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Diocese

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October 24, 2021

My Dear People of God:

Pope Francis has invited the whole Church to join with him in a process of listening and discerning for the purpose of determining how best to spread the Good News to our culture, that is, evangelize.

Today, October 24, I respond to the Holy Father's request by announcing our own Diocesan engagement in this consultation process. While everyone is free to respond individually or even as small "base communities" to the fundamental question which stands at the heart of this process, I also want to make broader listening and discerning opportunities available to various regions of the Diocese. In consultation with my Synod Team it has been determined that five geographic locations (Santa Rosa, Napa, Lakeport, Eureka, Fort Bragg) would provide ample opportunity for those interested to come, see, hear and contribute. A schedule of the meetings for the Diocese has been arranged and these have been forwarded to your pastors for publication.

In the material provided by the Holy See we find this Fundamental Question: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together". How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church?

The question is challenging for any rural Diocese which covers thousands of square miles and in which parishes are 200 or 300 miles distant. Thus, the question for our Diocese might be focused on the local parish more than on the "particular Church" which refers to the Diocese as a whole.

At this time, I invite you to begin to reflect and to pray about the various ways in which the Diocesan or Parish Church invites you to participate in the life and ministry of the Church. I invite you to consider the catechetical programs in your parishes and the Diocesan engagement with this ministry. Consider the RCIA Programs which each Parish sponsors and for which the Diocese provides guidance. I invite you to review the Diocesan Statutes regarding Parish Pastoral Councils and Parish Finance Councils. I invite you to consider your Sunday liturgies and the engagement of Readers, Acolytes, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. All of these entail an offering of self to the service of God and His Church. All of these are manifestations of our "journeying together".

We acknowledge these and commend you for all of this. Now, however, we come to you and ask: What are some other ways in which we, as a particular or local Church, can "journey together" more effectively and more fruitfully?

Asking every good grace and blessing of God upon you, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

The Most Reverend Robert F. Vasa,
Bishop of Santa Rosa