

Letter to be used as a model for going to clergy worldwide

(As many individuals and groups as possible are encouraged to send a letter such as this one to their bishops, pastors, and priests globally inviting a response to come back to them.)

date, 2021

Dear Bishop or Pastor or Priest:

Pope Francis has called for engagement of the whole People of God in walking, discerning, governing and evangelizing together to make fruitful the Synod on Synodality soon to begin on the local level this fall.

The early church was a community of equals, governed by Christ's "new commandment" that we love one another. The community came together in 'house churches' led by both men and women celebrating the Eucharist and keeping the faith alive. The current patriarchal and hierarchal Church patterned on monarchy, is not what Christ envisioned, for we are all one in Christ (Gal.3:28). We the People, *are* the Church and are eager to respond to Pope Francis's desire for greater involvement of the People of God in this Synodal process.

We write to you heartened by Pope Francis's comments to the Italian bishops (May 24) that the Synod must have a "bottom-up" focus with the process beginning in small, local communities and parishes. He called for patience, allowing all to speak freely, giving space to "the wisdom of the People of God."

For the Spirit to be heard, the lay people of God must be well represented at the synods. With this in mind, we feel it is essential to include the following issues both in the questionnaire that is going out and in the discussions in all three synodal gatherings:

- The Church becoming a more welcoming, forgiving, loving, and inclusive community
- The role of women serving in ministry
- A path back to the sacraments for the divorce and remarried
- The place of the LGBTQ community in the Church
- Mandatory or optional celibacy for priests
- Small Christian Communities as part of the official structure of the Church
- Lay people trained to administer in parishes and Small Christian Communities where it is anticipated that no priest will be available
- Transparency & accountability regarding the clerical sex abuse, financial crimes, and use of power in the Church.

We trust that a diocesan synod will be held in our community. Additionally, we hope you will be supportive of any lay-led listening sessions we and others organize, so that lay participation will have the benefit of a good cross section of opinion.

Be assured of our prayers as well as our cooperation and commitment in supporting diocesan synods. We would appreciate hearing back from you to explore our working together on this important event.

Sincerely,