

**DIOCESE OF DALLAS**  
THE DIOCESAN SYNOD – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**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 that brings together a large group of people from varied backgrounds to discuss the pastoral ministry of a diocese. Its purpose is to propose standards to the diocesan bishop for setting the direction of the pastoral ministry in the diocese for years to come.

**Why have a diocesan synod?**

When a diocesan bishop feels there is a particular pastoral need or particular circumstances suggest to him that it is necessary to do so, the diocesan bishop may call a diocesan synod.

**How does this process work?**

Since a synod is a very large event, there is a preparatory phase before the actual synod meeting itself. During this preparatory period, a preparatory commission will gather the topics and issues that will be discussed during the synod meeting itself. During this period, the preparatory commission will seek feedback from the community. While focus is placed particularly on members of the Catholic community, the commission also reaches out to non-Catholic communities that can provide helpful insight for preparing topics and issues for discussion at the synod meeting. All of this will then be proposed to the bishop as the agenda for the synod. He may also want to place his own topics and issues on the agenda for discussion.

**What happens at a diocesan synod?**

The synod meeting itself takes place after the preparatory process is complete. At the synod meeting, the topics and issues gathered by the preparatory commission are presented for discussion. These topics and issues are based on the information gathered from the community, but they are ultimately set by the diocesan bishop. During the synod meeting, the synod body discusses and votes on resolutions based on the topics and ideas that were presented. The meeting itself normally takes multiple days.

**Can a diocesan synod change Church teaching or address issues of Church 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 of the faithful of the diocese.

**Who gets to participate at the synod meeting?**

The diocesan bishop, his administration and his delegates run the meeting itself. There are also clergy members and lay members of the faithful who can be part of the meeting. The chosen members can provide a consultative (meaning non-binding) vote on a topic for the diocesan bishop’s consideration.

**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.