



ARCHDIOCESE OF AGANA

CHANCERY OFFICE

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November 18, 2021

To the people of the Archdiocese of Agaña:

Our loving God gives himself to each of us. All are important. All are welcome. With that in mind, Pope Francis has announced a process of reflection leading up to a meeting of the Synod of Bishops to take place in Rome in October of 2023. He announced a diocesan phase to begin at this time. The regional phase will follow. Our archdiocesan phase will open with a special Mass at 5 p.m. in our Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica on Tuesday Dec. 7, the eve of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception/Feast of Santa Marian Kamalen.

In this synod we will journey together with a purpose of being more inclusive as we look to our future Church, paying special attention to those on the margins whose concerns and perspective are so often overlooked. The three touchstones of this process are communion, participation, and mission.

Communion is the blessing of unity amid diversity. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for His people. Synodality seeks to hear what everyone has to contribute, especially those whom we do not hear from often.

Participation seeks the involvement of everyone in a process of deep, respectful listening to each other. In this way we create space to hear the Holy Spirit together and get a sense of direction the Church should take at this moment in history. Synodality seeks to include not only those who are very active in our parishes and the silent majority, who despite it all, come faithfully to Mass every weekend, but also those who have quit coming, feel excluded or feel pushed to the periphery in the Church and society.

Mission – Once we have shared a sense of direction, the Holy Spirit leads us forth to share the love of God with the whole human family, especially those who live on the

spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world.

In Guam, our participation in the synod will consist of a series of meetings between now and May in order to reflect on the following questions: How does this journeying together happen in our local church? And what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in journeying together?

I invite everyone to reflect on these questions and then participate in the discussions which will take place in groups in our parishes and the archdiocesan level, sharing your thoughts and listening to what others have to say. Truth is horizontal as well as vertical, and it takes humility to truly listen with an open heart to others whose life experience and perspective on things may be very different from our own.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I pray that through this synodal process we will better discern what God is asking of us today.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael J. Byrnes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

†Michael J. Byrnes, S.T.D.
Archbishop of Agaña