

Preparing to participate in a 'Listening Group'

Thank-you for responding to the invitation to participate in the Synod on Synodality. The Church, the people of God are delighted to hear from you and have your voice inform our response. No matter who you are age, stage, theological position, church affiliation (or not) we are delighted you are part of the process. Thank-you.

The Synod poses the following fundamental question:



A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together:” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

To prepare to participate in your listening group you might use the following steps.

- Take some silent time to pray about how you will arrive at your response. Don't focus on the theme/questions initially. Instead seek the freedom to follow where God leads, to let go of biases and negative feelings, and ask for the patience to allow your response to evolve over time.
- After a time of prayer, reflect upon the words: “A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”.”
 - What is my first response to these words?
 - Am I led towards any particular theme?
- When you come to consider one or more of the themes, be willing to first let thoughts and feelings which may be influencing your response to surface:
 - How do I feel about this theme?
 - Are my feelings the result of my experience? Are they influenced by other people?
 - What happens if I bring my imagination into play?
 - What is God saying to me about this theme? Negative thoughts and emotions or feelings of anxiety triggered by the theme may get in the way of hearing what God is saying. We know we are listening to God when our thoughts are refreshing, peaceful, generate new inspiration and ideas, and direct us beyond ourselves.
- Make notes as you reflect for use in preparing your input to the consultation.
- You do not need to use the themes, or the questions provided to respond to the fundamental question. They are provided to help your discernment. They are not there so that you come with a list of answers.
 - You will be asked to share the fruits of your reflection in your listening group.

HOW DO CATHOLICS 'JOURNEY TOGETHER'? HOW MIGHT WE DO IT BETTER?

1. OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

Jesus wants us to walk together, side by side.

- *Who do you feel is included / welcome on the church's local journey?*
- *Who is not included or welcomed?*

2. OUR LISTENING

Listening is the first step - it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.

- *Who do we need to listen to more? (Consider – women, young people, lay people, those on the margins of society, minority groups, the socially discarded and excluded.)*
- *What stops us from listening more carefully?*

3. OUR SPEAKING UP

Everyone is invited to speak boldly and courageously in freedom, truth, and love.

- *How do we say what is important to us as Catholics?*
- *What helps or hinders our public visibility?*

4. GATHERING

For Catholics, 'togetherness' is based on gathering to explore the Gospels (Word) and to break bread (Eucharist).

- *How does our gathering for prayer (including Mass) meet people's needs?*
- *How do they fail to meet people's needs?*

5. OUR MISSION

Walking together enables us all to accept our mission to share the Good News.

- *How exactly do we as Church members spread the Good News of Jesus Christ?*
- *What stops us from being active in mission?*

6. OUR CONVERSATION

Genuine conversation requires perseverance and patience but leads to understanding.

- *Good conversation (dialogue) leads to collaboration – how, and how well, do we collaborate as Catholics in our local community?*
- *In what ways could we dialogue and collaborate better with others in society (e.g. in politics, economics, culture, civil society, and those who live in poverty?)*

7. WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

Walking with other Christians is essential to our mission to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

- *What do we share and how do we journey with Christians from other churches (denominations)?*
- *Why don't we do more together?*

8. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY

Our Church is all about participation and shared responsibility.

- *How could we balance these better?*
- *How do we encourage lay involvement, participation and leadership?*

9. OUR DECISION-MAKING

Our aim is to make decisions by discerning what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

- *What methods or processes do Catholic communities use to include people in discernment and decision-making?*
- *What do you think we should do to improve our efforts in this?*

10. LEARNING TO JOURNEY TOGETHER

All of us need to be open to change and ongoing learning.

- *How do we as a Catholic community form our people to listen, participate and be open to change?*
- *Have you found Church leaders to be willing to listen, participate and remain open to new ways?*