



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

**February 2, 2022 – Feast of Our Lord, the Meeting with Simeon**

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to His Holy Passion! Glory to His Holy Resurrection!

My dear friends,

Our extraordinary Holy Father, Pope Francis, has certainly kept us awake during his time as Pope starting in 2013. Before the Synod on the Family, he asked the entire Catholic Church, all one billion of us, to offer our advise to him. In our own Eparchy, we distributed a lengthy questionnaire in every parish, and our Archbishop with his faithful staff compiled all of your observations and sent them to Rome. I am certain that the initial document that we were given to work with at the Synod was a compilation of these contributions from all over the world, which is why it seemed like an unwieldy casserole to the Synod Fathers.

Pope Francis sincerely believes that the Holy Spirit is guiding the Universal Church, and that he can best lead the Church by listening to the Church.

If you read your Bible, and I know you do, you know that when the first Apostles were faced with a crisis after the Ascension, they met together in Jerusalem, listened politely to each other, and then made a decision as a council. You can read about it in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. That council was truly both revolutionary and compassionate.

Then in the early Church, councils were held to resolve the most important disputes of their days, such as, which sinners can be readmitted to Holy Communion?, who runs the Church?, and even which books belong in the Bible? Many things that you and I accept as the revealed Catholic Faith were decided by councils.

The Church is not a republic. Neither is the Church a monarchy or a democracy. Thank God! The Church is the Body of Christ! In a body, the parts have different functions, but they do listen to each other.

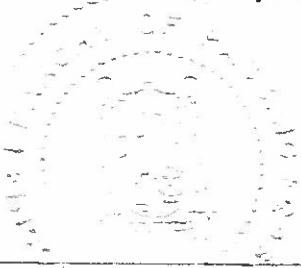
As centuries went by, the Western Church increasingly relied on decisions from the highest authorities instead of consulting in councils. Pope Francis has made it clear that he believes the universal Church should return to a more consultative mode of operation. With some exceptions, the early Church synods were composed of bishops, just as the council of Jerusalem. Our Holy Father is keen to include the wisdom of EVERYONE in the approaching Synod on Synodality. He sincerely asks us, tell him what we think!

I don't have to tell you, our eparchy and all churches in the United States are facing enormous challenges. What are these problems? What should we do to continue to bring the Light of Christ to the world? The Holy Father is asking for you to tell the leadership what you think. Let us rejoice together and tell the Holy Father joyfully what the Holy Spirit moves us to say.

Your servant,

+ Kurt

Bishop Kurt Burnette



## Preparing for Our Diocesan Synod

*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 considering this, dioceses will receive and report feedback on the following:**

1. What are the difficulties, obstacles, and wounds in the local Church?
2. What is the Holy Spirit asking of us?
3. In our local Church, who are those who "walk together"? Who are those who seem further apart?
4. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening?
5. How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?
6. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community?
7. What hinders the baptized from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting?
8. To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church?
9. How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?
10. What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations?
11. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church?
12. How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God?

## PARISHIONER SURVEY

*(Please review prayerfully at home about our Byzantine Ruthenian Church and bring your thoughts to our parish meeting as we prepare for the Diocesan Synod)*

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