

Letter from Bishop Donald Hying: “Synod Implementation Strategies”



Dear Brothers and Sister in Christ,

The celebration of our first Synod is truly a transformational moment for the Diocese of Gary. The hard work and selfless dedication generously offered by so many people has both fueled this spiritual process and renewed our commitment to the Gospel mission entrusted to each of us.

In order to ensure the Synod’s fruitful implementation, we shift our focus to the task of incarnating the priorities and ideals given to us on the levels of the Diocese, the parish and the individual, as we seek to grow in our missionary discipleship. As we embark on this new stage of our journey, please remember: “Everyone cannot do everything, but *everyone can do something.*”

To help facilitate this process of discernment and implementations, we are creating a new Post-Synod Structure. It is designed to offer a wide variety of priorities, plans and objectives which each parish and institution can adapt to their local reality and make their own, building on what they already do well and addressing needs that are still unmet.

To guide this ongoing process, I am forming a special Commission consisting of eight individuals (priest, deacon and laity) deeply committed to implementing the full Synod vision that emerged during Pentecost weekend. Their primary task is to ensure that our Diocese is committed more deeply to the all-encompassing mission of Christ and to the dynamic growth of the Church in service to everyone, as outlined in the Synod process.

To accomplish the mission of the Church, all dioceses, parishes and institutions need to consistently examine priorities and evaluate activities to best discern concretely how the Holy Spirit is challenging us to respond to the needs of the times. This has been the great task of the Synod. We must reflect upon how we pray in community, proclaim the Gospel, assist the poor, work for a more just social and economic order, form our children and young in the faith, and grow in our spiritual lives in order to decide what pastoral initiatives must be implemented now in order to lay the foundation for the future.

Recognizing that it is impractical to create some mammoth plan to simply impose on everyone in a uniform sort of way, the Synod instead offers a variety of priorities, plans and objective which will form the nucleus for each parish to create its own plan of Synodal implementation.

To accomplish this objective, we will be establishing eight distinct “Think Tanks” to assist us in the eight areas of our faith life and which stand out as defined principles of our core mission and apostolic activity: *Evangelization; Sacraments, Prayer & Worship; Discipleship/Formation; Social Teaching; Marriage & Family; Young*

Catholics; Stewardship; and Vocations & Leadership Formation. These groups would consist of eight persons—lead by a priest, deacon and lay ecclesial ministers—who will compile and communicate concrete ideas, helpful resources and best practices to assist parishes and institutions. Their role is to propose, not to impose, so that ideas and suggestions can be easily adapted and implemented at a local level.

Finally, to serve as a resource to the entire Diocese, some of the Department Heads (Youth Ministry, Catechesis, Formation & Evangelization, Stewardship) at the Pastoral Center will serve as Parish Liaisons. These gifted individual will dedicate quality time to meet on-site with priests, deacons, pastoral staff, parish councils and parishioners to assist them in the creation of a parish Synod plan and its implementation. We want the leaders and resources at the Pastoral Center to truly be of service to parish leadership in this transformative endeavor. Such face-to-face interaction is critical to the post-Synod success, and should generate even more ideas and initiatives.

All this will eventually lead to Pastoral Visits by me to each of our parishes and Catholic institutions, beginning in Fall 2018. Working with the priests and *pastoral team*, I will schedule *extended visit to be with the staff and parish pastoral council*, visit schools, nursing homes and the homebound, celebrate Mass, administer the Sacraments of Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick, and to meet with parishioners and others who are served in any way by the Church’s local ministry. These pastoral visit will allow me to listen, encourage and support the parishes’ efforts to live out the vision of the Gospel and their own Synod plan, as we share success stories and identify obstacles.

I have asked the Catholic Leadership Institute to assist the Diocese of Gary and me in implementing the proposed plans. We need to build upon the momentum and excitement that the Synod experience has created and to support the parishes and institutions in implementing strategies that align well with the eight areas of ministry. CLI will help lead the effort and train the staff so that we can enter fully into the process that will allow the spirit of the Risen Christ to be unleashed in us and through us as we strive to live the transforming power of the Gospel. I am profoundly grateful for the faith, love and hope of our leaders and people. The Holy Spirit is with us as we boldly step forward with minds and hearts renewed.



Sincerely in Christ

Most Reverend Donald J. Hying
Bishop of Gary



Evangelization

- 1. Educate and develop small faith-sharing communities at the parish level to provide opportunities for people to share their faith stories, develop relationships, and make their parish a more vital faith home. (26 percent)**
- 2. Make the Catholic faith more relevant for youth by creating engaging faith activities and contemporary events in which they can participate. (12 percent)**

(four-way tie for third highest number of votes)

- 3a. Provide apologetics formation in order to intelligently promote and explain Catholic teachings and beliefs. (11 percent)**
- 3b. Intentionally reconnect with and provide support for marginalized and disengaged Catholics. (11 percent)**
- 3c. Provide energizing adult formation opportunities in the diocese. (11 percent)**
- 3d. Enhance evangelization through strong inter-parish communication and networking, celebrating that we are all dynamic parts of the Church of the Diocese of Gary. (11 percent)**





Marriage and Family

- 1. Foster a community of Catholic families throughout the diocese and equip these families to live Christ-centered lives through events, programming and online resources. (31 percent)**
- 2. Develop diocesan and parish programs as well as online resources to prepare men and women for the sacrament of marriage. (25 percent)**
- 3. Provide pastoral support and resources for those navigating troubled marriages, separation and divorce. (15 percent)**





Sacraments, Prayer and Worship

(two-way tie for most votes)

- 1a. Responding to their baptismal call, parents are called upon to be primary teachers of the faith to their children. They have the principal duty and responsibility of bringing up their children in the Catholic faith. Emphasize the role of parents in their children's formation and growth in the faith by instilling in them that faith formation is a family affair. *(24 percent)*

- 1b. Encourage a stronger connection between faith and prayer by providing opportunities to teach the fundamentals of prayer and offer a variety of prayer experiences across the diocese that awaken the full potential of a Christian prayer life. *(24 percent)*

(two-way tie for next highest number of votes)

- 2a. In light of their baptismal calling, encourage youth and adults toward full, conscious and active participation in the Mass. *(11 percent)*

- 2b. Realizing Pope Francis' expression to "meet people wherever they are," extend a heartfelt welcome to divorced Catholics in order to embrace and support them, reminding them and ourselves that they are still a meaningful part of their faith community. *(11 percent)*





Social Teaching

1. Educate and evangelize people on Catholic social teaching as a "constitutive" part of the Church's mission to the world in order for them to better understand their role in proclaiming, preserving and protecting the moral vision for our society as a people of God. Actively committing to peace and justice is essential to living our faith life with authenticity and fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus. *(61 percent)*
2. Develop and implement a strategic communication plan among all parishes within the Diocese of Gary that focuses on building awareness related to charitable organizations, parish ministries and social causes as well as educates parishioners on various programs and services available to those in need. *(9 percent)*
3. Engage families, adults and youth to be active parishioners within each parish community by providing programs for them to join that align their passions and make a positive impact on their neighbors. *(7 percent)*





Stewardship

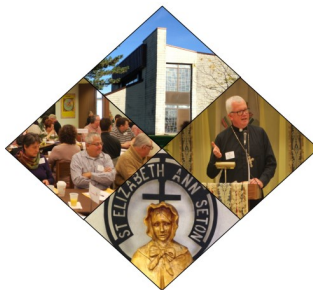
- 1. Form and train parishioners in stewardship, encouraging the embrace of a discipleship lifestyle generous with contribution of time, talent and treasure.**
(31 percent)
- 2. Organize and spearhead an inter-parish resource sharing system in which the parishes throughout the diocese can cluster, collaborate and share their unique gifts and strengths for stewardship.** *(29 percent)*
- 3. Provide opportunities for parishioners to become disciples of Jesus Christ, which naturally leads to the practice of stewardship.**
(13 percent)





Vocations and Leadership Formation

- 1. Proclaim the Good News by example and promote an atmosphere of "right relationships" to provide positive role models for vocations. (25 percent)**
- 2. Educate and inspire youth on discipleship, and they will understand and appreciate the different vocations. (23 percent)**
- 3. Valuing the baptismal call of the laity to assist in the mission of the Church, develop a plan that promotes and empowers the role of lay leadership within each parish. (19 percent)**





Young Catholics

1. Provide young Catholics with opportunities to gather and experience the richness of the Catholic Church and her teachings at the parish, regional and diocesan levels. *(34 percent)*
2. Develop collaborative strategies for youth and young adult ministries that allow youth to experience the faith beyond the parish boundaries, including events and ministries that are shared - parish, deanery, regional diocesan, national or international. *(15 percent)*
3. Develop intentional ministry strategies that animate and inspire confirmed high school teens and young adults in their 20s and 30s. *(13 percent)*





Discipleship/Formation

- 1. Establish opportunities for families, adolescents and young adults to get involved in service projects that fulfill their missions as disciples but also benefit others and our communities. (23 percent)**
- 2. Create post-Confirmation opportunities for teens and young adults to continue their faith journey and remain active in the Catholic Church. (18 percent)**
- 3. Develop comprehensive and inclusive diocesan and parish adult formation opportunities featuring expert speakers addressing a wide variety of faith and social justice topics helpful to individuals, members of traditional families and members of non-traditional (non-nuclear) families. (14 percent)**

