Frequently Asked Questions on the Synodal Process

What is a Synod?
“Synod” is an ancient word in the Tradition of the Church whose meaning indicates the path along which the People of God walk together. It also refers to the Lord Jesus and to the fact that Christians, His followers, were originally called “followers of the way” (cf. Acts 9,2; 19, 9:23; 22,4; 24, 14.22).

What is the current Synod and when does it take place?
The Church of God is convoked in Synod. Pope Francis has called the global Church to conduct an extensive connection and intentional “listening tour” on the parish level and beyond, to get direct feedback and hear from the people who make up the church communities. The path entitled “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission” will solemnly open on October 9 &10 of 2021 in Rome and on October 17, in each particular Church (diocese). One fundamental stage will be the celebration of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, in October 2023, which will be followed by the implementation phase that will again involve the particular Churches.

What is the aim of this Synod?
The aim of the Synod is to discern how we are “living the faith” and how, we as a Church, are achieving this together. A fundamental aspect of the Synodal Process is to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church and by answering one fundamental question: “How does this ‘journeying together’ take place today on different levels, allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel and what steps is the Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?” In responding to this question, we are invited to recall our experiences, re-read these experiences in greater depth, and gather the fruits to share.

The Synodal Process aims at fostering a lived experience of discernment, participation, and co-responsibility, where a diversity of gifts is brought together for the Church’s mission in the world. The Synod is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people’s hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission. In the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, the Synodal Process seeks to also build upon and advance the goals envisioned by Archbishop Paul Coakley in his Pastoral Letter, Go Make Disciples, Building a Culture of Conversion and Discipleship.
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What is the theme of this Synod?
The theme of this Synod is: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.” The three dimensions of the theme (communion, participation, and mission) are profoundly interrelated.

What is the timeline for the Synod?
The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City will formally initiate its Synodal Process with an Opening Mass (for all the faithful) on Sunday, October 24 at 10:00 a.m. at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Local (parish level) discernment sessions will take place in January and February 2022, followed by the diocesan-level conversations in spring 2022, prior to the drafting and submission to the Holy See of a synthesis of all conversations by the faithful of the Archdiocese.

How can the faithful participate in the Synodal Process?
The People of God of the Archdiocese can participate in the Synodal Process by engaging in parish level and submitting responses to an online survey.

What is the role of the bishop, priests and deacons in the Synodal Process?
The fullness of the Synodal Process can only truly exist with the involvement of the local Churches, requiring the personal involvement of the diocesan bishop, whose primary role in this Synodal Process is to facilitate the synodal experience of the whole People of God on the journey towards a more Synodal Church. The bishop can seek feedback and participation wherever helpful in the organization process. The bishop is invited to communicate with the respective bodies, organizations, and structures in the diocese, including the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, the Presbyteral Council, parishes, religious communities, lay movements, various pastoral ministries (such as in schools and hospitals), and diocesan commissions to encourage their participation in the Synodal Process and to request their help as is fitting.

Priests and deacons can raise awareness about the synodal nature of the Church and the meaning of synodality in parishes, ministries, and movements that they serve. Priests and deacons are also called to support, encourage, promote, and enable the unfolding of the diocesan phase of the Synodal Process in the local Church.

How can I learn more about the synod?
The Synod on Synodality was called by Pope Francis and information from the Vatican is available at https://www.synod.va/en.html The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has additional information on the Synod at https://www.usccb.org/synod