



Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Office of the Archbishop

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SUMMARY LETTER

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Let us listen again to words from the story of the Road to Emmaus in the Gospel of St. Luke:

They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. (Lk 24: 32-35)

Like the disciples who had encountered the Risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus, our Archdiocesan Catholic community has been filled with the enthusiasm of our Synod, the first in our history. Though the Synod ended one year ago this Pentecost Sunday, its work goes on in the hearts, in the prayers and in the actions of you, the Catholic faithful of this Archdiocese. The Synod is now in your hands.

Today I have proclaimed the post-synodal document, *Disciples on the Way*. This document outlines the challenges and opportunities which the Synod has placed before us. I encourage all to read the document, to pray over it, to ponder it and to join with their fellow parishioners to implement it in their various parish communities.

The very word "synod" means "walking together." His Holiness Pope Francis has frequently declared that the Church itself is a synod, that we are all on a journey together. Our collective response to our Archdiocesan Synod is a process of walking together: we listen attentively to the Holy Spirit and to each other; we pray over what we hear and experience; we discern the appropriate response and action; then, we act.

This call to synodality is directed to every member of the archdiocesan community. Everyone is encouraged to participate. *Disciples on the Way*, explains in fuller detail how this participation will be realized. We can listen, pray and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. And everyone belongs to a parish which will be implementing the Synod in the way most responsive to the needs and gifts of that parish.

The Synod declared three overarching themes. These are (1) Forming the Baptized as Missionary Disciples; (2) Passing on the Faith to the next generation and to others; and (3) Reaching out to others especially to those in need and those on the peripheries. I encourage everyone to consider how you and your parish can respond to these priorities. Responding will mean opening ourselves to being formed and reformed by the Holy Spirit and by each other. It will mean taking our proper role in sharing our faith with others, especially with the young. It will mean a personal and communal conversion to broaden the circle of our personal and parish lives to include those who have been excluded. To put it in one sentence, we must be educated and formed by the Gospel to become true servants of and companions with others, especially with the weak and the marginalized.

The implementation of the Synod is primarily the work of each parish community. It is critical that each parish (or perhaps in some cases each group of parishes) develop its own pastoral plan carefully and in stages. The truth is that if the People of God in our Archdiocese do not implement the Synod in their local communities, it won't be implemented! Parish Pastoral Councils will be at the centre of the drive to implement the Synod. Together with their pastor, they will pray, listen and discern in order to prepare and implement a parish plan. They will seek to engage others in the community in this "walking together".

Of course, God's grace comes first in all our undertakings. While it is important that we use our talents and apply our best efforts, ultimately, we rely on God's grace poured out in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Blessed Lord said, "Apart from me, you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5) It is for this reason that I particularly recommend to individuals, to families and to all gatherings of the Catholic Faithful the practice of *Lectio Divina*, also known as *Breaking Open the Word*. The more we open ourselves to Holy Scripture, the more we ponder God's Word, the more we share with each other how the Spirit is prompting us and the more we listen attentively to others' responses, the better we will discern and act in response to the Synod's challenges.

Please be assured of my prayers and my blessings as we continue walking together, seeking to be true Missionary Disciples who build God's kingdom here on earth and eventually enter together into our Eternal Home.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Gagnon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Most Reverend Richard Gagnon, D.D.
Archbishop of Winnipeg