



January 5, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Following the conclusion of last year's Synod of Bishops in Rome on the subject of synodality, Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV have called for an Implementation Phase, beginning at the diocesan level, to encourage continued growth in synodality. Local Churches are asked to identify concrete ways to embrace co-responsibility for the Church's mission through continued consultation and discernment. The two-year diocesan synodal experience (2026-2027) will contribute to national and continental assemblies which will inform the universal Ecclesial Assembly at the Vatican in October 2028.

The Diocese of Arlington already practices synodality robustly in many ways at the diocesan, deanery, and parish levels, and in other ecclesial institutions. Therefore, our Implementation Phase will largely focus on re-committing to collaborative consultations and discernment in those bodies. Following recommendations from the Synod of Bishops, we will undertake "Ecclesial Assemblies" throughout our diocese, which will be similar to the "listening sessions" we had during the first phases of the Synod, with the purpose of discussing synodal best practices.

I encourage you to visit our diocesan webpage on the Synod which includes a list of the many ways we are living synodality in our diocese. I have asked Father Donald Planty, Pastor of Saint Charles Borromeo Parish, to serve again as our Diocesan Synodal Coordinator. He will be assisted by a "Synodal Team" in guiding our efforts at strengthening synodal processes.

I encourage all our clergy, religious, and faithful to embrace this synodal Implementation Phase by renewing our efforts to pray, speak, and work together to bring the Good News of the Lord to everyone in our diocese.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge  
Bishop of Arlington