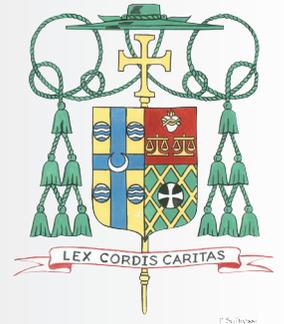




LEX CORDIS CARITAS

The law of the heart is love

Bishop Thomas John Paprocki
Ninth Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois



Ensuring our synodal efforts bear fruit

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Over the past six months, I have used my column in *Catholic Times* to explain the 12 declarations of our fourth diocesan synod that concluded last November. My hope is that this explanation will help to advance the cause of implementing these 12 declarations so that our diocesan commitment to discipleship and stewardship will take root and flourish.

At this point we may well ask: What are the next steps? Certainly there must be next steps lest our fourth diocesan synod simply fade into the wisps of memory of an historical event that occurred last year, but has come and gone. The next steps must be taken at both the diocesan level and at the local level to ensure that our synodal efforts will bear fruit.

At the diocesan level, there are two committees that are making progress with their work: one committee is working on the formula and the timeline for the parish tithe to the diocese, which we anticipate will replace the Annual *Catholic Services Appeal* in 2019; the other committee is working on the restored order of the sacraments of initiation, with the sacrament of confirmation being celebrated before first Eucharist, which we plan to phase in over several

years beginning with the 2019-2020 school year. More information will be forthcoming on both of these plans in the weeks and months ahead.

Also at the diocesan level, I am putting the finishing touches on my third pastoral letter, which will be a post-synodal reflection on the themes of the synod and my hopes for implementing them. Following

“ *There will be one fundamental question for our meetings: What are you doing to implement our diocesan synod?* ”

publication of this pastoral letter, I plan to resume doing parish pastoral visitations in the autumn of this year. I had suspended my parish pastoral visitations last year in order to focus on our diocesan synod. We have 129 parishes in our diocese, so it will take me a while to get to all of them. The basic plan for my parish pastoral visitations will be for me to meet jointly with the parish priests and the parish pastoral council, finance council and school board (if applicable). There will be one fundamental question for

our meetings: What are you doing to implement our diocesan synod? A lot of conversation can flow from that one question, since there were a variety of topics that we touched upon during the synod, as I have described over the past six months in my column in *Catholic Times*.

That leads to consideration of the next steps at the local level. In a sense, the 12 synodal declarations adopted at our fourth diocesan synod designate the destination to which we are headed as the Catholic community of faith in the 28 counties that make up our diocese here in central Illinois, but the synodal declarations are not intended to give a detailed road map of all the precise steps to take to get to the destination. There certainly is room for creativity and adaptation depending on local circumstances.

In this regard, the parable of the talents comes to mind. As recounted in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus tells this parable about the rich man who gives talents to three of his servants and then sets out on a journey. Upon his return, he reviews the situation and is told that the servant to whom he had given five talents had invested them profitably and that the servant to whom he had given three talents had done the same. But he finds, much to his chagrin, that



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