

Diocesan Synodal Network  
Thursday, December 16, 2021  
3 PM Eastern  
Via Zoom

## Meeting Notes

### *Presentation Notes*

- **Slide 1** Welcome
- **Slide 2** Opening Prayer
  - 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.
- **Slide 3** Housekeeping & Agenda
  - Please keep your microphones off
  - Please keep your video on as you are able
  - As questions arise, please feel free to drop them in the chat. Given the size of our group, this will be the easiest way to get your questions answered. Alexandra will be monitoring the chat, and we will get to as many questions as possible during the Q & A. Any questions we do not get to, we will try to answer in our meeting notes. Please also use the chat feature to share resources, ideas, or experiences.
  - The first half of the meeting will be to share information. The second half is to provide an opportunity for formation in a synodal spirit.
- **Slide 4** Introduction
  - Setting expectations
    - The Synod is a generational project. We are sowing the seeds. There is no pre-determined outcome. It will require patience, creativity, and curiosity with God, with ourselves, and with others.
    - It will be messy. There are not “right” answers. USCCB is here to accompany you.
  - This meeting is to introduce the Diocesan Synodal Network as a system of support to accompany you through the diocesan phase and beyond. To be a space of relationship building
  - Things shift change as we listen to and learn from the Holy Spirit and one another, and we will adjust as we learn
  - Diocesan Synodal Network is an opportunity to connect with others leading synodal efforts in the United States
  - This network is example of USCCB facilitating and accompanying
- **Diocesan Synodal Network**
  - **Slide 5** Goal is to become a more synodal Church, working to create networks of support beyond the Diocesan Phase. The purpose of DSN is to create a place to

share information and resources, as well as an opportunity to reflect as leaders of the synodal process on the process itself.

- **Slide 6** Meeting every Third Thursday at 3 PM
  - January 20<sup>th</sup> February 17<sup>th</sup> March 17<sup>th</sup> April 21<sup>st</sup> May 19<sup>th</sup> June 16<sup>th</sup>
- These meetings will NOT be recorded. We view them as a space for sharing and reflection; we want to respect the integrity of the process and confidentiality. We will be sharing any presentations, information, and meeting notes after. USCCB is open to having sessions beyond these for listening, reflection, troubleshooting, etc. These meetings give USCCB the opportunity to listen. To discover what is happening on the local level. We are listening and learning with you and a way to be responsive to diocesan needs during the process.
- **Greetings from Synod of Bishops**
  - Fr. David McCallum, SJ Executive Director of Discerning Leadership
  - Member, Commission on Methodology
- **Information**
  - **Slide 7** Synodal Path
    - Encounter
    - Listening
    - Discernment
  - **Slide 8** USCCB Priorities
    - Communicating, with transparency, what is happening in dioceses, USCCB guidance on issues relating to the synodal path
    - Outreach to dioceses and Catholic organizations to reach voices on the margins
    - Support bishops, dioceses, and organizations through the diocesan phase and beyond
  - **Slide 9** USCCB Approach
    - Accompaniment, Encouragement, & Facilitation. USCCB is not here to dictate or usurp local and diocesan efforts. It is your process, going to look different in every diocese. That is ok. No right way or wrong way. What is important is that we are walking the synodal path.
- **USCCB Synod Team**
  - **Slide 10** USCCB Co-Contacts
    - Julia McStravog & Richard Cool
  - **Slide 11** Team
    - Communications
      - Alexandra Carroll, Communications Manager for Social Mission, Office of Justice, Peace, & Human Development
      - John Lilly, Social Media Specialist, Office of Public Affairs
    - Outreach
      - Danielle Brown, Associate Director, Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism

- Mar Munoz-Visoso, Executive Director, Secretariat for Cultural Diversity
  - Support
    - Paul Jarzembowski, Associate Director, Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth
    - Jill Rauh, Director, Education & Outreach, Office of Justice, Peace & Human Development
    - Marilyn Santos, Associate Director, Secretariat of Evangelization & Catechesis
- **Slide 12** Consultations: Casting a wide net
  - Has your diocese been purposeful about reaching out to these groups? To voices on the margins? If your diocese has a strong ministry in one of these areas, consider creating a resource to share your best practices with other dioceses
- **Slide 13** Important Dates to Think About
  - Poverty Awareness Month (January)
  - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
  - Catholic Schools Week
  - Other Feast Days
  - International Day of Human Fraternity
  - Ash Wednesday/Lent
- **Strategic Overview**
  - **Slide 14** We must be nimble to the will of the Spirit You'll see not everything is filled out to completion We adjusting and adapting
- **Synthesis Reporting**
  - **Slide 15** As Bishop Flores shared at the Bishops Assembly in November, the Synod is about the pathway not production. Walking the path together is what is important. Synodality is an ecclesial muscle to exercise – the more we practice, the better we become. It will strengthen ecclesial communion, wiser discernment, and enable creative consultation
  - **Slide 16** Extended Deadline
    - Delighted that dioceses have taken off with their timelines; we ask, wherever possible, given the extended deadline, that you use that time to continue to reach out to the margins for consultation.
  - **Slide 17** Once we have the portal set up, we will share, and submission of syntheses can begin
  - **Slide 18** Requested Content
    - *Demographics* of the consulted group (# of people at the session, age, gender, ethnicity, etc)
      - We suggest offering a few minutes during introductions to ask people if they would like to share ways in which they self-identify that can be

- *Consultation context* (ie - parish, religious house, outside the Church, organization)
- *Methodology* (listening session, spiritual conversation model, a specific guide used)
- *Central themes, topics, questions, & recommendations* that arose within the consultation
- Beyond these four requests, it is really up to the diocese. This is a time to be creative – how is the Holy Spirit calling you? If you have already started consultations and have not collected these elements, do not worry. We ask that you capture these things to the best of your ability moving forward.
- **Slide 19** Synthesis Specs
  - Word Document
  - 10 Pages
  - Double-spaced
  - 1” Margins
  - 12 pt Times New Roman Font
  - Supporting Documentation
    - Up to 10 items
- **Slide 20** Regional Model
  - USCCB will collect all diocesan reports. USCCB will distribute reports by region to regional synod teams. +Flores is making a request to the regional reps to appoint two people per region to the team in the new year. We are working to create a team of USCCB staff and consultants to assist with the regional reports and the national report
    - Region XVI Capturing All Voices
      - There will be a mechanism for individuals and groups to submit feedback. We are encouraging all groups to submit feedback to their diocese as the gold standard. Local chapters of national organizations are encouraged to share their consultations with the diocese.
- **Slide 21** Timeline
  - Diocesan Synthesis Portal to open in early Spring
  - June 30 – Diocesan and Organizational Reports Due
  - July 1 – 21 – Regional Phase
  - July 22 – August 15 – National Phase
  - August 8-10 National Draft Public
- **Slide 22** Stay Connected
  - Share your resources so we can share

- Updating as we move along. USCCB will be creating some resources, but we really want to highlight what is coming from the dioceses.
  - Vatican Resources
    - Synodal Journey Newsletter
    - [www.synodresources.org](http://www.synodresources.org)
  - USCCB Resources
    - [Usccb.org/synod](http://usccb.org/synod)
  - Stay in touch!
    - [Synod@usccb.org](mailto:Synod@usccb.org)
  - 3:48 – Invite into quiet reflection before small groups
- **Slide 23** Formation
  - Small Group Reflection on gifts, challenges, and opportunities
  - Report back a best practice
    - Invite each group to report back biggest challenge and biggest opportunity, and
- **Slide 24** Synodality for the Future
  - The Synod is a very large and intricate consultation and synthesis process. USCCB encourages you to think beyond the diocesan phase for deep listening to become part of your regular process in the diocese. This will require patience, curiosity, & creativity, especially in light of Covid-19 limitations. We are being called to be nimble to the will of the Holy Spirit.

*Questions from the Chat:*

- Will DSN meetings be recorded?
  - No. Meetings will not be recorded to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the group process. Presentations and meeting notes will be shared after each meeting, as applicable.
- When are DSN meetings?
  - Every third Thursday at 3 PM Eastern
    - January 20; February 17; March 17; April 21; May 19; June 16
    - Future dates to be determined
- What is the DSN Zoom Link?
  - Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://usccb.zoom.us/j/81434852229>  
 Meeting ID: 814 3485 2229  
 Passcode: 986931  
 One tap mobile  
 +13017158592,,81434852229# US (Washington DC)  
 +16468769923,,81434852229# US (New York)
- Can you share more information about public discernment and feedback of the synthesis draft?
  - This step of the synodal path in the consultation phase is vital for transparency of the process, as well as providing opportunity for feedback from the people of

God. This will look different in each diocese. USCCB is looking into creative ways to make the National Synthesis public prior to sending to the Vatican Synod office.

- More information in the [\*Vademecum\*](#) Section 4.4.10 & Appendix D
- How should we submit our diocesan synthesis to USCCB?
  - USCCB is working on a submission portal for the diocesan syntheses. We will keep dioceses updated on the progress. We expect it to be ready in the spring.
- Is it required to submit supporting documentation (images, video, etc)?
  - It is not required, but it is most welcome.
- Do you have any advice on how to solicit local feedback to streamline the summarizing process?
  - The task putting together the diocesan synthesis is complex and crucial. The Synod of Bishops is looking into developing ways to assist dioceses and episcopal conferences in the synthesis process. We suggest looking at common topics, themes, questions, and recommendations that emerge from reports as they are received by the diocese.
- How are priests, religious, and laity participating in the Synod?
  - The People of God play various roles in the life of the Church, so it makes sense that there are multiple avenues in which people may participate. For example, a religious sister may participate at the parish she attends, through consultations with her religious order, perhaps consultations with sisters from orders represented in the diocese, and through her ministry. USCCB encourages creative thinking regarding groups consulted, as well as lay initiative to bring consultations to their parishes and ministries.
- Is there commitment in this process to including insights from those who feel distant from the Church?
  - Absolutely. USCCB encourages all dioceses to be curious and creative ways to reach those individuals and groups. Perhaps there in a local organization or religious order that can lead the outreach to these groups. Creativity in collaboration will only support to strengthen relationships in the synodal spirit.
- Are there good resources for adapting virtual listening sessions due to the Covid-19 pandemic?
- How can members of DSN stay in contact with one another?
  - Yes. We are looking into the best platform for which to house information that is only accessible to this group. DSN contact information will be accessible then. If for any reason you would not like to share your information, please let us know.

### ***Insights from Small Groups on Gifts & Challenges***

- Group 9: We had a wonderful group from all over the country – listening in incredibly difficult and divided times. What a brilliant way to ask people to listen. How do we reach out to the disengaged? We had dioceses coming up with ways to reach inmates, LGBTQ communities, etc. It's going to be a great process!

- **Challenge:** engagement from the pastors in the parishes. Without getting large pastor engagement the chances are lower later on that they will get in engaged in other processes The synod provides the opportunity to reach out to those who we would not normally reach out to
- **Gifts:** Gratitude to gather and hear where others are – the support of Bishops and Pastors. One diocese offered training in spiritual conversation. **Challenges:** the timeline, how do we reach out to those who are disaffiliated with the Church, polarization
- **Challenge:** simplifying the questions so that they are easier to understand. Someone has zoom calls weekly incase leaders have questions. Collaboration with other dioceses in the area to see what they are doing. To making sure to include those communities who we may not normally include; transparency in the process so people can become familiar.