



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
300 WYOMING AVENUE
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503-1279

October 4, 2021
Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In reflecting upon the Gospel stories of Jesus' life and ministry, it is apparent that much of His time was spent in listening – listening to struggling souls who were seeking a better life for themselves and those they loved. What set Jesus apart was that He listened not only to the words they spoke but also to the movement of their hearts as they shared their disappointments and fears, grief and pain, brokenness and sin, hopes and dreams. In every instance, Jesus listened to those who approached him with the merciful heart of God, acknowledging their life's journey and treating them with respect and dignity. Authentic listening – not just with our ears, but also with our head and heart – is a truly powerful, sacred and deeply human experience.

Throughout her history, the Church has valued the art of listening. From the earliest days of Christianity, the Church has used the model of a *Synod* as a means of listening to the voice of Christ alive in each member of the Church. Simply put, a *Synod* is a process to gather Christ's disciples to hear their voices.

On March 7, 2020, His Holiness, Pope Francis announced that a Synod of Bishops would convene at the Vatican in October 2023, the theme of which will be *For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission*. As a vital first step in the Synod process, the Holy Father has invited each diocese around the world to listen to the voices of its people, including those who are marginalized or may have fallen away from the Church.

By virtue of our Baptism, all of us are called to be active participants in the life of the Church through discernment, participation and co-responsibility. Through a process of careful listening, our participation in the Synod process will enable us to better understand how the Christian community participates in the life of our Church in the Diocese of Scranton today and how that shared participation among our members might grow in the future.

I invite you to join me in-person, as the Diocese of Scranton begins our participation in the Synod process with an opening Mass on Sunday, October 17, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton. Pope Francis will formally open the Synod at the Vatican on the weekend of October 9 and 10.

Our diocese is in the process of developing a broad consultation process for participation in our parishes, schools and other diocesan structures over the next six months. In addition, online opportunities to reach all members of our community will be available. While more details will be shared in the near future, I encourage your participation in this historic moment in the life of Church in the Diocese of Scranton in whatever manner you feel best responds to your situation.

Far from being a temporary or one-time experience in calling the Church to participate in the Synod process, Pope Francis is reminding us that the very mission of the Church requires the entire People of God to be on a journey together, with each member playing his or her crucial role, united with each other. The Holy Father's hope, which is my prayer as well, is that the experience of this unique worldwide opportunity will bring about a new springtime for listening, discernment, dialogue and decision-making in our Church, so that the whole People of God can better journey together with one another and the entire human family, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I look forward to walking together with you during these exciting days in our Church. Thank you and God bless you.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Joseph C. Bambera

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Scranton