



## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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8 September 2021

*The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

My Dear Brother Priests, Religious, and Collaborators in the Diocesan Mission,

Yesterday, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, released the preparatory documents and *Vademecum* for the new synodal program, the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops “for a synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission.” I have enclosed them for your kind review.

This is an effort to listen to the Universal Church so that, together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we may become a prophetic witness to the world, to discern the most authentic, Gospel-centered ways of addressing the world’s challenges, and to heal the wounds of the world through faith.

This universal synod will take place in three phases:

1. Diocesan Phase (October 2021-April 2022)
2. Continental Phase (September 2022-March 2023)
3. Universal Church Phase (October 2023)

I write to you about this first phase during which each diocese in the world will reach out and listen to our Catholics – including those who have fallen away from the practice of the faith, who feel marginalized; or who feel distant from the Church. We have a Diocesan Working Group that includes clergy, religious, and lay members of our leadership team who will assist in directing this effort over the coming months.

I am writing to you today to ask for your timely assistance. We would like to convene a larger group of the faithful who could assist us in the listening and information gathering process. The Holy Father wants to know how Catholics feel and act on their faith in these challenging times. The Diocesan Ambassadors would work with our Diocesan Working Group to identify individuals and groups, especially the marginalized and disaffected, to hear their thoughts on their relationship with the Church.

The Holy Father will celebrate an opening Mass on Sunday, October 10<sup>th</sup> in Rome and has asked each diocese in the world to celebrate an opening Mass for its

page 2

own Diocesan Phase on Sunday, October 17<sup>th</sup>. The Diocese of Allentown will celebrate our opening Mass at 2:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Catharine of Siena, Allentown. After Mass, the first joint meeting of the Diocesan Synod Working Group and the Diocesan Ambassadors will be held to discuss our outreach and collaboration in the coming months.

**I am prayerfully requesting that each of you would appoint 3 members from your parish, school, commission, or other religious entity to serve with us as Ambassadors for this important diocesan task being undertaken in service to the Universal Church. We would be grateful if you would provide the names of your suggested participants for this service and their contact information not later than Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup>.**

I have appointed Mrs. Kim Viti Fiorentino, our Diocesan Secretary for Administration, to be the diocesan contact person on this project. Should you have any further questions, please feel free to reach out to her directly at 610-871-5200 ext. 2205 or via email at [kfiorentino@allentowndiocese.org](mailto:kfiorentino@allentowndiocese.org).

With gratitude for your assistance and service to our Church and assuring you of my support and prayers as we begin this process, I am

Fraternally yours in Christ,



✠ Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert  
Bishop of Allentown

Enclosures