

SYNOD 2014
“Building Bridges to the Future Together”

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC
May 2014

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), a solemn and official assembly of all the bishops of the world, was convoked by Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) and charged with renewing the spirit of Catholicism in order to more effectively address the challenges of modern society. Pope John XXIII referred to the Council as a “new Pentecost.” One of the Council’s crowning achievements was the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* promulgated on November 21, 1964. Chapter Four of the Constitution titled “The Laity” assumes great significance as we approach the opening of our diocesan synod “Building Bridges to the Future Together.”

Our diocesan synod, Synod 2014, includes three stages, the Preparatory, the Synod itself and the Implementation. The Preparatory Stage is going on now and offers the opportunity for the entire Christian faithful (clergy, religious, laity) to submit input pertaining to issues currently facing the church (www.2014synod.org). Lay Catholics should see this as a chance to fulfill the mission bestowed upon them by the bishops at Vatican II who spoke of the laity as “called upon to expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification.”

The Diocese of Bridgeport’s last synod was held in 1981 under the auspices of the late Most Reverend Walter W. Curtis, the second Bishop of Bridgeport. There were also synods in Bridgeport in 1971 and 1961 with participation in the latter restricted solely to the clergy.

There will be 400+ delegates to Part II, the Synod itself, which will be convened on five Saturdays beginning September 19, 2014 and ending on September 19, 2015. Each of the 83 parishes of the diocese will have two delegates. The Parish Council and other parish lay leaders will submit to the pastor names of nominees. The pastor will select two delegates from the candidates presented to participate as General Delegates to the Synod. These lay representatives will join with priests, deacons, religious as well as representatives from Catholic Schools, Religious Education, Youth and other ecclesial movements to form the official membership of General Delegates to Synod 2014. The fruit of their labor will ultimately be revealed in the Implementation Stage, the final phase of Synod 2014.

Synod 2014 is a historical event in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Throughout the history of the church local synods have established customs and practices that influence our lives as Catholics down to the present day. The Synod of Toledo (589) introduced the “filioque” (Latin, “and the Son”) to the Nicene Creed and the clause was eventually adopted by all Latin Western Christians when professing belief in

the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The Easter Synod of Rome (1050) and the Synod of Vercelli (1050) upheld the doctrine of transubstantiation when Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist was under attack. Ashes, once the sign of official public penitents, were extended to the universal church at the Synod of Benevento in 1091.

In the 16th century the Council of Trent (1545-1563) required that a diocesan synod be convened once a year! The 1917 Code of Canon Law called for a diocesan synod only once every ten years. The present Code of Canon Law states that the synod is convened by a bishop when he deems it necessary (canon 461). The delegates to a diocesan synod have consultative status. The bishop alone is the legislator.

Dr Joan Kelly will offer a course called “Synods and Councils in Ancient and Modern Times” to be held at Notre Dame High School in Fairfield during the month of July every Tuesday and Thursday morning (10:00-Noon) beginning Tuesday, July 8th and ending on Thursday, July 31st. To register for the class please notify Gina Donnarummo, Diocesan Director of Adult Education, at gdonnarummo@diobpt.org. or call 203 416-1446.

Let us join in prayer that our diocesan synod will bear much fruit as we journey forward “Building Bridges to the Future Together.”

Submitted by Dr. Joan M. Kelly

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