



SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

Listening and Discernment in Local Churches

First Phase [October 2021 – August 2022]
in Dioceses and Bishops' Conferences

OUR SYNOD ON SYNODALITY PROCESS GUIDE FOR:

St. Theresa's Parish

7508 – 29 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta

WHAT THE SYNOD IS NOT - PITFALLS TO AVOID...

THE TEMPTATION

- Of wanting to lead ourselves instead of being led by God
- To focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns
- To only see “problems”
- Of focusing only on structures
- Not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church
- To lose focus on the objectives of the Synodal process
- Of conflict and division
- To treat the Synod as a kind of parliament or town hall meeting
- To listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities
- Of simplifying this process to the level of a “to do” list

PARTICIPATION MATTERS

- Participate in the consultation(listening) Diocesan phase with fervent prayer and discernment,
- Listen to the voice of others including the baptized, unaffiliated, marginalized, and those on the peripheries,
- Listen with an open ear and speak with courage and wisdom, inspired by the Holy Spirit and rooted in prayer,
- Synodal speaking and listening is oriented towards discernment in which people listen to each other, to their faith tradition, and to the signs of the times in order to discern what God is saying to all of us.

HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS SYNODAL JOURNEY?

- Ensure that the materials reach far and wide in your respective communities, organizations, and parishes (newsletters, websites),
- Attend, and encourage others to attend, the Synod Learning Sessions in January,
- Identify the different groups in your respective communities, parishes, and organizations. How will their voices be heard?

- Remain open to the idea that Listening Sessions can happen wherever the Holy Spirit guides (boardroom, classroom, staff room, parish hall, hospital bed, prison, shelter, family dinner),
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide every word and action,
- Participate in multiple Listening session (local, diocesan, and on line)

THE INFORMAL DIMENSION OF THE SYNODAL PROCESS

- Listening to one another is enriched by knowing each other and sharing life together. It can be very helpful to share a common activity before starting to meet and dialogue with one another.
- Some examples of activities that can be done together include a pilgrimage, social or charitable outreach, or simply sharing a meal with each other. Besides developing mutual trust among participants, this could also help foster the participation of people who are more attracted by practical action rather than intellectual discussion.
- This approach follows Jesus' example of gathering His disciples to share a meal, walk together, or simply spend time with each other. It can be important to allow sufficient time and suitable space for participants to share food and beverage, prolonging the experience of listening to one another in a less formal and more spontaneous exchange during break times. This may open the door to a more fruitful participation of people who feel less comfortable in formal meetings, as well as give some opportunities to clarify certain points more freely.
- Taking part in physical, cultural, social, and charitable activities can contribute to building communion among the participants, renewing the Church through new experiences of fraternity with one another.

The Main Question for Consultation

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”?

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”. In responding to these questions, it is helpful to remember that “journeying together” occurs in two deeply interconnected ways. First, we journey together with one another as the People of God. Next, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family. These two perspectives enrich one another and are helpful for our common discernment towards deeper communion and more fruitful mission.