

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bishops Conclude the North American Continental Writing Retreat with Prayers for Strengthened Communion

February 21, 2023

WASHINGTON – On Friday, February 17, the North American Synod Team led by bishops from Canada and the United States concluded a week-long retreat to pray, discern, and synthesize the insights and contributions heard during the North American Continental Stage of the 2021-2024 Synod on Synodality. Members of the North American Synod Team made up of eight bishops, three laywomen, two priests, two laymen, and two women religious, gathered in Orlando, Florida, to synthesize the People of God in the United States and Canada’s response to the [*Document for the Continental Stage \(DCS\)*](#) issued by the Holy See’s General Secretariat of the Synod in October 2022.

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niel E. Flores of Brownsville, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Doctrine, who has been shepherding the synodal process in the United States, expressed gratitude at the opportunity to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit, “It has been a tremendous grace to accompany the People of God in North America along the synodal path. A deep love for Jesus Christ and the Church animated the Continental Assemblies, and the participants expressed a great desire to pray and work for a more synodal style in the Church going forward. The synodal way has focused more attention on the baptismal dignity and mission of Christ’s members, and has brought great hope that we can, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, strengthen our communion with one another and with the Lord.”

Bishop Raymond Poisson of Saint-Jérôme-Mont-Laurier, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) welcomed the renewed sense of kinship and mission among the Church in North America, “Deepening relationships between the Church in Canada and the United States is invaluable for the ongoing synodal path. Bringing our two countries together in a meaningful way will serve to form the foundation for greater unity among the People of God in North America.”

The writing team discerned the fruits of the twelve Virtual Continental Assemblies held in December 2022 and January 2023 in English, Spanish, and French. 931 delegates and 146 bishops from Canada and the United States were appointed to participate in one of these twelve assemblies. Following a week of prayer and discernment, the North American writing team will continue to shape the Final Document for the Continental Stage over the next six weeks and will submit it to the Holy See by March 31, 2023. The Final Document for the Continental Stage from North America, along with the contributions of the six other Continental Assemblies, will form the basis of the *Instrumentum Laboris* to be released by the General Secretariat of the Synod in June 2023.

Begun in October 2021, the “Synod on Synodality” was recently extended by Pope Francis through October 2024, to allow for more time for reflection and discernment from both the local and universal Church. The Universal Phase of the Synod will be held in two parts, the first in October 2023 and the second a year later in October 2024.

The *Document for the Continental Stage* as well as [additional information](#) and [resources](#) about the North American Continental Phase are available at [usccb.org/synod](https://www.usccb.org/synod).

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For more information regarding each Regional Episcopal Assembly's report on the synodal process, please visit their respective websites or contact them directly.