

Archdiocese sets listening sessions for synod

As part of the universal Synod on Synodality, in-person and online gatherings will invite “God’s people at all levels” to share their voice with the goal of building a church that “journeys together” more deeply.

By Gina Christian
CatholicPhilly.com

The Philadelphia Archdiocese will hold a number of listening sessions in the coming weeks as part of the universal church’s Synod on Synodality.

Plans for the gatherings were announced in a Feb. 4 letter from Msgr. Brian Hennessy, pastor of St. Alphonsus Parish in Maple Glen and coordinator for the archdiocesan phase of the synod.

Sessions in local parishes and among various groups in listening events across the archdiocese, both in person and virtually, will be led by trained facilitators from the local communities.

The process of listening to the voices of the faithful and particularly those on the margins of society and/or the church is part of the preparation for the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican in October 2023.

The two-year synod process was launched by Pope Francis in October 2021, with the theme of “communion, participation and mission.”

The 18 regional archdiocesan sessions, which will include breakout meetings over two hours, will be facilitated by the Malvern-based Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI).

They are set to take place in person on the weekends of March 19-20 and April 2-3, with



online gatherings to be held March 21-31. See the reverse page for times and locations.

In addition to the in-person meetings, 10 on-line gatherings will be held March 21-31, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Virtual synodal sessions for the general public will be held on each of those days, plus a session for young professionals on March 21, a session for college-aged individuals on March 22 and sessions in Spanish on March 23 and 29.

To register for any of the sessions and to learn more about the process, visit the archdiocesan webpage, **ArchPhila.org/synod**.

CatholicPhilly.com will also report on the latest synod news throughout the spring.

Parishes, as well as institutions and communities supported by the Philadelphia Archdiocese, are encouraged to host local synodal meetings from March through May.

CLI will offer training for volunteer facilitators of all the local consultations.

In an electronic module still under development, individuals will soon be able to contribute to the consultation from the comfort of their home.

All synod materials for the archdiocese are available at the updated archdiocesan synod webpage at **ArchPhila.org/synod**.

In tandem with the synodal sessions, CLI will also implement its “Called for More”

initiative that will survey pastoral engagement among archdiocesan clergy, parish leaders and parishioners.

The listening sessions — the results of which will be compiled into a report in June — are intended “to offer as many of the faithful as possible with multiple opportunities to participate and be heard,” said Msgr. Hennessy in his letter.

That aim is key to the overall mission of the synod itself, said Msgr. Gregory Fairbanks, dean of the School of Diaconal Formation at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary.

“The idea behind a synodal church is that we recognize yes, we are under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, under the magisterium and the legitimate authority of the bishops, but we’re a church that listens to each other,” said Msgr. Fairbanks. “Everybody has a voice in order to be able to share their experiences, their points of view.”

Without signaling that the church is “a democracy,” the synod represents “an attempt to make sure there are more voices being added to the decision-making process, so that we can ... be better informed by hearing from God’s people at all levels,” he said.

The word “synod” itself derives from the Greek for “with” and “path,” signifying a way in which “the people of God walk together,” according to a 2018 document by the International Theological Commission.

Noting that the archdiocese had completed its own synodal process some two decades ago, CatholicPhilly.com editor Matthew Gambino recently wrote the main purpose of the latest initiative is not to create strategic plans.

“The journey is the point, not the destination,” he said. “A synod should lead a church community to learn how to listen – to one another, and to the voice of the Holy Spirit moving in our lives. And listening should become a permanent feature of the church.”

Regional Listening Sessions in Archdiocese of Philadelphia

March 19

9 - 11 a.m.: *St. Bede the Venerable Parish* (1071 Holland Road, Holland, Bucks County); *St. Pius X Parish* (220 Lawrence Road, Broomall, Delaware County)

2 - 4 p.m.: *St. Martin of Tours Parish* (in Spanish; Roosevelt Blvd. and Cheltenham Avenue, Philadelphia); *Our Lady of Calvary Parish* (11024 Knights Road, Philadelphia)

5 - 7 p.m.: *St. Rocco Parish* (in Spanish; 333 Sunny Dell Road, Avondale, Chester County)

March 20

2 - 4 p.m.: *St. Peter Parish* (2835 Manor Road, West Brandywine, Chester County); *Holy Innocents Parish* (in Spanish; 1337 East Hunting Park Avenue, Philadelphia); *St. Edmond Parish* (2130 South 21st Street, Philadelphia)

5 - 7 p.m.: *Mother of Divine Providence Parish* (333 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Montgomery County); *St. Thomas Aquinas Parish* (in Spanish; 17th and Morris Streets, Philadelphia)

April 2

9 - 11 a.m.: *St. Cornelius Parish* (160 Ridge Road, Chadds Ford); *St. Malachy Parish* (1429 North 11th Street, Philadelphia)

2 - 4 p.m.: *Queen of the Universe Parish* (in Spanish; 2443 Trenton Road, Levittown, Bucks County); *Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish* (5194 Cold Spring Creamery Road, Doylestown, Bucks County)

April 3

1 - 3 p.m.: *St. Patrick Parish* (131 Channing Avenue, Malvern, Chester County); *Villanova University, Connelly Center* (young adult session; 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova)

5 - 7 p.m.: *Mary, Mother of the Redeemer Parish* (1325 Upper State Road, North Wales, Montgomery County); *St. Patrick Parish* (in Spanish; DeKalb and Chestnut Streets, Norristown, Montgomery County)

**Register at the Archdiocese of
Philadelphia’s Synod resource page,
www.Archphila.org/synod**