

# ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER DISCERNMENT PROCESS

SYNOD 2021-2023



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. Why are we having a diocesan discernment process?

The Vatican announced that the upcoming Synod of Bishops in 2023 will pray and discuss the role of synodality in the Church. In order to prepare, they asked that every diocese in the world have an experience of synodality, which is a broad and prayerful consultation about where the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church. Archbishop Aquila expects this to be a grace filled time for our local church, during which we will all be reminded of our missionary identity and receive clarity on this next stage in our mission from the Holy Spirit.

### 2. What is the timeline?

The diocesan phase began with the opening Mass at the Cathedral on October 17th. Beginning on the Feast of Christ the King and throughout Advent, priests will preach the kerygma (the core message of the gospel) over the course of five weeks so that people can have a deepened experience of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Beginning in mid-January, parishes will begin the listening and discernment process at the local level. They may choose to host discernment sessions where members of the parish gather to pray and reflect on questions about mission: the mission of the disciple, the mission of the parish, and mission in the Archdiocese of Denver. The Archdiocesan Discernment Process Team will synthesize the fruits of these discussions in early March.

The Archdiocese will host a diocesan-wide event on March 25th-27th. Each parish will send representatives, chosen by the pastor, to reflect upon the results of the parish discernment sessions, pray, and discern where the Holy Spirit is calling the Archdiocese on mission.

### 3. What is the goal?

There is no predetermined outcome, except for the mission entrusted to the Church by Christ in Mt. 28:19-20, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."



How the archdiocese is being called to carry out this mission is the point of this discernment. We trust that the Holy Spirit still speaks in our world and that we can hear what He says to us when we prayerfully listen. The goal, then, is to have a diocesan-wide experience of prayerfully listening to the Holy Spirit in order to live out the mission entrusted to us.

#### **4. What are the formats for a Discernment Session?**

There are three formats that a parish can use to host a discernment session.

The first is a simple electronic format. All parishes will offer this format. Videos and questions for prayerful reflection will be provided and people can submit their answers electronically. If a person does not have access to the internet, or is not fluent with technology, paper forms should be provided by the parish. The parish will synthesize the responses given on the paper forms and include them with the responses of in-person gatherings if they choose to also include one of those formats.

The second format is an in-person meeting of a representative group of the parish, whose members are chosen by the pastor. The third format is a large-group meeting, with many parishioners in attendance, but sitting in smaller groups so as to facilitate more productive dialogue.

#### **5. What does an in-person Discernment Session look like?**

A sample agenda for the discernment sessions is provided. It is hoped that each session will be a combination of prayer and facilitated discussion.

In a large-group setting, this discussion takes place amongst the smaller tables and concludes with a time to share the fruits of the discussion with a larger group.

#### **6. What are the roles in a discernment session?**

An overview of the roles and description of responsibilities is available on a separate document provided by the Archdiocesan team.

#### **7. Who can participate in a discernment session?**

Anyone can submit responses via the electronic format. We are hopeful that the people who attend their parish's small or large group listening sessions (if the parish chooses to host them) will have also been through the Advent preaching series so that they have encountered the Gospel message in such a way that they are better equipped to discern according to a biblical worldview.



## **8. How many parish listening sessions will take place?**

The exact dates and times are left to the decision of the parish, but the parishes are encouraged to offer their sessions at times that will be convenient for those invited to attend. If multiple sessions would allow for greater convenience for the large-group format, those are encouraged.

