

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Listening to the Holy Spirit

Apostolic nuncio visits Archdiocese of San Antonio as Synod process begins

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, was in San Antonio for a series of events October 11-12 related to the upcoming Synod. The archbishop spoke at Assumption Seminary and the Mexican American Catholic College, greeted students from Catholic schools, was the keynote presenter at a Clergy Day gathering at Holy Trinity Church, and took part in an evening prayer service at San Fernando Cathedral.

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MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

Archbishop presides at outdoor Mass for new northwest side parish.



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DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

United States Postal Service dedicates new stamps at celebration.



20-21

ADVANCED CARE PLANNING

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LIVING AS A SYNODAL CHURCH

Communion. Participation. Mission.



Extensive coverage of the pastoral visit of Archbishop Christophe Pierre can be found on the Facebook pages of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Today's Catholic newspaper, and Catholic Television of San Antonio. Also see the website at www.archsa.org/synodality

Archdiocese opens Synod process with visit by apostolic nuncio, liturgy

(CNA) • The Archdiocese of San Antonio has joined with dioceses across the United States preparing for the consultation process for the Synod on Synodality, a two-year, worldwide undertaking during which Catholics will be encouraged to submit feedback to their local diocese.

The archdiocese held its opening Mass at San Fernando Cathedral on October 17, with a listening session immediately following in the San Fernando Cathedral Center.

One objective of the Synod on Synodality, according to the preparatory document, is to examine “how responsibility and power are lived in the Church as well as the structures by which they are managed, bringing to light and trying to convert prejudices and distorted practices that are not rooted in the Gospel.”

The “diocesan phase” of the Synod will run until April 2022. The Vatican has asked all dioceses to participate, hold consultations, and collect feedback on specific questions laid out in synod documents. Earlier this month, the Vatican released a preparatory document and handbook to help dioceses to take part.

The concept of “Synodality” has been a topic of frequent discussion by Pope Francis, particularly during the previous ordinary Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith, and vocational discernment in October 2018. The pope, speaking about the present Synod, has said that the Synod is “not about gathering opinions, no ... it is about listening to the Holy Spirit.”

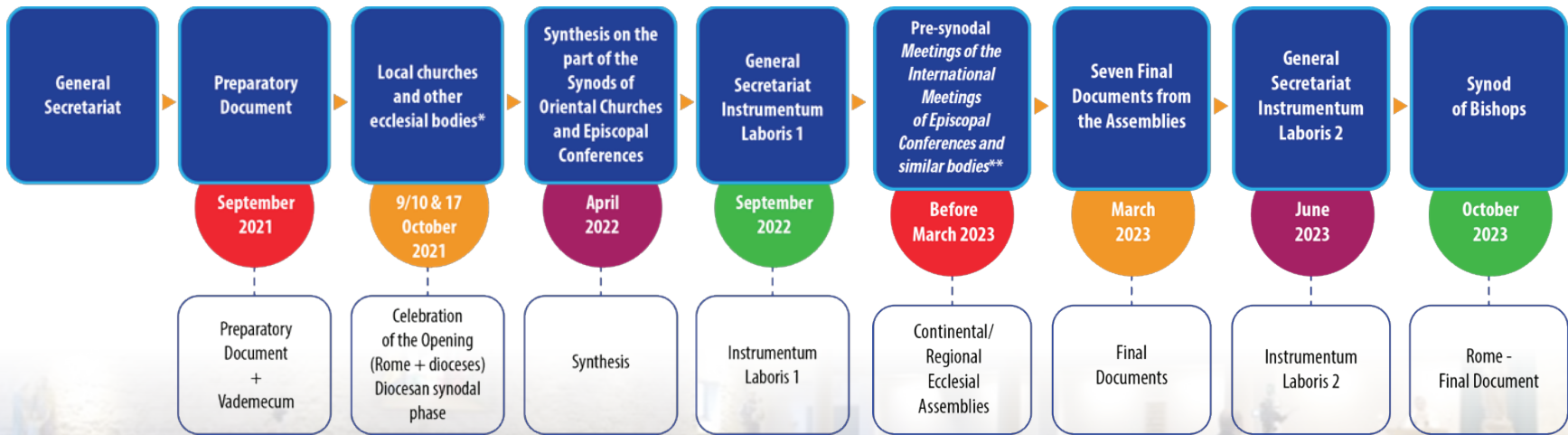
Synodality, as defined by the International Theological Commission in 2018, is “the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the People of God.” Pope Francis launched the consultation process leading to the 2023 Synod on Synodality October 10.

According to Vatican documents, the “fundamental question” to be considered by the dioceses and the bishops over the multi-year process is as follows: “A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, ‘journeys together.’ How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our ‘journeying together?’”

In San Antonio, the consultation period began with the opening Mass October 17. The archdiocesan website section for the Synod process, available in both English and Spanish, says that “listening and interactive sessions” to collect feedback from Catholics in the diocese are set to be held “in the following months.”

Timeframe for the Synodal Process

*DICASTERIES, CONSECRATED LIFE (UISG-USG, UNIONS & FEDERATIONS), ASSOCIATIONS OF THE FAITHFUL, INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
**AFRICA (SECAM), OCEANIA (FCBCO), ASIA (FABC), MIDDLE EAST (CPCO), EUROPA (CCEE), LATIN AMERICA (CELAM), NORTH AMERICA (USCCB+CCCB)



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The pope, speaking about the present synod, has said that the synod is “not about gathering opinions, no ... it is about listening to the Holy Spirit.”

Jordan McMorrough, Archdiocese of San Antonio Communications Director, told CNA that the Synodal Process Steering Committee will “launch a series of meetings in every corner of the archdiocese.”

There have been three distinctive moments of this “journeying together” in recent days.

The presence of the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, who was in San Antonio October 11 and 12 at this historic moment is a sign of fraternal communion with Pope Francis and the Universal Church.

The nuncio, along with Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, Auxiliary Bishop Michael Boulette, and Auxiliary Bishop Gary Janak met with Pastoral Center employees, Assumption Seminary faculty and staff, semi-

narians, Mexican American Catholic College faculty and staff, deacon candidates and their wives, the presbyterate, and a group of students from Catholic schools, for all to reinvigorate their zeal for the life and mission of the Church.

In addition, two Clergy Day gatherings have been held with all the priests in the archdiocese; one in September at St. Pius X Church and one on October 12 at Holy Trinity Parish, where table discussions were featured because this “journeying together” is all about “listening.” The priest convocation in November will continue this ongoing dialogue.

These new gatherings will involve parishes, universities, ministry organizations, and especially the marginalized – those that need the embrace of the church. These groups include young adults, the incarcerated, the hospitalized, divorced, immigrants, refugees, the homeless, single parents, the elderly, middle school students, high school students, college students, those with special needs, military personnel, the bereaved, those with same sex attraction, and others.

These special gatherings offer the archbishop assistance in setting the direction for the future of the lo-



cal Church. The outcomes do not include addressing doctrinal questions or Church teaching. Instead, it will be focused on pastoral planning, touching on all elements of the local Church. The Synod is a dynamic archdiocesan planning activity. It strives for listening to the real questions and authentic needs of the local Church and sifts for the real issues with a wider vision where subsidiarity and creativity are greatly needed, encouraged, and embraced.

The worldwide synod will conclude with the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican in October 2023.



Calendario del Proceso Sinodal

*DICASTERIOS, VIDA CONSAGRADA (UISG-USG, UNIONES Y FEDERACIONES), ASOCIACIONES DE FIELES, INSTITUCIONES DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR
**ÁFRICA (SECAM), OCEANÍA (FCBCO), ASIA (FABC), MEDIO ORIENTE (CPCO), EUROPA (CCEE), AMÉRICA LATINA (CELAM), NORTE AMÉRICA (USCCB + CCCB)



LIVING AS A SYNODAL CHURCH

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Pope Francis launches 2-year Synodal path with call to 'encounter, listen, and discern'

(CNS) • Pope Francis formally launched the two-year global consultation process leading to the 2023 Synod on Synodality on October 10 with a call to “look others in the eye and listen to what they have to say.”

Preaching at a Mass at St. Peter's Basilica, the pope said that Catholics taking part in the synodal path should strive to “become experts in the art of encounter.”

“Not so much by organizing events or theorizing about problems, as in taking time to encounter the Lord and one another,” he said.

“Time to devote to prayer and adoration – this prayer that we neglect so much: to adore, to make room for adoration – listening to what the Spirit wants to say to the Church.”

“Time to look others in the eye and listen to what they have to say, to build rapport, to be sensitive to the questions of our sisters and brothers, to let ourselves be enriched by the variety of charisms, vocations, and ministries.”

The live-streamed Mass, attended by around 3,000 people, was the second of two weekend events officially opening the two-year global consultation process.

The first was a “moment of reflection” on Oct. 9 featuring speeches from the pope, Cardinal Mario Grech, the secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ, the synod's relator general, and others.

The Vatican announced in May that the Synod on Synodality would open with a diocesan phase lasting from October 2021 to April 2022.

A second, continental phase will take place from September 2022 to March 2023.

The third, universal phase will begin with the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, dedicated to the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” at the Vatican in October 2023.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the day's Gospel reading, Mark 10:17-30, in which Jesus challenges the rich young man to “Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor ... then come, follow me.”

He said that the Gospels often showed Jesus in the midst of a journey, meeting people and listening to their deepest concerns.

“Today, as we begin this Synodal process, let



us begin by asking ourselves – all of us, pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity – whether we, the Christian community, embody this ‘style’ of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity,” he urged.

“Are we prepared for the adventure of this journey? Or are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: ‘It's useless’ or ‘We've always done it this way?’”

“Celebrating a Synod means walking on the same road, together. Let us look at Jesus, who encounters the rich man on the road; he then listens to his questions, and finally he helps him discern what he must do to inherit eternal life.”

The pope built his homily around three verbs – “encounter, listen, and discern” – that he hoped would mark the Synodal path.

He noted that when Jesus encountered the young man, he was fully present to him and did not “keep looking at his watch to get the meeting over.”

“Everything changes once we are capable of genuine encounters with Him and with one another, without formalism or pretense, but simply as we are,” he observed.

Pope Francis said that Jesus' meeting with the rich man showed that listening was an essential feature of true encounters.

He said: “Let us ask frankly during this synodal process: Are we good at listening? How good is the ‘hearing’ of our heart?”

“Do we allow people to express themselves, to walk in faith even though they have had difficulties in life, and to be part of the life of the community without being hindered, rejected, or judged?”

He continued: “Participating in a Synod means placing ourselves on the same path as the Word made flesh. It means following in his footsteps, listening to his word along with the words of others. It means discovering with amazement that the Holy Spirit always surprises us, to suggest fresh paths and new ways of speaking.”

“Celebrating a Synod means walking on the same road, together.”

—POPE FRANCIS

The pope acknowledged that learning to listen was “a slow and perhaps tiring exercise” for bishops, priests, religious, and laity.

“Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties. Certainties often close us off. Let us listen to one another,” he encouraged Catholics.

According to a Catholic News Agency report, the pope said that encounter and listening should lead to discernment.

“We see this in today's Gospel,” he explained. “Jesus senses that the person before him is a good and religious man, obedient to the commandments, but he wants to lead him beyond the mere observance of precepts.”

“Through dialogue, he helps him to discern. Jesus encourages that man to look within, in the light of the love that the Lord himself had shown by his gaze, and to discern in that light what his heart truly treasures.”

“And in this way to discover that he cannot attain happiness by filling his life with more religious observances, but by emptying himself, selling whatever takes up space in his heart, in order to make room for God.”

The pope described the Synod as “a journey of spiritual discernment” guided by God's word.

“That word summons us to discernment and it brings light to that process. It guides the Synod, preventing it from becoming a Church ‘convention,’ a study group or a political congress, because it is not a parliament, but rather a grace-filled event, a process of healing guided by the Holy Spirit,” he said.

“In these days, Jesus calls us, as he did the rich man in the Gospel, to empty ourselves, to free ourselves from all that is worldly, including our inward-looking and outworn pastoral models; and to ask ourselves what it is that God wants to say to us in this time. And the direction in which he wants to lead us.”

Pope Francis ended his homily by wishing participants in the synodal path a good journey together.

He said: “May we be pilgrims in love with the Gospel and open to the surprises of the Spirit. Let us not miss out on the grace-filled opportunities born of encounter, listening, and discernment. In the joyful conviction that, even as we seek the Lord, he always comes with his love to meet us first.”

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U.S. nuncio says he'll stay, helps prepare for synod, President Biden-pope meeting

Written by **Victor Gaetan**, Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON • Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the 75-year-old apostolic nuncio to the United States, said when he met Pope Francis at the Vatican Sept. 6, the pope asked him to remain in his post instead of retiring.

"He asked me to stay, so I stay as long as he wants. And I am happy to do so," the archbishop told Catholic News Service.

At the top of the nuncio's to-do list is helping the Holy See prepare for Joe Biden's first presidential visit to the Vatican, while the president is in Rome for an Oct. 30-31 summit of leading rich and developed nations.

The archbishop confirmed the Biden-pope meeting indirectly: "It would be an anomaly if he did not meet the pope while in Rome," especially since Biden is the first Catholic president in 58 years.

Despite a "tense situation because of the agenda of the Democratic Party on abortion," Archbishop Pierre said he believes it will be a good meeting.

Onlookers must think beyond institutions to the people themselves: "These are two human beings with huge responsibilities trying to meet

each other. They are not wooden figures. And behind them is a big machine – and the world." So problematic matters will not be solved quickly, the diplomat said.

Meanwhile, the church is a major factor in American society, "very much present in all issues," he said. "You have 80 million Catholics, the huge structure of the church, and the bishops are very active."

The nuncio thinks polarization is one of the most difficult things facing the United States because "as long as you are polarized, you don't find solutions."

He says the church defends values without transforming its mission into an ideology.

Ideology quickly gives way to "cultural war," which leads people to divide reality into those "with us" versus those "against us," a simplistic framework that the nuncio calls "mystification," because "reality is extremely complex."

The church is called to preach the Gospel, advocate dialogue, and resist extremism, he said.

"When the church is contaminated by polarization, we go nowhere" – a real danger, the archbishop said. Instead, the church – simultaneously in the world, but not of the world – is called to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world."

As the pope's eyes and ears in the United States, Archbishop Pierre is the Vatican's interlocutor with the U.S. government as well as with the

bishops. One of his most important assignments is to help the pope select new bishops, "a businesslike thing" that occupies much of his work with the Vatican.

Archbishop Pierre said Pope Francis – whom he's known since being appointed nuncio to Mexico in 2007, when Argentine Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio was a leading figure in Latin American Church deliberations – is easy to talk to and not intimidating, while "challenging us all the time."

"The pope is not a dictator, he is a mobilizer," said the French-born diplomat. "What he wants is to help the church be church here (in the United States)."

"That is why I insist a lot on Synodality, which means walking together, when I talk to bishops," the nuncio said. "The strength of the church is together, a synodal approach, which has to be implemented."

Archbishop Pierre is intensely at work on the 2023 Synod of Bishops on synodality, which Pope Francis officially opened Oct. 10. In the last two weeks of September alone, he visited Missouri, Massachusetts, Illinois, Nevada and Kentucky, carrying the pope's message.

"It is exhausting," he laughed.

The nuncio described a primary function of his job as providing analysis so the pope can play his role in a complex world – analysis that is "never black and white."

"We try to preach the Gospel in this world; we aren't creating a new society," the archbishop said.

Over the past 45 years, he has worked in nine countries, most of them poor.

"I started in New Zealand and the South Pacific. Then I went to Mozambique with (President) Samora Machel. Then I went to Zimbabwe with (Robert) Mugabe. Then I went to Cuba with Fidel Castro," he recounted.

"Beautiful figures of dictators: Machel, Mugabe, Fidel Castro. Then a bit later, I was with Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti. Then, I was with

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Trump," Archbishop Pierre said.

"We are not like foreigners. As soon as we arrive in a country, we are part of the country, because we are in the church," he said. "This is our specificity."

Gazing down on the nuncio as he spoke were portraits of several predecessors.

The largest portrait depicts Italian Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, who built the substantial nunciature. He represented the Vatican in Washington as apostolic delegate – the two countries did not yet have formal diplomatic relations – from 1933 to 1958.

Archbishop Pierre said then-Archbishop Cicognani was hardly utilized by Pope Pius XII, but with the ascent of Pope John XXIII, in a "twist of history," the Italian diplomat was named to the College of Cardinals in 1958, joining his brother, Gaetano, already a cardinal.

Pope John XXIII named Cardinal Amleto Cicognani secretary of state in 1961. He served as the Vatican's top diplomat until 1969, when he resigned at age 86.

"He is inspiring," said Archbishop Pierre, "But I don't identify with him."

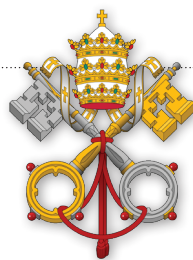
A smaller painting features Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, nuncio from 2011 to 2016 and author of scandalous statements against Pope Francis.

Asked why the portrait remains on the wall, Archbishop Pierre replied, "Because we are not Americans (who) want to take away the statues. We respect history."

Besides, Archbishop Pierre added, "I've known him for 40 years."



Archbishop
Christophe Pierre



definition:

nun•ci•o

(noun) a papal ambassador to a foreign court or government.

The Pope, as the Vicar of Christ on earth, in order to ensure that each country has a tangible sign of his care for the Lord's entire Flock, appoints an Apostolic Nuncio (Ambassador of the Holy See) as his personal and official representative both to the Church in the United States and to its Government.