

Message from Archbishop Hebda:

Moving Forward Together

At this year's Vigil of Pentecost, I will be formally announcing that our archdiocese will be embarking on a synod, our first since 1939. A synod is a formal representative assembly designed to help a bishop in his shepherding of the local Church. It is my hope that the process outlined in these pages, involving every parish in our archdiocese, will help us over the next two years to draw on the gifts that have bestowed in such abundance on the faithful of this archdiocese to discern and establish clear pastoral priorities in a way that will both promote greater unity and lead us to a more vigorous proclamation of Jesus' good news.

When St. John Paul II promulgated the new Code of Canon Law in 1983, he recognized that the laws of the Church needed to take into consideration the "new way of thinking" that had emerged from the Second Vatican Council. In particular, he identified a need for new canonical structures to reflect the conciliar teaching that presented the Church as the "People of God" and as a "communion," as well as the doctrine by which "all members of the People of God share, in a manner proper to each of them, in the threefold priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ."

One of the structures that took on a new prominence in that purposeful revision of the Code was the diocesan synod, a traditional structure for consultation and governance in the Church. The notion of the Synod was broadened and reconfigured precisely to serve as a tool for the bishop to engage the People of God (laity, clergy, consecrated men and women, and bishops all walking together) in exercising the responsibility that flows from our common baptism, always in the hope of strengthening the communion that is the Church. Since the reboot of this ancient structure, diocesan synods have consistently served as important instruments in effecting conciliar renewal within the local Church.

In the time that I have served in this archdiocese, I have come to believe that our local Church is particularly ripe for a synod. After the listening sessions that were held in 2015 when I was still serving as the temporary administrator, I drew up suggestions for the next archbishop, never thinking it would be me. At the top of that list was the convoking of an archdiocesan synod. We are blessed here with a particularly well-educated and articulate laity with a strong tradition of service to the Church, who along with their clergy and consecrated brothers and sisters, want to be involved in shaping her future, seeing that appropriately as both their right and their responsibility.

After the pastoral pause necessitated by the bankruptcy and related issues, I have sensed that many of you seem to be ready to roll up your sleeves to address some of the pastoral needs that had been placed on the back burner. The enthusiasm surrounding the new Lay Advisory Board would seem to confirm that. Without losing sight of either the critical

importance of our Catholic schools or the urgency of creating safe environments and engaging in outreach to those who have in any way been harmed by the Church, we now need to be deliberate in moving forward on other fronts.

It is in that context that I have been hearing Pope Francis' repeated articulation of the need for us to be a "listening Church." While stressing that "discernment is a gift of the Spirit to the Church, to which she responds with listening," he has concretely modeled for us how a more intentional "listening" might work in discerning and establishing pastoral priorities. In the six years of his pontificate, he has held three synods, plus the recent global summit, and at each of them he has opened wide the process of consultation and encouraged even difficult discussion.

The Holy Father has emphasized that he is not talking about listening that is merely "pro forma," but rather a sincere and respectful "mutual listening" in which everyone has something to learn. Moreover, it is not just listening to one another but to the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:17), to know what the Spirit "is saying to the Churches" (Rev 2:7).

The pre-synod process that we will be using over the next year has been designed to help us as a local Church to listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit. It reflects not only the excellent organizational work of the executive team headed by Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Therese Coons and Father Joseph Bambenek, but also the insights of a prayer team who have been meeting for the last seven months and supporting this effort in their daily prayer. They have wisely made sure that the 31 regional or focused listening opportunities that will shape our future discussion and deliberations will all be grounded in prayer and in God's Word. As Pope Francis has noted: "Only in the silence of prayer can one learn the voice of God, perceive the traces of his language [and] have access to his truth."

I am hoping, brothers and sisters, that you will be active participants in this process. Please keep your eye on your parish bulletin, [The Catholic Spirit](#) and a new [Synod webpage](#) to see how and when you can become involved. The synod will bear fruit only if you, God's people, are willing to share what is on your heart and what is in your prayer. In the meantime, I would be particularly grateful for your prayers this Pentecost for me and for all those who will be involved in this critical undertaking. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. Enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Listening sessions: [there are many; these are the geographically closest]

Friday	October 11	6-9pm	Guardian Angels, Oakdale
Saturday	October 12	9am-12pm	Our Lady of Guadalupe, [bi-lingual]
Saturday	January 25	9am-12pm	St Peter Claver, St Paul
Saturday	February 15	9am-12pm	Lumen Christi, St Paul
Saturday	March 7	9am-12pm	Transfiguration, Oakdale