



DIOCESAN SYNOD
“Building Bridges to the Future Together”

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, the fifth Bishop of Bridgeport, has convoked a diocesan synod to be held from September 19, 2014 to September 19, 2015. The formal Decree of the Convocation announcing the synod was promulgated by Bishop Caggiano on the Solemnity of the Chair of Peter, February 22, 2014. The theme of our diocesan synod will be “Building Bridges to the Future Together.” Bishop Caggiano has entrusted the synod to the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary under her title, Our Lady of Fatima. The intercession of Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) and Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) is also being invoked for the synod’s success. Both popes will be canonized by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014.

What is a synod? The word synod comes from the Greek word “synodos” meaning “meeting.” Throughout most of Church History the terms synod and council (from the Latin “concilium” meaning “gathering” or “meeting”) were virtually synonymous and used interchangeably. Only recently have synod and council become distinguishable. On September 15, 1965 Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) following the prompting of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) chartered the Synod of Bishops in the document *Apostolica Sollicitudo (Apostolic Concern)*. The Synod of Bishops is a permanent body of bishops from around the world whose purpose is to advise the Pope on certain issues. The Synod of Bishops usually meets every three years although the Pope may convene an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops for some special purpose (e.g. Pope Francis, Extraordinary Synod on the Family, October 2014). Thus there emerged a distinction between synod whose role is merely advisory or consultative and councils which have legislative or executive power such as the Second Vatican Council. This distinction was made formal and enshrined in canons 342-348 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*.

The 1983 *Code of Canon Law* speaks of two types of synods, the Synod of Bishops as described above and the diocesan synod. As a

canonical institution diocesan synods date back to the fourth century. Today the diocesan synod is an assembly of representatives of the faithful within a diocese, the bishops, priests, religious and laity for the purpose of examining and taking action on certain matters and issues confronting the diocese. 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.

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.

The next bulletin insert will contain particulars of our own 2014 diocesan synod and the various ways that all the members of the Christian faithful throughout the diocese can participate.

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

For further information on the diocesan synod consult the synod website at www.2014synod.org

Submitted by Dr. Joan M. Kelly March 30, 2014



Dr. Joan M. Kelly, a graduate of the School of Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., is on the faculty at Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell and teaches at Saint John Fisher Seminary in Stamford. She is engaged with the theological formation of the diocesan candidates for the permanent diaconate and is an adjunct professor at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield.