



## Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the 2023 Diocesan Synod

### **1. What is a diocesan synod?**

"Synod" simply means "meeting." While meetings happen regularly in dioceses, a diocesan synod is a special kind of meeting called by the diocesan bishop when he feels a particular pastoral need or significant circumstances suggest to him that it is necessary to do so. The synod brings together a large group of people from varied backgrounds to discuss the diocese's pastoral needs and listen to how the Holy Spirit is leading us at this critical time in history. The synod process recommends priorities and initiatives to the diocesan bishop to consider when setting the direction of the pastoral ministry in the diocese for years to come.

### **2. How is a diocesan synod different from the Universal Synod?**

The Universal synod was called by Pope Francis in 2020, and the Diocesan one called by Bishop Cantú in 2021 are synods in this same general sense. They simply have a different scope, different members, and address different topics. Namely, the synod called by Pope Francis will touch on issues that affect the universal Church around the whole world. In contrast, the synod called by Bishop Cantú is specifically focused on discerning the direction of the mission and ministry of the local church in Santa Clara County for years to come. However, learnings from the universal synod listening sessions will inform our Diocesan Synod process.

### **3. How does the Diocesan Synod relate to the Eucharistic Revival?**

Through the synodal process, the Diocese of San José seeks to spiritually and structurally renew our local church at all levels. The Eucharistic Revival is the heart of this renewal. Every Catholic parish, school, apostolate, and family are invited to be a part of renewing the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist —and sent out in mission "for the life of the world."

### **4. Why have a diocesan synod now?**

We are in need of a Spirit-filled renewal, especially in the aftermath of an historic pandemic. Bishop Cantú's decision to call the first diocesan synod was influenced by the sacramental, pastoral, catechetical, and financial realities seen in the dioceses across the country before the pandemic. The pandemic has only accentuated and exacerbated these existing challenges in our local Church and shed light on the issues of overall sustainability.

In consultation with others, he believes it is time to respond in prayer and action to the challenges we face, to build on the history of this great diocese, and to imagine what the Church in our Diocese wants to be in 10 years to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively in Santa Clara County.

Bishop Cantú is challenging us to become missionary disciples, despite the challenges that we face. In this Diocesan Synod, Bishop Cantú invites clergy, religious, and laity to reflect on the question, "where is our local Church of San José called to be in 10 years to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively in Silicon Valley into the future? Moreover, to be faithful to the mission of Jesus Christ, what do we need to do differently? What strengths can we leverage? What obstacles must we overcome? Do we need to pivot from old ministries to new ones?" Does our diocesan structure support our Mission or is our mission limited by our diocesan structure? These are all broad questions, and the synod process will surface various and creative ideas.

### **5. How does this process work?**

Since a synod assembly is a very large event, there is a preparatory phase before the actual synod meeting itself. During this period, a steering committee will leverage the key topics and issues raised from the recent Universal Synod process pertaining to our local Church, update relevant statistical data, distribute a survey, and convene additional listening sessions with clergy, religious, laity, and other Catholic groups. The steering committee will aggregate all such information into major themes and proposals for the Bishop Cantú's consideration to become the agenda for the synod assembly.

### **6. What happens at a diocesan synod assembly?**

The synod assembly itself takes place after the preparatory process is complete. At the synod assembly, the themes and proposals gathered from the listening sessions, reviewed by the Steering Committee, and approved by Bishop Cantú are presented for discussion. During the synod assembly, the synod body discusses and presents resolutions based on the themes and proposals that were presented. The assembly itself often takes multiple days.

### **7. Can a diocesan synod change Church teaching or address issues of doctrine?**

No. A diocesan synod does not have the authority to address any issues related to Church doctrine. It is a consultative body that meets to discuss pastoral proposals (spiritual and catechetical formation, evangelization, etc.) to implement in a diocese so that the gospel can be proclaimed and lived by all the faithful of the diocese.

### **8. Who gets to participate in the synod assembly?**

The diocesan bishop, his administration, and his delegates run the assembly. The synod body will include invited clergy, religious and lay members of the faithful representing of the diversity of the Diocese of San José community. The selected delegates will provide a consultative, non-binding feedback on the topics raised for the bishop's consideration.

### **9. Can the synod body pass new rules and laws at a diocesan synod?**

No, authority remains with the diocesan bishop at the synod to formally establish any binding rules or laws in a diocese. The synod body only provides discussion and a consultative vote to the diocesan bishop for his consideration.

### **10. What happens after the diocesan synod assembly?**

Having listened prayerfully to the voices of the faithful throughout the synod consultation, Bishop Cantú will prayerfully consider the conclusions and requests proposed by the synod assembly before making his decisions about the future of the Diocese. All input will be considered but may not lead to direct action. Bishop will issue a pastoral plan outlining the next steps coming out of the diocesan synod. Implementation of the pastoral plan will take place over many years in the Diocese. We will celebrate the fruits of the pastoral plan in 2031, with the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Diocese of San José and the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe.