



## ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

*The Church in Central and Southern Indiana*

# Leadership Briefing

By Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

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### Advent waiting is active, not passive

Advent is a particularly colorful liturgical season. It is full of rich symbolism and references to vivid characters of the Old Testament, including the prophet Isaiah and the herald John the Baptist, who bridges both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Northern Hemisphere, Advent coincides with autumn—nature’s final burst of color before the barrenness of winter—and it prepares our hearts for the warmth and beauty of Christmas.



Our longing for God’s return is a dominant theme in Advent, but it begs the question a bit. Is it God who is absent? Or have we wandered away from God, choosing to follow our own paths?

The truth is that because of our sins we have turned away from God, and our guilt has “carried us away like the wind” (cf. Is 64:5). We need the help of God’s grace to return to the right path, and to see what is right in front of us—the loving mercy of God who has never left us and who welcomes us home to his loving arms.

The synod process that we have begun in our archdiocese, and in every diocese throughout the world, provides us with a unique opportunity to walk together on the right path. Walking with us on this journey is our Blessed Mother Mary. Strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, Mary’s response to the Father’s invitation was an immediate and unqualified “Yes!” Her “Fiat” (Let it be done to me according to your Word) is the model for all who wish to follow Jesus on the synodal journey to everlasting life. Saying “yes” to God, as Mary

did, means saying “no” to all the things that distract us from listening carefully to God and to one another.

Advent is a season of grace, a time of year when we “wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:7). This “revelation” is not something esoteric or complicated. It is a person, Jesus Christ himself, who comes to us in many diverse ways and invites us to be united with him.

As Pope Francis said in his homily for the opening Mass of the Synod on Synods last October 10:

*The Lord does not stand aloof; he does not appear annoyed or disturbed. Instead, he is completely present to [each] person. He is open to encounter. Nothing leaves Jesus indifferent; everything is of concern to him. Encountering faces, meeting eyes, sharing each individual’s history. That is the closeness that Jesus embodies. He knows that someone’s life can be changed by a single encounter. The Gospel is full of such encounters with Christ, encounters that uplift and bring healing. Jesus did not hurry along, or keep looking at his watch to get the meeting over. He was always at the service of the person he was with, listening to what he or she had to say.*

We can say with the absolute certainty of faith that the Lord will come to us. And we can even say that he is coming now—in our daily prayer, our gathering in his name, our reception of the Eucharist, and our service to our brothers and sisters in need. This means that the waiting that we are called to do during Advent is active, not passive. In fact, we anticipate, and prepare for, the Lord’s coming by going out to meet him. We listen eagerly for his Word. We receive him in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. And we encounter him in the faces of our brothers and sisters, especially those who are most in need.

We begin the Church year with a season of waiting, a time of expectation and longing. Advent shows us that a personal encounter with Jesus Christ is what we truly hope for at this time of year (and always). It reminds us that all the joys of the Lord’s second coming, can truly be ours—if we learn to wait for them, not passively, but actively and prayerfully. Each time we celebrate Mass, we acknowledge that we are waiting for the Blessed Hope, Jesus, to come again. This waiting requires patience, trust and a firm belief that God will hear and answer our prayers. We hope that the Lord will give us everything we desire and need, and that his coming again—this Eucharist, at Christmas and at the end of time—will be a source of everlasting joy.

Advent is the Church’s way of helping us keep our eyes open. It’s also a season filled with reminders that the Lord is coming “whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning” (Mk 13:33-37).

May he not come suddenly and find us sleeping, indifferent to the needs of others. May we use this holy season to help us make the synod process truly a time of encounter, listening and prayerful discernment.

Best wishes for a blessed Advent season!

+Charles C. Thompson  
Archbishop of Indianapolis

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## Synod process underway across central and southern Indiana

*(Reprinted from The Criterion, November 12, 2021)*

**By Sean Gallagher**

The Church in central and southern Indiana, along with dioceses around the world, is in the midst of contributing to the planning process for a 2023 meeting of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican.



The topic of that meeting will be “synodality,” which is a word to describe how all the faithful are called to contribute to the guiding of the life of the Church through prayerful listening and sharing their own thoughts.

Ken Ogorek, archdiocesan director of catechesis, is coordinating the process of gathering input from across the archdiocese. He said that while the Church throughout its history has been collegial, “there’s always room for improvement.”

“It’s really an opportunity to focus on that aspect,” Ogorek said. “How are administrative and strategic decisions made? The synod is not about doctrine or morality. It’s not about the magisterium per se. It’s about how decisions are made. ... This specific synod is an opportunity to continue listening and to enhance our listening skills.”

To gather contributions from as many people as possible, there are several ways that have been set up for people to offer their thoughts.

Links to an online survey available in both English and Spanish can be found at [www.archindy.org/SynodSurvey](http://www.archindy.org/SynodSurvey).

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council met on Nov. 6 with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson to discuss the synod.

Parish councils across central and southern Indiana are invited to discuss the synod and return their input to archdiocesan leaders.

Ogorek emphasized the importance of contributions from individual parishes.

“It’s at the parish level where we believe that outreach to the marginalized is going to be most effectively realized,” he said. “We want to make sure that a broad variety of folks have an opportunity to weigh in on the synod questions.”

Other groups that have been invited to contribute to the process include young adult Catholics in the archdiocese and members of other Churches and Christian communities and representatives of faiths in central and southern Indiana.

“That’s really part of the idea of the synod,” Ogorek said. “Let’s hear from everybody, maybe especially folks who aren’t the usual crowd who gets to weigh in on Church-related matters all the time.”

All of this input should be returned to Ogorek by the end of January 2022. Archdiocesan leaders will sort through the contributions the following month and assemble a 10-page draft report.

“We plan to do that in a prayerful way that listens to how the Holy Spirit might be speaking through everyone who’s offered input and shared their thoughts and feelings,” Ogorek said.

On March 5, Catholics across the archdiocese will be able to take part with Archbishop Thompson in a meeting on the synod. The time and location of the meeting has not yet been determined.

When it occurs, those taking part will be able to view the draft report and share their thoughts about the synod with Archbishop Thompson.

A final report in which input from the March 5 meeting can be included will then be completed by the end of March. The findings of that report will be made available to archdiocesan Catholics. The archdiocesan report will be submitted to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which will later send a report on the synod to the Vatican.

Such contributions from dioceses around the world will help lay the groundwork for the 2023 meeting of the Synod of Bishops.

*(More information on the synod process in the archdiocese can be found by contacting your pastor, parish life coordinator or parish council chair or president. Ken Ogorek can also be reached at [catechesis@archindy.org](mailto:catechesis@archindy.org) or 317-236-1446.)*

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## A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

### Taking the first step, being involved and supportive, bearing fruit and rejoicing

The Church's closeness to Jesus is part of a common journey; communion and mission are profoundly interconnected... The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.



The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet. He tells his disciples: "You will be blessed if you do this" (Jn13:17). An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the "smell of the sheep" and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time. Faithful to the Lord's gift, it also bears fruit. An evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants her to be fruitful. It cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds.

The sower when he sees weeds sprouting among the grain does not grumble or overreact. He or she finds a way to let the word take flesh in a particular situation and bear fruits of new life, however imperfect or incomplete these may appear. The disciple is ready to put his or her whole life on the line, even to accepting martyrdom, in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, yet the goal is not to make enemies but to see God's word accepted and its capacity for liberation and renewal revealed.

Finally, an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.

*A selection from the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis , Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), Chapter One, “The Church’s Missionary Transformation,” No. 20–24, ‘A Church which goes forth.’”*

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## **My Prayer for You**

During this Advent season, let’s pray together using this exhortation of our Holy Father Pope Francis:

*Dear brothers and sisters, let us have a good journey together! May we be pilgrims in love with the Gospel and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit. Let us not miss out on the grace-filled opportunities born of encounter, listening and discernment. In the joyful conviction that, even as we seek the Lord, he always comes with his love to meet us first.*

*+ Charles C. Thompson*