

Letter by Cardinal Mario Grech outlining the reasons for the recent announcement of the synodal process



Below is the letter of Cardinal Mario Grech, General Secretary for the Synod of Bishops, sent to all the bishops of the world.

Vatican, 20 May 2021

Dear brother in the episcopate,

I am writing to you personally to send you the itinerary for the next Synod of Bishops, “*For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission*,” which you will find in the attached documents. The Holy Father has asked me to share with every diocesan bishop his sincere desire that we undertake this path together, so that we all might grow together through this concrete experience of synodality. Often, the Holy Father has invited me to remain “open to everything that comes from the local churches.”

Given the significance that this synodal journey has for the good of both the Universal and local church, if it were possible I would come and present it personally to every bishop. I would have gladly done so not only because its contents need to be communicated with due delicacy, but also because I have wished from the beginning of this ecclesial adventure to be close to all of you so as to encourage and support you on this journey we make together with the People of God entrusted to you. Since we are all ‘connected’, the contribution of everyone is precious in this process of mutual listening to the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, to emphasise that this synodal path is a shared journey, the Holy Father will celebrate the opening of the Synod in the Vatican, 9-10 October 2021. The following Sunday, 17 October 2021, each of you will celebrate the opening of the Synod in your own diocese.

I would like to emphasise the importance of this phase of diocesan consultation, which will culminate in a pre-synodal meeting. In this phase, we will ‘listen’ to the whole People of God, without exception, with particular care to involve also those who are further away and are consulted with greater difficulty. We remember the Rule of St Benedict wherein he writes, “every time some important issue has to

be dealt with in the monastery [in the diocese], the abbot is to summon the whole community and personally explain the matter in question [...]. But we said to consult the whole community, because often it is to the youngest that the Lord reveals the best solution.”(Chapter 3)

Therefore, each bishop will appoint a diocesan contact person (team) for the synodal consultation, who can act as a liaison and point of reference.

As I write this letter, I am aware of the many difficulties caused by the pandemic, as well as those countries suffering from war and violence. I hope that this synodal process, in a sense of renewed communion, might help the local churches notwithstanding the great challenges they face. I am also aware of the many countries and dioceses who have already embarked on a local synodal journey. With God’s grace, we will find creative ways to articulate diocesan dynamics, agendas, and priorities in preparation for the next Synod. I am sure that our common love for Jesus and his Church will help us to walk this path together.

At the same time, we would be grateful to those brother bishops who have synodal experiences already underway, and are willing to share with us unpublished testimonies of how they have seen the Holy Spirit acting in the midst of the People of God. They may also wish to share with us the moments and ways in which they have been surprised by the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Together with my colleagues in the General Secretariat, we are also preparing various training and information aids to accompany the Preparatory Document. Furthermore, before October 2021, we hope to be able to contact every Episcopal Conference to dialogue directly in this preliminary phase. In any case, any bishop may contact us so that we might help with any need.

Along with the itinerary for this Synod, is a copy of Pope Francis’ speech in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015. The Holy Father himself has explicitly asked me to bring to your attention the foundational importance of this text for our synodal journey.

This upcoming 21 May 2021 at Midday (Rome time), the Press Office of the Holy See in the *Bollettino* will release the documents enclosed in this letter. Until that moment, all the documents and content of this letter are under embargo.

I sincerely thank you for all the work you will undertake and I ask for your continued prayers for the success of this synodal journey.

Mario Card. Grech

General Secretary

Attached:

1. Itinerary for the Synod
2. Infographic for the Itinerary for the Synod
3. Speech of Pope Francis in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015

