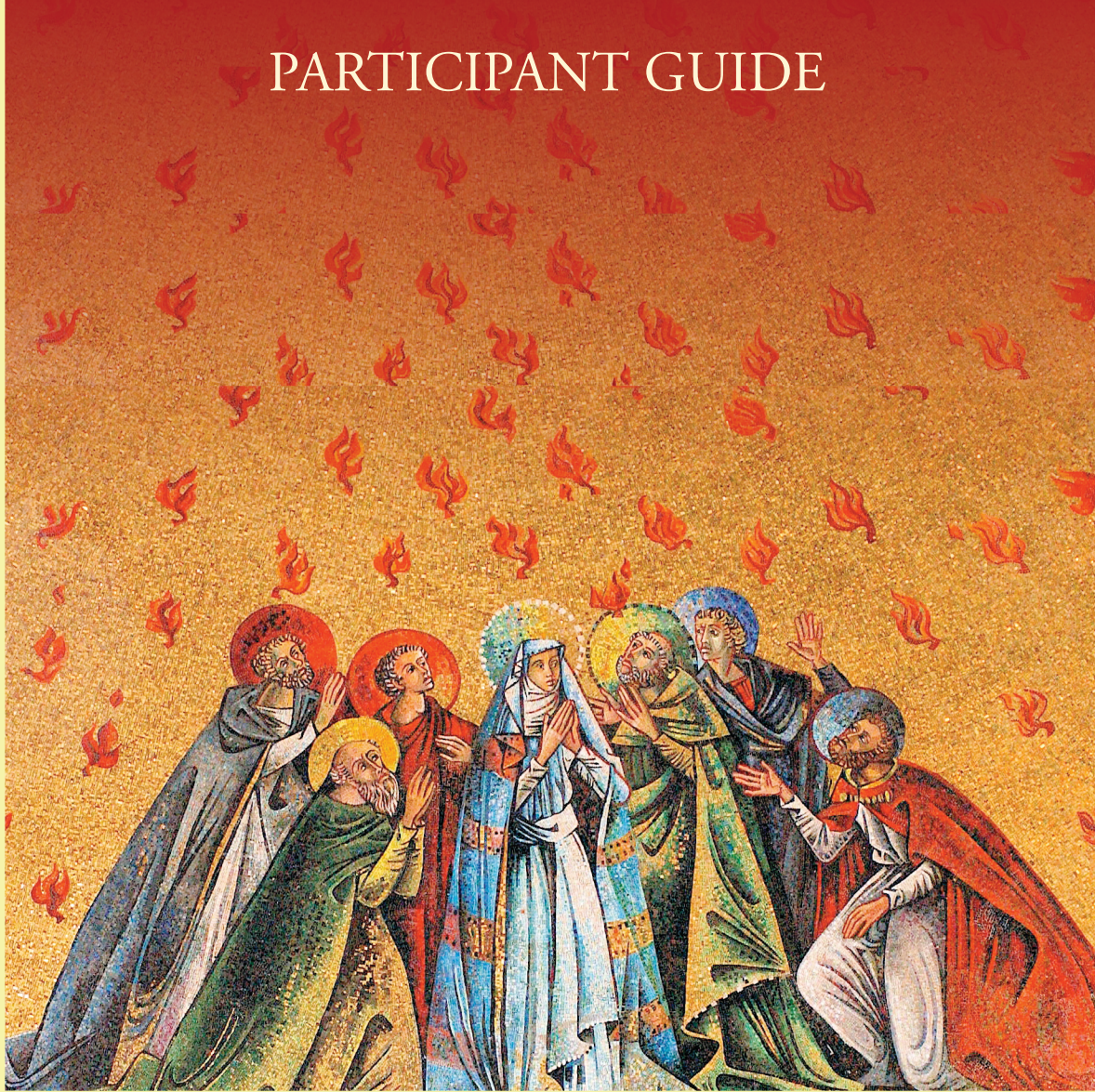




TEACHING AND LISTENING SESSIONS  
ARCHDIOCESAN SYNOD

PARTICIPANT GUIDE



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON





## Preparing for the Archdiocesan Synod Participant Guide

Thank you for participating in a listening session in preparation for the archdiocesan synod. You will have an opportunity to reflect on the life of the local Church in five key areas (worship, education, community, service and stewardship/administration) and evaluate where the ministry of the Archdiocese of Washington is successful and those areas where more can be done. Your feedback is essential to the preparation of the archdiocesan synod and will help the Church become the best Church we can be.

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# What Is a Synod?

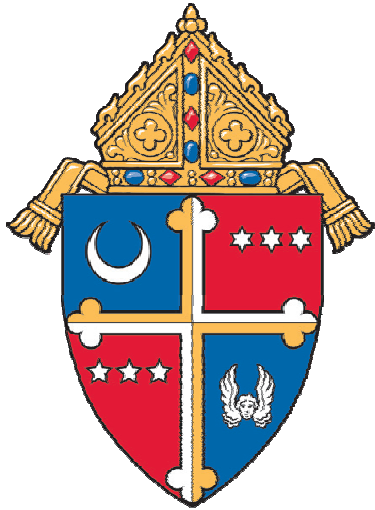
Throughout history, human beings have established *community* ("common unity"), which has always been considered the best way to advance the general welfare or the common good—taking into account both the needs of the individual and those of the community as a whole.

As Catholic Christians, we understand community not only sociologically, but also, and most importantly, theologically. For we believe that the heart of existence and the center of our lives as Catholics, is community: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus from the beginning of history, community has been the means through which God-Love (who is uniquely "tri-unity" or Trinity) has revealed himself; indeed, the Church herself is founded upon community: "the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Catholic Christians together constitute a *community of communities*. Daily, Catholics gather in community to "lift up our hearts" in praise and thanksgiving (in Greek, *eucharistia*) to God and to reaffirm and celebrate our lives together in Christ. Sunday, the "Day of the Lord," is the celebration from which all other prayer flows. However, from time to time, Catholics come together in order to consider whether we are best responding to our vocation to live and give witness to the Gospel. For example, whereas in households, parents and children gather round in "family meetings," so in the Church—local, regional, and universal—bishops, clergy (priests and deacons), and members of the faithful (consecrated religious and laity) convene in **Synods** (from the Greek term, *synodos*, meaning "a meeting" or "an assembly").

Specifically, the **diocesan Synod** "is a group of selected priests and other members of the Christian faithful who offer assistance to the diocesan bishop for the good of the whole diocesan community..." (*Code of Canon Law*, 460). Moreover, "the purpose of the diocesan Synod is to assist the Bishop in the exercise of the office proper to him, namely, that of governing the Christian community" (*Instruction on Diocesan Synods*, 1). In other words, the diocesan Synod is a "consultative" body (*Instruction*, 2) whose purpose is to facilitate the bishop's ministry of "teaching, sanctifying, and governing" that "portion of the people of God ... to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbytery [i.e., the priests]" (*Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church*, 11).

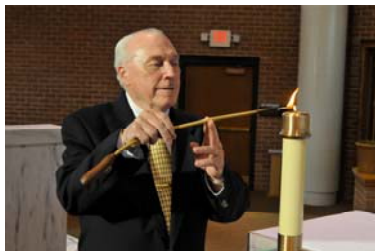
## So, then, *why* have a Synod for the Archdiocese of Washington?



In the words of our Archbishop, Donald Cardinal Wuerl, the Archdiocesan Synod is "an opportunity to bring together people who represent this entire Archdiocesan Church" in order to discern if we are being the "very best church" that Christ calls us to be. In the Acts of the Apostles, we learn that "[the first Christians] devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (2:42, 47). Given the model set before us by Christ and the apostles, Cardinal Wuerl has convoked a Synod in order to assess "what are we doing, how well are we doing it, and is there anything more we need to do to be everything we should be" in the key elements of the life of the Church: worship, education, community, service, and administration or stewardship.

## Why now?

Pope Benedict XVI has named October 11, 2012 (the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*) to November 24, 2013 (the Solemnity of Christ the King) the "Year of Faith," as "a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Savior of the world" (*For the Indiction of the Year of Faith*, 6). Moreover, the theme of the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that the pope has convoked for October 2012 is "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith" (*Indiction*, 4). Also, providentially, 2014 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Archdiocese of Washington. For these reasons, beginning with Pentecost 2013, having reflected on the key elements of the Church's life (as listed above), representatives from all 140 parishes of the archdiocese will begin to formulate a basic plan of action that will lead the Catholic Church of Washington into the future. Thus we will renew our understanding of who we are in Christ, and recommit ourselves to being the very best Church Christ calls us to be.





# Worship Context for Discussion

*...So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him... (Luke 24: 29-30)*

At the heart of the Church's liturgical life is the celebration of the Sacraments which are real and spiritual encounters with our Lord Jesus Christ. Central among the Sacraments is the Holy Eucharist (*the Holy Mass*) which is the source from which all the Church's power flows and the summit toward which all our activity is directed. Clergy and the faithful – one and all – are called to full, active, conscious participation in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, for it “is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, CSL #2*)

The Holy Mass is the highest form of worship that the Church can offer and all are invited to participate in it. It is through the Mass, as well as the other sacraments, prayer and devotions, that we most perfectly glorify God and offer praise and thanksgiving for His blessings. Topics for discussion may include the continued liturgical formation of clergy and all lay faithful so that all may be well disposed to receive the graces conferred in the sacraments and other forms of worship; awareness of local and universal traditions in the various expressions of worship; and the encouragement of frequent reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion to nourish ongoing Christian life.

# Worship

## Key Elements of the Life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Washington

## Reflection Questions

1. What are examples of the Church's efforts in this area that are bearing fruit?
2. What are some areas where more might be done to strengthen the work of the Church?
3. What practical suggestions do you have?
4. What are the four key elements you identify as priorities?

### The Eucharist

1. The Mass is properly and reverently celebrated in parishes
2. The prayerful and active participation of the lay faithful is fostered by the way Mass is celebrated
3. The Mass times meet the needs of the people and are conscious of the time constraints of priests
4. The needs and cultures of diverse congregations are adequately met
5. Adoration of the Holy Eucharist is encouraged and opportunities are made available in parishes
6. Homilies are relevant to the needs and cares of the people
7. Special feast days are appropriately celebrated throughout the year
8. Music is fitting, reverent, and uplifting at Sunday Mass
9. Eucharistic processions are scheduled and encouraged
10. There is adequate training for the liturgical roles of the lay faithful, such as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, ministers of hospitality, altar servers, and cantors.

### Other Sacraments

11. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is regularly offered with set and published times
12. Times for Reconciliation are convenient to both laity and clergy
13. Where appropriate, both face-to-face and the confessional screen are made available in each parish
14. Communal penance services are offered, always including provisions for individual confession
15. Shut-ins, the ill, and the dying are well cared-for, and they are visited regularly with the opportunity to receive the sacraments of Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick

### Preparing for the Sacraments

16. There is adequate teaching (*catechesis*) on the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist
17. There is adequate teaching and preparation for the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation for children, youth, parents, and sponsors
18. RCIA is well-implemented in the archdiocese and appropriate forms of preparation are offered for Christians being received into full communion with the Catholic Church
19. There is ongoing formation for the clergy in their celebration of the sacraments and in leading the people in worship
20. Appropriate attire is encouraged at Mass

### Prayer and Devotions

21. The beauty of our churches and the location of the tabernacle are conducive to prayer and piety
21. Various forms of Catholic spirituality are expressed: prayer groups, novenas, Bible studies, days of recollection, missions, archdiocesan retreats, etc.

### Others?



# Education Context for Discussion

At its heart Catholic education means teaching the faith to adults, youth and children in a way that brings them into an encounter with Jesus Christ and prepares them to know, love and serve God. Topics for discussion may include reaching out to adult Catholics who do not know the truths and teachings of the Catholic faith; helping families and parents teach their children; the essential relationship between knowing the faith and sharing it with others as part of the new evangelization; Catholic schools and religious education programs that successfully transmit the faith; ensuring that adults and children with special needs have access to excellent programs to learn the faith; support for families who educate their children in the home; updating the way in which the Church teaches, including using new media; building on the diversity of the archdiocese; and engaging a world that is sometimes hostile to the things of God.



# Education

## Key Elements of the Life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Washington

1. Parish religious instruction programs for adults, families, children and youth
2. Parish sponsored and supported Catholic elementary schools
3. Archdiocesan and independent Catholic high schools
4. Tuition assistance programs for families with financial need to attend Catholic schools
5. Qualified leadership for parish religious education and adult formation programs
6. Initial and on-going training for catechists
7. Support and resources for parents as the primary religious educators of their children; programs that strengthen marriage and family
8. Vibrant youth ministry programs for adolescents and young adults
9. Readily available baptismal and marriage preparation programs that include parishioner participation
10. RCIA (The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) and sacramental preparation programs for adults and children
11. Catechetical and social programs for parishioners who are Deaf or blind, parishioners with physical or Intellectual Disabilities, along with programs for the homebound and those unable to attend parish events
12. Informal opportunities at parishes for adult learning and spiritual growth (Bible Study, speakers, magazines, books, etc.)

**Others?**

## Reflection Questions

1. What are examples of the Church's efforts in this area that are bearing fruit?
2. What are some areas where more might be done to strengthen the work of the Church?
3. What practical suggestions do you have?
4. What are the four key elements you identify as priorities?



# Community Context for Discussion

The Church is the experience of communion with God and with one another through Christ. Through the sacraments, we experience the living presence of the Trinity, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Building community is the ability to create a welcoming parish where a familial bond exists among members who desire to open wide the doors to invite and embrace all people who seek to know and form a relationship with Jesus Christ, especially those who may feel alienated from the church. How parishes manifest the love of Christ is seen all areas of parish life. In assessing the vitality of community, topics for discussion may include the qualities of the parish that foster a sense of belonging and a sense of unity; helping Catholics understand their baptismal responsibility to share Christ with others; preparing parishioners for service; recognizing the gifts that different cultures bring to parish life.

# Community

## Key Elements of the Life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Washington

1. Organized initiatives that welcome new members
2. Includes parishioners with disabilities in every aspect of archdiocesan life and ministry
3. Welcomes persons of all cultures to participate fully in the life and ministry of the church
4. Opens all approved liturgical roles to men and women
5. Parishioners understand they have a responsibility to invite others to the Lord and the believing community
6. Regularly sponsors formal evangelization programs
7. Encourages the formation of small groups within the parish to foster unity in community
8. Identifies and uses the talents and interests of parishioners
9. Regularly invites people to participate in archdiocesan activities
10. Welcomes immigrants in the parish and makes serious efforts to accommodate their particular needs
11. Encourages people to use their talents for the good of the parish and for building a unity among parishioners
12. Actively involves seniors, adolescents and young adults in church activities
13. Has an accurate and up-to-date census of parish membership and its ministries reflects the needs of those parishioners
14. Trains people in how to reach out to others and invite others to full participation in the life of the parish

**Others?**

## Reflection Questions

1. What are examples of the Church's efforts in this area that are bearing fruit?
2. What are some areas where more might be done to strengthen the work of the Church?
3. What practical suggestions do you have?
4. What are the four key elements you identify as priorities?



# Service Context for Discussion

Jesus came “to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives and to set the downtrodden free” (Luke 4:18). In his Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est* Pope Benedict XVI writes, “The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her threefold responsibility: proclaiming the Word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising the ministry of charity.” Through serving the poor, the homeless, the marginalized, and other afflicted people and families in the community we bring the love of Christ to the world. Christian service is the expression of our faith through our deeds and is integral to our life as believers in Jesus Christ. Topics for discussion may include the ways we as an archdiocese from our youth to our elders, express our concern for the dignity of all people as we actively pursue peace, justice and advocacy for those in need. The rich social teaching of the Church provides seven themes that can be a guide for the areas of discussion.

# Service

## Key Elements of the Life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Washington

## Reflection Questions

1. What are examples of the Church's efforts in this area that are bearing fruit?
2. What are some areas where more might be done to strengthen the work of the Church?
3. What practical suggestions do you have?
4. What are the four key elements you identify as priorities?

1. For Call to Family, Community and Participation, the Church:
  1. Is sensitive to the needs of individuals and families when it schedules Masses, ministry, programs and events; and,
  2. Opens its doors to community groups (e.g. Alcoholic Anonymous, Scouts) for meetings and activities.
2. For Rights and Responsibilities, the Church:
  1. Educates its members about Catholic Social teaching through homilies, special programs, and formal discussion of encyclicals and church documents; and,
  2. Draws attention to important local, state, and federal legislation in light of Catholic Social teaching and supports its members to advocate on behalf of legislation consistent with the teachings of the church.
3. For Options for the Poor and Vulnerable, the Church and its members:
  1. Sponsor and support local food banks, blood drives and other programs to serve those in need in the community, including the working poor; and,
  2. Actively engage in efforts to foster respect for immigrants and to secure their basic human rights.
4. For Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers, the Church and its organization members:
  1. Educate and train individuals as they seek to develop their God-given talents and skills to serve others and support their families; and,
  2. Respect the inherent right of individuals to labor and be justly rewarded for their efforts and recognize the dignity derived from such endeavors; and,
  3. Recognize and respect the important work of mothers and fathers as they strive to raise responsible, caring children who will become the future productive citizens of our society.
5. For Solidarity, members of the Church:
  1. Respond generously to archdiocesan and national appeals for aid to the poor and marginalized; and,
  2. Participate in peace, justice and advocacy efforts, pro-life activities, voter registration drives, letter writing campaigns and parish twinning missions.
6. For Care for God's Creation, the Church:
  1. Advocates for respect of all life and recognizes that human life begins at conception; and,
  2. Calls for responsible stewardship of the environment and respect for all of God's creatures.
7. For Life and Dignity of the Human Person, the Church and its members:
  1. Serve the spiritual, emotional, social and physical needs of the poor and the ill, the young and the old, the native born and the immigrant, and the individual and the family from pre-conception until after natural death; and,
  2. Respond when invited to volunteer to serve their fellow human beings through service programs and parish ministries.

**Others?**



# Administration/Stewardship Context for Discussion

Essential to the fulfillment of the Church's mission is the preservation, oversight, use, and development of both the physical properties of the Church and its income and other assets (temporal goods).

Topics for discussion may include the fostering and promotion of competent leadership in parishes with respect to each Catholic's role within the Church; management of temporal goods of the Church; and the offering of one's time, talent, and treasure.

# Administration Stewardship

## Key Elements of the Life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Washington

1. The mission of parish stewardship, as defined by Scripture, is articulated and communicated to parishioners
2. The most knowledgeable people are consulted in making decisions
3. People at various levels in the archdiocese participate in planning and decision-making activities
4. Interactions and working practices between the archdiocese and parishes are defined, communicated, understood and effective
5. Recurring expenses are met in a timely manner without need for serial fundraising or bank loans and purchasing power across archdiocese is utilized to achieve economies of scale
6. Purchases, contracting and investments are made consistent with Church teaching
7. Has a documented plan for its programs beyond the current year which is communicated to parishes and parishioners
8. Maintains its plants and facilities in good condition and has a plan for future maintenance and contingencies
9. Has facilities that are adequate for the present and future needs of its people and its programs
10. The archdiocesan policies, training and on-line resources for Pastor and parish advisory councils are known and utilized
11. Parish has active Pastoral and Finance councils which fulfill their responsibilities as outlined in archdiocesan guidelines
12. People are given opportunities to share in leadership responsibilities by being empowered to use their skills and experiences
13. Has sufficient qualified personnel to further the mission and meet legitimate needs of the parish archdiocese
14. Utilizes technology to further the mission of the parish and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its internal administrative and ministerial needs
15. Has written policies and procedures that enable the continuity of the mission of the parish and achievement of goals in the case of unexpected events and turnover in positions.
16. Parishes have access to the financial resources they need when undertaking projects such as capital improvements
17. Parishes are assessed fairly, relative to their financial ability to support various initiatives within the archdiocese

**Others?**

## Reflection Questions

1. What are examples of the Church's efforts in this area that are bearing fruit?

2. What are some areas where more might be done to strengthen the work of the Church?

3. What practical suggestions do you have?

4. What are the four key elements you identify as priorities?







“Our archdiocesan synod will provide us an opportunity to look at the life of the local Church, to evaluate where the ministry of the Church is successful and the areas where there may be need for more attention so that we can better prepare ourselves to carry forward the work of the Church into the future. The pastoral priorities of our local Church will be examined, particularly within the context of the New Evangelization and in the spirit of the Year of Faith”

– Donald Cardinal Wuerl

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