

Synod Trip to Rome

Synod on Synodality

MEG PAYNE NELSON

The Synod on Synodality is a multi-year, worldwide undertaking launched by Pope Francis in October 2021. It is the largest human consultation exercise in the history of the world. Initially, all Catholics were invited to answer the question, “What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?” This feedback was synthesized, as it progressed through discernment and discussion, by Bishops’ conferences and lay and religious experts from around the globe, at each step narrowing its focus based on commonalities within the responses.

The first of what will be two general assemblies to consider the questions raised in the process took place throughout the month of October 2023. Three hundred sixty-three delegates participated. In the past, only Bishops served in general assemblies. This year, for the first time in history, lay men and women were appointed as full voting delegates, and among them were 54 women. One of these women is our Archdiocese’s own Dr. Cynthia Bailey Manns.

Women’s voices are key because several official synod questions are regarding women’s participation in the Church. I visited Rome during the synod with a group of women from a national nonprofit called Discerning Deacons, which asks whether the Holy Spirit is calling the Church to ordain women as deacons. While there, we taught college students about the Synodal way and convened a Symposium on a Synodal Diaconate. Our group also met with the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations (WUCWO), which is headquartered in Rome.

We spent much of our time praying for

and being present to the delegates. We lunched with Dr. Manns, and greeted other delegates personally, assuring them of our prayers for their stamina and openness to the Spirit. In return the delegates asked us for our patience as this long process plays out. At the end of the October 2024 assembly, recommendations will be provided to the Pope, which he will take under prayerful consideration. ✚

Meg Payne Nelson is a Basilica parishioner, an avid volunteer with many Catholic organizations, and works at the Catholic Community Foundation of Minnesota.



Meg Payne Nelson (third from right) with women from the national nonprofit Discerning Deacons in Rome.