



DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

P.O. Box 1399 † Great Falls, Montana 59403 † (406) 727-6683

www.diocesegfb.org

September 18, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This is the first letter that I write to you as the Bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. In just a few days, on October 4, Pope Francis will open the first session on the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome. We have had a part leading up to this Synod with the listening sessions throughout the diocese leading up to our Diocesan Synod, and participation from a variety of individuals in the regional, national, and continental stages.

This is an important time in the life of the church. A synod is above all, an event of prayer and listening that involves not only the members of the Synodal Assembly, but everyone. Indeed, we are all called to unite in a communion of prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit to guide us in discerning what the Lord is asking of the Church today.

I am asking and inviting each of you to unite in unceasing prayer for the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for all the members of the Synodal Assembly, and for each other. Prayer is first and foremost an opportunity to listen to God. Secondly, prayer is adoration. Listening must be followed by adoring silence in awe for what God is doing and saying to the church. Prayer as intercession is the third aspect. We believe in the effectiveness of intercessory prayer as we ask the Lord to enlighten our hearts to the power of God's life-giving Spirit so that we may discern his will. When we intercede, we show that we are interested, that we belong. It means that we participate. Finally, prayer is thanksgiving. In giving thanks, we recognize the primacy of God's action and grace in all that we do and in how we live.

With prayer, listening, adoration, intercession, and thanksgiving, we will be present by the power of the Holy Spirit at the Synodal Assembly.

I invite and encourage each of our pastors and parish communities to include prayers for the Synodal Assembly especially on the weekend of October 1, the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, but also throughout the month of October. Please remember the Synod in the homily, the Universal Prayers, and the final blessing. I am attaching some prayers that could be utilized for the Universal Prayers and the final blessing.

I am so grateful to be your Bishop and I thank you for your prayers for the synodal journey and your prayers for me. Please know of my prayers for you. May the Spirit of the Lord enlighten us and lead us always in the way of his will.

In Christ's peace, joy, and love,

+ *Jeffrey M. Fleming*