

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is a Synod?**

A Synod is both an event and a process that sees people — clergy, religious, and laity — gather to discuss important matters of the faith. Synods are transformative events that lead to renewal in the Church's life. In expressing his confidence that, "in response to our prayers through the synod in 2016, God will make being missionaries part of the DNA of our archdiocese."

### **What is the purpose of Synod '16?**

Archbishop Vigneron summarized a two-fold purpose of Synod '16. The first is "missionary." The focus of this Synod is *evangelization*, to attempt a radical overhaul of the Church in Detroit, a complete reversal of our focus from an inward, or maintenance-focused church, to outward, or mission-focused church. The second is, "DNA," to transform the very culture of our Archdiocese — how we work, how we pray, how we minister, everything — so that in everything we do, we are more effective witnesses to the Gospel.

### **Why is it important to focus on evangelization right now?**

The natural state of the Church is one of growth. We are living in a time of unnatural deterioration of the Church. The decline in sacramental participation and vocations as well as the closing of parishes are unnatural aberrations rooted in an erosion of evangelization.

Archbishop Vigneron and the leadership of the Archdiocese of Detroit have acknowledged that we need to undo some of what we've become as a people of Christ — passive in prioritizing and living our faith, sad about the perceived decline of the importance of Jesus and Church institutions, and accustomed to a malaise rooted in believing there is little that can be done. Just as we are seeing revitalization in our city, we seek to bring about rebirth of the Church in Detroit.

### **Who participates in Synod '16?**

Approximately 400 participants, including clergy and laity, will take part in Synod '16.

### **How were the members chosen?**

Each pastor was asked to prayerfully nominate three people from his parish who he thought could be flexible, creative, and discerning to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, a body of clergy and lay Catholics who advise the archbishop, prayerfully considered the nominations and elected the members. Clergy and religious have been elected by their peers and invited by the Archbishop.

### **What is the role of a Synod member?**

Members of the synod are counted upon to be instruments of the Holy Spirit and catalysts for advising the archbishop on bringing about new and creative ways to Unleash the Gospel in Metro Detroit.

### **What will be discussed at the Synod?**

The Unleash the Gospel Leadership Team, its four subcommittees, and the Synod Synthesis Team have identified four key areas for the Synod to consider: 1) how to encourage Catholics to foster their *individual* relationship with Jesus Christ, 2.) A Christ-centered *family* life, prayer and catechesis, 3.) how *parishes* can best evangelize, form, connect, equip and support families and individuals in local mission, and 4.) how *the Archbishop and his Chancery* can best provide strategic and structural support to parishes and other mission entities.

### **What changes should we anticipate from Synod '16?**

It is difficult to say because we do not know where the Holy Spirit will lead us. But, much of the conversation is expected to center around how we can make our parishes, schools, hospitals, charitable organizations, families, etc. more joyfully missionary-based.

### **What happens after Synod '16 is over?**

The Synod is an important step which will allow the faithful to consider questions and make recommendations to Archbishop Vigneron about transforming our regional church into an evangelizing diocese of joyful, missionary disciples. After the conclusion of the Synod, Archbishop Vigneron will prayerfully consider the recommendations and promulgate those which he feels will most help us become joyful, missionary disciples of Christ. Archbishop Vigneron expects to make an announcement about the outcome of Synod '16 on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 2017.

### **What changes could there be to ministry at my own church as a result of the Synod?**

While it is difficult to say, it is important to acknowledge that radical changes are possible as a result of a synod. For example, the Synod in the Archdiocese following Vatican II, while much wider in scope than our current Synod, led to the redevelopment of parish governance, with the concepts of lay participation in parish councils, finance councils, worship commissions, etc.

It is important to keep in mind that the Synod discussions could spark all means — from the traditional to the creative — of making life at our churches best reflect the joyful, missionary spirit of the Church.

### **Have there been previous synods in the Archdiocese of Detroit?**

Yes. This is the 11<sup>th</sup> Synod in the Archdiocese of Detroit since its founding as a dioceses in 1833. The last synod took place in 1969.