

October 11, 2021

On Saturday, Oct. 9, Pope Francis opened the Synod on Synodality, with an important, 3 1/2 page instruction, click below. Every diocese is supposed to have a synod around Oct.17 of this year through April of 2022, to prepare for the formal one in Rome, which will be the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, in Oct. 2023.

In the Eastern Churches, synods or gatherings of bishops are very important. In our Latin Church, they have been very weak.

At the Second Vatican Council, held in Rome during the autumn from 1962-65, synodality was stressed. In fact, as the 21st Ecumenical Council, Vatican II is one of the rare examples of cooperation among bishops in our Church, the first meaning of synodality. Rather than each bishop being responsible only for his own diocese, synodality stresses that the bishops must work together in matters which cross diocesan lines. So in Vatican II's "Decree on the Bishops Pastoral Office in the Church," we read "This sacred Ecumenical Synod earnestly desires that the venerable institution of synods and councils flourish with new vigor" (#36).

Please notice that Pope Francis, in his Oct. 9 instruction below, constantly invokes the Holy Spirit, The third person of the Trinity is featured more than in any statement from the Vatican that I have ever read. Also notice how he feels "we must acknowledge the frustration and impatience felt by many pastoral workers, members of diocesan and pastoral consultative bodies and women, who frequently remain on the fringes."

Not only does the pope call for the laity to be much more involved in synods, but he observes that synods "offer a great opportunity for a pastoral conversion in terms of mission and ecumenism." He also quotes what some have called the seven last words of a dying Church: "We have never done it this way." Only he calls it "poison for the life of the Church."

Please read this short instruction below, and watch for your own diocese to begin its synod, in preparation for the one in Rome. I especially welcome any insights you have on this document and process.

During the month of October, Catholics and some other Christians celebrate the Month of the Holy Rosary. You may find the Mary and Unity page on the Mission-Unity- Dialogue website

([www.harrywinter.org](http://www.harrywinter.org)) to be helpful. The fourth item there, Fatima and Eamon Carroll, O.Carm., may be humorous.

Many thanks to those who responded to the Five Ways e-letter of Sept. 24. Your prayers for the repose of the souls of Frs. Deegan and O'Connell are very much appreciated.

In Christ's love,

Father Harry Winter, O.M.I.

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/october/documents/20211009-apertura-camminosinodale.html>.