

The North American Continental Phase Frequently Asked Questions

What Episcopal Conferences will be participating in the North American Continental Phase?

- The Continental Stage for North America will be a collaboration between the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). While geographically part of North America, given their long history of partnership and ongoing work of the different *Encuentros*, Mexico will participate in the Continental Stage through the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM).

What will the North American Continental Stage consist of?

- The North American Continental Stage of the Synod has been planned in conjunction with representatives from the CCCC and USCCB. Ten (10) Virtual Assemblies reflecting on *the Document for the Continental Stage* will take place in late 2022 and early 2023, including five (5) in English, three (3) in Spanish, and two (2) in French. Virtual Assemblies will be followed by a debrief session with the North American writing team in early February 2023.
- The North American Writing team, made up of representatives from both the U.S. and Canadian Synod teams, will gather in early February 2023 for a writing retreat to draft a Continental Synthesis that will be submitted to the Secretariat for the Synod on March 31, 2023.

Why is the North American Synod Team utilizing virtual assemblies?

- The virtual format will allow for greater accessibility for all the People of God, cause less financial strain on dioceses, and provide more opportunities for all Bishops in Canada and the United States to participate. In particular, virtual assemblies will enable the North American Synod Team to hold the meetings in three different languages.
- All virtual assemblies will include an opportunity for prayer, spiritual reflection, small group listening circles, and large group sharing.

Who will participate in the Virtual Continental Assemblies?

- 3-5 delegates will be appointed by Bishops in each of the 196 U.S. and 72 Canadian (arch)dioceses to represent their dioceses in the Virtual Continental Assemblies. Delegates will be placed into small groups prior to the assemblies to reflect the diversity of the Church in North America.
- Every North American Bishop is invited and encouraged to attend a virtual assembly of their choosing.

How will (arch)dioceses prepare to participate in the Virtual Continental Assemblies?

- The North American Synod Team will provide all delegates with a detailed resource to help them prepare for the Virtual Continental Assemblies, which will include guidance included in the methodology section of the *Document for the Continental Stage*.
- (Arch)Dioceses are encouraged to engage in local listening sessions on the *Document for the Continental Stage*, and the delegates are invited to bring the contributions of these sessions to the Virtual Continental Assemblies.

What does the extension through October 2024 mean for the Synod?

- The extended timeline for the Synod will allow for more time for a deeper discernment by the members of the Synodal Assembly, as well as the People of God. 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.