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A Letter from the Diocese

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A Letter from the Diocese

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A Letter from the Diocese

Reading the signs of the time is an important skill for those engaged in theological reflection. This edition of *Obsculta* builds an intellectual bridge to the lived experience of the people of God, faithful or occasional worshiper and those living on the margins. Your contributions are important, welcome additions to the listening that the Diocesan Synod Steering Committee is leading for the Diocese of Saint Cloud.

The named objectives for the Synod connect powerfully to the work of the theologian: 1) recalling how the Spirit has guided the Church's journey through history, 2) living a participative and inclusive ecclesial process... to contribute to the edification of the People of God, 3) recognizing and appreciating the wealth and the variety of gifts and charisms that the Spirit liberally bestows for the good of the community, 4) exercising responsibility in the proclamation of the Gospel, 5) examining how responsibility and power are lived in the Church as well as [in her] structures, 6) accrediting the Christian community as a credible subject and reliable partner in paths of social dialogue, healing, reconciliation, inclusion and participation, 6) regenerating relationships among members of Christian communities and other social groups, 7) fostering the appreciation and appropriation of the fruits of synodal experiences locally and globally.

Thomas Aquinas instructed us in another time in Church history that moral virtues develop the ends at which we should aim: "It belongs to prudence rightly to counsel, judge, and command concerning the means of obtaining a due end. It is evident that prudence regards not only the private good of the individual, but also the common good of the multitude." (*Summa Theologica*, 354). This teaching holds today. The *Synod for a Synodal Church* has been charged to explicitly listen with the ear of the heart for the lived experiences of those with varying faith experiences. And we are listening. Many people are filled with hope, laying claim to their own empowerment, involvement in Church ministry and with people on the margins. And some people are out of breath, telling their story one more time of brokenness, lack of welcome, and unjust systems. They wonder if anyone is noticing. Some families, youth and

adults share the excitement and adventure of being baptized and confirmed as Catholics. Then they note “something went wrong”. Sometimes they respond, “I wonder if anyone notices that I am shrinking. And others are falling through the cracks.”

We need to pay attention to these voices.

Good listening doesn't come naturally. It is a discipline and an art form. Our listeners for *A Synodal Church* don't just offer release or a place for one to vent or ramble but invites, engages, and explores. We seek to understand and ask questions — imaginative questions, open ones, sometimes surprising questions that reframe the conversation. We are discerners of what is spoken and unspoken. Looking for patterns across conversations and beneath the surface is essential. And we cannot ignore the outlier responses. Often, they are the prophetic voices spoken with courage. We listen to the Word of God and the magnitude of data that describes our faith and culture today. In this Benedictine place your pastoral and theological studies are grounded in these very pursuits. Your hearts, your work and your voices are essential to the life of the Church in our common Synodal journey. The contributions in this journal are testimony to this.

With gratitude,

David Fremo, Chair, Diocesan Synod Steering Committee

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