

The Synod of Bishops



October
2015
Rome

What is the Synod of Bishops?



Bishops representing all regions of the world will meet in Rome from 4-25 October 2015.

This is the fourteenth meeting of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, for which the theme is

“The vocation and the mission of the family in the Church and contemporary world”.

The Synod of Bishops is a permanent institution established by Blessed Pope Paul VI, on 15 September 1965, in

response to the desire of the bishops at the Second Vatican Council to keep alive the positive spirit engendered by the experience of the Council. The word “synod”, derived from two Greek words *syn* meaning “together” and *hodos* meaning “road” or “way”, means a “coming together”.

A Synod is a religious meeting or assembly at which bishops, gathered around and with the Holy Father, have the opportunity to interact with each other and to share wisdom,

information and experiences, in the common pursuit of pastoral solutions which have a universal validity and application.

Saint John Paul II referred to the Synod as “a particularly fruitful expression and instrument of the collegiality of bishops” (Speech to the Council of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, 30 April 1983; *L’Osservatore Romano*, 1 May 1983).

What is the difference between the Extraordinary Synod of 2014 and the Ordinary Synod of 2015?

“Ordinary” Synods are held at fixed intervals and “Extraordinary” synods are held to address some important matter. In view of the greater urgency that justify their convocation, the preparation of extraordinary general assemblies of the Synod of the Bishops is shorter. The participants also are fewer, consisting of the heads of Eastern Catholic Churches, the presidents (only) of episcopal conferences, three members of religious institutes and the cardinals who head dicasteries of the Roman Curia. As of October 2014, there have been three such assemblies, in 1969, 1985 and 2014.



Who will attend the 2015 Ordinary Synod in Rome?



More than 360 participants, including 18 married couples from around the world, are expected to attend

October's Synod of Bishops on the family.

In addition to the 166 synod members elected by their national bishops' conferences, 22 heads of Eastern Catholic churches, 25 heads of Vatican congregations and councils and 10 heads of men's religious



orders, the Pope appointed an additional 45 synod fathers to take part in the October 4-25 gathering.

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh and President of the Irish Bishops' Conference and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin and Vice-President of the Irish Bishops' Conference will represent the Church in Ireland at the Synod.

What do the working documents for the Synod contain?

The *Instrumentum Laboris*, or working document of the Synod, is divided into three parts following the structure of the *Relatio Synodi* (the final report of last October's Extraordinary Assembly). It reflects the close link between the Third Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2014, dedicated to "The pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation", and the upcoming Ordinary General Assembly. The first part, entitled "Listening to the challenges of the family", relates most directly to last year's Synod, while the second, "Discernment of the family vocation", and third, "The mission of the family today", introduce the theme of the next Synod.

After the Synod in October, the Bishops will present the Pope with their recommendations. Pope Francis will then evaluate their proposals and provide the Church with guidance.

Themes of Previous Synods

1967: Preserving and Strengthening the Catholic Faith

1971: The Ministerial Priesthood and Justice in the World | Pope Paul VI, *Justice in the World* (Apostolic Exhortation).

1974: Evangelization in the Modern World
Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Apostolic exhortation).

1977: Catechesis in Our Time | Pope John Paul II
Catechesi tradendae (Apostolic exhortation).

1980: The Christian Family | Pope John Paul II,
Familiaris consortio (Apostolic exhortation).

1983: Penance and Reconciliation in the Mission of the Church
Pope John Paul II *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (Apostolic exhortation).

1987: The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World
Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles laici* (Apostolic exhortation).

1990: The Formation of Priests in Circumstances of the Present Day
Pope John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis* (Apostolic exhortation).

1994: The Consecrated Life and its Role in the Church and in the World
Pope John Paul II, *Vita consecrata* (Apostolic exhortation).

2001: The Bishop: Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World
Pope John Paul II, *Pastores gregis* (Apostolic exhortation).

2005: The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church | Pope Benedict XVI,
Sacramentum caritatis (Apostolic exhortation).

2008: The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church | Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (Apostolic exhortation).

2012: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith | Pope Francis (24 Nov 2013),
Evangelii gaudium (Apostolic exhortation).

Pictured above with Pope Francis are Archbishop Eamon Martin and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.