



# SYNODAL PROCESS EXECUTIVE REPORT

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*“Synodality represents the path by which the Church can be renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, listening together to what God has to say to his people.” - Pope Francis*

## I. THE SYNODAL PATH IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER: BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

Taking to heart the invitation from the Holy Father, Pope Francis, the Church of Northern Colorado embarked on a six-month long process of synodality, journeying together to listen to what the Holy Spirit desires for and from us for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel in the modern wilderness of our times.

Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila and his mission leadership team were particularly moved through their prayer and reflection upon receiving the Holy Father’s invitation to see that this synodal journey truly was, “[unfolding] within a historical context marked by epochal changes in society and a crucial transition in the life of the Church,” and that as a Church the Lord was very clearly inviting us, “within the folds of the complexity of this context, in its tensions and contradictions... to “scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in light of the Gospel.””<sup>1</sup>

In the year prior to the announcement of this Synodal process, the Archdiocese of Denver had begun to embark on a journey of prayer and discernment, asking the Lord to bring clarity to what he desired for and from his church and his sons and daughters in our territory. One critical layer of clarity the Lord provided came from recognizing that we no longer live in Christendom, but rather in a new apostolic age. As such, the Lord was calling us to equip his Church for apostolic mission.

What is apostolic mission? Simply it is the understanding that we live in a time where the culture and society in which we find ourselves no longer sees the world in the light of the Gospel. The culture no longer shares nor holds the same beliefs, ethical, or moral foundations that we do, and has become not simply adversarial, but rather blatantly hostile to the Catholic worldview and way of life. Even many of those who call themselves Christian today believe Christianity has very little to offer them in the modern age. Thus, these times are apostolic for we find ourselves, in many respects, locked in a time that resembles various moments in our Church’s history including the primitive Church: a church composed of 12 apostles, 72 disciples, a few hundred followers living in a hostile environment with little to nothing in terms of human power and resources.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the fire of their love for Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit burned deeply in their hearts and it allowed them to set the entire world on fire.

In an apostolic time, the heart of apostolic mission is to gain a genuine conversion of mind and vision through a bold and new proclamation of the saving message of the Gospel, which has the power to transform our minds to behold a sacramental vision of the world.<sup>3</sup> This new cultural situation required us to listen to the Holy Spirit for his inspiration, so that we can be equipped to live and share the Gospel that gives our lives purpose and meaning.

<sup>1</sup> Synod Preparatory Document, I. The Call to Journey Together, #4

<sup>2</sup> Reflection on apostolic mission derived from discernment with the text, *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age*, University of Mary Press. 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

This, however, would require a transformation of mind, vision, and practice for our Archdiocese, for our parishes, and for all followers of Jesus Christ. From this realization and through prayer, we received from the Lord profound clarity on why we exist as a Church, captured in the following statement written by Archbishop Aquila and his leadership team:

*The Archdiocese of Denver exists so that in Jesus Christ all might be rescued and have abundant life, for the glory of the Father.*

With this beautiful clarity, we turned our attention to discerning how we would carry out this work which God had begun to set aflame in our hearts. The invitation to enter this synodal process locally, coming from the Holy Father at the time that it did, was our answer. It became clear to Archbishop Aquila, as he prayed with his leadership team and the guiding documents of the synod process, that the Lord was providing this opportunity as a way to accelerate the work he was beginning to do.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the synodal process was our response to this invitation from the Lord to engage the people of God in the Archdiocese of Denver in a process of formation and listening across our parishes and in a diocesan-wide gathering to regain clarity on the mission the Lord has given to his Church and to listen collectively for where and how he was inviting us to extend that mission today in this new apostolic age.

Archbishop Aquila, placing our synodal process under the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, proceeded to commission a Synod Team composed of men and women from various races, nationalities, and vocations as representative of the Church of Northern Colorado to prepare for and carry out our synodal process.

Our synodal process was defined by two central goals:

### **Goal #1: To Re-Acquire a Biblical Worldview**

All of the faithful of the Archdiocese of Denver were called to regain clarity on our mission as a Church by discovering our place in the great narrative of salvation history, recognizing that the heart of discipleship is to see the world as it really is by knowing the story of what God has done through Jesus Christ.

### **Goal #2: Listen to God**

The mission and teachings of the Church are perennial; how, though, do we best accomplish that mission today? Better than our own plans or best ideas, we realized that we must listen to and discern God's voice allowing him to be the "planner" in our archdiocese, surrendering each step of the way to the Holy Spirit who is the principal agent of all renewal.

In order to truly listen to the Holy Spirit during both the parish and archdiocesan-wide discernment gatherings in early 2022, we knew that we would need to first have clarity on why the Church exists and what the mission of Jesus is — we would need to know the story. More straightforwardly, we would need to "re-acquire a biblical worldview." That is why, from the Feast of Christ the King through Christmas, Archbishop Aquila invited the entire Archdiocese of Denver to "go on retreat" together.

Delivered over five Sunday homilies, launching on the Feast of Christ the King and then through unpacking the Gospel over the four Sundays of Advent, all priests in the Archdiocese of Denver delivered the kerygma to the faithful in their parishes as part of their homilies. These homilies and

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<sup>4</sup> Archbishop Samuel Aquila. November 19, 2021. *Synod Can Accelerate Our Missionary Move*. <https://denvercatholic.org/synod-can-accelerate-our-missionary-move/>

related reflection questions were intended to open our ears and hearts to the Holy Spirit, as Christ did on the Road to Emmaus, so that we might see and hear clearly and encounter him anew. There was the conviction that we could not truly listen to God until we, as an Archdiocese, had the clarity on his mission.

Once we completed the process of encounter with the Lord through the proclamation of the kerygma, we focused on further preparation and formation of the parish representatives who would attend our Archdiocesan Discernment Event in March 2022. The parish representatives and their pastors hosted Parish Discernment Gatherings throughout the month of February 2022.

### **Parish Discernment Gathering Format**

All Parish Discernment Gatherings, whether hosted at parishes or in other locations, were asked to provide quality time for silent prayer, preferably in front of the Blessed Sacrament. This prayer time happened either once at the start of the gathering or before discussing each of the questions. Following prayer, facilitators would lead small group discussions asking participants to share what they heard in prayer regarding each of the three questions. Scribes were selected to write down the responses of the participants, which were then collected by the parish representatives.

### **Discernment Questions**

Three questions were discerned at the local Parish Discernment Gatherings asking what the Holy Spirit is saying to us about the mission of the disciple, the mission of the parish, and the mission of the Archdiocese of Denver. The exact questions can be found in Appendix B.

Parishes then provided reports of what

they heard the Holy Spirit saying through their gatherings which were submitted to the Synod Team and were used to prepare the Archdiocesan-wide Discernment Event, which took place March 25-27, 2022. In the lead up to the event, Archbishop Aquila invited the faithful to join in a prayer of the Surrender Novena which ended on March 25, 2022, for the intention of our synodal process.

### **Virtual Survey Format**

A virtual format was provided for those who were unable to attend their Parish Discernment Gathering or for those who have fallen away from the practice of the faith. Responses from the virtual surveys were collected centrally by the Synod Team and then shared with parish representatives. If respondents identified their parish, their response was included in their respective parish synthesis report. If not, they were accounted for by the Synod Team. All responses thus, were honored and reviewed.

### **Participants in the Parish Phase**

The demographics of participants in this phase of the synodal process was broad: parishioners, small groups, ministry coordinators, staff, retreat participants, senior citizens, students, and young children all came together to listen to God speak through the Holy Spirit. We are confident that God spoke clearly and powerfully through prayer during these gatherings on how we can more effectively carry out the mission of the church here in the Archdiocese of Denver. Eighty-nine parishes held a reported total of 168 gatherings with a reported total of over 3,700 attendees. These gatherings were held in three different languages, English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Additionally, 316 people submitted responses via an online form.

## II. ARCHDIOCESAN DISCERNMENT EVENT PREPARATION AND THEMES

In early March, the Synod Team gathered for a day of prayer over all the synthesis reports and responses submitted from the various Discernment Gatherings and from the surveys. The Synod Team was asked to identify words, phrases, and messages that were repeated throughout the responses, as echoes of the Holy Spirit speaking. The Synod Team was also tasked with grounding their conversation in scripture as confirmation of an echo being from the Lord. The themes that emerged were the foundation for the March Archdiocesan Synod Event.

The following is a synthesis of the themes that emerged from the Holy Spirit through the various discernment gatherings, as identified by the Synod Team:

### ***Mission of the Disciple:***

Your first mission is to divine intimacy with me. Do that in prayer. Abide in me (Jn 15:5).

Take seriously that you are the plan and take personal responsibility for the mission to evangelize.

My plan needs you to grow in truth and virtue.

This time needs your life to be characterized by public witness. We need to be intentional about sharing the fruits of abiding in the Lord: love, joy, boldness, courage, conviction.

### ***Mission of the Parish:***

Be more welcoming; welcoming like the Father of the prodigal son (Luke 15), a place where people are expected/awaited, seen, known, and loved.

Work actively towards unity between Catholics of different languages, cultural backgrounds, liturgical expressions, political affiliations, etc.

Be a place where disciples are equipped to live their mission and vocation (Ephesians 4).

Parishes don't exist for their own sake. You are sent out for the sake of the broader community. Reach out. You have a treasure to share. Reach out to the fallen away. Reach out to the poor. Reach out to the broader community.

### ***Mission of the Church:***

Heal. You have work to do to be a minister of healing from the wounds you've caused, for the wounds in the broader Church, for the wounds amongst families and individuals.

Unite. I need my Church in Northern Colorado to unite (Ephesians 4:4).

Stand firm in truth. Boldly proclaim the truth. Be a source of light for the broader world. Reveal the truth with love, mercy, and for healing. But receive the truth first. Be purified in it so that you can be an authentic source of light for the world.

In addition, due to a recurring theme of the family that arose in the parish discernment gatherings, a fourth topic on the mission of the family was added for discernment at the March Archdiocesan Synod Event.

### **Archdiocesan Discernment Event Representatives**

Each Pastor was asked to select two parish representatives that along with them would be invited to attend the Archdiocesan Discernment Event. In addition, at-large synod representatives were selected to ensure the various religious orders, apostolates, movements, institutes, ministries, and key advisory groups and boards in the Archdiocese of Denver were all represented in the Synod process.

In total, 349 people including pastors, parish representatives, Movement Coordinators, Apostolate Leaders, Religious Superiors, Seminarian Formators, and Archdiocesan Council Leaders gathered with Archbishop Aquila to discover how God is inviting us into the mission of the Church, the mission of the parish, the mission of the family, and the mission of the disciple.

### **Archdiocesan Discernment Event Format**

Representatives from across the Archdiocese of Denver gathered at a hotel in Broomfield, Colorado for three days of prayer and discernment conversations between March 25 and March 27, 2022.

On March 25, 2022, Archbishop Aquila opened our Archdiocesan Discernment Event with a mass. During the mass, in unity with the Holy Father, he also performed a consecration of Russia and the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We do not think it was a coincidence that the Holy Father invited bishops to join him in this consecration on the day we were opening our synod event. During the mass too, Archbishop Aquila offered prayers of repentance, seeking forgiveness on behalf of our Church and her leaders for the many sins the faithful have committed.

The synod event format resembled that of the parish discernment gatherings. The four sessions of the event were centered on the four themes of the mission of the disciple, the mission of the family, the mission of the parish, and the mission of the Archdiocese of Denver. The exact questions can be found in Appendix B.

Each of the four sessions began with a brief presentation from a member of the Synod Team that presented the recurring

themes for each of the four missions and a question for discernment. Three of the presentations were given by lay members of the team and one was given by a priest. Before each period of discussion, participants were given at least 30 minutes of quiet time in front of the Blessed Sacrament to pray about the question. They then proceeded to gather in small groups composed of approximately 10 representatives. Representatives selected scribes and reporters who would submit the answers from their groups virtually, in real-time. Each group was also given an opportunity to share a synthesis of their discussion to the whole group.

### **Post-Synodal Discernment**

Following the Archdiocesan Discernment Event, the Synod Team gathered on two occasions to pray over all the responses and feedback collected at the event. This resulted in an updated synthesis which was presented to Archbishop Aquila and his mission leadership team. The Synod Team then gathered with Archbishop Aquila and his Mission Leadership Team to pray over the themes and discuss the key messages from the Holy Spirit coming out of the entirety of this synodal process.

### **Specific Clarity on the Missions**

#### ***Mission of the Disciple:***

We need to let our relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit actually transform us. In this relationship is where we hear that we have been chosen to go out and be his plan. Recognizing that we are God's plan, being sent in the world on a rescue mission for Jesus, means that we must accept that we are our brother and sister's keeper. This begins in our sphere of influence, in our family and with our neighbors.

We are called to be the “next door saints,” (Gaudete et exsultate, 6-9.)<sup>1</sup> and in radical mission for the ‘one lost sheep.’ Lastly, we heard the Holy Spirit saying, “Disciple, it’s not all up to you. Put to rest your temptation to activism. Rest in me and it will be done.”

***Mission of the Family:***

Clarity on the mission of the family is included in the section entitled “Key Themes,” as the mission of the family arose in many discussions, not simply the session dedicated to it.

***Mission of the Parish:***

The Eucharist is the soul of the parish. To quote Venerable Fulton Sheen, “You will win the war before the Blessed Sacrament.” We must find creative ways to bring our Eucharistic Lord to others and to bring others to our Eucharistic Lord.

***Mission of the Church/ Archdiocese of Denver:***

We must continue to do everything we can to reach our youth with the Gospel. We must take a next step to deliberately pray and plan with the Lord for this.

The Archdiocese of Denver curia is being called to be a place of coordination and formation of parishes, providing resources, removing obstacles, and getting out of the way for the parish to do the work that is properly theirs. To do this, they must know the “smell of the sheep” and be more present in the community, embracing an attitude that sees our parishes and churches not as a problem to be solved. We heard the Lord saying here, “I will take care of my bride. She is not a problem to be solved.”

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html)

### III. KEY THEMES ON WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS LEADING US

Throughout the entirety of the synodal process, the following messages emerged that we believe represent the desires the Lord has for us and his Church in Northern Colorado:

#### Healing:

If we are God's plan, we need to recognize our own need for ongoing personal healing of our sins and our woundedness, a healing that can only be found in Jesus. People noted that Christ would perform miraculous healings and the recipients would then become disciples. They realized that they needed healing of their personal wounds in order freely to follow God as a disciple. Jesus desires to heal us, asking, "What would you have me do for you?" (Mark 10:51).

Healing, ultimately, begins at the top. Healing must flow from the archbishop to priests, from the curia to parishes, from priests to the laity, from lay leaders to others. We cannot lose sight of the wounds and sins of the faithful and the church from the past and recognize that we are not above sinning even now, thus we must continue to seek repentance, healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In particular, we heard our curia is being called to be agents of healing and more present in the community.

Our parishes need to be actively working towards a supernatural unity and healing. We all need healing through reconciliation with Christ first, and then with each other (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). As such, parishes are being called to be centers of healing and to be supported by the archdiocese in order to be equipped for this ministry. This healing, in and by Christ, is an avenue to unity.

We are also being invited to help families encounter healing and forgiveness. There is much suffering in the family and the Church must be a source of healing for the brokenness of the family today. Families are struggling in our current culture. Participants in the discernment gatherings asked the Church to teach them how to be agents of healing and forgiveness in their own families.

We must also work towards greater healing of communities of different races, cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities that have been wounded by the church and some of her members, including priests. The church must name and claim the ways it has caused harm through the rejection and exclusion of individuals and groups alike.

Lastly, there was a recognition that this synodal way and approach of prayer and discernment has already proven to be healing, unifying, and worth proclaiming. The process also made clear that the one who heals is Christ the Divine Physician. We are being called to seek him for our own healing, to ask forgiveness for the wounds we caused, and to lead others to Him so that they can be healed. How we concretely create a culture of healing is something we are continuing to discern.

#### Family:

We are called to embrace the messiness and suffering of the family. We can't run away from the brokenness in the family. Many families experience shame because their family situation does not live up to "the ideal." This shame becomes a barrier to belonging and a perceived obstacle to feeling welcome in our communities. Oftentimes, too, our concept of the family becomes overly individualistic. No family is perfect and every family needs accompaniment;

we are called to find ways to genuinely and authentically accompany families and help them encounter healing. There is a great desire for communities of families, especially in parishes.

Parents are the primary formators and educators of their children, but many are lost and confused as to how to carry out this role. There is a desire, especially from parents, to receive formation and accompaniment, especially through “families mentoring families.” There was a call for ongoing formation for newlyweds and formation for parents to know what it means to be Father and Mother. Identity is received, for good or bad, in the relationships that exist within families. The confusion of the world has resulted in a loss of a sense of the necessary complementarity of father and mother, man and woman, and the unique genius and gifts of each, all of which are critical for the family and the proper formation of children. Formation and clarity around these roles is needed.

### **Unity, Community and Welcoming**

Discipleship needs communion, union, and community. We are called to challenge the separation, isolation, and loneliness of our culture by being the communion of the Church and working towards supernatural unity which comes from our personal communion with the Trinity. We must abide in a relationship of love with the Trinity to be able to truly be a community rooted in authentic charity. “Christ called to himself twelve men,” (Mark 3:13), as such our calling and our growth as disciples does not happen in isolation but happens in the communion of the Church. The Church is a family with a clear head who unites and ‘tunes’ us to desires from the heart of the Father.

As such, our parishes must be communities united in communion with the Church. Belonging to the parish also brings forth unity and thus, our parishes must forge

unity within themselves. This unity must permeate all ministries and peoples of different races, ethnicities, languages, nationalities, and liturgical preferences so that we live the reality of being under one roof. This invitation for us is clear and has been ongoing, but there is a recognition that we just have not done it. At the archdiocesan level, this includes bridging the cultural and linguistic divide between the English and Spanish-speaking communities. The many beautiful and diverse movements in our archdiocese can be models of this.

Further, unity and communion can be formed through consistency and clarity. Consistency of experiences, formation, and messaging. We need ongoing unity in prayer like the Advent preaching series, the Surrender novena, and the synodal experience. In many ways, this is the beginning.

If God is asking our parishes to be welcoming like the father of the prodigal son, then the parishes must be places where all can find their true identity: a home where we discover our worth as beloved sons and daughters of the Father. This is accomplished through accompaniment that is more substantive and not just reduced to an activity. It must be a substantial welcoming through personal invitation and embrace. However, to welcome does not mean to compromise. We must remain rooted in truth, in sound doctrine, and revelation. We must avoid the two flawed sides- compromising truth or compromising love. Thus, our invitation must be to “come and see,” and it must be loving and for all. We are most comfortable welcoming those who look like us and the Holy Spirit is inviting us to receive eyes to see who we’re not currently welcoming.

In this light, our parishes must know their territories, its unique reality, and its people, in and out of the pews and beyond the parking lot of the church. While we have an individ-

ual responsibility to live the mission, we're called to live this in community. The parish needs to be this communal hub for mission. Parishes could benefit from having mission teams that discern the reality and ways to meet the spiritual needs of its territory.

### **Accompaniment**

The parish is also being called to be a place of synodality, of journeying together with the people where the fire of faith is shared and becomes contagious. True accompaniment comes from walking with someone to know Jesus and the parish must be the source of accompanying, especially with those who are alone, wounded, rejected, and broken. Accompaniment must be a culture of 'being-with', not just teaching.

The model of accompaniment came up in many contexts throughout our discernment. For instance, in order for parishes to be truly welcoming, it is not enough to have someone greet people at the door. In order to be truly welcoming, people must take newcomers "under their wing" and help them find their home in the parish. Families also need accompanying, especially those who are in difficult circumstances, such as those who are divorced and civilly-remarried. All families, however, need accompaniment, as a common desire was to have families mentor families. Finally, regarding equipping for mission, participants at both the parish gatherings and the Archdiocesan Synodal Event expressed a desire to know their gifts and charisms and how they can use them for mission. This is best discovered and taught through personal accompaniment.

### **Equipping the Saints (Ephesians 4):**

Laity and clergy alike desire to be equipped for mission. Parishes should be places where disciples are equipped to live their mission and vocation. In particular, and

in faithfulness to Vatican II, the laity is called to be the protagonist for our Church today in the sanctification of the world in Christ Jesus. This invitation cannot rest solely on the clergy and religious. As such, we are being called as a Church to co-responsibility of the mission between the laity and the clergy. To accomplish this, we must safeguard against the tendency to clericalize the laity. In particular, the clergy is being called to help the laity know their gifts and charisms explicitly and find ways for their formation according to an apprenticeship model. Participants expressed desire for formation in the practical aspects of how to share the faith, joy, and love of Christ with others. Ultimately, this means that we must be willing to simplify and focus our efforts to effectively equip.

### **Let's Get Back to the Basics! Return to Your First Love:**

The Holy Spirit made it abundantly clear that our first mission is to divine intimacy with the Trinity. However, as one representative noted, "Like Martha, we in Denver can be anxious about many things." The Archdiocese of Denver feels the weight of activity and has become obsessed with doing mission work. We have heard the Lord saying very clearly, "Prioritize me first. Come back to the love we had at first," (Revelation 2:1-7). To do this, we must pray to identify where we have prioritized the work of mission over living in a relationship of love with God and others. We have overcomplicated many things and the Lord is saying, "Go back to the basics. Be humble. Do less and you'll do more." The invitation, then, is to reflect on how much we're doing as disciples, in our parishes, and as a Church to assess if it's getting in the way of loving God and loving our neighbor.

## IV. FIRST FRUITS OF THE SYNODAL PROCESS

The Holy Spirit worked in amazing ways over the past few months as we opened ourselves to receive God’s plan. The first fruits of this process can be summed up in three categories: the process itself, conversions, and action.

The communal discernment process itself was a fruit of the call to a synodal experience. By asking God to reveal His plans for us, we put aside our own ideas, preoccupations, and anxieties. Many people entered the parish discernment sessions, and even the Archdiocesan Synodal Event, with their own ideas about what is wrong with the Church and how to fix it. This naturally leads to conflict and division as people have different assessments about where the Church is at and where she should go. By first spending time in prayer, asking God to reveal where and how he wants us to go on mission, the division of personal agendas was healed. Very clear and common themes arose amongst all the parishes, showing that the Holy Spirit was speaking in the communal prayer of the people of the whole Archdiocese of Denver. Two themes, as mentioned previously, were unity and healing.

Our approach for discernment of proposing a question, praying with the question, discussing the fruits of the prayer, and synthesizing the discussion is simple and replicable at all levels, from the individual to the family, to the parish. We have even begun to incorporate it in the meetings at the curia of the archdiocese. At the end of our Archdiocesan Synodal Event, we encouraged the participants to use this approach in their families, businesses, and parishes.

Another first-fruit of the process was the number of conversions that took place when people encountered Jesus Christ in prayer. One pastor shared that he had a pa-

rishioner who opposed him in every decision that he made. At the end of the prayer period during the parish discernment phase, the gentleman stayed in the chapel in Eucharistic adoration for an additional ten minutes. When he rejoined the group for discussion, he was crying. After that experience, he and the pastor have had a good relationship and the gentleman is no longer reflexively antagonistic.

At the Archdiocesan Event, another gentleman told a member of the Synod Team all his opinions about what the Church is doing wrong and what needs to change. The member of the Synod Team told him to go into the chapel and tell Jesus exactly what he had just said. After spending time in Adoration, the man left the chapel in tears and approached the Synod Team member. “I told Jesus exactly what I told you,” he said “then I waited for God to respond. The first words I heard were ‘Would it even matter?’” Through time in honest prayer, the gentleman was convicted of his own pride and experienced a conversion that opened him to following the will of God instead of his own will or that of the world.

Finally, two of the parish representatives at the Archdiocesan Event were married but had been struggling in their relationship and had been fighting often. The experience of spending time in prayer together helped heal their relationship and they now pray together regularly. They related to us how they are now more forgiving and don’t fight like they used to.

The last first-fruit of the process is that people took action once they prayed. One parish discerned the need to provide a stronger sense of community for parishioners and immediately created small-groups, where a small number of individuals or fam-

ilies would get together to share faith and fellowship. They had almost two hundred people sign-up immediately to participate in these groups. Another joyous fruit was that two parish representatives met each other during a training session that was held near the beginning of the process and they are now engaged to be married.

We understand that this synodal discernment was only the beginning of the process and we are looking forward to seeing more fruits as we continue to follow God's plan for the Archdiocese of Denver.

## V. APPENDICES

Many resources including videos, guides, and Frequently Asked Questions can be found on our webpage: [synod.archden.org](http://synod.archden.org).

### Appendix A: Timeline

#### OPENING SYNOD LITURGY

October 17, 2021, at 8:30 am at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception for the Opening Synod Liturgy celebrated by Archbishop Aquila.

#### PARISH PHASE

**Nov. 3-4:** Parish Phase Preparation Days

**Nov. 21 - Christmas:** Archdiocesan-wide Retreat

**By Jan 7th:** Parishes choose Parish Representatives

**Jan 24 - Feb 18:** Parish discernment gatherings

#### PARISH REPRESENTATIVE PREPARATION JAN - FEB 2022

**Jan 21-22:** Two-Day Parish Representative Preparation and Formation Event

**Jan - Feb:** Further Support and Training for Parish Discernment Gatherings

#### ARCHDIOCESAN PHASE MAR - APR 2022

**March 25-27:** Archdiocesan Discernment Event

**July:** Synthesis, Document Submission, Communication of Outcomes

### Appendix B: Questions Asked

The following questions were discerned at the local *Parish Discernment Gatherings* and served as the basis for our Archdiocesan Wide Discernment Event:

- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying in prayer to the Church of northern Colorado about how he wants that mission to be carried out today in this apostolic time?
- In supporting the Church's mission, the parish functions like an "embassy" – a

place of home and freedom in a foreign and sometimes hostile land where anyone can find support and refuge. What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying in prayer to the Church of Denver about how our parishes can more effectively live out that "embassy" mission?

- The mission of each disciple is given to them in baptism. This mission is to become a saint by being "on mission" in their individual lives and families "so that all might be rescued." What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you personally, in prayer, about how you are being called to live out that mission today?

The following questions were discerned at the *Archdiocesan-Wide Discernment Event*:

- In light of what we have heard today [in the presentation on the mission of the disciple] and throughout the discernment gatherings, what is the Holy Spirit saying he desires from disciples and from you as a disciple in the church of Northern Colorado?
- In light of what we have heard today [in the presentation on the mission of the family] and throughout the discernment gatherings, what is the Holy Spirit saying he desires for families in the church of Northern Colorado?
- In light of what we have heard today [in the presentation on the mission of the parish] and throughout the discernment gatherings, what is the Holy Spirit saying he desires from parishes in the church of Northern Colorado, [especially in light of the themes of welcoming, unity, equipping for mission and holiness, and outreach]?
- In light of what we have heard today [in the presentation on the mission of the Archdiocese] and throughout the discern-

ment gatherings, what do you hear the Holy Spirit saying in prayer to the church of Northern Colorado about how he wants that mission to be carried out today in this apostolic time?

**Appendix C: Formats for Discussion**

Three formats were proposed for the parish phase of the process to accommodate the different needs and capacities of each parish. The Archdiocesan Discernment Event utilized the “Large Group” option.

The first format was a simple electronic format. All parishes offered this option. Videos and questions for prayerful reflection were provided and people submitted their answers electronically. If a person did not have access to the internet, or is not fluent with technology, paper forms were provided by the parish. The parish synthesized the responses given on the paper forms and include them with the responses of in-person gatherings if they choose to also include one of those formats.

The second format was an in-person meeting of a representative group of the parish, whose members signed-up or were chosen by the pastor. The third format is a large-group meeting, with many parishioners in attendance, but sitting in smaller groups so as to facilitate more productive dialogue. Both in-person formats included a brief talk on each topic, time for prayer, and time for discussion.

Below is a sample schedule for a large-group discernment gathering that considered one question a week over the course of three weeks.

**Session 1 – Question One: Mission of the Church**

5:30pm Optional dinner  
 6:00pm Welcome, opening prayer and introduction video from Archbishop Aquila

6:15pm Facilitator gives a short explanation of how the evening will proceed  
 6:20pm Introduction Video for Question 1: Mission of the Church  
 6:25pm Transition to the Church or other location suitable for prayer  
 (Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament if possible)  
 6:30pm Prayer Time with the Questions  
 6:45pm Transition back to tables  
 6:50pm Sharing what each person received in prayer (at tables, facilitated by table leader and recorded by scribe). Prior to this first sharing, invite each person at the table to briefly introduce themselves to the group.  
 7:20 pm Large-Group Synopsis (table leaders take turns briefly reporting what their group discussed)  
 7:30pm Concluding remarks (thank you for participating, instructions on how to submit additional feedback, and concluding prayer)

**Appendix D: Demographic Information**

Total Number of Parishes that held Gatherings	89
Total Number of Reported Attendees	3760
Total Number of Reported Gatherings	168
Total Number of Languages Represented	3
Total Number of Individual Discernment Forms Submitted	316
Total Number of Parish Discernment Weekend Attendees	349

**Who was invited to the Parish Listening Gatherings?**

Entire parish community  
 Established small groups  
 Formation Classes

Ministry Coordinators  
Parish Staff  
Retreat participants  
School Staff

**How were invitations made to the Parish Listening Gatherings?**

Bulletin  
Flocknote  
Mailings to parishioners  
Personal Invitation  
Pulpit Announcement

**Who attended the Parish Listening Gatherings?**

Adoration Goers  
Established Small Groups  
Formation Classes  
K-12 Students  
Ministry Coordinators  
Parents  
Retreat participants  
Senior Citizens  
Staff  
Young Adults  
Youth Group

**How were the Parish Listening Gatherings held?**

In person  
Online  
Large Group Gatherings  
Small Groups  
Weekend Retreat

**Appendix E: Synod Team Members**

The Synod Team of the Archdiocese of Denver was composed of the following members: Mr. Tim Glemkowski, Mrs. Kateri Williams, Mr. Elias Moo, Mr. Andrew McGown, Ms. Alejandra Bravo, Mr. Abram Leon, Msgr. Peter Quang, and Fr. Tom Scherer.

As the process continued, Mrs. Sarah Wigand and Mrs. Caitlin Wojtasek also joined the team. Mr. Rick Popp and Mr. Nick Jorgensen from the organization Acts XXIX provided advice and assistance throughout the process.