



THE MOST REVEREND
GREGORY J. HARTMAYER, OFM CONV.

My dear friends,

Peace and All Good Things!

We have been invited to participate in an unprecedented moment in our Church's history beginning this fall. On Sunday, Oct. 10, Pope Francis opened a two-year process called *Synod 2021-2023 – For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission* that will uniquely engage not only Catholics but God's people all over the world. I want to personally encourage you, your family, and all those who are dear to you to join with me and our brothers and sisters in north and central Georgia on this extraordinary journey of faith.

I will celebrate a very special Mass on Sunday, Oct. 17, at the Cathedral of Christ the King to open the archdiocesan phase of the Synod. I hope you will join me in your own parish by praying fervently for its success and committing to active personal participation as we move ahead. Whether you are seated in the pews or virtual, have been here for decades or moved yesterday, speak a different language(s), are feeling close to God or not, are young or old, I hope to hear from you.

A synod is a "journeying together" – a shared journey of prayer, listening and discernment. When we engage in this process, we go back to the very roots of what it means to be Christians as a pilgrim Church together *on the way*, following Jesus who is *the way*. What's more, this synod aims to reframe our journey moving forward. "The objective of this Synodal Process is not to provide a temporary or one-time experience of synodality, but rather to provide an opportunity for the entire People of God to discern together how to move forward on the path towards being a more synodal Church in the long-term" (Vademecum, 1.3).

In the words of the Holy Father, "...the purpose of this Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but to 'plant dreams, draw forth prophesies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands'" (Preparatory Document, 32).

In the coming weeks and months, your pastors, ministry leaders and brothers and sisters will be inviting you to speak and to listen as part of this process. The archdiocese will provide resources about the process throughout our communities. Look for opportunities to participate in a listening session or contribute to a survey and to join us in prayer, study, and reflection as we journey together. As we continue our Eucharistic Renewal, I invite each of you to spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, praying that this Synod will bear abundant fruit. Come Holy Spirit!

Yours in Christ,

+ *Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv.*

Most Reverend Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv.
Archbishop of Atlanta

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