



## Announcing the Preparatory Phase of the Synod of Bishops and the Québec Synodal Process

September 20, 2021

I enthusiastically welcome Pope Francis's invitation to engage our diocese in the preparatory phase of the XVI<sup>th</sup> ordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops which will take place in 2023 under the theme "For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission".

Along with all the dioceses of the world, we will live this preparatory phase from mid-October until the end of March, meeting in small groups to pray, dialogue and discern how to better live synodality in our local Church. The Pope's initiative comes to us unexpectedly, but it fits perfectly with our own synodal process that I closed on May 25th with the publication of a pastoral letter entitled "Our Project: Christ's Mission; Our Path: Synodality."

In this letter, I noted, among the fruits of our process, this realization: "The very principle of synodality has prevailed among us: people want to continue to exchange, to deepen the questions together and to participate actively in the discernment of the paths to be taken for the future."

I also confirmed one of the pastoral priorities identified during the process: "We will strengthen the synodal structures that already exist at both the parish and diocesan levels (councils and committees) so that they can play their deliberative role more actively in discernment and decision-making."

The approach proposed by our Pope will help us examine our life as Church in the light of a fundamental question: "How does this 'journeying together,' which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church? "

We have only just received the background documents that will help us set up this preparatory phase. But already, I can announce that the opening liturgy of this phase will take place on Saturday October 16 at 4:00 p.m. at St. Joseph's Cathedral. Priests, deacons, pastoral workers and parish and diocesan representatives will be invited. It will be held a few days after the diocesan feast of Mary, Mother of the Church, our principal patron, and will give us the opportunity to entrust this new experience to her intercession.

I'm also glad to announce that the bishops of Québec, at their plenary assembly last week, unanimously decided to follow this preparatory phase of the Synod of Bishops with a project specific to our province: a *québécois* synodal process. This will take place over the next few years and will address challenges common to all the dioceses of our province. Our hope is that this process will enable us to better discern the ways that the Spirit urges us to follow in this time of radical change for the Church in Québec.

I invite all of you to begin now to pray for the success of both the preparatory phase of the Synod of Bishops and the eventual Québec synodal process.

Together, let us walk in the Spirit's ways!

+ Paul-André Durocher