

## Appendix C

# Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting

Each local Church culminates the diocesan phase with a Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting. This gathering provides the opportunity for diverse members of the diocese to come together for a liturgical celebration, to pray together, to reflect on their experience of the Synodal Process in the diocese, to listen to feedback that has emerged from the synodal consultation meetings across the diocese, to dialogue about the current reality of the local Church and the signs of the times, and to discern the Holy Spirit's call for the diocese on the path of synodality. While much of the consultation process during the diocesan phase might have occurred within specific communities of the local Church, such as parishes, ministries, and other ecclesial groups, the objective of the Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting is to bring together a representative cross-section of the *whole* diocese, including minority groups and people on the peripheries, and to enable participants to pray, listen, reflect, and discern together. After this gathering, the outcome of the Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting should be included as part of the diocesan synthesis, together with the feedback that emerged from the synodal consultation meetings from across the diocese. (See Appendix D for more information on the diocesan synthesis.)

### OBJECTIVES

- a. To culminate the months of the diocesan phase of synodal consultations with the People of God.
- b. To celebrate and reflect on the emerging realities and experience of the diocesan journey of travelling together on the synodal path.
- c. To highlight the main themes of the diocesan consultations with a chosen group of representatives from different communities of the diocese.
- d. To involve members of diverse communities (parishes, ministries, movements, schools, clergy, religious communities, the marginalized, young persons, cultural groups, etc.) in reflecting on the experience and input of the consultation process, in view of the diocesan synthesis on the basis of the feedback received from across the diocese.
- e. To listen to what God has been saying through the people of the diocese, to discern his will for the local Church and the pathways he is inviting the Church to follow in the diocese towards deeper communion,

- fuller participation, and more fruitful mission.
- f. To bring out the best practices, synodal pathways, and a new momentum and vitality towards being a more synodal Church of journeying together, mutual listening, and co-responsibility.
  - g. To develop the diocesan synthesis that conveys what was shared by the People of God during the consultation process in the diocese, as a contribution to the current Synodal Process of the entire Church.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The members of this Synodal meeting depend on the local situation of the diocese. Dioceses may adapt these guidelines according to population size, geographical distances, resources available, cultural background of people, etc. Ideally the members should include:

- The diocesan Bishop, auxiliary Bishops, and the Diocesan Contact Person(s)/Team
- People whose voices are often inadequately heard, such as those who experience poverty, the elderly, minority groups, isolated persons, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, indigenous communities, etc.
- Lay leaders (men, women, young people of various ministries and diocesan bodies)
- Other lay persons (men, women, and young people invited from parishes and other Church organizations)
- Clergy (diocesan priests, religious priests, deacons, etc.)
- Members of Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic life (reflecting the diversity of charisms) and leadership of institutions of apostolic and charitable works
- Interested ecumenical and interreligious delegates (and others who may not be Catholic but who can contribute helpful perspectives for the Church)
- People with specialized skills required for the meeting, including facilitators and pastoral or theological experts in ecclesiology

## **AGENDA AND FORM OF THE DIOCESAN PRE-SYNODAL MEETING**

The agenda of this gathering would be to celebrate the synodal journey in the diocese so far, to reflect on the feedback received from the consultation process across the diocese, and to move towards developing the diocesan synthesis that represents the fruits of the listening and discernment of the People of God in the diocese. This diocesan synthesis will be the contribution of the diocese sent to the episcopal conference.

The form of this gathering would be shaped in discernment with the Bishop and the Diocesan Contact Person(s)/Team, to most effectively pursue

the objectives mentioned above in the context of the diocese. (See the Synod website for more suggestions and resources.) It is highly recommended that the diocesan phase culminate in a liturgical celebration, giving thanks to God for what has been experienced and invoking the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the journey ahead. How to put in place the other elements of the gathering can be discerned by each diocese. The Diocesan Contact Person(s) would be responsible for assembling all the feedback received from the consultation process throughout the diocese. The feedback could be presented to the participants at the gathering that culminates the diocesan phase.

#### POSSIBILITY OF CONDUCTING ONLINE OR HYBRID SYNODAL MEETINGS (E-SYNODAL MEETINGS)

It may be necessary or helpful to arrange for online or hybrid meetings, either for the local consultation sessions or for the diocesan celebration that culminates the process across the diocese. Online meetings or a combination of in person and online meetings can be an effective option, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Special care should be taken to ensure that these online or hybrid meetings take place in a spirit of prayer, communion, and attentive listening to one another and to the Holy Spirit. Facilitators or moderators should ensure that all participants are able to contribute and have their voice heard, including those who are less comfortable or familiar with technology.

#### ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ONLINE OR HYBRID MEETINGS (E-SYNODAL MEETINGS)

We encourage dioceses to involve young people in the planning and execution of these e-synodal meetings, thus exploring creative ways of making it accessible and user friendly for all participants, keeping in mind the various needs of different age groups.

Tools like social media, virtual platforms, and interactive technology could be put to great use in reaching out to more people and collecting responses that could be handed over to the Diocesan Contact Person(s)/Team. Young people can play a key role in contributing creatively and effectively to these efforts.

