



Questions for discussion at synod meetings



A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together": how is this "journeying together" happening today in our Church? What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?

Dear parishioners,

To contribute to our diocesan synod, you will soon be offered to take part in a synod meeting, sometime between mid-January and Pentecost. Here is what you will be invited to do on this occasion:

- **Ask yourselves** what experiences in your particular church do these questions call to mind?
- **Re-read the experiences in greater depth.** What joys did they provoke? What difficulties and obstacles were there? What wounds have they brought to light? What insights have they elicited?
- **Gather the fruits to share.** Where in these experiences, does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is he 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?

Below are the ten themes chosen by the Vatican for this Synod. These are suggestions to aid spiritual conversations at synod meetings. Please note, **the aim is not to answer all of the questions, but to choose those you would like to share ideas about, because they are most relevant to you.** Of course, you can also ask other questions, and we encourage you to do so.

Theme 1: COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

The Acts of the Apostles tells us how the first disciples worked together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to build the early Church. In the Church and in society today, we are side by side on the same road.

- In our local church, who are the ones already "journeying together"? How can we do this better?
- Who is getting left behind and why? How can we, as a parish, reach out to those who don't feel welcome or are no longer interested in Jesus Christ?

Theme 2: LISTENING

Listening is the first step, but it requires having an open mind and heart, without prejudices. When we can listen like this, we may hear God's voice speaking to us through other people.

- What is limiting our ability to listen in our local church, especially to those who have different views than our own? What could help us to listen to others better?
- How are the Laity, especially young people and women, listened to? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or exclusion?



Theme 3: SPEAKING OUT

As Catholics, we are all invited to speak with courage, and ensure that our words convey freedom, truth, and charity.

- In our local church, when and how do we manage to say what is important to us? Are we comfortable talking about Jesus to others? If not, why, and what would make us be more confident and able to do so?
- What enables or hinders us to speak up courageously and responsibly as Catholics in wider society? How can our parish be a light for our community, to share with others the love of Jesus and his saving truth?
- Beyond our parish, who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen? How does the relationship with local media work (not only Catholic media)?

Theme 4: CELEBRATION

"Journeying together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass).

- How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and guide our community?
- How well do we enable every faithful to participate in liturgical celebrations? How are we encouraging and helping the members of our community who wish to take part in the ministries of the reader and acolyte? How could we do it better?

Theme 5: SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Synodality is at the service of the Church's mission. Every baptised person is called to use their gifts and talents to participate in the life and missionary service of the Church.

- Within our parish, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church? How can we encourage participation and a true gift of each person to the Lord Jesus?
- What prevents us from giving our gifts and talents to the Church? Are there areas of mission we are neglecting? (For example: helping the poor, supporting the pro-life efforts of the Church, evangelising, caring for the environment, etc)
- How does our community support its members who serve society (through social and political involvement, scientific research, education, etc.)?

Theme 6: DIALOGUE

Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.

- What are the places and means of dialogue within our local church?
- How do we promote communication and collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations, etc.? How do we resolve potential conflicts? How could we do it better?
- How well do we dialogue with and learn from diverse groups, like people who live in poverty, believers of other religions and those who have no religious affiliation? How can we improve?



Theme 7: ECUMENISM

The dialogue with other Christian communities, united with us by one Baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.

- What relations do we have with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations?
- What do we share and how do we journey together? What are the benefits and the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

Theme 8: AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

A synodal Church is a Church where everyone participates and shares responsibility.

- How well do we identify our goals and how to reach them? How is authority exercised within our local church? What good examples do we have of teamwork and shared responsibility?
- How do we promote lay ministries and the responsibility of lay faithful? What can our parish do to prepare us to be committed disciples of Jesus?
- How does synodality work at the level of our particular church (Pastoral Councils, lay ministries, etc.)? Are they a fruitful experience? How can we foster more leadership of the lay people?

Theme 9: DISCERNING AND DECIDING

In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

- How well do we promote participation in decision making and how well do we make decisions together?
- How can we improve our methods so that everyone's voice can be included?
- How do we promote transparency and accountability?
- How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

Theme 10: FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

Synodality, that is journeying together, involves ongoing learning and being open to change.

- What do we need to help us to be more capable of 'walking together', listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue?
- What formation do we offer so that decision-making and the exercise of authority takes place in a synodal way, that is to say, making sure that every member of the community is welcomed, respected and listened to?