

Diocese of Dallas Post-Synodal Pastoral Letter

The Hope of the Gospel

December 12, 2025

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Filled with the hope of the Gospel and confident in the Lord's promises, we stand at the beginning of a new chapter in the life of our local church. On December 12, 2021, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we began our synodal journey here in the Diocese of Dallas. She who first appeared to San Juan Diego as the Mother of the Church in the Americas has accompanied us from the very beginning, and today on her feast again, I am grateful to present to you the Synod Implementation Plan.

This Pastoral Letter and Plan is a direct fruit of the Synod, which began with the efforts of our Synod Preparatory Commission and led to us hearing the voices of almost 9,000 Catholics who attended our 30 listening sessions held throughout the Diocese from 2021 through 2023. This continued with the prayerful discernment and preparation of the delegates for our Synod Assembly, held in December of 2024.¹ At this assembly, the Synod body voted on 376 resolutions based on the comments of the many listening sessions.

Advised by an Implementation Commission of dedicated clergy and lay faithful and in reflection upon the results of this Synod Assembly, I have prayerfully discerned the need to renew our Diocese in its commitment to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people.

In light of all that we have heard and discerned together, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is calling us to renewal. The fruit of our Synod is not merely a set of recommendations, but a shared conviction about who we are as the Diocese of Dallas and what Christ asks of us in this time and place. Every renewal in the Church begins with a return to the person of Jesus Christ and to the mission He entrusts to His disciples. Therefore, before setting forth the priorities and initiatives that will guide us in the years ahead, I wish to articulate the **Vision** and **Mission** that will animate and orient all our pastoral efforts.

Our Vision: To bring people to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to His people.

Our Mission: The Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas calls all people to holiness through Jesus Christ, who is priest, prophet, and king, by celebrating the sacraments, proclaiming the Gospel, strengthening families and individuals in their relationship with Christ, embracing missionary discipleship, and practicing faithful stewardship and governance, thereby preparing for enduring growth.

Together, as the people of God in North Texas, we are pilgrims on the move, guided by the Spirit, rooted in the Word, and united in the Eucharist. Truly, "the harvest is plentiful" (Mt 9:37) in the Diocese of Dallas. This vitality is a gift of the Spirit and expressed in the wide diversity of our people across languages, cultures, and economic circumstances. Many have come here as immigrants, seeking a new beginning for themselves and their families, while others are

¹ The last synod of the Diocese of Dallas was convened in 1934 by Bishop Joseph P. Lynch, the third Bishop of Dallas.

generations-deep in this land and laid the foundations for long-standing parishes and institutions. Together we form one community of believers in which the wealthy, poor, old, and young are made one in communion with Christ. This diversity of people from every walk of life is both a strength and a charge to nurture unity and bear witness to the universality of the Gospel. At the same time, we cannot ignore the cultural pressures that shape our society: the spread of secularization, the weakening of marriage and family life, and the widespread failure of catechesis that leaves many Catholics unequipped to live and joyfully share their faith. We also recognize that ideologies contrary to the faith continue to grow louder in our society and aggressively challenge the truth of the Gospel while distorting human dignity and minimizing the sacredness of every human life.

All these realities came into focus for me during the Synod Assembly of 2024, where dedicated prayer, discussion, and discernment of the delegates revealed both the blessings we enjoy and the challenges we must meet. At the Synod Assembly, a number of themes emerged. There was a clear desire among the faithful to foster a culture of vocations, while also supporting and empowering our priests. At the same time, the Assembly felt a need to strengthen individuals and families through improved catechesis, sacramental preparation, and deeper formation. Finally, there was a call for stewardship of resources to sustain a rapidly growing diocese and to form missionary disciples.

As your bishop and shepherd, I embrace with joy and determination the task entrusted to me: to govern, to teach, and to sanctify in the name of Christ (*Christus Dominus*, 11). The Lord has placed me among you not only as a servant of the Gospel but also as a father to this diocesan family, called to keep watch, to guard the faith, and to lead you ever closer to Christ, the Good Shepherd. With unwavering trust in the power of the Holy Spirit, I commit myself to walking with you, so that, in keeping the unity of the flock, we may become ever more fully the Church God is calling us to be.

Therefore, what I propose as bishop and shepherd of this Diocese is not a set of strategies or an imposition of regulations. This is instead a **summons to all** to live the Gospel of Christ more faithfully and to become a missionary Church where every disciple knows they are called, chosen, and sent by Him.

Participation in the Global Church

This mission of the Church belongs not to clergy, but to all the baptized. Indeed, as the Second Vatican Council affirmed, the laity too “are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world” (*Lumen gentium*, 31). Each vocation contributes something unique to the upbuilding of the Body of Christ, for “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord” (1 Cor 12:4–5). In an irreducible manner, the lay faithful have a special role to play, since “in accordance with their state of life, [they] live in the midst of the world and its concerns, and are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ” (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 2).

In other words, all the faithful of the Diocese of Dallas are called to take an active and meaningful part in the life and mission of the Church. To accomplish this, I am inviting greater

participation from the faithful across the Diocese in the implementation of the Synod. I am deeply grateful to all who played a vital role in the Preparatory Commission in advance of the Synod of 2024, and I am equally grateful to those who now serve as members of the Implementation Commission. Their hard work has made this Pastoral Letter and Plan a reality. Much more lies ahead as we seek to respond to the growing number of people in our Diocese and to the urgent call to reach out, welcome, and invite them to share fully in the mission and work of the Church before us.

The Road to Renewal

When I convoked our diocesan Synod, it was at a time of a global pandemic. I faced the agonizing decision to close all of our churches during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This was, without question, one of the most difficult choices I have ever had to make. Shutting the doors of every parish in the Diocese of Dallas went against everything I have ever known and loved about the life of the Church. I watched as our pews went empty, our altars barren, and our pulpits silent. It was a reality that grieved me deeply. Yet in the midst of this unprecedented time, I recognized that an extraordinary crisis required an extraordinary response. In that sorrow — and out of deep concern for the spiritual well-being of the faithful — I resolved to take decisive action that would not only guide us through the crisis but help renew and rebuild the Church after such a devastating time.

What has transpired in the intervening years is truly a gift of the Holy Spirit. A great time of consultation and prayerful discernment among all members of the Diocese (priests, deacons, religious, and lay faithful) in the **Listening Sessions** led to concrete ideas, suggestions, feedback, and experiences that spoke to the vitality and challenges of the Catholic faithful in schools, parishes, and ministries across our nine counties.

The Synod Preparatory Commission and Synod staff worked carefully to distill and consolidate these suggestions and ideas into a series of **Resolutions** that would form the basis for prayer, discussion, and consultative voting at the Synod Assembly itself, held in December 2024.

These Resolutions, organized into five major parts, were discussed openly and respectfully at the Assembly in a spirit of prayerful discernment by dedicated delegates representing every parish, school, and Catholic organization throughout the Diocese. This discernment included priests of the Diocese, whose voices also gave clarity about the challenges we face and direction for the mission entrusted to us. The outcome of the Synod Assembly was a series of consultative votes on the Resolutions, including a vote on their **Prioritization**, which allowed delegates to weigh in on what issues felt most pressing for the Diocese to address.

Over the past year, this data from the Assembly has guided the work of the Synod Implementation Commission who, together with the priests of the Diocese, Pastoral Center staff, and others, have studied the Synod resolutions along with prioritization results to develop and recommend a concrete framework for their implementation.

Advancing Together Toward Renewal

I entrust this Pastoral Plan to the whole Church in the Diocese of Dallas. It will not remain the responsibility of the chancery alone, nor of the clergy in isolation from the faithful, but belongs

wholly to the entire people of God: to me as your Bishop, to priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, and especially to all the lay faithful.

I would like to emphasize that the **laity** has an especially vital role in this work of renewal, one that begins in personal spiritual growth, since every baptized person is called to holiness and discipleship. It extends to the **family**, which the Second Vatican Council named the “domestic church” (*Lumen gentium*, 11), where parents are the first teachers of the faith and where Christian life takes root most deeply. It continues in the **daily witness of men and women in society**, at work, in neighborhoods, and in public life, where they are called to “seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God” (*Lumen gentium*, 31). Within the Church, the laity build up the life of **local parish communities** by generously offering their gifts of time, talent, and leadership in service to the Gospel.

This diocesan Pastoral Plan thus reflects a faithful vision of **co-responsibility for the mission of the Church**. Each **initiative** shows how the work of diocesan renewal is carried out at every level. The faithful of the Diocese of Dallas are called to take an active and meaningful part in the life and mission of the Church. Each of us shares in the responsibility of advancing the Gospel and carrying out the mission of Jesus Christ. To accomplish this, I am inviting greater participation from the faithful across the Diocese in the implementation of the Synod.

As the Council reminded us, we are encouraged in the truth that “all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord to that perfect holiness by which the Father Himself is perfect” (*Lumen gentium*, 11). It is in this shared call to holiness and mission that the Plan before us finds its strength.

Sent Forth in Hope

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, the time has come for us to begin anew. I entrust this work to the maternal care of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas and Mother of the Church. I look also to San Juan Diego, who bore her message of unity, hope, and evangelization to a world in need, and who continues to intercede for us today.

Let us therefore embrace this moment with courage and joy. Let us walk together as one Church, united in prayer, steadfast in hope, and eager in charity. And let us go forward confident in the promise of Christ: “I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

*Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.
St. Juan Diego, pray for us.*

Pastoral Plan for Renewal in the Diocese of Dallas

After much prayerful discernment and guided by the input of those who have tirelessly engaged in the Synod process over the past four and half years, I hereby present the diocesan Vision and Mission statements from which our diocesan Synod Implementation Plan will flow. These statements are intended to guide the Diocese of Dallas for the foreseeable future.

DIOCESAN VISION STATEMENT:

To bring people to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to His people.

DIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT:

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas calls all people to holiness through Jesus Christ, who is priest, prophet, and king, by celebrating the sacraments, proclaiming the Gospel, strengthening families and individuals in their relationship with Christ, embracing missionary discipleship, and practicing faithful stewardship and governance, thereby preparing for enduring growth.

Introduction to the Plan

The Diocese of Dallas advances the mission of Jesus Christ to teach, to sanctify, and to shepherd in every parish, school, and community. Throughout the synodal process, thousands of Catholics participated in listening sessions and dialogues. Through our Pastoral Plan, which has been shaped by the Diocesan Synod Assembly in 2024 and all the preparatory work that preceded it, we seek to be renewed in our mission by responding to the pastoral realities of our time while remaining anchored in the unchanging truth of the Church.

As we prepare for diocesan renewal, a framework will ground our efforts in the Holy Spirit and commit us to lasting change. Renewal is not just a one-time project but a call from the Lord that requires consistent discernment, structure, and diligence. This pastoral planning framework gives words to such a structure, which will help us to embrace lifelong renewal that is faithful to our mission and practical in execution. As *Lumen gentium* teaches, the universal Church is united under the authority of our Holy Father, the universal shepherd. As your diocesan shepherd in communion with him, I guide our local shepherds — our pastors — who care for the People of God in our parishes. This ecclesiology, this communion of distinct yet complementary roles, is reflected in our Pastoral Plan, which affirms both our shared responsibility and the unique ministries that together sustain the life and mission of the Church.

While this Plan represents a comprehensive framework for diocesan growth, it is only a starting point. As shepherd of the people of God in the Diocese of Dallas, I remain open to the influences of God's grace as we journey together in carrying out this work of renewal. How each initiative will be implemented, for example, remains under ongoing development with insight and planning from the Synod Implementation Commission.

"The Diocese of Dallas" is used in this Plan in a general sense to refer to the whole Diocese and not any specific actor. Management of the initiatives will be determined based on the needs of each initiative.

For most initiatives, over time I will establish a small initiative advisory council, made up of clergy and lay faithful from across the Diocese, which will act in a consultative way to aid in the implementation of the respective initiative. Many of these initiatives address ongoing needs in our Diocese, and therefore have different timelines for implementation and completion. My goal is to see a full renewal of the Diocese by 2031, the 500th anniversary of the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to San Juan Diego.

To provide clarity, here are definitions for terms used throughout this framework going forward:

Pathways of Renewal: Areas of focus in our diocesan life and mission that need attention, growth, and transformation. These are intended to unite us in purpose, organize our priorities, direct our efforts, and sustain our mission. We will set out upon these in a shared pilgrimage as each pathway contains initiatives that focus collective attention and build shared momentum for renewal. Each pathway reflects the priorities set by the Synod Assembly. Each pathway is deeply connected with all the others and mutually dependent upon them. No single pathway of this Plan stands alone, but, together, they shape a unified and dynamic vision for how we are to live out the mission of Jesus Christ in the Diocese of Dallas.

Pastoral Initiative: A clear and measurable expression of renewal that makes each direction concrete within a specific context. Each initiative emerges from the top 25 prioritized resolutions of the Synod Assembly and most will be guided by an initiative advisory council. In practical ways, these pastoral initiatives turn our shared hopes into real action and will guide our parishes, schools, and ministries to grow with clarity of direction, strength of purpose, and deeper faith.

Project: A specific action within a pastoral initiative that will be accomplished. Projects embody specific needs and requests from the faithful of the Diocese that have been prioritized for immediate action. Within this document you will see the first project listed under each initiative. These projects represent many other projects that will be developed from the results of the Synod Assembly and will be implemented in the near and distant future.

With time, the full scope of the renewal that lies before us will come into clearer focus. Below are the pathways and initiatives that were initially identified through the conversations and voting of the Synod Assembly.

Pathway I: Celebrating the Sacraments

Pastoral Initiatives: Liturgy; Sacramental Preparation & Life

Pathway II: Proclaiming the Gospel

Pastoral Initiatives: Engagement & Outreach; Solidarity & Support

Pathway III: Strengthening Families and Individuals in Christ

Pastoral Initiatives: Catechesis; Identity & Success of Catholic Schools; Prayer & Faith Formation

Pathway IV: Embracing Missionary Discipleship

Pastoral Initiatives: Culture of Vocations; Clergy Formation & Wellness; Lay Minister Formation

Pathway V: Practicing Faithful Stewardship and Governance

Pastoral Initiatives: Victims' Assistance & Safe Environment; Governance; Facilities; Tribunal; Care for the Catholic Worker; Rapid Response

What follows is the expanded explanation of each pathway, initiative, and project. It is important to note that the project listed under each initiative is the first but not the only project that will be pursued. As time goes on, further communication will come regarding additional projects.

PATHWAY I: CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS

The critical importance of sacraments to the life of the Church was a central theme that emerged from the Assembly and subsequent discussion. This Pastoral Plan header encompasses the pastoral initiatives of Liturgy and Sacramental Preparation & Life.

Pastoral Initiative: Liturgy

The Diocese of Dallas will foster among all the faithful of the Diocese of Dallas a deeper, more reverent, active, and conscious participation in the Church's sacred rites, particularly the Eucharist, which we know as the source and summit of the whole Christian life.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Liturgy Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Provide a Catechetical Mass Video

The Diocese of Dallas will make available a catechetical instructional video for the laity which explains the celebration of the Mass with attention to the importance of the Real Presence, as well as the liturgical actions and postures of the priest, ministers, and laity.

Pastoral Initiative: Sacramental Preparation & Life

The Diocese of Dallas will renew the Church's sacramental life by fostering deeper encounters with Christ through reverent celebration, sound catechesis, and spiritual preparation for all sacraments. It will strengthen OCIA as a path of conversion and discipleship, improve Confirmation preparation to empower witnesses of Christ, and support marriage as the foundation of the domestic Church through better preparation, ongoing support, and lifelong accompaniment.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Sacramental Preparation & Life Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Establish Consistent Marriage Preparation and Lifelong Formation

The Diocese of Dallas will evaluate existing marriage preparation programs and

implement a unified standard for use in all parishes. In addition, the Diocese will develop lifelong formation that fosters a deeper understanding of Christian marriage. Special focus will be given to couples facing infertility, health challenges, and marital struggles, as well as forming men as strong fathers and establishing ministries for wives and mothers.

PATHWAY II: PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

The work of evangelization belongs to all, not to a few. The need for encouraging, promoting, and acting on this concept was a major component of synodal discussions. This Pastoral Plan header encompasses the pastoral initiatives of Engagement & Outreach and Solidarity & Support.

Pastoral Initiative: Engagement & Outreach

The Diocese of Dallas will proclaim Christ with clarity, charity, and zeal, inviting all into a living relationship with Him. Through preaching, teaching, witness, and outreach, it will make the Gospel known throughout the community, guided by hospitality and accompaniment so that the Good News is shared through both word and loving witness.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Engagement & Outreach Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Create a culture of hospitality and reach out to the marginalized

The Diocese of Dallas will launch a hospitality initiative with training, welcoming ministries, and events to make parishes more inviting to newcomers and returning Catholics. It will also reach out to those who feel alienated from the Church, including the homebound, homeless, victims of abuse, and those struggling with sexuality, gender identity, or abortion-related trauma, potentially through a diocesan-wide “welcome home” campaign.

Pastoral Initiative: Solidarity & Support

The Diocese of Dallas will strengthen the Church’s mission of mercy by equipping parishes to accompany those in spiritual, emotional, or material need with compassionate care and practical support that uphold human dignity. It will assess needs, expand partnerships with ministries serving the poor and marginalized, and promote visible, collaborative works of mercy across parishes and schools.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Solidarity & Support Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Serve Christ in the Poor and Vulnerable

The Diocese of Dallas will support initiatives, especially with volunteers, addressing illness, mental health concerns, disability, poverty, homelessness, immigration, and environmental issues through collaboration with Catholic Charities and other nonprofits.

PATHWAY III: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN CHRIST

Families and individuals need support and formation in knowing the faith and living it out. Synodal discussions included many points of importance specifically focused on the growing need for catechesis for adults, parents, families, and youth both in parishes and Catholic schools. This Pastoral Plan header encompasses the pastoral initiatives Catechesis, Identity & Success of Catholic Schools, and Prayer & Faith Formation.

Pastoral Initiative: Catechesis

The Diocese of Dallas will renew and strengthen catechesis, so that the faithful are formed to live their Catholic faith in its fullness, guided by Sacred Scripture and Tradition and rooted in the Eucharist. Efforts will emphasize the sanctity of life from conception to natural death, sexual morality, chastity, and natural family planning and will equip the faithful to proclaim the Gospel with clarity, conviction, and charity in every stage of life.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Catechesis Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Improve and Promote Catechetical Resources

The Diocese of Dallas Pastoral Center will continue to improve the diocesan website to serve as a central hub for trusted Catholic resources, including sacramental preparation guides, moral teaching documents, and evangelization tools. This will make high-quality, accessible formation materials available to individuals, families, and parish leaders. At the same time, the Diocese will clear, train, and accredit catechists for the ministry of catechesis.

Pastoral Initiative: Identity & Success of Catholic Schools

The Diocese of Dallas will strengthen Catholic education by forming schools that are vibrantly Catholic, academically excellent, and centered on the person of Jesus Christ, preparing students to think critically, grow in faith, and live as joyful, faithful witnesses in the world. In partnership with others, this work will strengthen Catholic education, foster family catechesis, and prepare young disciples for the world.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Identity & Success of Catholic Schools Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Strengthen Catholic Identity in Schools

The Diocese of Dallas will ensure that all schools are deeply rooted in the Catholic faith by reviewing curricula for fidelity, forming teachers in Church doctrine, expanding campus ministry and sacramental life, increasing the presence of priests and religious, and recognizing teachers who model exceptional Catholic witness in the classroom.

Pastoral Initiative: Prayer & Faith Formation

The Diocese of Dallas will deepen spiritual formation by fostering a culture of prayer, discernment, and interior renewal so that all may grow in holiness, listen to Christ's voice, and respond generously to His call at every stage of life. This will be accomplished through improved catechesis, mentoring, and parish involvement that form fully initiated missionary disciples, drawing always on the Church's rich tradition of devotions.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Prayer & Faith Formation Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Provide Age-Appropriate Formation in Human Dignity and Chastity

The Diocese of Dallas will identify and promote faithful, age-appropriate resources for families, schools, and campus ministries to teach the Church's vision of the human body, human sexuality, and the virtue of chastity.

PATHWAY IV: EMBRACING MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

The life of our Church depends upon a vibrant culture of vocation and discipleship. Without priests, we are deprived of the sacraments; without individuals and families who live their baptismal call with conviction, the Church's witness in the world grows dim. This pathway calls us to renew our commitment to fostering priestly and religious vocations, to accompany and support those already living their vocation, and to form every disciple to respond generously to Christ's call. This Pastoral Plan header encompasses the pastoral initiatives Culture of Vocations, Clergy Formation & Wellness, and Lay Minister Formation.

Pastoral Initiative: Culture of Vocations

The Diocese of Dallas will ignite, promote, and support vocations work at every level in the Diocese to ensure that all people understand their collective responsibility to foster an environment where individuals can freely respond to the call God has placed on their hearts. In particular, the Diocese will highlight the need for priestly vocations through the work of our parish vocation committees.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Culture of Vocations Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Foster a Culture of Vocations in Parishes and Schools

The Diocese of Dallas will strengthen parish and school-based efforts to promote priestly and religious vocations by encouraging altar serving, establishing and utilizing existing parish vocation committees, and engaging youth through prayer, witness, and intentional invitation.

Pastoral Initiative: Clergy Formation & Wellness

The Diocese of Dallas will strengthen the life and ministry of clergy by providing ongoing holistic formation and intentional support that fosters wellness in the spiritual, fraternal, physical,

and psychological dimensions, enabling them to serve the People of God with faithfulness, joy, and integrity throughout every stage of their vocation.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Clergy Formation & Wellness Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Support the Formation and Well-Being of Priests

The Diocese of Dallas will invest in the spiritual, personal, and pastoral well-being of priests by offering orientation for new clergy, funding ongoing formation, promoting healthy priestly life through wellness initiatives, and providing clear guidelines on decorum and conduct appropriate to their vocation.

Pastoral Initiative: Lay Minister Formation

The Diocese of Dallas will equip lay ministers for service in the Church through comprehensive formation that integrates and combines theological knowledge and pastoral skill with their gifts of dedication and commitment in order to serve the Church faithfully. In this way, they will lead others to encounter Christ and strengthen parish life.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Lay Minister Formation Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Provide Diocesan and Parish Workshops and Training Opportunities

The Diocese of Dallas will host regular workshops for clergy, catechists, parents, and ministry leaders, focused on areas such as catechesis, pastoral care, bioethics, and responding to cultural challenges with clarity and charity. These sessions will strengthen confidence in teaching and living the faith.

PATHWAY V: PRACTICING FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP FOR GOVERNANCE

The need for good and healthy administrative practices was woven throughout all synodal discussions. Support for strong administrative structures and stewardship practices, including facilities development and management, was also important. This Pastoral Plan header encompasses the pastoral initiatives Victims' Assistance & Safe Environment, Governance, Facilities, Tribunal, Care for the Catholic Worker, and Rapid Response. Victims' Assistance & Safe Environment remained a preeminent concern.

Pastoral Initiative: Victims' Assistance & Safe Environment

The Diocese of Dallas places the care and healing of victims and survivors of abuse as a priority. The Diocese will continue to provide compassionate assistance and accompaniment that honors each person's dignity and promote healing. With this comes the pledge that the Diocese will continue to uphold the highest standards of safe environment and accountability through robust policies, comprehensive training, and transparent oversight — ensuring that every parish, school, and ministry is a safe place, protecting our children and the most vulnerable. The Diocese will continue to uphold the vital work of the Diocesan Review Board, composed of dedicated men and women who bring expertise from fields such as law enforcement, psychology, and

education, as well as important representation of survivors of abuse. Their faithful service provides independent guidance and accountability in ensuring that the Church's response to allegations and upholding appropriate safe environment procedures are transparent and strong.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from Synod Assembly outcomes and the Diocesan Review Board.

Project: Improve Safe Environment Policy

The Diocese of Dallas will perform regular reviews of the Safe Environment policy with input from the lay faithful and civil authorities, integrating theological and mission-driven content to deepen the Church's commitment to holiness and the dignity of each person. Training materials will be expanded to address the specific needs of youth and vulnerable adults.

Pastoral Initiative: Governance

The Diocese of Dallas will improve administrative structures and stewardship practices at the chancery to better serve the mission of the Church and strengthen parishes and schools through strategic planning, transparent governance, improved communication, equitable resource distribution, and responsible care for people, property, and the environment.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Governance Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Plan and Steward Diocesan Growth

The Diocese of Dallas will assess long-term pastoral and operational needs across the Diocese in light of continued growth. This work will include evaluating how ministries, offices, and outreach efforts can be strengthened through planning, improved coordination, and prudent and equitable stewardship of resources. Attention will be given to emerging areas of pastoral demand, future population trends, and opportunities to support parish and school vitality through strategic planning processes.

Pastoral Initiative: Facilities

The Diocese of Dallas will ensure that diocesan parishes, schools, and facilities are positioned to support growth, worship, and inclusion. This initiative focuses on planning for future expansion, enhancing the quality of liturgical environments, updating existing facilities, and ensuring accessibility for all, so that the faithful can encounter Christ in spaces that are welcoming, spiritually nourishing, reflective of the Catholic tradition, and provide for the needs of the Diocese.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Facilities Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Establish a Real Estate Task Force

The Diocese of Dallas will establish a real estate task force with specific directives to establish and conduct feasibility studies to assist with identifying parish and school facilities needs now and in the future. This will address diocesan buildings, including rectories, that have not been updated in the past 10 years, investigate how to remain environmentally conscious during construction and ongoing facilities management, and assess the expansion of the diocesan headquarters into a center of evangelization.

Pastoral Initiative: Tribunal

The Diocese of Dallas Pastoral Center will continue to strengthen the Tribunal in responsiveness and pastoral accompaniment so that petitioners and respondents may experience greater closeness to the Church. Guided by canon law, the Diocese will review current practices to identify reasonable adjustments that reduce unnecessary barriers, making the process more accessible and supportive for all who seek it.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Tribunal Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Continue Tribunal and Sacramental Process Improvements

The Diocese of Dallas will assess current Tribunal practices to continue to improve clarity, communication, and pastoral care. This includes advocate training for clergy, updating the Tribunal Manual, designating a single contact for annulments, and reducing barriers to access.

Pastoral Initiative: Care for the Catholic Worker

The Diocese of Dallas will honor and support the dignity of Catholic workers, including parish and school employees, Pastoral Center staff, and volunteers, by ensuring just policies, family-friendly benefits, and affordable access to Catholic education for those who serve and sustain the Church.

The following is the first of many projects that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects will continue to emerge from the outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and advanced with the guidance of the Care for the Catholic Worker Advisory Council, working under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Support Personnel and Volunteers

The Diocese of Dallas will assess and improve human resource practices by promoting work-life balance, including fair and supportive maternity and paternity leave policies as well as support for Catholic education. It will also integrate spiritual formation into the workplace and encourage volunteer engagement through shared resources and best practices.

Pastoral Initiative: Rapid Response

The Diocese of Dallas will respond swiftly and faithfully to urgent needs that impact the life of the Church and the wider community. These may include natural disasters, immigration and humanitarian concerns, public health emergencies, social unrest, global Church issues, or sudden

pastoral needs affecting parishes and schools. Through proactive coordination among diocesan offices, parishes, Catholic Charities, and civil authorities, the Diocese will foster a culture of readiness and unity in rapid pastoral response and effective action that protects the vulnerable, supports those in crisis, and upholds the Church's witness of mercy and hope.

The following is the primary project that will support this pastoral initiative. Further projects may continue to emerge from outcomes of the Synod Assembly and will be developed and pursued under the guidance of this team listed below, serving under the Implementation Commission.

Project: Diocesan Rapid Response Team

The Diocese of Dallas will establish a Diocesan Rapid Response Team trained to coordinate efforts across ministries and agencies during emergencies. This project will include a Pastoral Crisis Communication Plan to ensure timely, transparent, and compassionate messaging to clergy, parishioners, and the public.

Conclusion: The Journey Begins Anew

Renewal begins now. The fruits of our Synod and the labors of this Pastoral Plan find their true fulfillment not on paper, but in the living faith of the people of God. The work before us is nothing less than the continual conversion of hearts — our own and those we are called to serve. Every initiative, every project, every moment of witness must be rooted in prayer, for without the grace of God our efforts remain incomplete.

I invite all the faithful of the Diocese of Dallas to join together in prayer for the successful implementation of this Plan, that we may be renewed in the mission of the Gospel — to bring Jesus Christ to His people and His people to Jesus Christ — beginning with ourselves. May the Holy Spirit, who has guided us thus far, continue to lead us along the pathways of renewal, toward the fullness of life in Christ.

Bishop Edward J. Burns

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Diocese of Dallas Synod Implementation Prayer

Good and gracious God,
Heavenly Father, we thank you for the wisdom and grace You have given us through Your Son, Jesus. Increase our faith so that we may hear the voice of our Good Shepherd and joyfully follow the path His love illuminates before us.

As we come to know and embrace the fruits of the Synod in the Diocese of Dallas, send forth anew the Holy Spirit to guide us. Grant that our vision and understanding may be enlightened as we live out the mission of this local church in our time, while never losing sight of Your will and our hope to be with You in heaven.

We entrust the fruitfulness of our Synod to the maternal care of our patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe, who intercedes for us and accompanies us, and whose “yes” in love and faith we seek to imitate.

We pray with confidence through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.