



Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

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Introduction: Journeying Together

The entire Catholic Church seeks your contributions as it continues on the synodal path towards stronger communion, greater participation, and an increased sense of mission.

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.

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 and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The "goal" of this 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.

What is Synodality?

Throughout this process, we hear the words: Synod, Synodality, and Synodal process. What do these words mean? Do they mean the same thing?

Synodality is the path and process of the Church as communion of all the baptized journeying together to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to become holy. Synodality involves clergy, religious and laity working together to listen to each other, dialogue with each other, and pray together to hear the voice of Holy Spirit. The fruits of this communion place the hopes and concerns of the People of God at the foot of the bishops, who, united with the Pope, decide matters of faith and morals in order to preserve the faith and strengthen the Church throughout the world.

Evidence of the synodal path can be found in the Church over Millenia, culminating in a "Synod of Bishops." Notably, Pope Francis has invited a diverse group of 70 individuals (including lay people) to discern alongside bishops, and, for the first time, will enjoy voting rights. Now titled "The General Assembly," 370 members will gather to listen to one another and the Holy Spirit for stronger communion, greater participation, and an increased sense of mission for the Catholic Church.



Listening Session Overview: 90 Minutes

- Hospitality (5 minutes)
- Welcome and Introduction (2 minutes)
- Opening Prayer (3 minutes)
- Participant Ground Rules (5 minutes)
- Overview of Synod Process (5 minutes)
- Table Group: Questions 1a and 1b (30 minutes)
- Break (5 minutes)
- Prayer (5 minutes)
- Table Group: Question 2 (20 minutes)
- Closing (10 minutes)

Listening Session: Participant Ground Rules

Respectful Communication Guidelines (from the USCCB)

R: take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel, and speak with words others can hear and understand

E: use EMPATHETIC listening, not just words but also feelings being expressed, non- verbal language including silence

S: be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles

P: PONDER on what you hear and feel before you speak

E: EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions

C: keep CONFIDENTIALITY

T: TRUST the process because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong but to experience true dialogue

Facilitator & Notetaker Roles

The role of listening session facilitators is to guide the conversations. Please listen to their instructions. There will be an individual at your table taking notes. The notes will be anonymous. The notes from all of the small groups will be summarized into one listening session report. This listening session report will be shared with the diocesan synod team to create a summary report of all listening sessions.

Scripture Reflection

John 14:1-6

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going, you know the way."

Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?"

Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The Gospel of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

Prayer for the Synod

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 2021-2024 Synod, the Holy Father is proposing that the entire People of God pray this simplified version of the *Adsumus*.

Adsumus (We Stand Before You)

*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.

Small Group Discussions:

Questions 1a and 1b:

“In a Synodal Church, the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God’s will.” (Vademecum no. 1.4)

The questions we will consider are:

1a. Where have I seen or experienced successes within the Church’s structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage the mission?

1b. Where have I seen or experienced distresses within the Church’s structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that hinder the mission?

(5-minute break)

Scripture Reflection

Romans 12:1-8

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him. For as in one body we have many members, and all members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

The Word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God

“Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. A Synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.” (Preparatory Document no. 30)

The members of the People of God are united by Baptism, and “if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors, and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to dignity and to the activity common to all the Faithful for building up of the Body of Christ.” (Lumen Gentium, no. 32)

Small Group Discussion: *Question 2*

2. The Church seeks to help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and live as a community of love and mercy in Christ. How can the Church's structures and organization better support this mission?

Closing Prayer

Lord, help us to expand the space of the store, so that those who seem to be on the margins of our societies or the Church can be heard and valued.

As we walk together, we want to join in prayer. There is no Synod without a real encounter with you!

You, Lord, invite us to welcome into our hearts those who have been left by the wayside, to an interior conversion to welcome those whom you have invited.

May we leave no one behind on this synodal journey, may no one be excluded, but a part, brother, sister, friend.

Amen.

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