



DIocese OF ARLINGTON

DIoCESAN INTERIM STAGE



DIoCESAN BEST PRACTICES FOR SYNODALITY

March 25, 2024

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Synod Team, in their “Interim Stage Guidelines,” recommended that each diocese provide them with a two-page “testimony of best practices for synodality used in the diocese,” along with the requested diocesan Interim Stage Synthesis Report.

This document lists and describes the robust synodal practices which are a regular part of the lived faith of the People of God in the Diocese of Arlington, most of which have been in place for some time.

SYNODAL PRACTICES AT THE DIoCESAN LEVEL

- **Strategic Planning**
 - From 2021-2023 the bishop and his staff consulted widely with the clergy and with lay faithful of different demographics to develop a Strategic Plan based on a consensus regarding pastoral priorities.
- **Diocesan Finance Council**
 - As required by Canon Law (Can. 492), the bishop and his staff regularly consult this council, and have established three subsidiary bodies (Audit & Budget Committee, Savings & Loan Corporation Committee, and Investment Committee) of expert lay faithful with whom to consult further.
- **Diocesan Pastoral Council**
 - Although not strictly mandated by Canon Law (Can. 511), the bishop has established this council which advises him on the pastoral works of the diocese.
- **College of Consultors**
 - Required by Canon Law (Can. 502), the bishop meets regularly with this college.
- **Presbyteral Council**
 - Mandated by Canon Law (Can. 495), the bishop meets regularly to seek the counsel of this body.
- **Building Commission**
 - The bishop has established this group of clergy and lay experts to advise him on major construction projects.
- **Catholic Charities Board**
 - The bishop leads this board which advises him on the charitable works of the diocese.

- **Annual Meetings with Priests**
 - The bishop gathers with his priests in Advent and in Lent for Days of Prayer, during an annual week-long Convocation in the spring, at a Fall Meeting of Priests, and on other occasions, both formal and informal, at which he receives the counsel of his clergy. (see Can. 384)
- **Bishop’s Advisory Council on Racism**
 - The bishop meets yearly with this group comprised of Black clergy and lay men and women from across the Diocese who advise him on issues related to race.
- **Bishop’s Annual Listening Session with Victims of Sexual Abuse**
 - The bishop meets yearly with victims of sexual abuse to hear their testimony and to offer his and diocesan support.
- **Bishop’s Listening Sessions in the Wake of the Clergy Abuse Scandals**
 - In 2019, the bishop met several times with the lay faithful to understand the pain caused by the scandals and to assure them of the diocese’s conscientious response.

SYNODAL PRACTICES AT THE VICARIATE LEVEL

- **Regular Meetings of Vicars Forane with Priests of the Deanery**
 - The vicars forane, according to law (Can. 555), meet with the priests of their vicariate to seek their counsel and to ensure their well-being.
- **Annual Visits by Vicars Forane to Parishes**
 - As established by universal (Can. 555) and particular law, the vicars forane make annual visitations to the parishes in their vicariates during which they consult with the clergy and lay staff of those parishes.

SYNODAL PRACTICES AT THE PARISH LEVEL

- **Finance Councils**
 - As required by Canon Law (Can. 537), pastors regularly consult these parochial councils composed of expert lay faithful.
- **Pastoral Councils**
 - Although not required by universal law (Can. 511), parish pastoral councils are required by particular law and meet regularly in each parish, with the lay faithful members advising pastors on the pastoral works of the parish.
- **Staff Meetings**
 - Most parishes have regular staff meetings at which pastors consult their lay staff regarding the pastoral and administrative works of the parish.