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|  | Papal Documents in Order of Priority |

Documents establishing the process and setting the rules for the 2023 Synod *For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission* are among the most solemn in the Church.

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| Document Type | Description |
| Apostolic Constitution | The most solemn, formal papal documents, on doctrine or disciplinary matters, published as the universal or particular law of the Church. Examples: *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950, Pius XII) on Assumption of Mary; *Lumen gentium* (a dogmatic constitution of the Church, 1964, Paul VI, Vatican II) |
| Encyclicals | Pastoral letters that clarify or explain some aspect of Catholic teaching, morals, or discipline. Usually addressed to bishops, they may also be addressed to all. Examples: *Humanae vitae* (1968, Paul VI), *Fratelli tutti* (2020, Francis) |
| *Motu Proprio* | Legislative, apostolic letter written and signed by pope on his own initiative, used for significant legislative matters that do not merit a Constitution. Relatively brief, they handle specific Church issues “at this time.” Examples: *Ecclesia dei* (July 1988, John Paul II), On transparency in public finances  (April 2021, Francis) |
| Other Apostolic Letters | An “epistle” responding to a specific need or a specific group of people, pastoral in nature and not legislative or doctrinal |
| .Apostolic Exhortations | Papal reflections on a topic addressed to all clergy and all the faithful. First used by Pius XII in 1939. Aims to encourage a particular mission or virtue (such as Christian family); not legislative and not dogmatic. |
| Decretal Letters | Papal decisions on discipline and administration. Today, they typically are used for canonizations and solemn matters, and. they are part of the pope’s *magisterium* but are not legislative. |
| Addresses (*Allocutiones*) | General category for less-formal comments and addresses by the pope that do not address Church law or liturgy. |
| Papal Rescript | A reply to a petition placed before a Curia office or the pope. |
| Apostolic Brief (*brevia*) | Short document on matters of relatively minor importance. |