

Archbishop invites participation in upcoming Synod



Archbishop
Andrew Bellisario,
C.M.

By Archbishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M.

On October 17, 2021, I invite all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau to join me either in-person or through live-streaming for the liturgy which will initiate the start of the 2021-2023 Synod process within the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau. The liturgy will begin at 9:00 am at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. You can

find the live-stream link at www.aoaj.org.

Your first question might be what is a "Synod"? A "Synod" or "Council" is an authoritative meeting of bishops for the purpose of church administration in the areas of teaching (faith and morals) or governance (church discipline or law).

Pope Francis has inaugurated a three-year preparation process for a 2023 Synod with the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission," which will focus on reforming the entire synodal process and have the potential to revolutionize the way decisions are made in the Catholic Church and to promote a more decentralized structure of authority.

As Archbishop, I completely support this synodal process and see many short- and long-term benefits

for the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau and the Universal Church.

Synodality sets out to achieve an ambitious goal: teaching and uniting the faithful, lay and religious, to come together in dialogue to explore the needs and focus of the Church in the world of today.

The synodal path will begin in the Vatican with our Holy Father on October 9 and 10 with prayer invoking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the celebration of the Eucharist. This is the beginning of the three phase process: Diocesan, Continental and Assembly of Bishops in Rome.

The Diocesan phase is a wonderful opportunity to come together as a fully united Archdiocese that will allow us to unite universally with the Catholic Church throughout the rest of the world. The process in the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau will involve a focused listening phase that will come from discussion among parishes, schools, social organizations, and other groups.

With the support of all priests, the faithful will be encouraged to gather at their parishes and in their communities, respond to stimulus questions which will be provided, listen to each other, provide individual and group feedback, reactions and suggestions. This process is an opportunity for parishes to encounter, experience and live out the synodal journey together, thus discovering and developing tools and pathways which will ultimately become the new style of the local Church on the path to synodality.

The success of this process of synodality ulti-

mately rests in the participation of the faithful. I pray that you will take the time to prayerfully consider participation in the dialogue and discussion when they are announced at your parish. For your consideration, I offer the following prayer as we begin the Synod process:

*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.*