



Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

Synod Synthesis Report

June 14, 2022

2.1 Introduction: rereading of the synodal experience (1-2 pages)

Over a period of several years, the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois has embraced the synodal approach of a particular church that listens, accompanies, journeys, and leads. While the population of most communities in our diocese are not growing, Bishop Paprocki has exhorted the faithful of the diocese to a mindset of growth and evangelization, recognizing that Catholics currently comprise roughly 11% of the total population in our area. The exhortation to growth was a clear theme of our Fourth Diocesan Synod of 2017, with an emphasis on growth in the depth of faith and in the number of faithful actively participating in the Church and her sacraments. The Fourth Diocesan Synod set a course, mission, and pastoral framework for the diocese with a horizon a decade or more. The “Four Pillars” of discipleship and stewardship, including hospitality, prayer, formation, and service, formed a foundation for much of the Synod’s declarations and ambitions.

Since the official completion of the Fourth Diocesan Synod, our faith community is seeing truly remarkable evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in guiding the unfolding fruits of our synod. The synodal process is an ongoing reality in our diocese that dates back to 2012 and continues now, ten years later, as we continue to engage in formal synodal listening sessions, canonical visitations to schools, pastoral visitations to parishes, highly participative diocesan councils (presbyteral, pastoral, and finance), and active parish pastoral councils. At the ten-year mark from commencing this journey and the five-year mark from the formal completion of our 4th Diocesan Synod of 2017, we can attest to the power and fruitfulness of the synodal approach.

Key turning points in our Synodal journey include the following:

- 2012: Bishop Paprocki responded to declining participation in many aspects of the Church’s liturgical and communal life by commissioning twin surveys of those who remain active in the faith and those who have fallen away. The surveys were administered by Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois, and provided honest, confidential, and objective feedback, through which the faithful gave candid and clear answers about their practice of the faith and relationship with the Church. Two overriding themes emerged: 1) the most common reason for disaffiliation was lack of personal connection and community – it was typically a gradual drift and lack of connection; and 2) another common theme was a very personal experience with morality and lifestyle issues in conflict with the Church’s teaching. The surprise from this research was twofold. First, contrary to common perception, disaffiliation was less associated with intellectual or theological differences with Church teaching. Rather, those who cited these reasons typically had a very personal experience with lifestyle matters incompatible with certain truths of the faith. Second, the disaffiliation was less deliberative than may have been assumed prior to the research. Rather, the disaffiliation was often gradual and not premeditated.

- 2017: the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois conducted a year-long formal synod process, involving hundreds of faithful, including priests, deacons, men and women religious, and lay faithful from all parishes and congregations in the diocese. (Key documents from this Synod are included in the appendix.) This process built on the findings of the Benedictine study and substantial preliminary deliberations by the Bishop, curia staff, clergy, and Diocesan Pastoral Council. The listening sessions and formal voting sessions of the Synod centered around the themes of discipleship (articulated in the context of “four pillars” of hospitality, prayer, formation, and service). The community reflected and sought to strive toward more intentionality and mission orientation, while recognizing that formation for all ages would be essential.
- 2019: major initiatives flowing from the synod, such as restoring the proper sequence of the Sacraments of Initiation, and eventually moving Confirmation and First Holy Eucharist celebrations to the Cathedral, presented broad-based evangelical and catechetical opportunities for the people of the diocese to understand and experience the faith and sacraments anew. While turbulent and contending with significant resistance to change, the process prompted a renewal of catechesis, prompting the faithful to look deeper into the spiritual realities of the sacraments, beyond the surface-level social traditions surrounding their celebration. A critical lesson learned from this experience was the power of inertia and resistance to change. While the Holy Spirit has clearly prompted several new developments and changes flowing out of our synod process, each new development has confronted significant resistance – at times active, at times passive – clinging to status quo, even if the status quo is failing or flawed.
- 2021-2022: three critical developments, which are interrelated and unplanned by the diocese emerged:
 - Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla announced plans to establish an international center for pilgrimage and devotion to St. Gianna and Pietro Molla. The St. Gianna Beretta Molla & Pietro Molla International Center for Family and Life will house many relics and be the primary place of pilgrimage for St. Gianna, and the center will endeavor to promote and educate the faithful in authentic and courageous Christian marriage and family life.
 - The Hospital Sisters of St. Francis and the diocese announced plans to transform a large retreat house and convent property into a center of formation of teachers of the faith, “The Evermode Institute,” directly corresponding to the overarching theme of formation in the 2017 synod.
 - The Norbertine Fathers of St. Michael’s Abbey announced plans to establish a new priory at the same location, with The Evermode Institute as their primary apostolate.

None of these initiatives were part of a “master plan” to implement the main themes of the 2017 Synod. Yet each individually, and the combination taken together, directly relate to the hopes and challenges articulated in the Synod process. These developments are clearly the initiative of the Holy Spirit, first and foremost, and have been profoundly humbling and inspiring to all those involved.

- January 2022: Bishop Paprocki re-engaged parish pastoral visits, which had been on hold during COVID under a new format to enable broader participation and more engaged dialog. These visits have revealed parish communities committed to discipleship and growth. Notably, these visits have highlighted central themes of engagement and evangelization – broadening participation in the Church and her sacraments.
- 2022: At the five-year mark since the Fourth Diocesan Synod, a series of listening sessions commenced. The fundamental question of the synod process, along with two additional questions specifically for our particular church, were posed in separate sessions to the Diocesan Pastoral Council, Diocesan Presbyteral Council, Diocesan Curia, and to seven different gatherings of lay faithful across the diocese. These sessions involved hundreds of participants and produced fulsome discussion and progress since the 2017 synod. Many challenges have emerged and persisted since that time. The surprise in this round of discussion has been the strong measure of engagement and sense of common purpose and mission. Despite concerns about post-COVID disengagement and loss of momentum, large numbers of highly engaged faithful gathered together and collaboratively discussed many positive and encouraging developments in the local parishes and the diocese.

2.2 Body of the synthesis: discernment of the collected contributions (6-7 pages)

This part of the synthesis articulates the response to the fundamental question of the synodal process (cf. Preparatory Document, n. 26), considering the thematic questions (cf. *ibid.*, n. 30, and *Vademecum*, n. 5.3) and highlighting the principal fruits of a discernment carried out during the synodal process.

The various consultative bodies and diocesan listening session groups all engaged in dialog and discussion of the following three questions:

1. In what ways are we seeing the fruits of discipleship unfold in our local communities? What essential work remains to be done? What are the challenges and opportunities we see to evangelize and form missionary disciples of Christ?
2. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, ‘journeys together.’ How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our ‘journeying together’? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
3. Given our negative experience with the loss of Catholic Charities foster care and adoption services 10 years ago due to government mandates contrary to our Catholic faith, how do we prepare for such mandates possibly being imposed on our Catholic schools?

In addressing the central question of the synod (question #2 above), along with a similar version of the question more specifically tailored to our diocese’s experience of being several years into a journey of synodality (question #1), the various listening discussions highlighted several themes and examples of positive developments and good work across the parishes and institutions in the diocese. The discussions also highlighted areas of challenge, opportunity, and need. As the various discussions were synthesized, many consistent themes emerged, yet important distinctions also emerged between smaller, rural parishes and larger urban/suburban parishes. The synthesis crystallized eleven clear and consistent themes, with an additional, twelfth theme associated with our third question regarding Catholic schools:

1. Hospitality and Inclusion
2. Listening, Dialog, and Engagement
3. Fellowship, Community, and Belonging
4. Advantages and Limitations of Technology
5. Fruitfulness of Promoting Discipleship & Stewardship
6. Challenge and Opportunity of Reaching Outside the Walls of the Church
7. Continuing to Re-engage Post-COVID
8. Formation
9. Engaging the Youth
10. Rural and Small Parish Challenges
11. Service
12. Sustainability of Catholic Education

A summary of each of these major themes follows.

1. Hospitality and Inclusion

Related to the first pillar of hospitality from our Fourth Diocesan Synod, the synodal discussions highlighted good fruit and progress while also noting opportunities for evangelization and invitation to those outside the Church. Discussions highlighted good examples of communities of faith embracing and celebrating cultural diversity and various ethnic groups in the diocese. Notable examples included special events and devotions involving the Filipino American community at multiple parishes; the Encuentro, many parish-level ministries with our Hispanic communities; and a well-attended diocesan Gospel Mass and Soul Food Luncheon organized by our Black Catholic Commission. Nonetheless, some pastors noted that efforts to attend to multi-cultural pastoral needs, including offering Mass and Confession times in different languages, had an unintended effect of separating different communities within the parish. There was discussion about balancing the pastoral need to serve diverse communities with the need to also unite the faith community as one. Further, several discussions noted the need to extend hospitality, invitation, and welcome more broadly to those who are not engaged in the Church at all.

2. Listening, Dialog, and Engagement

The sessions highlighted the fruitfulness of listening efforts within parishes. Some parishes shared experiences with formal listening efforts that involved parishioners going out to visit with members of the parish, including both those who were engaged and those who were inactive or estranged. Some parishes also held their own in-person synod listening sessions to tackle the central question of the synod. Discussions on this topic surfaced insights and lessons learned for other parishes to promote similar efforts. Notably, multiple parishes reported increased engagement and Mass attendance simply from going out to fallen-away parishioners and listening, without even making changes to address concerns or questions raised in the sessions.

3. Fellowship, Community, Belonging

A number of groups highlighted the importance and good fruit of various fellowship opportunities at the parish level. Discussion groups observed the importance of community and connection, how the fabric of the community was frayed during COVID shutdowns, and how an appetite for social and fellowship opportunities appears to have strongly emerged in the return to normal. The discussion of this topic highlighted the importance of interpersonal/social connection, community, and the sense of belonging that marks strong parish communities. Those who have either been slow to reengage such efforts in the wake of COVID or have lapsed for other reasons in providing such opportunities for parishioners were challenged and encouraged by the good fruits that other parishes are seeing.

4. Advantages and Limitations of Technology

The rapid adoption and innovation of our use of technology at the diocesan level and within the parishes was discussed as both a blessing and a challenge. On the one hand, most of our parishes rapidly assembled teams and tools to livestream Masses and found that many people who had not been regularly attending Mass were reintroduced to the liturgy and decided to come back after the shutdown. On the other hand, some participants noted that livestreaming became a gradual offramp for others who stopped going to Mass, then gradually stopped livestreaming as well. Also, the significant efforts at the diocesan level to use social media more effectively and, in particular, video-based “homegrown” content, was noted as a significant improvement in the ability to reach audiences outside the walls of the Church. Viewership of such evangelical and catechetical content has grown rapidly within the diocese in recent years. Yet again, there was recognition of the limitation of such efforts, as personal relationship ultimately needs to be the context for effective evangelization and invitation. There was significant discussion of the work to be done to equip, motivate, and mobilize parishioners to have personal conversations of witness, invitation, and evangelization. Many of the faithful lack confidence and/or competence in addressing questions or even making invitation.

5. Fruitfulness of Promoting Discipleship and Stewardship

Several participants who had been involved with discipleship and stewardship teams at the parish level noted the importance of the “Season of Stewardship” and related diocesan efforts to promote discipleship. The diocese has offered webinars, in-person workshops for parish teams, communication and marketing materials, and other support to help parishes mobilize and promote discipleship within their communities. Those who have embraced these resources or tapped into other similar capabilities from outside the diocese consistently noted the evidence of good fruit from these efforts. One region of the diocese, in particular, noted the “verifiable increase in service” that has flowed from such efforts.

6. Challenge and Opportunity of Reaching Outside the Walls of the Church

The synod listening discussions and synthesis also clearly pointed toward a need to do more to reach out beyond the walls of the church and beyond those registered for the parish. There was a recognition that many of our parishes have made strides to be more welcoming and inviting greater involvement of those attending Mass and enrolled in schools, but that not enough was being done to go out to the broader community and proactively propose the good news of the gospel and invite others to experience the life of grace encountered through Christ, His Church, and her sacraments. There was a recognition of the need to reach out to those who left the church or never attended. There was discussion of the challenge to offer more welcome and hospitality opportunities for those on the margins like LGBTQ, to effectively invite such groups to the faith without alienation but also without avoiding or attempting to change the essential teachings of the Church.

Importantly, while the Catholic population of our diocese is only 11% of the total population and many of our communities are gradually losing population, there is a significant opportunity for evangelization and invitation to reach the 90% that are outside of the Church today.

7. Continuing to Re-engage Post-COVID

As noted elsewhere, the challenge of reengaging the faithful after COVID shutdowns continues to present itself in many of our parishes. While our early experience suggests that most of our parishes have rebounded better than national averages, in terms of weekly Mass attendance and other measures, many parishes note that a significant number of people still have not returned to regular participation. Where typical parishes had seen a gradual annual decline, for example, in weekly Mass attendance, some are seeing declines of 25% or more from pre-COVID Mass attendance just a few years ago. The perception is that there are some who remain confined generally due to acute health concerns, but the majority of those who have not returned to the regular practice of the faith appear to have been simply moved to abandon a habit that was already weakened. The disruption of COVID appears to have nudged many from the inertia of going through the motions to the inertia of passive non-participation. Bringing back this group and engaging them in a more fulsome way is a particular challenge across much of the diocese.

8. Formation

As was certainly true during the 2017 Synod, this year's discussions and listening sessions frequently pointed to the urgent need for formation. Some of this discussion related to the diocese-specific discussion of Catholic schools and education, as noted below, in particular the need to better form and equip catechists in the schools and parishes to promote and defend the faith more effectively in an increasingly hostile culture. But the focus extended also to formation of couples for marriage, formation for parents of all ages and for parishioners of all ages and states of life. Each of the groups noted the growing challenge of a common culture, set of attitudes and beliefs, and habits of life that contradict or are otherwise incompatible with the faith. The combination of highly saturated infotainment culture and an increasingly aggressive secularism and materialism heightens the demands on parents and teachers who are striving to convey the truths of the faith and promote the life of Christian discipleship.

Several pastors and parishioners highlighted positive experience with various approaches to family faith formation as an alternative to traditional weeknight catechism classes for youth. Those who are offering such programs are typically hosting them on weekends, between Masses, and offering adult formation adjacent to or complementary of the catechesis the children are receiving separately. Some include joint activities for the families periodically, in addition to the concurrent but separate formation classes.

There was also recognition of the need to provide formation that extends beyond intellectual learning. A strong desire was expressed for resources, programs, and experiences to help the faithful cultivate more active prayer lives, including techniques and approaches to prayer. Similarly, some groups discussed the need for personal formation – both in terms of support for growth in virtue and holiness but also in terms of counselling and healing for those who suffer wounds, addictions, and other afflictions. It was noted that depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and isolation are of rising concern at all ages, but particular among the youth.

9. Engaging the Youth

While all the above applies to cohorts across all ages, the specific challenge of engaging and retaining youth in the Church was a particular area of focus. As noted elsewhere, the tides of technology, saturated infotainment, and aggressive secularism are pulling many youth directly away from the church and facilitating drift and complacency among many others. There was discussion of the need for experiences and ways to engage youth that are more fitting to contemporary reality – which involved a parallel line of discussion about the ineffectiveness of typical youth ministry programs of past years. Distinctly, some regions and many parishes in the diocese noted a particular challenge of a dearth of young people in the community, making it hard to form community simply due to lack of enough young people altogether.

10. Rural and Small Parish Challenges

Building on this theme, there was a discussion particularly within the more rural regions, of parish life in smaller communities. Representatives from such parishes noted the trifold challenge of little to no parish staff, few volunteers, and small groups of cohorts that can make community, formation, and service efforts difficult to organize and make effective. An immediate good fruit of the synod listening sessions was a recognition of common challenge and opportunity or need for such parishes to collaborate more effectively together.

11. Service

Several groups discussed many blessings flowing from the good works of charity and service in the diocese. Some noted that these efforts make the mercy of Christ known to the world outside of the Church, reaching the broader community while at the same time bearing witness to the faithful. Those parishes with active ministries or with groups participating regularly in diocesan ministries noted that the Church's mission of service benefits the parish community and participants as much as those served. Further, some noted the power of mission trips in the evangelization, catechesis, and formation of our young people.

As noted above, this demographic cohort presents a particular challenge, and the experiential aspect of service appears to be a highly effective way to engage this group. With that said, the broad conversation around the positive experience of service related to all age groups and cohorts within a parish.

12. Sustainability and Fruitfulness of Catholic Education

As noted above, our diocesan approach to this most recent phase of our journey of synodality also addressed an acute pastoral challenge for our community related to Catholic schools. Catholic elementary and secondary schools have a high priority in the diocese and are the most significant investment of resources among any pastoral initiatives. From a financial point of view, parishes with schools are urged to balance the funding of the school from several sources: parish revenue, tuition, fees, fundraising, and long-term development efforts. Our parishes typically fund 40% to as much as 60% of the cost of the school's operating budget. Development efforts include annual funds, endowments, planned giving, etc. With each passing year, it grows more difficult for our schools to balance affordability for families with the need to provide competitive, living wages for teachers and staff. At current course and speed, our schools are on a path to become an exclusive opportunity for the wealthy. In our diocese, this is a particularly acute problem, as our median household income is below the national average, typically \$45,000-\$55,000. An elite private school system does not serve the needs of the majority of Catholic families nor are there enough wealthy families in most of our communities to sustain elite private schools. Further, there is growing concern based on our experience in the recent past with Catholic Charities being forced out of adoption services, combined with recent trends on tying funds, accreditation, and participation in inter-school programming to adherence to policies that directly contradict essential tenets of the Catholic faith.

The listening sessions engaged fulsome discussion and debate related to these issues, as well as brainstorming of solutions and approaches to mitigate the challenges. There was clear consensus that reliance on "funding with strings attached is bad idea" and that we must remain focused on the essential mission and identify of our schools. Further, the three essential actions that emerged as priorities from the discussion include a comprehensive formation program for Catholic school teachers to more effectively promote and defend the faith; a concerted effort to convert to tithing as a means to fully fund parish ministries, including schools, without charging parents for tuition or relying on public funding; and identification and implementation of a Catholic accreditation alternative.

2.3 Conclusions: next steps (1-2 pages)

Bishop Paprocki and his leadership team have identified seven conclusions and priorities for action through the 2022 synod listening process:

1. *Support Parishes in the Promotion of Family Faith Formation & Post Initiation Engagement*

Many parishes in the diocese have begun experimentation with family formation programs as an alternative to the more typical weeknight youth parish school of religion classes. Those who have done so have reported strong engagement and good fruit from parents cultivating their own knowledge of and practice of the faith. Efforts will be undertaken to promote collaboration among parishes seeking to explore such programs with those who have early experience with the model.

2. *Promote Sacraments of Initiation as an Opportunity for Evangelization & Formation*

Few pastoral ministries in the diocese present as much opportunity as the sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Eucharist at the diocesan cathedral. Many parents, grandparents, children, and extended family across all 129 parishes of the diocese participate in these sacraments each year. The recent change to celebrate these sacraments at the cathedral is a catalyst for catechesis and evangelization, encouraging the faithful to rediscover the theology and graces of the sacraments anew, to experience all four pillars of the synod first-hand (hospitality, prayer, formation, and service). The diocese will seize this opportunity to engage broad audiences in the diocese, including many who have drifted from the practice of the faith. In addition to welcoming these families to the cathedral, resources will be invested to go out to the parishes to proactively engage and invite families and children.

3. *Encourage Parish-level and Deanery-level Listening and Collaboration*

Several participants in the Fourth Diocesan Synod and the 2022 listening sessions expressed enthusiastic support for the process, the engagement, and the fruitfulness of the dialog. Many noted the opportunity for parishes to extend this experience at a more local level, and some noted that such efforts have already begun and are bearing good fruit. Such efforts will be encouraged and supported.

4. *Embrace Evangelization Opportunity with St. Gianna & Pietro Molla International Center*

The good news of Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla's plans to establish an international center for pilgrimage and promotion of family life associated with her parents, St. Gianna and Pietro Molla, is a remarkable blessing for the diocese and clearly promotes all four pillars of the Fourth Diocesan Synod. The coming of this center presents opportunities for the diocese to provide hospitality and prayer experiences for pilgrims from around the country and the world. Further, the center's specific focus on promoting family and life through the witness of the marriage and family life of St. Gianna and Pietro Molla is a tremendous opportunity for formation and evangelization. The diocese should promote and embrace this opportunity, encouraging the people of the diocese to make pilgrimage and participate in the activities and conferences of the institute.

5. *Sustain Stewardship & Discipleship Efforts*

The listening sessions and synthesis clearly highlighted good fruits of efforts to promote discipleship and stewardship. Several parishes noted measurable improvements in engagement in ministries and service activities as well as financial support from efforts to promote more intentional discipleship. Many participants specifically noted support, tools, and resources from the diocese as instrumental in helping to promote active discipleship. These efforts should be sustained and expanded.

6. *Catholic School Accreditation through the Transformation of Catholic Education*

A specific effort will be undertaken to collaborate with Catholic University of America's Institute for the Transformation of Catholic Education to implement the newly forming national accreditation platform for Catholic Schools. This initiative will focus both on establishing independence from the requirements and mandates of state-based accreditation and on strengthening Catholic identity, culture, curriculum, and effectiveness in forming Christian disciples.

7. *Comprehensive Formation Programming Build-out*

The 2022 listening sessions reinforced the 2017 Synod theme of urgent need for formation resources across the diocese. Efforts already underway to develop and deploy comprehensive intellectual, spiritual, and personal formation programming will be redoubled with heightened urgency. The first focus of these efforts will be a revamp of a multi-year catechist formation program aligned with the Apostolic Letter issued "*Motu Proprio*" by Pope Francis, *Antiquum ministerium*, and geared toward forming the formators of the diocese – permanent deacons, Catholic School teachers, volunteer catechists, and parents. This formation programming will be developed in tandem with the launch of the Evermode Institute and the soon-to-be established community of Norbertine Fathers in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

2.4 Appendices

2.4.1 Sociodemographic and Pastoral Context of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

The Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is composed of 129 parishes and 43 schools in 28 counties across 112,000 square miles in south-central Illinois. The population of the diocese is 1.1 million, with 124,000 Catholics served by roughly 80 active priests and 53 permanent deacons. There are a few urban areas (notably Springfield, Alton, Decatur, Granite City and Quincy), and a suburban area outside St. Louis, but most of the territory of the diocese is rural. The capital of the state is Springfield, so the see city is the central and official location of state government (though a large portion of governmental affairs seem to be handled by the state in Chicago, the largest metropolitan area of the state). The principal language spoken is English, though an increasing number of persons speak Spanish as a first language, and the Church has a strong Catholic Filipino community and a small French African community. While the median household income across the United States is \$87,000, most of the 28 counties in this diocese range from \$45,000-\$50,000, and the highest median household income in a few of the counties is \$65,000. The 28 counties of the diocese have lost .5%-1% population per year, on average, for the past decade. Against this socioeconomic and demographic backdrop, the Catholic population of the diocese has held relatively steady over the past decade and has not lost population in proportion to the broader community. Some parishes, particularly in the population centers, have seen modest growth. Our Catholic schools across the diocese experienced net growth of 5% over the past year after several years of modest decline.

2.4.2 Prayer for the Fourth Synod of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

O God, who never forsake your people and ever journey with them through the struggles and joys of daily life, stir up the flame of faith in the hearts of your sons and daughters in our Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

Help us to experience anew your great love for us and fill us with a greater desire to love and serve you and our neighbor.

Throughout this time of our fourth diocesan synod, help us, by the light of the Holy Spirit, to discern the needs of our local Church and better follow Christ your Son as intentional disciples.

Open our hearts and minds to know your will, to speak the truth with love, and to hear each other, that together we might plan, with the help of your grace, for the strengthening and growth of our diocese.

May Mary, the Immaculate Conception, first and greatest of all disciples, lead us closer to your Son.

May she accompany us as we follow the call to live as his disciples and as generous stewards of your many gifts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

2.4.3 Timeline of Fourth Diocesan Synod of 2017

- Sunday, January 22, 2:00 PM – Prayer Service for the Opening of the Preliminary Phase of the Diocesan Synod (at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield)
- Sunday, April 2, 2:00 PM – Diocesan Synod Deanery Prayer and Listening Sessions in each Deanery with the Bishop connected by video conference to hear the needs, desires and opinions of the faithful regarding the proposed synodal topics
- Tuesday April 11, 6:30 PM – Chrism Mass with Official Opening of the Diocesan Synod (at Cathedral) • Saturday, May 20, 10:00-2:00 – First Session of the Official Members of the Diocesan Synod (at Cathedral Atrium)
- Saturday, August 12 – Gathering of Permanent Deacons for prayer and discussion regarding the Diocesan Synod (at Cathedral)
- Saturday, August 19 – Synodal Consultation with Consecrated Religious (at Chiara Center, Springfield)
- Saturday, September 9 – Second Session of the Official Members of the Diocesan Synod (at Little Flower Parish Center, Springfield)
- Monday, September 18 to Thursday, September 21 – Convocation of Priests for prayer and discussion regarding the Diocesan Synod (at Pere Marquette Lodge, Grafton, Illinois)
- Sunday, September 24, 2:00 PM – Diocesan Synod Deanery Prayer and Listening Sessions in each Deanery with the Bishop connected by video conference to receive feedback on proposed synodal declarations and decrees
- Wednesday, October 11, 2017 – Consultation with the Diocesan Curia
- Saturday, November 18, 10:00-2:00 – Final Session of the Official Members of the Diocesan Synod to vote on synodal declarations, decrees and statutes (at St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Chatham)
- Sunday, November 26, 2:00 PM – Mass Closing the Diocesan Synod on the Solemnity of Christ the King (at Cathedral)

2.4.4 Declarations of the Fourth Diocesan Synod of 2017

The Synodal Declarations adopted by the Fourth Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois are as follows:

1. (Statute n. 1):
 - a. The mission of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is to build a fervent community of intentional and dedicated missionary disciples of the Risen Lord and steadfast stewards of God’s creation who seek to become saints. Accordingly, the community of Catholic faithful in this Diocese is committed to the discipleship and stewardship way of life as commanded by Christ Our Savior and as revealed by Sacred Scripture and Tradition.
 - b. To further this mission, the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is committed to implementing the Four Pillars of Discipleship and Stewardship, namely:
 - i. **Hospitality** – to **invite** people proactively to join us in prayer, especially Sunday Mass;
 - ii. **Prayer** – to **provide** well-prepared celebrations of the sacraments and other occasions for **prayer** as signs of hope and paths of grace to heaven;
 - iii. **Formation** – to **study** the Bible and **learn** more about Jesus and our Catholic faith; and
 - iv. **Service** – to **serve** each other, especially those in need, by practicing charity and justice.
2. (Statute n. 2): In the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, “all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness”¹ and will invite people to a life of discipleship and stewardship.
3. (Statute n. 3): “The art of growing in God’s grace is the key to growth in the Church. Building a culture of growth in the Church starts with inviting people to experience the love of Jesus Christ. . . . This growth looks not only to build up the number of followers of Jesus Christ, but also – and more importantly – for Christ’s followers to grow in the depth of their relationship with Jesus Christ and in their commitment to observe all that he has commanded us to do.”²

¹ Pope Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, “On entering the New Millennium,” January 6, 2001, n. 30.

² Second Pastoral Letter of Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, *Ars Crescendi in Dei Gratia*, September 14, 2015, n. 1.

4. (Statute n. 4): To be a disciple means to accept Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior.³ Disciples are those who "make a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves."⁴ Catholic discipleship refers to a committed approach to living a Christian life within the Catholic Church.
5. (Statute n. 64): Formation for discipleship and stewardship as a way of life shall be the primary focus of the catechetical programs in our Catholic parochial schools, high schools and parish schools of religion, as well as our faith formation programs for youth, adults and those with special needs, with sacramental preparation seen as a step in this process, but not the end of the process. Being a practicing Catholic must be taught as a way of life. Thus, religious education is a personal obligation that does not end with the reception of the sacraments, but continues into adulthood.
6. (Statute n. 80): The Sacraments of Christian Initiation shall be offered in the proper sequence (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) for children as well as for adults. To promote discipleship and stewardship as a way of life from an early age, those who are baptized as infants are to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist at about the age of reason, which in this Diocese will normally be in their third grade of elementary school, after they have been properly prepared and have made sacramental confession.⁵
7. (Statute n. 67): As a means of fulfilling the responsibility of all the Christian faithful (not just parents) to hand on the Catholic faith to the next generation and in order that cost not be a barrier for children to receive a Catholic education, our parishes and schools through the use of scholarships (public and/or private) shall help pay tuition to make Catholic education available in Catholic grade schools, high schools and parish schools of religion (K-12) for all children of their parishes whose parents agree to the terms of the Family School Agreement.
8. (Statute n. 79): "The art of celebrating the liturgy properly and adoring the Lord in the Eucharist devoutly (*ars celebrandi et adorandi*) is the key to fostering the active participation of the People of God in divine worship."⁶ The clergy of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois "must consider the celebration of the liturgy as their principal duty."⁷

³ Cf. *John* 3:16; *Acts* 2:38, 4:12; *Romans* 10:9, 13.

⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 1992.

⁵ Cf. cc. 891 and 914 and the complementary norm of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

⁶ First Pastoral Letter of Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, *Ars Celebrandi et Adorandi*, June 22, 2014, n. 1.

⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Exhortation, Sacramentum Caritatis, March 13, 2007, n. 39.*

9. (Statute n. 134): The art of dying in God's grace is the key to everlasting happiness in eternal life. The Christian faithful die to sin through the saving waters of baptism. By dying to their selfish desires through acts of mortification and self-sacrifice, the Christian faithful grow in love of God and neighbor. The whole Christian life aims at reaching this goal of everlasting happiness in eternal life by turning from sin and growing in virtue through God's grace.
10. (Statute n. 143): As a Diocese committed to discipleship and stewardship, the community of Catholic faithful recognizes that everything we have comes from God and that He has given us gifts not just to use them for ourselves but also to share them with others. As faithful and generous stewards of God's abundant gifts, those committed to discipleship and stewardship as a way of life pledge to share their talents, give of their time and contribute proportionately from their financial resources for the good of the Church and those in need.
11. (Statute n. 144): Trusting in God's providence and giving according to their means, the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois are called to live as disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ by giving of their time and talent and striving to fulfill the Biblical command to tithe by donating the suggested amount of at least 8% of their income to their parishes and 2% to other charities as an expression of their gratitude to God and of their stewardship of His manifold gifts of creation.
12. (Statute n. 145):
 - a. Each parish is a member of the Diocese and of the universal Catholic Church. As such, each parish has an obligation to contribute to the operational expenses of the Diocese and the Apostolic See. Following the Biblical model of tithing, parishes shall tithe approximately 10% of their designated annual income to the Diocese, which shall be used to fund the operations of the Diocesan Curia, payment of assessments to the Catholic Conference of Illinois and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, financial contributions to the Apostolic See in accord with canon 1271, and donations to national and international collections.
 - b. Parish tithing will replace the Annual Catholic Services Appeal and regularly-scheduled second collections. Parishioners who wish to make additional donations to the scheduled diocesan, national and international collections may still do so by placing the envelope with their designated donation in the regular collection. Special second collections will be taken in support of the Annual Missionary Plan of Cooperation and may still be taken up from time to time to assist victims of natural disasters and other extraordinary causes.

- c. The Diocesan Bishop shall appoint a committee, whose purpose is, in consultation with the Diocesan Finance Council and Presbyteral Council, and subject to the approval of the Diocesan Bishop, to define what constitutes the annual parish income for the determination of a formula to calculate the amount that is subject to the approximate 10% tithe.⁸ Such process should take into consideration the goals of the Diocese to build up the Body of Christ, to support Catholic formation and education, and to recognize the differences in parishes (e.g., those with an abundance of material wealth and those without, those that operate parish schools and those that do not). Such formula should attempt to be fair and just to all, while at the same time provide adequate financial resources to the Diocese, so that the Diocese can accomplish its intended mission.

⁸ Cf. c. 1263.

2.4.5 Fourth Diocesan Synod of 2017 Official Membership

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Mr. Zach Wichmann, Member of Diocesan Pastoral Council

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