



## DECREE

To the People of God in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester:

The birth of Jesus Christ brings light to those living in darkness, joy to mourners and hope to sinners. The proclamation that Jesus is Lord of my life and of the universe is a powerful statement, especially when so many have forgotten that he came to save us from our sins. We as Catholics have for too long sat on the sidelines when presented with opportunities to bear witness to the good things God has done for us; we have been convinced that politics and religion should not be discussed at the dinner table and, even more, that speaking about faith publicly violates a commandment not to impose your beliefs on another.

I want us to abandon those false convictions. Since I arrived in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, I have been asking that we work together to double the number of seminarians and to double the number of faithful in the pews. During my time here, I have also participated in both sessions of the Synod on Synodality. While that Synod of the Universal Church was open to a wide variety of discussion topics, I have desired to hold a diocesan synod that will focus on our local needs for evangelization and vocations. Since these terms are multi-valent, I ask that you consider the following working definitions:

- **Evangelization:** Evangelization is the proclamation of the Gospel - that Jesus Christ is Lord, has died for our sins, and has invited us into a new life with him in the Church - to fallen-away Catholics, non-Catholic Christians and the unbaptized.
- **Vocations:** This synod respects and cherishes all vocations. Its deliberations, however, are to focus on vocations from our own parishes to the diocesan priesthood and the consecrated life.

**I decree that a diocesan synod on vocations and evangelization is hereby convoked.**

This synod will begin with an opening Mass on March 2, 2025, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Winona. Parishioners will be invited to participate in a survey during the season of Lent before we hold regional gatherings of the faithful in the Easter season. We will conclude the synod with a formal gathering of parish delegates and appointed members from all over the Diocese. At this final session, the participants will vote on priorities, and I will then determine our next steps for how best to evangelize and promote vocations within our own diocese.

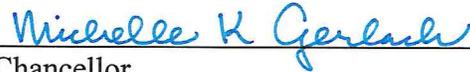
Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), yet the persistent drive to proclaim His Good News looks different in every age. I look forward to working with you in the months to come as we determine concrete plans and structures to raise up vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, as well as to engage in the necessary conversion of heart to proclaim to every community in southern Minnesota that Jesus Christ is Lord!

To prepare for our synod, I ask that every parish find a suitable time – especially in staff meetings and pastoral and finance council meetings – to pray the following prayer for the synod.

Given at Rochester, Minnesota, on this sixteenth day of January, in the year of Our Lord 2025.



The Most Reverend Robert Barron  
Bishop of Winona-Rochester



Chancellor

Most High and Gracious God,

We implore you for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Diocese of Winona-Rochester as we embark on the Diocesan Synod for Evangelization and Vocations. We ask you to send us graces for wisdom and insight into how we can proclaim the Gospel and invite your sons and daughters into a right relationship of worship and friendship through your Son Jesus Christ. As we seek your grace to make you known and loved, we also beg you for the grace to invite each member of our Diocese to serve you with the gift of their lives in service to the Church especially in more vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life. Give us the gift of your Spirit for right discernment and clarity of approach so that we might faithfully carry out your will in this Diocese and in each of our parishes. We pray in gratitude for every gift and blessing you bestow and put our full confidence in your holy will. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.