

What's the latest with the Synod?



Initiated by Pope Francis, the Synod on Synodality is a process of listening and dialogue which began in 2021 with a worldwide consultation of the People of God. The Synod continues with gatherings of delegates in Rome in October 2023 and is expected to conclude in 2024. Learn more about the upcoming Synod in this question-and-answer format or go to the Archdiocese of Seattle's Synod website, archseattle.org/synod.

What is a Synod? The Church is in synod! The word “synod” means “on the way together” and refers to a gathering of the Church for discernment or decision-making.

Who is part of the Synod? This Synod is unprecedented in the breadth of participation. In fall of 2021 and winter and spring of 2022, millions of people all over the world participated in listening sessions — the widest consultation of the people of God, and indeed of the human family, in history. In the Archdiocese of Seattle, 11,000 people took part in listening sessions in their parishes or online.

In October 2023, laypeople as well as bishops will serve as official delegates to the Synod — a first. Archbishop Paul D. Etienne was named a delegate by Pope Francis, making him one of about 20 Americans participating in the Synod.

What happens next?

All the work that has happened to this point has prepared the way for the gathering of delegates in Rome in October 2023. The work of the delegates will be guided by the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod. What happens next depends on their deliberations. We know that the Synod will continue into a second session in October 2024.

What will be talked about?

The *Instrumentum Laboris* guiding the work of the delegates this fall asks a wide range of questions focused on how the Church can foster communion, strengthen participation, and carry out its mission. Topics considered include

caring for creation, ecumenism, the participation of the baptized in the life of the Church, the role of women, and the inclusion of marginalized groups, as well as considerations around leadership and decision-making at the local, national, and global levels. Ultimately, the focus of the Synod is synodality itself: How can we walk together more effectively? How can our decision-making processes engage the whole people of God? How can we listen to one another and to the Holy Spirit more intentionally? How can we overcome polarization and divisions and walk together without erasing differences, but holding them in creative tension?

Where can I find out what's happening at the Synod this October?

The Synod assembly is likely to be widely covered in the media. It is important to choose reliable sources because many popular media outlets will likely focus on any controversial topics that are discussed, possibly losing sight of the big picture: The Synod is not about a single topic, but rather about how we walk together as Church in every aspect of life and ministry.

We recommend the following sites for balanced information about what is happening at the Synod:

- [Synod.va](https://synod.va): Site for the Synod, available in several languages
- vaticannews.va/en.html: Official media site for the Vatican, available in several languages
- usccb.org/newsroom: Official media site for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- NWCatholic.org: News from our local Church and around the world
- archbishopetienne.com: Archbishop Etienne's blog, where he will share regular updates first-hand from the Synod assembly. You can sign up to receive new posts in your email.

What can we do now?

This is a good time to read, reflect on, and discuss the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the other documents the Synod has produced so far. Above all, let us pray for the Synod, that the delegates in Rome may listen deeply to one another and, most especially, to the Holy Spirit!

For information about the Synod, please visit archseattle.org/synod.