AGENDA:

OPENING PRAYER
SYNOD, OVERVIEW
SYNOD, NEXT STEPS
LARGE GROUP SHARING
CLOSING PRAYER
Synod means "journeying together", listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other, discerning the path we are called to walk together.

Purpose:
• Time of prayer, listening, dialogue, and recommendations.
• Respond to Pope Francis’ call to dream about the Church we are called to co-create.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to our Church today?

"Without the Spirit, there is no synod."
"I am certain the Spirit will guide us and give us the grace to move forward together, to listen to one another and to embark on a discernment of the times in which we are living, in solidarity with the struggles and aspirations of all humanity."
-Pope Francis
THEME 1: COMMUNION
Our communion is rooted in the radical love and unity of the Trinity. All distance between people is artificial. We are all children of God.

THEME 2: PARTICIPATION
Jesus was proactive in reaching the widest possible audience. No one is excluded from the Synod process. In a listening church, all are invited to participate.

THEME 3: MISSION
The mission of the church is evangelization. We must be ever turned outward, bringing the joy of our relationship with God to all we meet.
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.”

(PD, 32)

Our Process...

- Starting on March 16, 2022 and continuing through June 1, 2022, members responded to a 17-item on-line survey.
- Between March 29, 2022 and April 22, 2022, 182 members participated in 4 facilitated on-line listening sessions.
- A committee of 4 met to review the data collected in both the survey and the listening sessions and prepared the draft report.
- The Association Board of Directors reviewed the draft and their comments have been incorporated herein.

NACC Membership Composition

- Lay Women
- Priests
- Lay Men
- Sisters
- Deacons
- Other
- Brothers
Our Joys. . .

- **THE SYNOD** is seen as an opportunity for a NEW BEGINNING in the Church; one respondent suggested it represents a NEW PENTECOST.
- **CHAPLAINCY** is a vocation that opens the door to the privilege of accompanying others on their journey toward spiritual wholeness and “joining with Christ in the ministry of healing.”
- **THE JOURNEY** with a broadly diverse group that includes the young, the elderly, those who are LGBTQ, people living with mental illness, those who profess no religion, the spiritual but not religious, as well as a host of others.
- **CATHOLIC LIFE** is a source of joy. The sacraments especially the Eucharist and liturgical life were often cited. Devotional practices such as retreats, the rosary, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are seen as sustaining, essential sources of life and joy.
- **SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHURCH**, especially collegiality with clergy, represents an ongoing joy among many chaplains participating in the survey.

> “Walking into a patient’s room is entering sacred space. So often I have experienced the strong work of God’s Spirit as part of the encounter.”

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Our Challenges. . .

- **SACRAMENTS** for those in need of them are often not available. In those facilities where a priest-chaplain is not on staff, it is often difficult – and becoming more so – to locate a priest able and willing to provide the Sacraments when needed, resulting in missed opportunities for a sacramental encounter and frustration for patients, their loved ones, institutional staff, deacons, lay chaplains and often the priest himself who has to say no.
- **ECCLESIAL SUPPORT for LAY CHAPLAINS** is often lacking. While some report an ongoing, fruitful relationship with their parish or diocese, many others lament that their bishop or pastor appear not to value the work they do or recognize them as co-workers in ministry. Clericalism remains an issue. Often the newly ordained are not adequately prepared for institutional ministry nor how to work collegially with lay persons doing the day-to-day work.

- **WOMEN IN MINISTRY** who are well educated and trained are excluded from opportunities to use their gifts to serve in their areas of expertise. This sense of alienation was expressed repeatedly in comments such as, “Women are not made to feel welcome in ministry at every level in the Church.” and “Jesus did not proscribe the exclusion of any from the table . . . Recognize the vocational calls of women in ministry.” A clear, strong voice supporting a pathway to the diaconate for women was expressed in both focus groups and surveys.
◆ SUPPORT for PRIEST CHAPLAINS was also found wanting albeit for different reasons. One priest put it this way—"So many times, we encounter 'the abuse issue' as the terrible scandal it is, but we seldom hear praise and support for those who have faithfully discharged their duties through the years, caring chastely for their flock."

◆ VALUE of SPIRITUAL CARE IN THE WORKPLACE where chaplains are not recognized as key members of the professional staff and compensated commensurate with their training and experience. Even in Catholic facilities administrators are slow to recognize the value of spiritual care in healing.

"visiting the sick is an invitation that Christ addresses to all his disciples."

Pope Francis in his letter on the occasion of the 30th World Day of the Sick.

Our Recommendations...

◆ AVAILABILITY of the SACRAMENTS and ECCLESIAL SUPPORT for RELIGIOUS, DIACONAL and LAY CHAPLAINS—Ministry to the sick and dying must become a higher priority for the Church in the United States. We urge our Bishops to:
  • consider new models of ministry and management in the Church that will result in greater availability of priest to meet the sacramental needs of the sick, and
  • recognize, support and invest in the ministry of Religious, Diaconal and Lay Ministers working in healthcare institutions and hospices.
◆ WOMEN IN MINISTRY – The women who participated in our survey and listening sessions expressed both the joy they experience in ministry and disappointment that very often their skills, talents and hopes for inclusion in the Church go unrecognized or are dismissed. We urge our Bishops to:

- engage in serious dialogue with women in the Church toward greater understanding, respect and inclusion of women’s voices and skills at all levels of the Church and in its ministries.

◆ COLLEGIALLY IN MINISTRY – Our respondents expressed the view that clergy working in parishes do not always understand and value the vital work of healthcare chaplains in caring for the sick and the dying. We urge our Bishops to:

- encourage meaningful dialogue between healthcare chaplains and parish clergy and work to incorporate healthcare chaplains into the diocesan structures.

◆ SEMINARY EDUCATION – Many of our respondents suggest that often the newly ordained are not adequately prepared for healthcare ministry nor how to work collegially with lay ministers doing the day-to-day work of caring for the sick and dying in institutional settings. We urge our Bishops to:

- engage faculty and rectors of seminaries to require each seminarian to engage in at least one unit of clinical pastoral education as part of their seminary experience.

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**Vision for a New Pentecost**

Invitation for Bishops’ support and partnership

- Greater understanding collaboration between chaplains and clergy in parishes
- Introduction welcoming of women’s voices
- Episcopal support for training of seminarians
- Institutional support and formation of lay
- Mutual Ecumenical Unity and Respect
- Seamless support pastoral care community, hospital, hospitals

- How shall we meet the current need for sacraments?

- Joy in walking with marginalized (prisons, hospitalized, behavioral health, youth, LGBT+)

- Women and laity not recognized for expertise, excluded from decision making

- Overwhelming need for sacraments for ill, dying, and imprisoned—suffering and isolated opportunities because priests not available

NACC Member Experiences
For a Synodal Church
Communion, Participation and Mission

North American Final Document for the Continental Stage of the
Synod 2021-2024 Synod

931 DELEGATES

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<th>Women 50.2%</th>
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This report from the Continental Stage is North America’s contribution to the larger, global discussion and discernment stage of the 2021-2024 Synod. The North American participants felt that the DCS reflected much of what the participants expressed during the diocesan and national stages of the Synod. The conversations at the Continental Stage focused on the intense need for the Church to become even more synodal. In summary, what was shared and what was heard at the Continental Stage was that by our common baptism, we are each called by God and gifted by God with dignity. This common baptism places us in communion with Christ and one another. The synodal journey thus far has made us more conscious of where the stresses on our communion lie. But it also has revealed that, as one delegate described it, “the more we become missionary disciples the more we will address these challenges” (Debrief Session). Our baptismal dignity is inseparable from our baptismal responsibility, which sends us forth on mission. “Many times, we focus on the negative and forget the joy; the Spirit we experience in our core is to be a missionary” (Debrief Session).
Pope Francis on April 26 dramatically expanded participation in the Vatican’s upcoming Synod of Bishops to include lay men and women, for the first time granting them a right to be appointed as full voting members of the Catholic Church’s primary consultative body.

In addition to the standard participation of bishops selected by the pope and episcopal conferences from around the world, the new changes allow for the participation of 70 non-bishop members at the upcoming October gathering – 10 from each of the seven global regional bishops’ conferences – with the request that young people be included and that 50% of those named be women.

- National Catholic Reporter, April 2023

Draft Working Document for the Synod on Synodality approved

On 10-11 May, the 15th Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod met in Rome to discuss the *Instrumentum laboris*; the working document for participants in the first session of the 18th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (4-29 October 2023).

In plenary session and in language working groups, the Council members accompanied by some consultants reviewed, amended and approved the *Instrumentum laboris*, which is scheduled to be published in early June.

The participants also approved the assembly’s methodology. Furthermore, the work included a reflection on the preparation of the participants and some information on the Ecumenical Prayer Vigil on 30 September next as part of the Together2023 initiative (for more information: www.together2023.net) and the spiritual retreat for participants of the assembly (1-3 October 2023).

- What does journeying together as chaplains mean for you personally? For the National Association of Catholic Chaplains organization?

- As missionary disciples, how are we as Baptized persons called to be leaders in the mission of the church?

- How do we individually witness our faith?

- What treasure do we bring to the Synodal Process?
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.