or the evil one inflicts upon us. Amidst our many differences, we are united in our common baptism, as members of the Body of Christ.

Our communion exists on the various levels of the diocesan Church of Lubbock – in our parishes, in renewal opportunities, in the numerous organizations of lay faithful, and in the life of our families/households of faith, our Consecrated Persons, and in our Clergy.

## **Participation**

Our lay faithful, our households of faith/family units, our Consecrated Persons and our Clergy all play a vital role in the life of the Church. Pope Francis is calling upon all of us to participate more fully on the synodal journey he is inviting us to initiate.

Efforts need to be made to include those who may sometimes be excluded — including members of other Christian denominations and other religions, people who experience poverty and marginalization, people who live with a handicap, young people, women, etc.

All of us must reach out, in coming months, to try to include those people who might feel they are on the peripheries, and to include them on the journey.

We must invite them to be included.

## **Mission**

The many gifts and charisms of the People of God in our diocese need to be drawn upon.

Every Christian has a vital role to play in the mission of the Church—all the baptized are living stones in building up the Body of Christ.

No one is excluded from the joy of the Gospel.

Lay people have a special mission in witnessing to the Gospel in all parts of human society. As disciples of Jesus, we are leaven in the midst of humanity so that the kingdom of God may rise across the entire world.



Pope Francis — this weekend — is inaugurating the 2023 World Synod of Bishops, and the theme of the Synod is Synodality, which includes the Universal Church in Communion, Participation, and Mission.

The Synod process is a worldwide consultation which involves listening, discernment, and participation.

The synodal process is first and foremost a spiritual process – it is not a mechanical data-gathering exercise or a series of meetings and debates. It involves listening oriented toward discernment – personal and communal discernment.

We listen to each other, to our faith tradition, and to the signs of the times in order to discern what God is saying to all of us.

This kind of discernment is ultimately a way of life, grounded in Christ, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, living for the greater glory of God. Communal discernment helps to build flourishing and resilient communities for the mission of the Church today.

Discernment is a grace from God, but it requires our human involvement in simple ways – praying, reflecting, paying attention to one’s inner disposition, listening and talking to one another in an authentic, meaningful, and welcoming way.

If listening is the method of the Synodal Process, and discerning is the aim, then participation is the path. Fostering participation leads us out of ourselves to involve others who hold different views than we do.

Listening to those who have the same views as we do bears no fruit. Dialogue involves coming together across diverse opinions.

Indeed, God often speaks through the voices of those that we can easily exclude, cast aside, or discount. We must make a special effort to listen to those we may be tempted to see as unimportant and those who force us to consider new points of view that may change our way of thinking.

The Preparatory Document for the Synod on Synodality says this:

“Every synodal process, in which the Bishops are called to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church, not by themselves but by listening to the People of God, who ‘shares also in Christ’s prophetic office’, is an evident form of that ‘journeying together’ which makes the Church grow.”

Coming out of the pandemic experience, I was already making plans to do a lot of listening around the Diocese of Lubbock. Listening to those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic whose funerals had to be conducted in a truncated way, thus short circuiting the grief process.

Listening sessions in parishes when I visit for Confirmations this year, because my recent visits have been curtailed — or socially distant — to the point of not really encountering the people of our parishes.

Trying to listen to people who disagree with me on COVID protocols, pro-life approaches, or even pastoral assignments — all of that listening I still intend to do.

Some of it will be folded into the synodal process, but we will need to create many more opportunities for listening throughout the diocese — that will involve the pastoral and finance councils and people in leadership positions in our parishes.



It will involve diocesan consultative structures already in place – the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Presbyteral Council, my Administrative Team, the Diocesan Finance Committee, the body of priests and deacons and Consecrated Persons.

Specially-scheduled listening sessions will take place this winter.

Concrete plans for these listening sessions and the subsequent diocesan summary of the results of those sessions all are still in the planning stages.

We have had less than a month since the Vatican sent us details of this synodal process.

Today, I want to commit that the Diocese of Lubbock wants to — and will be — a listening Church.

We must journey together into the future. We must be about the work of Communion, Participation, and Mission.

Stay tuned in coming weeks for more details about the synodal process, about our involvement together in the 2023 World Synod of Bishops on Synodality. With prudent wisdom, Pope Francis has invited us into this journey.

As we prepare to listen to one another, we must each — as individuals and as communities of faith — commit to listening attentively to God’s Word, and we must be prepared to move beyond adherence to doctrine and discipline, into action flowing from deep, interior encounter with the living God.

For now, hear what the preparatory document for this synod has to tell us, from the Holy Father’s address at the opening of the Synod on Young People in 2018:

“We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but to ‘plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands.’”

And in the coming months you will become very familiar with this 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.”



