

Guide For a Diocesan Consultation



Archidiocèse de
Saint-Boniface
Archdiocese

Created and adapted from the following resources:

- [Preparatory Document](#)
- [Vademecum](#)
- [Guide diocésain du Diocèse de Bayeux et Lisieux](#)
- [Process for Facilitating Synodal Consultations](#)



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

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“Synodality is the way of being a Church today according to the will of God in a dynamic of listening and discerning the Holy Spirit”

Pope Francis

What is Synodality?

For a more synodal Church

It is at the call of Pope Francis that we set out: this Synod is a stage for reflecting together on the road traveled and on what can help us to better live communion, achieve participation and open ourselves to mission.

The **basic question** that will guide all of our exchanges: ***How is this “journeying together” taking place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel? And what steps is the Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?***

It is about gathering to listen to the Holy Spirit and to one another. The commitment to build a more synodal Church is a mission to which we are all invited, each in the role entrusted to them by the Lord.

A Synod is:

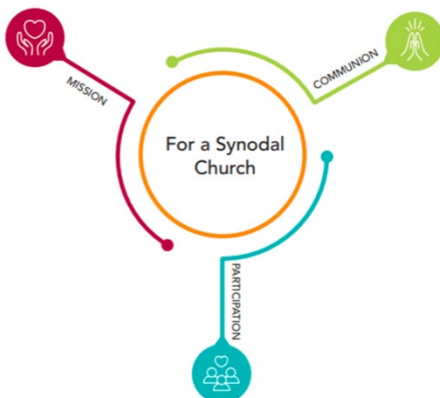
- a way of being the Church today, a community that walks together with Jesus Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,
- listen "without prejudice", speak with courage and sincerity,
- engage in an open and benevolent dialogue with the baptized people, society, and other Christian denominations,
- enter into a process of discernment through a common listening to the Holy Spirit.

“THE PURPOSE OF THIS SYNOD IS NOT TO PRODUCE MORE DOCUMENTS. RATHER, IT IS INTENDED TO INSPIRE PEOPLE TO DREAM ABOUT THE CHURCH WE ARE CALLED TO BE, TO MAKE PEOPLE’S HOPES FLOURISH, TO STIMULATE TRUST, TO BIND UP WOUNDS, TO WEAVE NEW AND DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS, TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER, TO BUILD BRIDGES, TO ENLIGHTEN MINDS, WARM HEARTS, AND RESTORE STRENGTH TO OUR HANDS FOR OUR COMMON MISSION (PD, 32).”

Pope Francis

In this difficult time, the synod is an occasion ...

- to imagine a different future for the Church,
- to be a prophetic sign for a human family in need of a common goal.



THE PRINCIPLE IS TO ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE, IN ORDER TO LISTEN TO THE LIVING VOICE OF ALL THE PEOPLE OF GOD. HENCE THE IMPORTANCE OF ALSO FOSTERING THE PARTICIPATION OF THOSE WHO ARE POOR, MARGINALIZED, VULNERABLE AND EXCLUDED TO LISTEN TO THEIR VOICES AND EXPERIENCES. THE SYNODAL PROCESS MUST BE SIMPLE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING; IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT THE MEETINGS MUST TAKE PLACE.

Attitudes for Participating in the Synodal Process

From Vademecum

On various occasions, Pope Francis has shared his vision for what the practice of synodality looks like concretely. The following are particular attitudes that enable genuine listening and dialogue as we participate in the Synodal Process.

- **Being synodal requires time for sharing:** We are invited to speak with authentic courage and honesty in order to integrate freedom, truth, and charity. Everyone can grow in understanding through dialogue.
- **Humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking:** Everyone has the right to be heard, just as everyone has the right to speak. Synodal dialogue depends on courage both in speaking and in listening. It is not about engaging in a debate to convince others. Rather, it is welcoming what others say as a way by which the Holy Spirit can speak for the good of all (1 Corinthians 12:7).
- **Dialogue leads us to newness:** We must be willing to change our opinions based on what we have heard from others.
- **Openness to conversion and change:** We can often be resistant to what the Holy Spirit is trying to inspire us to undertake. We are called to abandon attitudes of complacency and comfort that lead us to make decisions purely on the basis of how things have been done in the past.
- **Synods are an ecclesial exercise in discernment:** Discernment is based on the conviction that God is at work in the world, and we are called to listen to what the Spirit suggests to us.
- **We are signs of a Church that listens and journeys:** By listening, the Church follows the example of God himself, who listens to the cry of his people. The Synodal Process provides us with the opportunity to open ourselves to listen in an authentic way, without resorting to ready-made answers or pre-formulated judgments.
- **Leave behind prejudices and stereotypes:** We can be weighed down by our weaknesses and sinfulness. The first step towards listening is freeing our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path, towards ignorance and division.
- **Overcome the scourge of clericalism:** The Church is the Body of Christ filled with different charisms in which each member has a unique role to play. We are all interdependent on one another and we all share an equal dignity amidst the holy People of God. In the image of Christ, true power is service. Synodality calls upon pastors to listen attentively to the flock entrusted to their care, just as it calls the laity to freely and honestly express their views. Everyone listens to one other out of love, in a spirit of communion and our common mission. Thus, the power of the Holy Spirit is manifested in manifold ways in and through the entire People of God.

- **Cure the virus of self-sufficiency:** We are all in the same boat. Together we form the Body of Christ. Setting aside the mirage of self-sufficiency, we are able to learn from each other, journey together, and be at the service of one another. We can build bridges beyond the walls that sometimes threaten to separate us – age, gender, wealth, ability, education, etc.
- **Overcoming ideologies:** We must avoid the risk of giving greater importance to ideas than to the reality of the life of faith that people live in a concrete way.
- **Give rise to hope:** Doing what is right and true does not seek to attract attention or make headlines, but rather aims at being faithful to God and serving His People. We are called to be beacons of hope, not prophets of doom.
- **Synods are a time to dream and “spend time with the future”:** We are encouraged to create a local process that inspires people, with no one excluded to create a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel. The following dispositions will help participants (cf. *Christus Vivit*):
 - **An innovative outlook:** To develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity.
 - **Being inclusive:** A participatory and co-responsible Church, capable of appreciating its own rich variety, embraces all those we often forget or ignore.
 - **An open mind:** Let us avoid ideological labels and make use of all methodologies that have borne fruit.
 - **Listening to each and every one:** By learning from one another, we can better reflect the wonderful multi-faceted reality that Christ’s Church is meant to be.
 - **An understanding of “journeying together”:** To walk the path that God calls the Church to undertake for the third millennium.
 - **Understanding the concept of a co-responsible Church:** To value and involve the unique role and vocation of each member of the Body of Christ, for the renewal and building up of the whole Church.
 - **Reaching out through ecumenical and interreligious dialogue:** To dream together and journey with one another throughout the entire human family.

Important dates

SEPTEMBER 2021 – Publication of the Preparatory Document and the Vademecum

OCTOBER 2021 – Official opening of the Diocesan Synodal Phase

NOVEMBER 2021 – Presentation at the Diocesan Pastoral Council

DECEMBER 2021 – Diocesan send out of the questions

JANUARY 2022 TO APRIL 2022 – Parish Consultations

APRIL 29, 2022 – **Deadline for submitting answers to questions**

JUNE 2022 - Submission of the diocesan summary to the regional assembly

AUGUST 2022 - CCCB final document submitted to Rome for the preparation of continental synthesis documents

OCTOBER 2023 - Synod of Bishops in Rome followed by publication of the apostolic exhortation

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PROCESS

- Put yourself in a spiritual framework anchored in prayer and the Word of God.
- Listen to each other in order to listen to the Holy Spirit.
- Live an experience together (rather than just answering a questionnaire).
- Welcome the participants' sharing of their lived experience by mutual listening and exchanges, without striving for consensus. The sharing group then becomes a place of synodal learning.

Ground Rules for Small Group Discussion

- Speak in "I" rather than in "we" as we are sharing personal experiences rather than making general statements.
- Allow all participants to speak: limit chatterboxes and encourage timid ones!
- Listen to the diversity of experiences; this is an essential element of the synodal process.
- Do not enter into a debate of ideas, but accept what is said without judgment. Do not seek to be right or to convince the other.
- Ensure that everyone is treated equally in their participation in the listening process so that every voice can be properly heard.
- Humility in listening must match courage in speaking: everyone has the right to be heard, just as everyone has the right to speak the truth.
- Welcome moments of silence as opportunities for the Spirit to move!

Prayer

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer Adsumus Sancte Spiritus, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal journey from 2021 to 2023, we propose the following simplified version, so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray it more easily.

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.

Questions

Here are the questions to be discussed in Parish Pastoral Councils, in Deanery meetings, in religious congregations and other faith-based groups. You can also organize conversations at the church level to include as many people as possible. Note that a summary of the conversations must be submitted by April 29, 2022.

You can submit the summary by completing one of the following forms.

- **[Online form](#)** (response submitted immediately)
- **[Form to be completed](#)** (answer must be sent by email to Mireille Grenier mgrenier@archsaintboniface.ca)

**In our parish can also refer to in our religious congregation, in our group, in my life, etc.*

Listening

- In our parish, how is God speaking to us?
- In our parish, what enables us to listen to one another, including the voices of those who suffer?

Speaking Out and Companions on the Journey

- In our parish, what hinders parishioners and those who suffer from speaking openly and being accompanied on their respective journeys?

Dialogue in the Church and Society

- Through the parish’s PPC, committees, and groups, how do we dialogue and learn from other sectors of society? (e.g., government and other religions)

Co-Responsible in the Mission

- Since we are all missionary disciples, every baptized person is called to participate in the mission of the Church. What hinders the baptized from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting?

Specific Question for the Clergy

- What is the unique role of the priest in the synodal process?