



DIOCESE OF TRENTON
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MINISTRARE NON MINISTRARI

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Brothers,

On April 24, 2021, Pope Francis announced the convocation of the Sixteenth Ordinary Synod --- originally scheduled for 2022 but postponed due to the pandemic until 2023 --- with the theme "For A Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." It is, in a sense, "a Synod on 'synodality'," with three phases or levels: diocesan, continental, and universal.

On May 21, 2021, diocesan bishops throughout the world began receiving notes, documents and instructions on how to proceed from the General Secretariat of the Synod in Rome. As late as last week, I received new information on the initial liturgical celebration opening the synod in the Diocese. At the onset, I am asking your *patience* as I try to create a meaningful plan for the Diocesan Synod adapted to our local circumstances in the timeframe we have been given. The goal for completion of the diocesan phase set by the Holy See is April 1, 2022, with a report to be submitted by the Bishop to the USCCB. I

will communicate with you as plans take final shape. To that end, I must appoint two-co chairs and a committee who will develop and coordinate our activities. Again, please be *patient*.

On October 10, 2021 Pope Francis will open the 16th Synod of Bishops (2021-23) in Rome. He has asked every diocesan bishop throughout the world to open the diocesan phase in the local Church the following Sunday, October 17, 2021.

FIRST EVENT

So, on **October 17, 2021, at 3 pm**, I will celebrate the “**Opening Mass for the Opening of the Diocesan Synod**” at the Cathedral in Trenton. It will also serve as a “Celebration of the 140th Anniversary of the Diocese of Trenton.” ALL priests and deacons and seminarians who can attend will be invited to vest and participate, as we would at a diocesan ordination there, vesting in and proceeding from the Cathedral lower level. Further directions will be provided prior to Mass. Concelebrating priests present wearing diocesan vestments, will be directed/laassembled in representative groups for the procession (seminarians in cassock, deacons wearing alb and stole, concelebrants, deans, consultors, vicars, etc.) A representative group of deacons will sit in the sanctuary; seminarians and remaining vested deacons will sit in the upper pews closest to the sanctuary, pulpit side.

The Mass will be livestreamed for the benefit of all at home and special seating will be reserved for designated representatives (youth, staff, religious, members of lay groups). The rest of the seating will be open to capacity for others attending.

Pastors and priests are asked to announce this “Opening Mass” to parishioners this weekend. Seating will be limited by capacity, of course

SECOND EVENT

Each diocesan bishop throughout the world is expected to publish a “pastoral letter” for his Diocese. I have done so and it will be released on Sunday, October 10 after the Pope’s Mass in Rome.

THIRD EVENT, ETC.

1. Appointment of Co-chairs (TBA)
2. Formation of Representative Synod Committee (TBA)
3. Meeting of Synod Committee with Bishop (TBA)
4. Meetings of Synod Committee to Develop Plans for Diocese and Parishes, Other Groups within Diocese (late October thru mid-November)
5. Implementation of Planned Listening Activities throughout Diocese (November 2021 thru March 2022)

--- these will include parish listening sessions (prepared video presentation, power-point and discussions) or regional (vicariate) sessions

--- electronic on-line "Survey Monkey" type questionnaire made available

6. Final Meeting of Synod Committee and Formulation of Report to USCCB (mid-late March)
7. Mass for the "Conclusion of the Synod" (June 2022, TBA)

This is a massive undertaking and we will do the best we can. Wish we had more time to do this.

WE NEED ALSO TO KEEP IN MIND: simultaneously, a committee will be planning events for a July 2022 "Eucharistic Revival/Renewal" along with other US dioceses as called for by USCCB.

Thanks so much for your kind and generous attention.

Fraternally yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. O'Connell, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning of the first name.

Most Reverend David M. O'Connell, C.M., J.C.D.
Bishop of Trenton