

Synod 2023 – The Main Question and 10 Themes Highlighting Significant Aspects of “Lived Synodality” (PD, 30).

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):

1. Companions on the Journey

([Preparatory Document](#), nos. 1, 9, 20; [Vademecum](#) nos. 1.3, 1.4, 5.3)z

- *In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.*

- A truly synodal Church walks together, side by side, along the same road towards renewal in the Spirit and the good of all people.
- Journeying together requires great commitment to listen to the voices of all who make up the People of God, but especially those who have often been marginalized, and the openness to discern the path forward that prophetically renews and enlivens.

2. Listening

([Preparatory Document](#), no. 26, 30; [Vademecum](#), nos. 1.5, 5.3)

- *Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.*
- The synodal process necessitates that we, as the People of God, first listen with an open heart and open mind to where the Spirit is calling us and discern to whom we are needing to listen and what steps need to be taken to more fully live out our mission.
- Lived synodality is only possible through the approach of a listening Church, open to gathering and reflecting on the lived experiences of all its members, including making space for those often excluded and discarded: women, youth, victims of sexual abuse, and the poor and vulnerable.

3. Speaking Out

([Preparatory Document](#), no. 30; [Vademecum](#), nos. 2.3, 5.3)

- *All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity.*
- Synodal dialogue insists on the open and honest contributions of all the People of God. Both in speaking and listening a deep sense of courage and openness must be present to welcome all that the Spirit may bring forth.

- Courage must also be the foundation for the process by which the People of God discern and dialogue towards clarity, welcoming all contributions and working together to reveal the truth of the Spirit.

4. Celebration

([Preparatory Document](#), no. 30, [Vademecum](#), 5.3)

- *“Walking together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.*
- Journeying together is only possible if rooted in the Church’s communal listening to the Gospel and the celebration of the Eucharist.
- A synodal Church discerns how prayer and liturgical celebration inspires and empowers the community’s active participation in our communal mission.

5. Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission

([Preparatory Document](#), nos. 20, 27, 30; [Vademecum](#), no. 5.3)

- *Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate.*
- The synodal process calls each member of the People of God to equally participate and take responsibility for the method of listening and dialogue being called for by the Spirit. The participation of each member of the faithful is required to further the mission of the Church.
- Just as Jesus sends the apostles and the crowd out, so too, each member of the faithful is invited to live out a synodality that listens to the needs of the community and engages courageously in the work of the Spirit at work in the world.

6. Dialogue in Church and Society

([Preparatory Document](#), nos. 23, 28, 29, 30; [Vademecum](#), no. 5.3)

- *Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.*
- The synodal process consists of the invitation and experience of encounter with the larger community of the People of God, embracing dialogue with those outside both our faith and cultural community, with those of different faith traditions, and with the entire human family to promote the flourishing of all.
- The call to “journey together” invites us to enter into relationships of listening and dialogue that engage shared and different realities, experiences of suffering and joy, to promote collaboration and foster the work of the Spirit.

7. Ecumenism

([Preparatory Document](#), nos. 29, 30; [Vademecum](#), no. 5.3)

- *The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.*
- As we walk together on our synodal journey, the fruits of dialogue with and between our brothers and sisters of different Christian denominations can help us to see the Spirit at work in the world.
- A listening Church is open to and invites collaboration with those from differing Christian denominations as we walk together towards unity within diversity.

8. Authority and Participation

([Preparatory Document](#), nos. 1, 30; [Vademecum](#), no. 5.3)

- *A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.*

- The Synod calls the People of God, in all their diversity, to embark on a journey together toward a common mission to witness to the love of God at work in the world.
- A synodal Church recognizes the call of God to foster co-responsibility in pursuit of the mission. The People of God must examine, together, how authority is exercised within the Church and what practices of teamwork can be taken to better promote the unity of the diverse people of faith.

9. Discerning and Deciding

([Preparatory Document](#), nos. 26, 30; [Vademecum](#), nos. 2.3, 5.3)

- *In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.*
- The synodal path is not only one of listening but also one of discernment that invites us to “reread” the experiences brought forth in our listening to discover joys and challenges, insights and opportunities.
- Journeying together calls the Church out of attitudes of complacency and towards an openness to listen, discern, and dialogue with the community towards a consensus that arises from the Spirit and points the People of God toward our mission

10. Forming Ourselves in Synodality

([Preparatory Document](#), nos. 25, 30; [Vademecum](#), nos. 1.2, 5.3)

- *Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning. How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue?*

- Synodality must be lived and adapted into the local context that engages all in a method of being Church that is guided by the Spirit and responsive to the reality of the world it exists within.
- The synodal path is one that is guided by the Gospel and grounded in Tradition and requires the equal participation of all those in the People of God who participate in the mission of the Church to together, listen and discern the work of the Spirit within the world.

Resource links:

Synod 2023 Preparatory Document ([English](#) | [Español](#))

Synod 2023 Vademecum: ([English](#) | [Español](#))

Diocese of Grand Rapids Synod webpage ([English](#) | [Español](#))