



Synodal Conversations

Participant's Materials

To be read in conjunction with the Guide to Deep Listening resource

The Synod is a participative and inclusive **process of listening and discerning** that offers everyone the opportunity to contribute to how the People of God can better 'journey together'.

Our 'synodal' conversation depends on courage both in speaking and in listening. It is not about debate, but about discerning what the Spirit of God may be saying. We believe that God is always present and active in the details of our lives and that he will reveal his plans and purposes to us if we make an effort to be attentive. It begins with **listening**.

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Parish Listening Session Overview

Saturday Half-Day Listening Session Option (3 hours)

- Hospitality (10 minutes)
- Opening Prayer (20 minutes)
- Welcome and Introduction (2 minutes)
- Participant Ground Rules (3 minutes)
- Overview of Synod Process (10 minutes)

- Small Group: The Fundamental Question (60 minutes)
 - Reflection on Scripture and Synod Principles
 - Small Group Sharing

- Break (20 minutes)

- Small Group: Core Questions (60 minutes)
 - Listening
 - Speaking Out
 - Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission and Sharing Authority and Participation
 - Discerning and Deciding
 - Celebration
 - Holy Spirit

- Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Parish Listening Session Overview

A Three-Week Evening Listening Session Option
(90-105 minutes each week)

WEEK ONE

Hospitality

Opening Prayer (20 mins)

Welcome and Introduction (2 mins)

Participant Ground Rules (3 mins)

Overview of Synod Process (10 mins)

Break (10 mins)

Small Group: The Fundamental Question (40 mins)

Closing Prayer (5 Mins)

WEEK TWO

Hospitality

Opening Prayer (20 mins)

Welcome and Introductions (3 Mins)

Participant Ground Rules (reminder) (2mins)

Small Group: Listening (20 mins)

Small Group: Speaking Out (20 mins)

Break (10 mins)

Small Group: Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission and Sharing
Authority and Participation (20 mins)

Closing Prayer (5 mins)

WEEK THREE

Hospitality

Opening Prayer (20 mins)

Welcome (5 mins)

Small Group: Discerning and Deciding (15 mins)

Break (10 mins)

Small Group: Celebration (20 mins)

Small Group: Holy Spirit (20 mins)

Closing

NB The time for prayer is essential to this process. It is important that the length of time given to this is not minimised in any way. If you can move to a different place, the Church or a space created purely for the prayer with a candle as focal point.

Time of Prayer

Our Synod journey takes place in the midst of where the Church ordinarily lives and works in the day to day lives of the faithful. The Synodal process invites each one of us - the People of God - to recall that we journey together. Moreover, in that journey of faith we are called to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Word of God: (other options are available at the end of this resource)

A Reading from Acts 2: 14-21

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them ... "These people are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

'It will come to pass in the last days,' God says 'that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams' Indeed, upon my servants and my handmaids I will pour out a portion of my spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy. And, I will work wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below: blood, fire, and a cloud of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and splendid day of the Lord, and it shall be that everyone shall be saved who calls on the name of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord.
R/.Thanks be to God

We pray in silence for 10-20 minutes and conclude the time of prayer saying the Synod Prayer together.

(if in the Church return to the hall in silence).

Parish Listening Session - Participant Ground Rules

Facilitator will invite:

The Invitation Method is a way to include all people in the conversation in a very respectful atmosphere.

The role of listening session facilitators is to guide the conversations. Please listen to their instructions.

- While each person is speaking, the others listen.
- No one may interrupt the speaker or jump in to speak until invited by the facilitator.

Note Taker Roles

Someone will also take some notes. The notes will be anonymous. The notes from all of the small groups at your community's listening sessions will be summarised into one feedback report. This report needs to be submitted either on-line or via email by 28th February to the Diocesan Synod Team who will create a summary of all the listening sessions. During February, area assemblies in Clifton Diocese to reflect further.



Overview of Synodal Process

You are invited to read this

The entire Catholic Church is called to participate in the upcoming Synod of Bishops! The upcoming Synod is entitled: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.” Synod is a Greek word (*synodos*) meaning a meeting or assembly. The two Greek words that make up Synod are *syn* meaning together and *hodos* meaning way or journey.

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! This Synod is not just another meeting with oral presentations and written reports. This Synod is a process of journeying together. As the Church, we will listen to each other, dialogue with each other, pray together, discern together and make decisions together for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world!

Pope Francis is asking each local diocese to gather together—clergy, religious and laity—to first listen to each other’s joys and hopes, and griefs and anxieties (c.f. *Gaudium et Spes* no. 1). After we listen to each other, we are called to dialogue together on ways we can accompany each other as we seek to grow in holiness. Listening and speaking within the Church always involves prayer. We are listening, dialoguing and praying together so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The “goal” of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and His Church.

In view of the group discussion

- Where in these experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit?

Small Group Process: Core Questions Sharing on Listening

“Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.” (Preparatory Document no. 30) “The meaning of the journey to which we are all called is above all that of discovering the face and form of a Synodal Church, in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit.” (Preparatory Document no. 15)

- How is God speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst?
- How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the peripheries?
- What space is there to listen to the voices on the peripheries, especially cultural groups, women, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?



For A Synodal Church - Participant's Guide

Small Group Process: Core Questions Sharing on Discerning And Deciding

In a Synodal style, we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. Synodal style of decision-making is to listen first, dialogue, pray, discern, and then the priest makes a decision on behalf of community. A Synodal Church does not make decisions to accomplish pre-identified priorities. "In a Synodal Church, the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will." (Vademecum no. 1.4)

- How does your parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions?

- Do the decision-making methods of your parish help you to listen to all members of the community, including those who are on the peripheries of parish life?

Small Group Process: Final Question Sharing on the Holy Spirit

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13) The Holy Spirit sent by Christ and received in our Baptism and Confirmation guides our efforts, breathes life and vitality into the Church, and leads us into a deeper relationship with Jesus and deeper communion with the Church in order to proclaim the Gospel. This Synodal journey is guided by the Holy Spirit (c.f. Vademecum 1.2)

- From your small group sharing, name one insight where you heard the voice of the Holy Spirit today?

Prayer for the Synod

Adsumus (We Stand Before You)

The Adsumus prayer calls upon the Holy Spirit to guide a Church gathering. Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the bishops and Holy Father praying this prayer. This prayer is attributed to St. Isidore of Seville (c.560- April 4, 636). For the 2021-2023 Synod, the Holy Father is proposing that the entire People of God pray this simplified version of the Adsumus:

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.
All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.
Amen

Additional Scripture Passages which may be used for personal or group reflection time:

Journeying

The Journey to Emmaus : Luke 24:13-35

Listening:

The Story of Bartimaeus : Mark 10:46-52

Hearing Gods call: John 1:35-39

Discernment

Discerning Christ's Call : Mark 1:21-39

Communion

Living as one : Acts 2:42-47

Community synodal Journey : Ephesians 4:1-16, 5:2

The First Council : Acts 15:1-35

Mission

Gifts at the service of the Community: 1 Corinthians 12:1-15,22,25-31)

Go out to the Whole World Mark 16:13-19

Feed and Tend others John 21:1-19