Catholics in the diocese of [ ] should aware that, beginning October 2021 through April 2022, Bishop [ ] is responsible for developing and implementing a process for gathering and “listening to all the baptized” on important matters in our church in the lead up to the 2023 Synod of Bishops, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participate, and Mission.”

On May 21, 2021, Pope Francis announced that he would postpone the previously scheduled October 2022 gathering of the Synod of Bishops 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 our bishop understands, in order to realize this new consultation process, Pope Francis will open the three phase consultation 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. He also 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 addressing the family, youth, and the fate of our common world as we witness the destruction of the Amazon and its people. With the new process in mind, we must ask our bishop to 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, Catholics should reach out to Bishop [ ] to ask him how he will devise and implement the process in the coming months. Further, it is our responsibility to ask how we can help him do an effective job, volunteering to help as he and his staff see fit.

[Name]
[Address]
[Parish]