



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

# Questions

**For reflecting on the themes of  
Communion/ Participation / Mission**

## Introduction to the Discernment Process

The Synodal Process entails a discernment process. In this process, we listen to each other in order to discern what God is saying to all of us. This kind of discernment is not only a one-time event, but ultimately a way of life, grounded in Christ, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, living for the greater glory of God. Communal discernment helps to build flourishing and resilient communities for the mission of the Church today. Discernment is a grace from God, but it requires our human involvement in simple ways: praying, reflection, paying attention to one's inner disposition, listening and talking to one another in an authentic, meaningful, and welcoming way. Discernment in this spiritual key plants seeds that can bear the fruits of fraternity, healing, communion, mission, and more. God comes to lead and inspire us as we seek to discern His will

Participants are encouraged to share with honesty and openness about their real-life experiences, and to reflect on what the Holy Spirit might be revealing in what they share with one another.

Frameworks for sharing can be found in the 'Facilitating Local Spiritual Conversations' document.

This Synod poses the following fundamental question:

**A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, 'journeys together.' How is this 'journeying together' happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our 'journeying together'? (PD 26)**

In responding to this question, we are invited to:

- Recall our experiences: What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?
- Re-read these experiences in greater depth: What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?
- Gather the fruits to share: Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our local Church?

To help people explore this fundamental question more fully, the following themes highlight significant aspects of "lived synodality" (PD, 30).

In responding to these questions, it is helpful to remember that "journeying together" occurs in two deeply interconnected ways. First, we journey together with one another as the People of God. Next, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family. These two perspectives enrich one another and are helpful for our common discernment towards deeper communion and more fruitful mission.

Below you will find a series of questions which as a parish, school or community you invited to reflect upon and respond. Whilst your responses will contribute to the response

of our Diocese which will go to the Bishops' Conference, we also hope that they will guide Bishop Declan and the diocese as it seeks to discern the way forward

### **Key Words for the Synodal Process**

The theme of the Synod is "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission." The three dimensions of the theme are communion, participation, and mission. These three dimensions are profoundly interrelated. They are the vital pillars of a Synodal Church. There is no hierarchy between them. Rather, each one enriches and orients the other two. There is a dynamic relationship between the three that must be articulated with all three in mind.

#### **Communion:**

By his gracious will, God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, through the covenant that he offers to his people. The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church, and grounded in the *sensus fidei* that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people.

#### **Participation:**

A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit. 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 (ICT, Syn., 67-68). Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.

#### **Mission:**

The Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centred on ourselves. Our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God's kingdom.

## **The Questions**

The Synod offers us ten themes to reflect upon (see pages 34-37 of the Preparatory document). Each of these themes could be taken and explored within parishes during an on-going time of reflection and discernment. To start the process of conversation the following questions are offered. They emanate from the three areas of the synod – Communion, Participation, Mission.

### **Conversation 1**

- What is my dream for the Church, for my parish so that it can become more outward-looking, more missionary?
- To achieve this dream, what do we need to stop doing?
- What are we doing that needs to be developed or done differently?

### **Conversation 2**

- What is my dream for the Church? How can we make this happen?
- Who are the people who feel left out and excluded in the Church? How can we reach out, listen to, and love them? Think of two ideas, one for now and one for the future, to help include them.
- What does the Holy Spirit inspire us to do in our Church? What do you think the Holy Spirit is calling us to do next?

### **Conversation 3**

- As a parish, do we know who are the people who feel marginalised or separated from the parish and society?
- How best can our parish respond? Suggest at least two identifiable ways (an immediate action and a long-term change) in which, as a parish, we will reach out to, and listen to, the marginalised or separated.
- How do I hear and respond to the voice of God's Holy Spirit, in my life; what signs of the Spirit at work do I see in the life of my parish
- What steps may the Holy Spirit be calling us to take, as a parish, on our journey together into God's future?