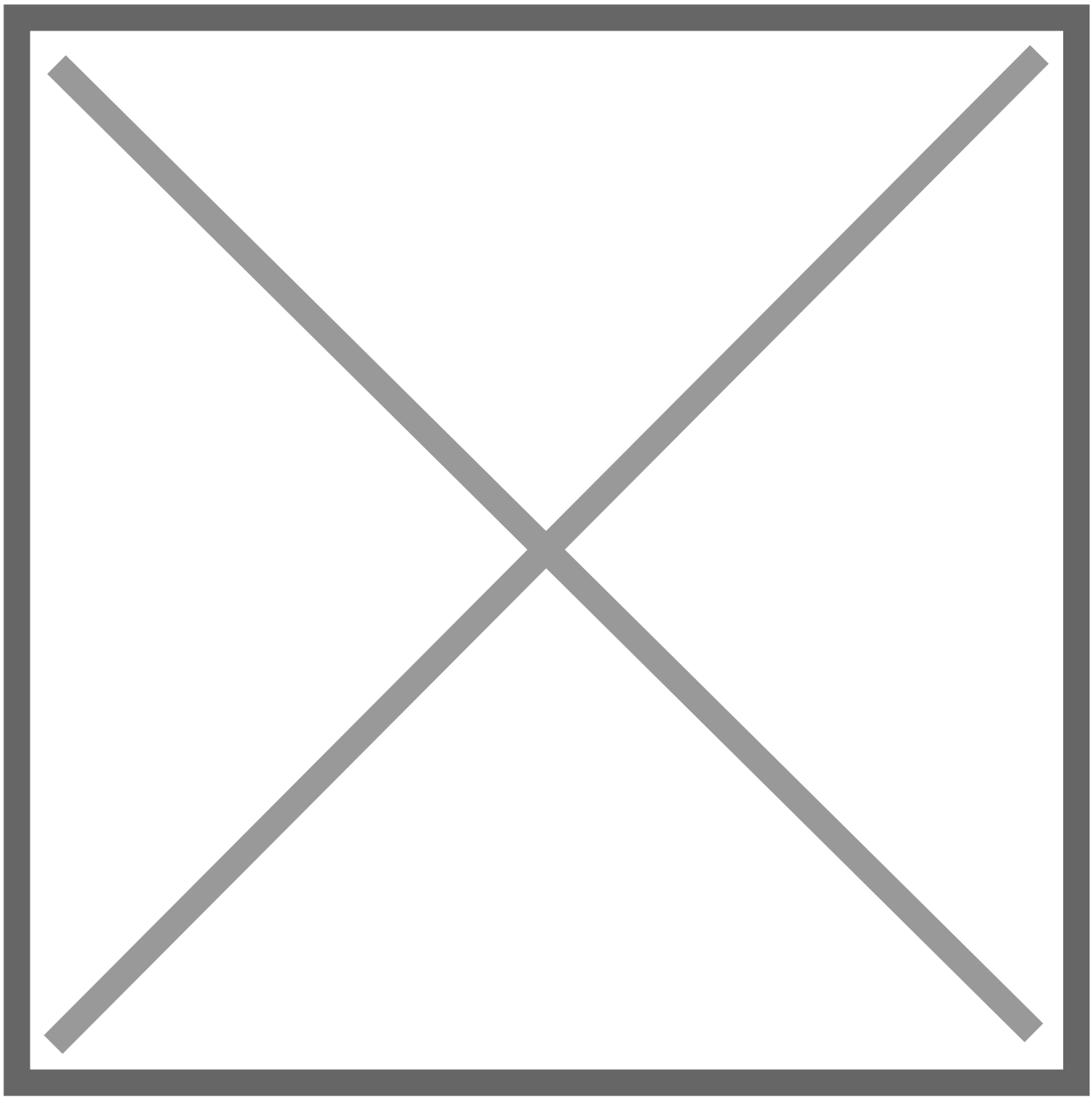
News



People pray at the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Dallas Aug. 7, 2019. (CNS/The Texas Catholic/Jenna Teter)



by Catholic News Service

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Recognizing the pandemic has taken its toll on discipleship and could lead to the faithful in the Diocese of Dallas becoming complacent, Bishop Edward J. Burns announced he will convene a synod in the diocese Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The last diocesan synod was called in 1934 by Bishop Joseph P. Lynch, who was the third bishop of Dallas and "the longest serving bishop in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States," Bishop Burns said.

He announced plans for the synod in a pastoral letter sent to Catholics Feb. 19, saying he plans for it to be "part of a 10-year process, culminating in a celebration of the 500th anniversary of the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to San Juan Diego, a key moment in the evangelization of the Americas."

In the letter, titled "The Journey Through Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost — A Post-Pandemic Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of Dallas," Burns presents a vision to renew the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Dallas after the historic COVID-19 pandemic.

The starting point for the pastoral letter is a reflection on the journey through Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost.

It offers a review of the state of the diocese over the years, including his own four years as its shepherd, and covers some of Burns' thoughts "on the direction of the diocese going forward."

"This movement forward requires both input and support from the whole local church," he said. "In light of the historic nature of this pandemic, I believe an equally

historic response is required, a response that looks toward a post-pandemic, apostolic church.

"As we look toward life after this pandemic, I believe a local synod is the best way for this local church to develop the means to respond to the needs of the faithful in this increasingly challenging world."

The multiday synod event will take place in 2024 and resolutions approved at that gathering will be implemented in the diocese in the following years. The synod process will include holding listening sessions in the parishes of the diocese, and time will be spent focusing on the "spiritual, pastoral and temporal renewal" of the diocese.

"This is a time of tremendous opportunity. This is not a time for going back to business as usual, but rather forward to fresh initiatives and bold witness to the enduring love of Jesus," Burns said. "This is a time to renew our faith in him and to strike out 'into the deep water' with trust that the Lord is with us in the boat, battered as it may be by many headwinds, yet still continuing toward the destiny to which he calls us."

Burns said this is a time "to recover the original animating spirit of apostolic times, to see ourselves as one with those original apostles and disciples, with Mary, our Mother, and all the holy men and women who followed Jesus. They were the whole of the church left to carry out the mission of Jesus after his resurrection and ascension."

The apostles were "endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit," Christ's disciples were able to transform the Roman Empire and the pagan Hellenistic culture over the centuries and "refashion them into the very means of articulating and spreading the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth. Who could have predicted this or planned it?"

"It is time to recover the faith and trust of that original apostolic community: to implore the risen Lord as they did, to beg him to set our hearts on fire again with the zeal of the Holy Spirit which came upon them in the Upper Room at Pentecost," he said.

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