



As many of you have heard, Pope Francis recently opened the preparatory phase for the XVI Ordinary General Synod of Bishops, which will be held in October 2023. With this convocation, Pope Francis invited the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”

This journey, which follows in the wake of the Church’s “renewal” proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together; and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, and to open Herself to mission. Our “journeying together” is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God. It is a manifestation of the Church taking on its mission of giving life to the world!

This Synod poses the following fundamental question: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

In responding to this question, we are invited to:

- Recall our experiences: What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?
- Review these experiences in greater depth: What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?
- Gather the fruits to share: Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What paths are opening up for our local Church?

You have two opportunities to answer these questions:

1. In person at a gathering at St. Eugene’s Cathedral Monday, November 29 - 6:30 PM
2. On-line at: <https://srdiocese.org/synod> (Note that there is a 250-word maximum for on-line responses)



Office of the Bishop

Phone: (707) 566-3325
Email: BpVasa@SRDiocese.org



Diocese of Santa Rosa

P.O. Box 1297
Santa Rosa, California 95402

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My Dear People of God:

Pope Francis has invited the whole Church to join with him in a process of listening and discerning for the purpose of determining how best to spread the Good News to our culture, that is, to evangelize.

On October 24, I announced our own Diocesan engagement in this consultation process. While everyone is free to respond individually or even as small “base communities” to the fundamental question which stands at the heart of this process, I also want to make broader listening and discerning opportunities available to various regions of the Diocese. In consultation with my Synod Team, it has been determined that five geographic locations:

Santa Rosa, Cathedral
Lakeport, Saint Mary Immaculate
Napa, Saint Apollinaris
Eureka, (Arcata, St. Mary)
Fort Bragg, Our Lady of Good Counsel

Monday, November 29 - 6:30 PM
Wednesday, December 1 - 6:30 PM
Thursday, December 2 - 6:30 PM
Sunday, December 5 - 6:30 PM
Monday, December 6 - 6:30 PM

In the material provided by the Holy See we find this Fundamental Question: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”. How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church?

The question is challenging for any rural Diocese which covers thousands of square miles and in which parishes are 200 or 300 miles distant. Thus, the question for our Diocese might be focused on the local parish more than on the “particular Church” which refers to the Diocese as a whole.

At this time, I invite you to begin to reflect and to pray about the various ways in which the Diocesan or Parish Church invites you to participate in the life and ministry of the Church. I invite you to consider the catechetical programs in your parishes and the Diocesan engagement with this ministry. Consider the RCIA Programs which each Parish sponsors and for which the Diocese provides guidance. I invite you to review the Diocesan Statutes regarding Parish Pastoral Councils and Parish Finance Councils. I invite you to consider your Sunday liturgies and the engagement of Readers, Acolytes, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. All of these entail an offering of self to the service of God and His Church. All of these are manifestations of our “journeying together”.

We acknowledge these and commend you for all of this. Now, however, we come to you and ask: What are some other ways in which we, as a particular or local Church, can “journey together” more effectively and more fruitfully?

Asking every good grace and blessing of God upon you, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

The Most Reverend Robert F. Vasa,
Bishop of Santa Rosa