



Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher
Bishop of Buffalo

October 20, 2021

Dear Friends - brothers and sisters in our Lord.

Thank you for again joining me in my weekly Journeys and Insights weekly update.

This past Sunday at our Cathedral, we opened the universal Synod that was initiated by our Holy Father, Pope Francis in Rome just a little over a week ago. He characterized this as a “A Journey of Spiritual Discernment,” that the entire Church is invited to participate in as a way to determine how best to define and assert Catholic and Christian Faith in the modern world. *Communion, Participation and Mission* are the main themes and guideposts of this journey that all throughout our Church are asked to travel during these next two years

Of course, this assertion of Catholic faith and witness in society is not a new idea. The second Vatican Council called for the same in the central document of *Lumen Gentium*. It defined the role of Christian witness and engagement in the modern world, which continues to be relevant in our own day and time. We have an obligation to assert a distinctly Christian perspective and understanding about the critical issues that preoccupy our secular discussions and decisions. In doing so, we fulfill our mission of evangelization - to represent and invoke the perspective of Christian discipleship: to love one another, to serve one another, to care for those whom society has forgotten, to promote the common good that leaves no one behind.

The Synod that we’ve now begun here in our own Diocese of Buffalo requires that we listen intently, engage with all who wish to express their view, and to then make known the many views and insights in what will be our Diocesan report to the Holy See in 2023, culminating in a major convocation of bishops from around the world at the Vatican.

The Holy Father has challenged us first and foremost to listen. It is this essential act of listening that enables us to discern and to act with intention - to respond to the Gospel of Christ in ways that make a difference and are experienced in everyday life. As such, the Synod is fundamentally an invitation to journey together - to listen together - to discern together and to define new ways to assert the transcendent power of Christ’s Gospel and teachings in our own day and time and with the many gifts that are available in the Body of Christ. What a wonderful opportunity this presents us! And, of course, it’s wholly consistent with our own Road to Renewal.



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We need to reassert the role of Catholic faith and witness across Western New York - and to identify ways to collaborate better and make better use of the vast resources that exist in our many parishes for the benefit of those who may need what others have and offer. This is essentially what our Road to Renewal is all about. It's also what the Synod aims to achieve - a clearer definition of Catholic faith and ministry to serve the abundant need all around us.

We have formed a leadership team for our diocesan implementation of the universal Synod. As such, you'll be hearing a great deal more about this in the coming days in your parishes and from me. I ask that you pray and engage in this work in the day, weeks and months ahead. The Synod will continue over the next two years and there'll be many opportunities to engage and provide input as to what we need to do, how we need to do it and, ultimately, what we need to accomplish as members of the Catholic faith in the years ahead. As our Holy Father has made clear: *"The purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but "to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to be nourished, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands."*

Thank you for your commitment to this work. You are vital to our ability to respond and contribute to the input that will define our collective mission. Let me us now together pray the prayer of the Synod:

"We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find
in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the
communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen. "

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Bishop Mike