



Synod

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ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

DIRECTORY

I. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE SYNOD

The *Code of Canon Law* provides nine Canons (Canons 460 to 468) on the subject of the diocesan Synod. In 1997, the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples issued an *Instruction on Diocesan Synods*. While the Canons offer a general schema for a diocesan Synod, the 1997 instruction offers more concrete assistance in how a Synod is held, what is to be addressed, and who is a part of it.

The following are excerpts from the *Instruction* concerning the nature and purpose of the diocesan Synod:

“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. This purpose determines the particular roles to be ascribed to those priests who partake in the work of the Synod as ‘wise collaborators with the Order of Bishops, their helpers and chosen instruments, and who are called to serve the People of God.’ The Synod also offers the Bishop the opportunity of calling to cooperate with him and with his priests some members of the laity as well as some chosen religious. This is a particular form of that responsibility and concerns all of the faithful in building up the Body of Christ. In the process of the Synod, the Bishop also exercises the office of governing the Church entrusted to his care. He determines its convocation, proposes the questions to be discussed in the Synod and presides at the Synodal sessions. Moreover, it is the Bishop who, as sole legislator, signs the Synodal declarations and decrees and orders their publication” (*Instruction* I.1).

“Those who participate in the Synod ‘assist the diocesan Bishop’ by formulating their opinion or ‘votum’ with regard to the questions, which have been proposed by him. This votum is defined as ‘consultative’ so as to indicate that the Bishop remains free to accept or not the recommendations made to him by the members of the Synod. However, this does not imply that such a ‘votum’ is of little importance or merely an ‘external’ consultation involving someone with no responsibility for the final outcome of the Synod. Having heard the members of the Synod, his will be the duty of discernment of the various opinions expressed, he will scrutinize everything and retain that which is good” (*Instruction* I.2).

“Communion and mission, both indispensable aspects of the Church’s pastoral activities, constitute ‘the good of the diocesan community’ mentioned in Canon 460 as the final object of the Synod. The work of the Synod is to promote acceptance of the Church’s salvific doctrine and to encourage the faithful in their following of Christ. Since the Church is ‘sent into the world to proclaim and bear witness to that communion by which it is constituted, as well as to actualize it and to spread it’” (*Instruction I.3*).

II. CONVOCAATION OF THE SYNOD

It is the sole prerogative of the diocesan Bishop, in his prudent judgement and having consulted with the council of priests, to convoke a diocesan Synod (cf. Canon 461). On January 24, 2026, Archbishop Robert Casey wrote to the faithful of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati announcing his decision that a diocesan synod would take place. Subsequently, the following Decree was signed and promulgated on June 19, 2026, formally convoking the Synod.

Having judged the present circumstances of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati opportune for the convocation of a diocesan Synod, and having heard and considered the advice of the Presbyteral Council, I, the Most Reverend Robert Gerald Casey, by the grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See, Archbishop of Cincinnati, in accord with canon 461 §1, hereby convoke the Seventh Synod of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to proceed according to the following timeline:

- *Evening Prayer for the Opening of the Preliminary Phase of the Diocesan Synod will be celebrated at 7:00 P.M. on Friday, June 19, 2026, at Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Centerville to initiate a period of prayer and preparation for the Diocesan Synod;*
- *Listening Sessions will be conducted throughout the Archdiocese during the fall of 2026 to hear the needs, desires, and opinions of the faithful – clergy, consecrated, and lay – for the purpose of discerning proposed topics for the synodal discussions;*
- *The official opening of the diocesan Synod will take place in conjunction with Holy Mass to be celebrated at 11:00 A.M. on Saturday, June 19, 2027, in the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Peter in Chains;*
- *The initial sessions of the Diocesan Synod will be held during the summer of 2027;*
- *The final General Assembly will be held from September 15-18, 2027, at the Sharonville Convention Center; Holy Mass to mark the conclusion of the synodal sessions will be celebrated on Saturday, September 18, 2027.*

Further details concerning each of these events will be announced in the coming weeks and months.

This Synod of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati will help the people of this local Church to advise and assist the archbishop in the governance and care of the faithful entrusted to him. Through the discernment of pastoral priorities, the adaptation of universal Church laws to local circumstances, and the development of strategic plans for the spiritual renewal of the archdiocese, Synod 2027 seeks to encourage us in our faith journey, strengthen us in our unity as the Body of Christ, and inspire us to answer the call to missionary discipleship so that we may meet the needs of this modern era.

III. SYNOD MEMBERSHIP

The diocesan Bishop presides over the diocesan Synod. The Code of Canon Law (Canon 463) identifies those persons who are members of the Synod. Some are obligated to participate because of their office, some expressly by the law, and others chosen in other ways.

For the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, these members, *ex officio and de jure*, are: the vicar general, the judicial vicar, the rector of the major seminary, the vicars forane (deans), the members of the presbyteral council, and at least one priest from each deanery to be elected by all those who have the care of souls there.

The law provides also that other members are to be elected in such a way that the membership, like the membership of the diocesan pastoral council, is inclusive of the varied nature of the make-up of the local Church and “truly reflects the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the diocese, taking account of the different regions of the diocese, of social conditions and professions and of the part played in the apostolate by the members, whether individually or in association with others” (Canon 512 §2).

The diocesan Bishop may also invite others to be members of the diocesan Synod, whether clerics or members of institutes of consecrated life or lay members of the faithful.

Additional members of the Synod will be selected as follows:

- All pastors of parishes of the Archdiocese are expected to participate;
- Lay members of Christ’s faithful from each Family of Parishes, selected by the pastoral council(s) thereof, the number of members determined in a manner proportionate to the average Sunday Mass count, with consideration for balanced representation from the various parish/church communities which comprise the Family of Parishes and with balanced representation of men and women;
- All priests of the Archdiocese are invited to participate;
- 12 actively serving permanent deacons of the Archdiocese, two from each deanery, to be elected by the deacons actively serving there;
- The members of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council;
- Some major superiors of religious institutes and of societies of apostolic life, which have a house in the Archdiocese, to be selected by the Archbishop;
- Some members from institutes of consecrated life nominated by superiors who have a religious house in the Archdiocese;
- The department directors of the archdiocesan Pastoral Center;
- Ten grade school principals and four high school principals nominated by the Superintendent of Catholic Schools;
- The presidents, or their delegates, of the Catholic universities in the archdiocese;
- A director of evangelization, worship, and administration from each deanery, selected by the deans in consultation with the pastors of the deanery;
- Faithful from across the Archdiocese representative of the various ages, ethnicities and states of life, as well as of the many apostolates, ministries and other organizations that serve in the Archdiocese, to be appointed at the discretion of the Archbishop.

The diocesan Bishop may invite to the Synod as observers some ministers or members of Churches or ecclesial communities which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, but who can play an important role in the renewal of the Catholic Church.

The diocesan Bishop shall communicate in writing to members their designation as members and likewise, members, not bound *ex officio* and *de jure*, shall communicate their acceptance in writing. Members of the Synod, once lawfully designated, have a right and duty to participate in the sessions of the Synod. If they are unable to attend, a proxy cannot be sent in their place.

One may lose one's membership by reason of loss of title - that which qualified one to become a member - or by removal by the Bishop for a lawful reason.

Lay members must have "firm faith, high moral standards and prudence" (Canon 512 §3) and canonically regular status (*Instruction* II.3.1).

According to the norm of Canon 833, 1°, before commencing the synodal discussions, the members of the Synod, as ecclesial officers, shall make the Profession of Faith at the opening Mass of the Synod.

IV. OFFICERS OF THE SYNOD

President

The Most Reverend Robert G. Casey as diocesan Bishop presides over the diocesan Synod. He may, however, delegate the vicar general to fulfil this office at individual sessions of the Synod (cf. Canon 462 §2).

Moderator

The diocesan Bishop appoints a Moderator to oversee the preparatory stages of the Synod, to coordinate the offices and commissions of the Synod, and to moderate the sessions of the Synod (Instr. III. B. 2.3). The Very Rev. Jan Schmidt is the Synod moderator.

Secretary

The diocesan Bishop is to appoint a secretary to oversee the Secretariat of the Synod (Instr. III.B.1). Mr. Jeremy Helmes, Director of Pastoral Vitality & Mission, is the Synod secretary.

V. PREPARATORY COMMISSION

The Bishop is obliged to constitute a Preparatory Commission. The Preparatory Commission is tasked primarily with matters pertaining to the organization and preparation of the Synod; in drawing up and publishing the synodal directory; in the designation of the synodal members and in his determining the questions to be proposed for synodal deliberation. The diocesan Bishop, or his delegate in the event he is unable to do so, presides over the meetings of the Preparatory Commission;

The members of the Preparatory Commission are Sr. Fran Repka, RSM; Rev. Eric Sundrup; Deacon Jesse Fanning; Prof. Jana Bennett; Ms. Devon James; Mr. Joe Shadle; Sr. Mariana Thayer, OP; Bro. Tim Sucher, OFM; Rev. Kyle Schnippel; Ms. Samantha Asmah; Rev. Scott Morgan; Mr. Jared Pottkotter; Mr. Matthew Dunn; Mr. Enrique Acuña; Mrs. Heidi Acuña; Mr. Antonio Mata; Mr. Greg Feldkamp; Mr. Percy Stricklin; and Ms. Dianne Meyer.

The archbishop has also established a Synod secretariat to assist the Synod as far as organizational matters are concerned. The members of the secretariat are the Synod moderator and secretary, Very Rev. Anthony Brausch, Rev. Jason Williams (Chancellor), Ms. Leisa Anslinger, Ms. Meg Paul, and Ms. Jennifer Schack. The members of the secretariat are also *ex officio* members of the Preparatory Commission.

VI. SPIRITUAL, CATECHETICAL AND FORMATIONAL PREPARATION

“The celebration of the Synod affords the diocesan Bishop a privileged opportunity for the formation of the faithful. It leads to a well-articulated catechesis of the faithful with regard to the mystery of the Church and the participation of all the faithful in her mission. Such catechesis is carried on in the light of the teaching of the Church’s Magisterium and particularly that of the Second Vatican Council. To this end, concrete directives can be given to priests for preaching” (*Instr.* III, C, 1). Resources will be developed to assist in the ongoing formation on listening and discernment to foster a culture of synodality during and beyond the Synod.

VII. DETERMINING THE QUESTIONS

The Preparatory Commission will provide the preliminary question(s) to help facilitate initial conversations during the consultative process. At the conclusion of the consultative process, having considered all of the feedback received, the diocesan Bishop shall proceed to determine those questions on which the synodal debate will concentrate. The diocesan Bishop makes the final decision on the questions to be considered by the Synod.

“In providing suitable directives for consultation, unjustified expectations with regard to the acceptance of proposals should be avoided’ (*Instr.* III, C, 2). For this reason the *Instruction* provides that: “In view of the bonds uniting the particular Church and her Pastor with the universal Church and the Roman Pontiff, the Bishop has the duty to exclude from the synodal discussions theses or positions - as well as proposals submitted to the Synod with the mere intention of transmitting to the Holy See ‘polls’ in their regard – discordant with the perennial doctrine of the Church or the Magisterium or concerning material reserved to Supreme ecclesiastical authority or to other ecclesiastical authorities” (*Instr.* IV, 4; CD 8; Canon 381).

VIII. RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE SYNOD

The Presentation of Propositions/Questions

§1 The synodal propositions/questions will be presented for explanation and discussion by the diocesan Bishop unless he determines a manner otherwise.

The Manner of Seeking Opinions

§1 It is necessary that the subject for discussion, determined by the diocesan Bishop in convoking the Synod, be considered before voting by the delegates.

§2 In treating these subjects, each may express their opinion, according to a manner judged most opportune.

§3 This opinion is to be expressed in the assembly of the Synod members.

§4 The consensus of the Synod members, at the conclusion of synodal discussions, is expressed in *Proposals* or *Amendments*, submitted to a vote and offered to the diocesan Bishop at the conclusion of the synodal sessions. The Bishop then has the responsibility to draw up decrees and statutes based on these recommendations. He does this mindful of the needs, wishes, and desires of the People of God, but also mindful of the traditions and general laws of the Church.

The Procedure, Formula, and Manner of Voting

§1 Unless the Bishop determines otherwise, voting on the proposals and amendments will be held at the final full session for the Synod. Amendments will not be considered until all synodal propositions have been discussed.

§2 In the Synod, voting is expressed using the formula: *yes*, *no*, or *abstain*.

§3 The votes are expressed by a show of hands, unless the Bishop determines otherwise.

§4 A member must be physically present to cast their vote and may not vote absentee or by proxy.

§5 To arrive at a majority of votes, an absolute majority of the members present at the full session is required.

The Obligation to Notify Absence

§1 Whoever is legitimately impeded and is not able to attend a synodal session must make this reason known to the diocesan Bishop.

IX. DECREES AND DECLARATIONS

There will be voting on a variety of *Proposals* at the final assembly of the Synod. These Proposals will become recommendations to the diocesan Bishop for his consideration to be incorporated into the synodal documents. “In the preparation of such documents every effort should be made to arrive at precise formulations intended to assist the pastoral ministry and to avoid generalizations or merely reducing such texts to exhortations which render them less effective” (*Instruction* IV, 6).

For validity, the diocesan Bishop alone signs and promulgates the synodal declarations and decrees, by which means he promotes and fosters the observance of those canonical norms which the circumstances of diocesan life most require; regulates those matters which the law entrusts to his competence, and applies the discipline which is common to all of the particular Churches” (*Instruction*, V, 4).