



The Relationship between Beacons of Light and Synod 2021-2023

The upcoming Synod of Bishops, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission” will serve to strengthen the pastoral planning effort *Beacons of Light*. These two pastoral initiatives are not in conflict, but rather are complementary; we in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati have an opportunity to embrace the synodal process which comes to us at a most appropriate time. If *Beacons of Light* is successful, not only will it address urgent issues such as scarce resources (human and capital) but it will also lead to greater communion and participation within and among our Families of Parishes, which will ultimately equip the faithful to better fulfill the mission of the Church: to radiate Christ.

Already present in the theological foundations for *Beacons of Light* “Journeying Together” is the principle of synodality and the value of a Family of Parishes “journeying together” over the coming years. Continued theological reflection by parish leaders upon Families of Parishes will be well-informed by the theology of synodality.

Notably, the Preparatory Document for the upcoming Synod states the intended outcome: “to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people’s hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.” (PD, 32) Although not overtly stated in this way yet, these should also be aims of *Beacons of Light*, along with the renewal of ecclesial structures inherent to such a synodal process (one of the latent outcomes of *Beacons of Light*.)

The timing of the diocesan phase of the Synod (Oct 2021-Apr 2022) will allow for appropriate reflection within the local Church of Cincinnati not only on the specific goals of the *Beacons of Light* process, or the Synod itself, but more importantly on the ways in which the archdiocese can grow in communion, through a deeper participation of all the faithful in the mission of the Church. The *Beacons of Light* process already assumes self-assessment on the part of parishes, clergy, and parish leaders before engaging in pastoral planning within a new Family of Parishes; thus, the framework of the diocesan phase of the Synod will provide a helpful context for this. If nothing else, the simultaneity of these two initiatives will be a happy coincidence: the universal Church and local Church all “journeying together” toward a future better equipped to fulfill the Great Commission.

The *Beacons of Light* process will be enriched by the synodal process. Deeper communion, more robust participation, and strength for mission are mutual outcomes. What a blessing for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.