



## Committee on Doctrine

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3015

January 2, 2024

Dear Brother Bishops,

Greetings and hopes for a blessed New Year!

As I mentioned during my presentation on the Synod at our gathering in November, the USCCB Synod Team has prepared guidelines for listening sessions and synthesis preparation for the Interim Stage Synthesis; the guidelines are attached. This guidance is based on communications to the episcopal conferences of the world from the [Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops](#). The aim is to assist local dioceses in planning realizable consultative activities during this time, in ways that contribute to the preparation for the October 2024 Assembly in Rome.

The general guidance from the Secretariat is twofold:

1. We are invited to hold discernment sessions regarding the guiding question in order to help prepare a USCCB summary due to the Secretariat in May 2024.
2. Further, we are encouraged to continue ongoing engagement with the People of God in the dynamism of a synodal style.

In light of the Synod Secretariat's request for documentation, the US Synod Team is asking that each diocese hold **2-3 listening sessions** regarding the guiding questions. A **3-5 page** document synthesizing what was heard at the diocesan listening sessions would help us prepare a summary from the USCCB to the Secretariat. We ask that the diocesan summaries be sent to USCCB by **Monday, April 8, 2024**. Dioceses also have the option to including a two-page testimony of best practices for synodality developed in the dioceses.

Concerning the guiding questions for local consultations, the USCCB Synod Team suggests the following questions adapted from the Secretariat's communication to the episcopal conferences. They are focused in such a way as to help facilitate constructive discussion.

1. Where have I seen or experienced successes—and distresses—within the Church's structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage or hinder the mission?
2. How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy in Christ?

While diocesan consultations are taking place, the USCCB will be holding additional listening sessions at the national level with a focus on participation, social justice, and vocations. Diocesan Synod Leaders will be invited to participate in a national working group with the permission of the bishop. In order to synthesize the amount of material we are collecting, we



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will again be relying upon the regions to help us synthesize the documents as we did in the Diocesan Stage. More information on both of these points will be forthcoming.

We have already begun sharing preliminary informational meeting for Diocesan Synod Leaders. There will be an informational meeting on **Thursday, January 4, 2024 at 3 PM ET/12 PM PT.**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://usccb.zoom.us/j/81697149825?pwd=KZLavJYsgGfr6mRUfInEabfakqbQk1.1>

Meeting ID: 816 9714 9825

Passcode: 531642

Please be in touch with Dr. Julia McStravog, Senior Advisor for the Synod ([synod@usccb.org](mailto:synod@usccb.org)) if you have any questions or would like to be regularly updated by the US Synod Team.

I am most grateful for your assistance with this matter. We all know time is short, but even modest efforts at the local level can bear much fruit. Let us do what we can, as well as we can and trust the Lord to accomplish beyond what we can foresee.

Your Brother in Christ,

Bishop Daniel E. Flores, Diocese of Brownsville  
Chair, Committee on Doctrine



## Interim Stage Guidelines

### *Towards October 2024*

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Where have I seen or experienced successes—and distresses—within the Church’s structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage or hinder the mission?
- How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy in Christ?

#### DEEPENING

Hold 2-3 listening sessions during Lent 2024 regarding the guiding questions.

#### BROADENING

The Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops has produced a [worksheet](#) to assist with receiving the fruits of the October assembly and to continue on a path of conversion in the local churches.

#### SCRIPTURE

Prayer and reflection with the word of God is essential on the synodal path. The US Synod Team recommends using the following scripture for deepening reflection upon synodality:

- [John 14](#)
- [Romans 12](#)
- [Isaiah 61](#)

## HOLDING LISTENING SESSIONS

The USCCB offers these suggestions to meet the proposed schedule from the Synod of Bishops.

- Hold 2-3 diocesan-wide listening sessions regarding the guiding questions.
  - Include voices that may not have been heard in earlier stages of the Synod, or other groups that were underrepresented in your diocesan consultations.
  - Collaborate with Catholic-affiliated groups and organizations in your diocese, including schools, colleges, non-profits, and healthcare facilities.
  - Focus upon the voices of the People of God and use quotations in the synthesis.
- Use the [Conversation in the Spirit](#) method.

## SYNTHESIS

- Prepared collaboratively by a small team. For continuity, the team may be comprised of members of the Diocesan Synod Team or those who worked on the Diocesan Synthesis for the Diocesan Stage of the Synod.
- **No longer than 3-5 pages.**
  - Focus upon the voices of the People of God and use quotations in the synthesis.
  - An optional two-page testimony of best practices for synodality used in your diocese is welcome. These will be collected by the US Synod Team and sent directly to the Vatican.
- **Due Monday, April 8, 2024**

## TIMELINE

January 2024	Prayer and spiritual preparation of the People of God
Lent 2024	Hold 2-3 diocesan wide listening sessions regarding the guiding question
<b>April 8, 2024</b>	<b>3-5 page synthesis of diocesan listening sessions due to USCCB</b>
April 9-22	Regional synthesis process

April 23-May 14      Drafting National Synthesis

**May 15, 2024      US Synthesis due to Synod Secretariat**

#### RESOURCES

- [\*A Synodal Church in Mission\*](#)
- Interim Stage [Worksheet](#)
- [Letter of the Synod to the People of God](#)
- [\*Instrumentum Laboris\*](#) for XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
- North American [\*Final Document\*](#)
- [\*Document for the Continental Stage\*](#)
- [\*US National Synthesis\*](#)
- [\*Preparatory Document\*](#)
- [\*Vademecum\*](#)

#### USCCB CONTACT

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[USCCB Synod Website](#)  
[Synod Secretariat Website](#)

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