Dear Bishop [ ],

On May 21, 2021, Pope Francis announced that he would postpone the October 2022 gathering of the Synod of Bishops entitled, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission” for one year so that the whole Church could be availed of the opportunity to enter more deeply into the process of consultations and “listening to all of the baptized.” The Vatican communique states the three-stage process “will help to make possible a true listening to the People of God to ensure the participation of all in the synodal process.”

As bishop of our diocese, I am sure you are aware that in order to realize this new consultation process, Pope Francis will open the three phase process this October 9 – 10. The three phases include:

1. Listening and consultations to be held in local dioceses from October 2021 – April 2022.
2. Listening and consultation held at the continental level from September 2022 - March 2023.
3. The discerning, synod phase with the gathering of bishops, appointed religious, and auditors in Rome in October 2023.

As the new head of the Vatican’s Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Mario Grech, noted that they chose to undertake the new, three-part format because "the time was ripe for a wider participation of the people of God in a decision-making process that affects the whole church and everyone in the church."

"The Second Vatican Council teaches that the people of God participate in the prophetic office of Christ, therefore, we must listen to the people of God, and this means going out to the local churches,” noted Cardinal Grech. Cardinal Grech explained that the church, “as the people of God is an active subject in the life and mission of the church” by virtue of their baptism.

In his wisdom, Pope Francis has continued to strengthen the consultation and discernment process for synods. With the new process in mind, we ask that you make every effort to invite all the baptized so that, together, we may pray, listen deeply to the Spirit of God, listen to each other, and work together to spread the Gospel message in our own parish communities, in our diocese, and around the world.

Since the diocesan phase of the process begins this October, it is my hope that you will inform all the people in our diocese how this process will be devised and implemented in the coming months. Please know that I am also willing to help you in this effort as you see fit.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Address]
[Parish]
[Telephone Number]
[Email]