

## Diocesan Synods in Canon Law

*The Synod is intended to assist the Bishop in his legislative activity (see canons 460 and 466 below); that is, as regards the forthcoming Liverpool Diocesan Synod, to assist him in organising the diocese for the future and directing how resources are to be used.*

*Relevant to the general aspect of the Synod is that it is one of the few canonically recognised bodies that allows the laity to be heard by the clergy. Another such body is the parish pastoral council but they are not compulsory unless the bishop mandates that every parish should have one (c. 536).*

### Chapter I. The Diocesan Synod

Can. 460 A diocesan synod is a group of selected priests and other members of the Christian faithful of a particular church who offer assistance to the diocesan bishop for the good of the whole diocesan community according to the norm of the following canons.

Can. 461 §1. A diocesan synod is to be celebrated in individual particular churches when circumstances suggest it in the judgment of the diocesan bishop after he has heard the presbyteral council.

§2. If a bishop has the care of several dioceses or has the care of one as the proper bishop but of another as administrator, he can convoke one diocesan synod for all the dioceses entrusted to him.

Can. 462 §1. The diocesan bishop alone convokes a diocesan synod, but not one who temporarily presides over a diocese.

§2. The diocesan bishop presides over a diocesan synod. He can, however, delegate a vicar general or episcopal vicar to fulfil this responsibility for individual sessions of the synod.

Can. 463 §1. The following must be called to a diocesan synod as members of the synod and are obliged to participate in it:

1° a coadjutor bishop and auxiliary bishops;

2° vicars general, episcopal vicars, and the judicial vicar;

3° canons of the cathedral church;

4° members of the presbyteral council;

5° lay members of the Christian faithful, even members of institutes of consecrated life, chosen by the pastoral council in a manner and number to be determined by the diocesan bishop or, where this council does not exist, in a manner determined by the diocesan bishop;

6° the rector of the diocesan major seminary;

7° vicars forane;

8° at least one presbyter from each vicariate forane, chosen by all those who have the care of souls there; also another presbyter must be chosen who, if the first is impeded, is to take his place;

9° some superiors of religious institutes and of societies of apostolic life which have a house in the diocese, chosen in a number and manner determined by the diocesan bishop.

§2. The diocesan bishop can also call others to a diocesan synod as members of the synod; they can be clerics, members of institutes of consecrated life, or lay members of the Christian faithful.

§3. If the diocesan bishop has judged it opportune, he can invite as observers to the diocesan synod other ministers or members of Churches or ecclesial communities which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

Can. 464 If a member of the synod is prevented by a legitimate impediment, the member cannot send a proxy to attend it in his or her name. The member, however, is to inform the diocesan bishop of this impediment.

Can. 465 All proposed questions are subject to the free discussion of the members during sessions of the synod.

Can. 466 The only legislator in a diocesan synod is the diocesan bishop; the other members of the synod possess only a consultative vote. Only he signs the synodal declarations and decrees, which can be published by his authority alone.

Can. 467 The diocesan bishop is to communicate the texts of the synodal declarations and decrees to the metropolitan and the conference of bishops.

Can. 468 §1. The diocesan bishop is competent to suspend or dissolve a diocesan synod according to his prudent judgment.

§2. When an episcopal see is vacant or impeded, a diocesan synod is interrupted by the law itself until the succeeding diocesan bishop has decided that it is to be continued or has declared it terminated.