



Diocese of Great Falls-Billings



DECREE TO AMEND THE DIRECTORY OF THE SECOND SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS

WHEREAS, the Second Synod of our Diocese has been properly convoked and begun, and,

WHEREAS, it was discovered that this Synod, previously thought to be the first of the Diocese, is actually the second, and

WHEREAS, the delegates have met in their Vicariate sessions and the First Full Session in which they deliberated upon the preliminary questions and gave their input, and

WHEREAS, the Synod Preparatory Commission, having compiled and reviewed all the input from the delegates, particularly from the first full session, have prepared a draft declaration to propose to the Second Full Session of the Synod, and

WHEREAS, I, at the strong recommendation of the Preparatory Commission, judge it necessary to specifically limit the amount of time each delegate may speak at the Second Full Session to ensure full and equitable participation from as many delegates as possible;

THEREFORE, I, the Most Reverend Michael Warfel, by the grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Great Falls-Billings, by this decree do hereby amend, effective immediately, the previously promulgated Directory for the this Synod to correct the title to "Directory for the Second Diocesan Synod," and to include, under paragraph three of the section "*The Manner of Seeking Opinions*," the following subsection:

- n. 1. Each intervention by delegates at the second full session will be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes. Individual delegates will be allowed to make interventions only once per topic. Priority will be given to delegates who have intervened less up to that point.

Given at the Co-Cathedral of Saint Patrick in Billings, Montana on this twenty-first day of October in the Year of Our Lord, two thousand and twenty one.

Most Reverend Michael Warfel

Bishop of Great Falls-Billings



Mr. Darren Eultgen

Chancellor and
Secretary for the Second Synod



Directory for the Second Diocesan Synod

The Year of Grace 2021

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

Intro Letter and Decree

August 4, 2020

To the Priests of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

Dear brothers in Christ,

It is with great joy and anticipation that I announce to you that, for the first time in the history of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, we will hold a diocesan synod in the fall of next year!

We are familiar with the synods held in Rome for the Universal Church, but this Synod will be directed to, and comprised of, the ordained and lay faithful of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. It is my sincere belief and hope that this synod will help the Catholics of our Diocese to live ever more deeply the call to build up the Body of Christ, the Church, within their family lives.

The Diocesan Synod is a one way that the Christian faithful throughout the Diocese can advise me, their bishop, in my administration or teaching responsibility. Canon 460 sums up the nature and purpose of a diocesan synod: “A diocesan synod is a group of selected priests and other members of the Christian faithful of a particular church who offer assistance to the diocesan bishop for the good of whole diocesan community...”

The theme for this Synod is “The Domestic Church in Eastern Montana,” aimed at helping the families of our Diocese to grow closer to Christ and to one another by living out the faith in the home. The Second Vatican Council, in the document *Lumen Gentium*, #11, beautifully taught that:

From the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries. The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state.

The membership of this synod will be comprised of around 60 persons, about 50% clergy and 50% laity, elected or appointed from throughout the Diocese.

What I ask of you, my brothers as coworkers in the vineyard of the Lord, is to prepare yourselves and your parish pastoral councils for this synod. As with any good effort that we undertake, we must keep prayer ever in the forefront of our actions and plans. Please pray for the success of this synod.

Furthermore, as you will see in the timeline below, all priests and parish pastoral councils will be invited to submit questions or suggestions for consideration. I ask that you schedule a pastoral council meeting at your parish in October or November of this year so that your pastoral council can prepare their questions for submission.

More information will be provided at our Fall Presbyteral gathering, or by mail. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the moderator of the Synod, Fr. Samuel Spiering.

In Christ,

Michael W. Warfel
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings

DECREE

Having considered the current life of the Church in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, and having consulted the Presbyteral Council and Diocesan Pastoral Council, I judge that the convocation of a Diocesan Synod would be greatly beneficial to the present and future of our Diocese. Therefore I, the Most Reverend Michael W. Warfel, by the grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Great Falls-Billings, in accord with canon 461 §1, hereby convoke the First Synod of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, with the overall theme “The Domestic Church in Eastern Montana” to proceed according to the following timeline:

August 6, 2020. This decree and a letter of explanation will be mailed out to all priests of the Diocese.

September 14th, 2020. The preparatory commission will provide resources and information, including the directory, to the priests of the Diocese, gathered for the Fall Priest Assembly.

September, 2020. The Synod will be formally announced by the publication of this decree in the Diocesan Harvest.

December 15, 2020. Questions for consideration and suggestions from priests and parish pastoral councils must be submitted to the chancellor of the Diocese.

January 1, 2021 through April 30, 2021. Members of the synod will be appointed or elected as provided for in the directory. Groups charged with such appointments or elections shall notify the chancellor of their choice by May 15.

February 1, 2021 through April 30, 2021. The bishop will consult his various diocesan councils on the preliminary questions for the Synod.

July 30, 2021. Members of the Synod will be provided with the questions for consideration by this date.

Friday, September 10, 2021, 12:00pm. The Bishop will celebrate an opening Mass of the Synod in the Cathedral of St. Ann in Great Falls, followed by a gathering of the delegates for introductions and an explanation of the procedures of the Synod.

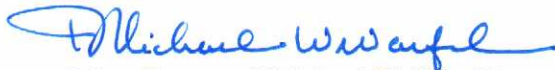
September 11-October 9, 2021. Vicariate sessions will be held to discuss the proposed questions.

October 15, 2021, 10:00am-3:00pm. First full session, held in Lewistown, MT.

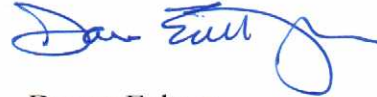
October 22, 2021. 10:00am-4:00pm. Second and final full session, held in Billings, MT,
5:00pm. Closing Mass at St. Patrick’s Co-Cathedral, followed by dinner for the delegates.

It is my hope and prayer that this Synod will enliven our Diocese, but most especially the families of our Diocese, to more faithfully love and serve our Risen Lord.

Given at Great Falls, Montana on the Memorial of St. John Vianney, patron of parish priests, this 4th day of August, in the year of Our Lord 2020.



Most Reverend Michael W. Warfel
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings



Darren Eultgen
Chancellor of Great Falls-Billings

Synod Membership

The participants (delegates) in the Diocesan Synod are selected according to the laws of our Church. Some have to participate because of their office, some expressly by the law, and others chosen in other ways in to truly reflect “the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the Diocese... (canon 512 §2).

Those who will participate in this Synod by law or office are: the vicar general, the judicial vicar, the vicars forane, and the members of the presbyteral council.

Members of the synod will also be selected from throughout the Diocese. These members will be: one priest from each vicariate, along with an alternate, elected at a gathering of the pastors of that vicariate; one lay member and one lay married couple (3 persons total) from each vicariate, to be nominated by pastors and elected at a gathering of the pastors of the vicariate; one member from each of the following entities, to be chosen or elected at the discretion of those organizations: Diocesan Finance Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council, Knights of Columbus State Officers, Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, Catholic Daughters of America, Heralds of the Good News, the Capuchin Friars, and the Missionaries of St. Paul.

In addition, the following will be appointed by the Bishop: Rev. Rodrigo Mingollo, Rev. Samuel Spiering, the chancellor, the director of deacon formation, the diocesan finance officer, the director of lifelong faith formation, the director of the tribunal, the vocation director, the superintendent for Catholic schools, the president of the Catholic Foundation of Eastern Montana, the director of the Montana Catholic Conference, the regional representative of the National Advisory Council, a deacon and his wife, one Native American from each tribe, three religious sisters, a young adult, a youth minister, a lay minister, three lay alternates, and two Hispanic persons, one from Sydney and one from Billings.

Lay members must have “firm faith, high moral standards and prudence (canon 512 §3)” and canonically regular status (*Instruction* II.3.1).

The Bishop may, having heard the preparatory commission, permit elections to be held by mail in ballots if physical gatherings are not feasible.

The Bishop will communicate the designation of members in writing to them.

One may lose one's membership by reason of loss of title or office, which qualified one to be a member, or by removal by the bishop for a just cause.

In accord with canon 833, delegates shall make their profession of faith at the opening Mass of the Synod.

Officers of the Synod

President

The diocesan bishop presides over the diocesan Synod. He may, however, delegate the vicar general to fulfill this office at individual full sessions of the synod.

The vicars forane will preside over the vicariate sessions.

Moderator

The diocesan bishop shall appoint a moderator to oversee the preparatory stages of the Synod and to moderate the full sessions of the Synod (*Instruction III.B.2.3*). Fr. Samuel Spiering is the moderator. Some duties of the moderator may be delegated at a later date.

The vicars forane shall moderate the vicariate sessions.

Secretary

The diocesan bishop is to appoint a secretary to oversee the Secretariat of the Synod (*Instruction III.B.1*). Mr. Darren Eultgen, chancellor of the Diocese, is the synod secretary.

The Preparatory Commission

The Bishop must establish a preparatory commission. This commission is tasked primarily in matter pertaining to the organization and preparation of the Synod; in drawing up and publishing the synodal directory; in designation of the synodal members and in his determining the questions to be proposed for synodal deliberation. The diocesan bishop presides over the meetings of the preparatory commission. The moderator will chair the meetings.

The members of the preparatory commission are: Bishop Michael Warfel, Rev. Samuel Spiering, Rev. Rodrigo Mingollo, Mr. Darren Eultgen (chancellor), and Mr. Thomas Dotterweich (director of lifelong faith formation).

Determining the Questions

The diocesan bishop makes the final decision on the questions to be considered by the Synod. However, he will seek input from throughout the Diocese before making that final determination.

All priests will be invited to propose questions for the Synod. Additionally, parish pastoral councils will likewise be invited to propose questions. All proposals are due to the Synod Secretary by December 15, 2020.

The preparatory commission, having reviewed the proposals, will establish preliminary questions. These questions will be discussed at the meetings of the various diocesan councils, as the bishop determines.

Once the bishop decides he has consulted sufficiently, he, with the assistance of the preparatory commission, shall make the final determination of the questions to be treated at the synod.

Rules of Procedure for the Synod

Sessions of the Synod

§1. The delegates of the Synod will gather in full sessions and in vicariate sessions.

§2. The full session consists of all the delegates. There will be two full sessions of the Synod, unless the bishop determines otherwise. Alternates will attend the full sessions only if the corresponding delegate is unable to attend.

§3. The vicariate sessions consist of all delegates and alternates living in that vicariate. There shall be at least one vicariate session per vicariate. The vicar forane may choose to call for (an) additional one(s).

§4. Whoever is legitimately impeded and is not able to attend a full session must make this reason known to the bishop, and if unable to attend a vicariate session must make that reason known to their vicar forane.

The Manner of Seeking Opinions

§1. It is necessary that the subject for discussion, determined by the bishop in convoking the synod, be considered before voting by the delegates.

§2. In treating these subjects, each may express their opinion, according to a manner judged most opportune. However, such opinions must not be “discordant with the perennial doctrine of Church

the Magisterium” (*Instruction IV.4*), or a rejection of the authority of the bishop, either of which could result in removal from participation in the Synod (*Instruction II.5*)

§3. This opinion is to be expressed in the full or vicariate level of assembly of the synod delegates.

- n. 1. Each intervention by delegates at the second full session will be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes. Individual delegates will be allowed to make interventions only once per topic. Priority will be given to delegates who have intervened less up to that point.

§4. Consensusⁱ of vicariate sessions will be presented at the first full session by a delegate chosen at the vicariate session for further deliberation.

§5. Consensus of the discussions at the first full session will be expressed in *Proposals* or *Amendments*, submitted to a vote and offered to the bishop at the conclusion of the second full session. The bishop then has the responsibility to draw up decrees and statutes based on these recommendations. He will do so mindful of the needs, wishes, and desires of the People of God but also mindful of the traditions and general laws of the Church.

The Procedure, Formula, and Manner of Voting

§1. Unless the bishop determines otherwise, voting on the proposals and amendments will be held at the final full session of the Synod.

§2. In the Synod, voting is expressed using the formula: *yes, no, or abstain*.

§3. The votes are expressed by a show of hands at the direction of the moderator, unless the bishop determines otherwise.

§4. A delegate must be physically present to cast their vote and may not vote absentee or by proxy.

§5. To arrive at a majority of votes, an absolute majorityⁱⁱ of the delegates present at the full session is required.

ⁱ “Consensual decision-making processes are intended to help groups ‘think and feel together.’ In the context of this synod consensus describes how delegates work out a decision by thinking together as a group. It is a form of decision-making which enables a group to come to agreement without voting.” Adapted from Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, *PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL GUIDELINES, Appendix III – Building Consensus Making Decisions as a People of Faith*, 1996.

ⁱⁱ “Absolute majority” means votes obtained equal to over 50% of the number of delegates. E.g., if there are 60 delegates present at the session, a proposal would require over 30 “yes” votes to pass.