



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Information Session Guide

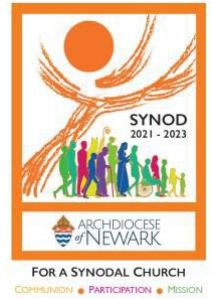


ARCHDIOCESE
of NEWARK

Table of Contents

A quick look at the Synod on Synodality 2023.....	1
For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.....	2
Synod prayer	16
Synodality – Walking the Road Together.....	17
Universal prayers in English and Spanish	19
Universal Prayers for Synod and Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs	21
Preaching The Synod.....	22
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2022	28

A Quick Look at the Synod on Synodality 2023



Pope Francis announced the Sixteenth Ordinary Synod of Bishops, which will take place in 2023 in Rome. His theme for the Synod is for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission. The term synodality means walking the same road together. We journey as a Church together, all of us – Pope, bishops, clergy religious, and those on the margins. The mission of Christ can only be accomplished by all of us collaborating together to make the Gospel heard in our time. Every age in Church history has had to figure out the best way to proclaim the Gospel and this is our time.

Pope Francis has asked for an extraordinary task to be done – that is, he wants to hear from every part of the Church throughout the world, those committed to the church, those who have left the Church, never been a part of the church, or who are poor, marginalized and don't feel welcome in the Church. Some say that this is the largest single consultation in the world! We are all asked to join in and be a part in the ways best for us and to be as inclusive as possible.

In this consultation, Pope Francis asks us to consider this question of proclaiming the Gospel and continuing his mission through prayer and discernment together. His overarching question is: *What does the Holy Spirit expect of the Church of the 21st Century?* Two subsequent questions to be used at the listening sessions to expound on this question are:

1. How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish community, campus ministry, university, school, youth group, religious congregation or other area of Church life?
2. How are we “walking together” as a Church, and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

For our Listening Sessions, which can take place in December until February, we have clarified those questions in order to be more specific to our particular circumstances.

The Synod 2023 will have three phases:

Phase One: The Diocesan phase in which we will all be able to reflect and give feedback to the Archdiocese – December 2021-February 2022

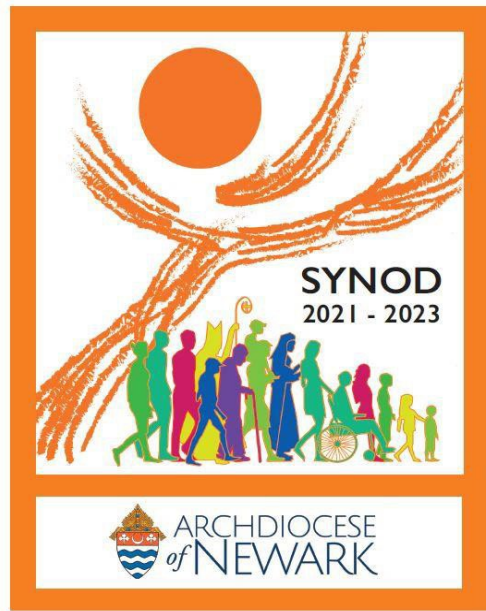
Phase Two: The Continental Phase in which all dioceses will synthesize feedback and send a report to the bishops' conference in Washington, DC (USCCB) by March 1, 2022. In turn, the USCCB will then synthesize feedback and send a report to the Vatican Synod Committee beginning April 2022.

Phase Three: The Universal phase, which will be the actual Synod of bishops in Rome in October 2023



Walking together, inspired by the Holy Spirit

For a Synodal Church:
Communion,
Participation,
and Mission



FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

COMMUNION ● PARTICIPATION ● MISSION

Synod Message from Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR



Synodality

+Journeying together

Who Should Part of This?

Pope Francis wants to invite all people:

Listening to

- Pope, bishops, clergy, religious, laity
- People on the margins; poor, vulnerable, unchurched, former Catholics, other faiths, youth, young adults, **everyone!**
- Pope Francis has called for the people of God and clergy to convene and work together to **listen and discern** a vision for the future of the Church.



Synod Handbook

Synodality RCAN

3

3

The Early Church

The Acts of the Apostles tell that when the early Christian communities needed to resolve certain practical problems or pastoral questions, they held an assembly of believers, called on the Holy Spirit and discussed with those in authority.

For Example: Council of Jerusalem

Can we allow Gentiles?

Later:

How to take care of women and orphans with unequal food distribution?

Establishment of diaconal type ministry



Synodality RCAN

4

4

Today

Celebrating a Synod means walking on the same road, *together*

Let us look at Jesus:

- ✦ First, he encounters the rich man on the road;
- ✦ then, he listens to his questions,
- ✦ and finally, he helps him discern what he must do to inherit eternal life.



Encounter, listen and discern

Pope Francis

Synodality RCAN

5

The Synod on Synodality

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.



Synod Handbook

Synodality RCAN

6

6

Pope Francis

Wants the whole Church to explore:

**What does the Holy Spirit expect of the Church
in the 21st Century?**



Synodality RCAN

7

7

We have been in a Synodal Process in our Archdiocese

Cardinal Tobin - Listening Sessions in Deaneries:

Forward in Faith Together Pillars:

- 1. Protection of the Faithful**
- 2. Accountability, Transparency, and Communication**
- 3. Parish Pastoral Planning**
- 4. Life-Long Faith Formation and Education**
- 5. Ongoing Formation and Support of Clergy**
- 6. Active Engagement of the Laity.**



Synodality RCAN

8

8

Ongoing Synodal/Collaborative Processes

- Development and Training of Parish Pastoral Councils
- Development and Training of Finance Councils
- Council of Priests
- Council of Deans
- Archdiocesan Pastoral Council
- Deans meetings in regions
- Deanery meetings with priests and staffs
- Auxiliary Bishops with Cardinal
- Collaboration within the Pastoral Center Departments
- Parishes in collaboration
- Interfaith gatherings
- Pastoral Center Departments with their constituents, councils, advisory boards, etc.



Synodality RCAN

9

9

Synod Fundamental Questions:

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”?




Synodality RCAN

10

10



Archdiocese of Newark Synod Process Timeline

October	November	December	January/ February	March 1	April	June
<p>Reading and Preparation: Synod Docs</p> <p>Vatican Synod Mass Opening October 10</p> <p>Newark Synod Mass Opening October 17</p>	<p>Information sessions and preparation of resources for parishes and other groups for Listening Sessions</p>	<p>Listening Sessions throughout the Archdiocese</p>	<p>Listening Sessions throughout the Archdiocese</p>	<p>All Listening Session Reports sent to RCAN</p> <p>Gather all information and synthesize</p>	<p>Diocesan Reports given to USCCB</p>	<p>Pre-Synodal Gathering Listening Session</p> <p>Mass of Thanksgiving <i>Dates to be determined</i></p> 
<p>Creating Synod Leadership Teams</p>	<p>Training PPCs and other group leaders and facilitators</p>					<p>Bishops meet in formal Synod in October 2023</p>
			ynodality RCAN			11

How the Synodal Process Can Work in RCAN

Parishes

- The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) can be the convener and facilitator
- Hispanic Leadership (Encuentro) groups can be conveners and facilitators
- If a parish does not have a working PPC, we can provide a facilitator(s)
- Need contact person(s) from each parish
- We would need to know language needs

In Your Parish and Other Ministries - Examples

Religious Ed

- Listening sessions with catechists, parents, and children

Youth Ministry

- Listening sessions with youth, parents

Schools

Children, teachers, parents

Hispanic Ministry and other Cultural Groups

- Listening sessions including adults, youth, etc.

Disabilities

- Inclusion in Listening Sessions, prayer and other activities and ministries



Synodality RCAN

13

13

How many sessions?

- Parishes can convene one session or several sessions with different groups.
- Listening session designed for
 - 2.5-3 hour evening session
 - 3 hour longer session such as on a Saturday morning
 - 2 Sessions
 - Deanery Sessions
 - Specialty Sessions: schools, Parent meetings, campus ministry, etc.
- Other groups and ministries can determine best timings
- Persons outside of church framework may be interviewed
- A survey may also be available online



Synodality RCAN

14

14

Webpage



- Webpage for: <https://www.rcan.org/synod2023>
 - General information about the Synod
 - Message from Cardinal Tobin
 - Newark Opening Synod Mass and Cardinal Tobin's Homily
 - INFO Session Sign Up Flyer
 - Training video for PPCs and other group leaders – how to run a listening session
 - Training video for Facilitators
 - Materials such as a Facilitator Guide to download for the listening sessions
 - Prayer card in English and Spanish
 - Others to come

Synodality RCAN

15

15

Vatican Social Media



- <https://www.synod.va/en.html>
- <https://www.instagram.com/synod.va/>
- https://twitter.com/synod_va
- <https://www.facebook.com/synod.va>
- https://www.flickr.com/photos/synod_va/



Synodality RCAN

16

16

Encounter with Christ and Each Other

Pope Francis:

Jesus knows that someone's life can be changed by a single encounter

As we initiate this process of **Synodality**, we too are called to become experts in the art of encounter. Not so much by organizing events or theorizing about problems, but by taking time to encounter the Lord and one another – time to devote to prayer and adoration, listening to what the Spirit wants to say to the church.

Come Holy Spirit

Synodality RCAN

17

17

Listening Session Process

1. Gathering Prayer and Faith Sharing

2. Video by Cardinal Tobin

What is this synod on Synodality, and why it is important

3. Explanation of the process by the Main Facilitator(s)

- Table Facilitator
- Table Scribe
- Table Discussion & Feedback Handouts

4. Explanation of the Questions

- Discussion at Tables
- Large Group Feedback

5. Sending Prayer



Synodality RCAN

18

18



Opening Song

All Are Welcome or Other appropriate song

Gathering Prayer

Leader Come Holy Spirit

All fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Leader Send forth your Spirit

and they shall be re-created.
and You shall renew the face of the earth.

All O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Spirit
we may be truly wise
and ever rejoice in His consolation,
Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Synodality RCAN

19

19

The Word of God

Acts 2: 1-11, 14-19

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

**When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,
they were all in one place together.
And suddenly there came from the sky
a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they were.
Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in different tongues,
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.**

Synodality RCAN

20

20

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.

At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, "What does this mean?"



Synodality RCAN

21

21

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, Let this be known to you, and listen to my words.

this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

'It will come to pass in the last days,' God says, 'that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams... And I will work wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below...'

The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God



Synodality RCAN

22

22



Scripture Reflection Question

- ✦ How have I experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in my life?
- ✦ In what ways do I see the Holy Spirit working in my parish, campus ministry, religious congregation, etc.?

Prayer *Leading into reflection session*

Leader Come Holy Spirit,
as we move into our reflection session.

All be with us as a discerning guide
to speak what is in our heart,
our experience of Church, our joys and sorrows,
hopes and dreams.

May we listen carefully to each other
so that we may discern how you, Holy Spirit,
are calling us be church at this time in our history.

Leader We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All Amen

Synodality RCAN

23

23

Global Question One

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish, campus ministry, university, religious congregation, other?

Table Discussion

- Share a few examples of ways that you have experienced this “walking together” in your parish and what is challenging about participating fully in your parish? For example, attending Mass, participating in service activities, planning for the future, other?
- What prevents us from “walking together”?
- What are the ways we reach out collectively or individually to those who are no longer participating in church? How do we reach out to include cultural or ethnic groups, women, disabled, those living in poverty or social exclusion, or others?
- What are three steps we can take in our parish to grow in “walking together”?
- **Where in these shared experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit?**

24
Synodality RCAN

24

Global Question TWO

How are we “walking together” as a Church, and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

Table Discussion

- By our deep listening today, what actions do you hear the Holy Spirit asking our parish and the global Church to take?
- What practical steps are needed to include people in the area of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the global Church?

Local Questions The Archdiocese of Newark

How are we “walking together” as the Archdiocese of Newark, and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

- How can the Archdiocese of Newark support you in your local parish?
- What are three steps we can take in our Archdiocese to grow collaboratively for the future?

Synodality RCAN

25

25

Evaluation of the Time Spent Together

- How has this discussion given you the opportunity to listen and express and share your own experience of Church?
- What are your hopes for the Church as we continue to grow and listen to the Holy Spirit?

Sending Prayer and Sign of Peace

Leader Let us take a moment of quiet as we reflect on what we have done here today...

Reader A reading from the Letter of St. James Jas 1:22
Dearest brothers and sisters:
Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you...
[and] Be doers of the word and not hearers only.

Leader Come Holy Spirit,
we ask you, that by your inspiration,
may all of our prayer and actions always begin from you
and inspire others to know you more deeply.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All Amen

Leader Let us go forth sharing a sign of peace.



Synodality RCAN

26

26

What you will need for a Listening Session

- Contact Person(s) for the RCAN Synod Team
- Preparation/Set-up team(s)
- Welcome Hosts: sign in, nametags, etc.
- Room arrangements, publicity, invitations
- Round tables *if possible* to seat 5-6 people
- Power Point Equipment; projector or TV, sound, computer, PPT presentation
- (download from RCAN webpage)
- Facilitators:
 - Main Facilitator(s)**
 - Table Facilitators**
 - Table Scribes**
 - Pens**
 - Handouts of questions for discussion and discernment & reporting**

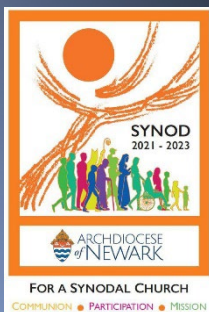
**Parish Pastoral Council
can plan & convene**

Synodality RCAN

27

27

Synod Prayer for the Archdiocese of Newark



**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.**

Synodality RCAN

28

28



SYNOD PRAYER
for the
ARCHDIOCESE of NEWARK

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.

FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH



COMMUNION . PARTICIPATION
. MISSION

SYNOD PRAYER
for the
ARCHDIOCESE of NEWARK

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.

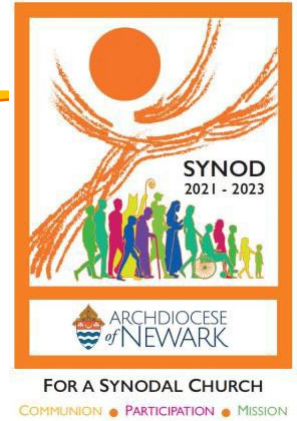
Let us find in You our unity so that
we may journey together
to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth and
what is right.

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.

FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

COMMUNION . PARTICIPATION . MISSION

Synodality – Walking the Road Together



Gathering Prayer

Leader Let us begin + In the name of the Father...
All Amen

Leader God of the Journey,
walk with us on the road
All as we respond to the call
to discern how the Holy Spirit is calling us
as a Church in the 21st Century.

Leader We ask this in the name of Jesus,
Who walks with us each day.
All Amen

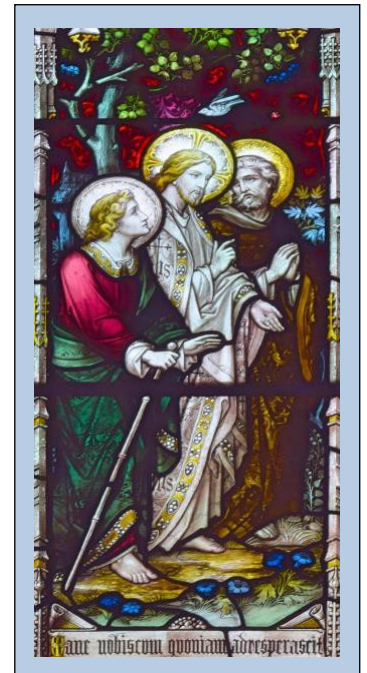
The Word of God The Appearance on the Road to Emmaus Luke 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week,
two of Jesus' disciples were going
to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,
and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.
And it happened that while they were conversing and debating,
Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,
but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

He asked them,
"What are you discussing as you walk along?"
They stopped, looking downcast.
One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply,
"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem
who does not know of the things
that have taken place there in these days?"
And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"

They said to him,
"The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,
how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over
to a sentence of death and crucified him.
But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel;
and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place.
Some women from our group, however, have astounded us:
they were at the tomb early in the morning
and did not find his Body; they came back and reported
that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.

Then some of those with us went to the tomb
and found things just as the women had described,
but him they did not see."



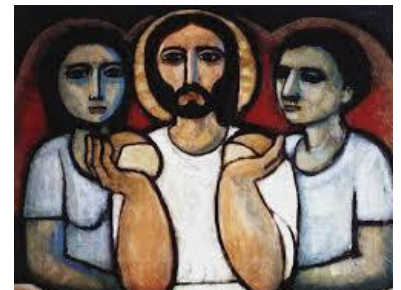
And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are!
How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things
and enter into his glory?"
Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going,
he gave the impression that he was going on farther.
But they urged him, "Stay with us,
for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over."
So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table,
he took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them.

With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him,
but he vanished from their sight.

Then they said to each other,
"Were not our hearts burning within us
while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?"
So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem
where they found gathered together
the Eleven and those with them who were saying,
"The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"
Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way
and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.



Supper at Emmaus
by Cerezo Barredo, Spain

Reflection Walking the Road Together

Prayer

Leader Jesus,
You are the Way the Truth, and the Life.
As we begin our meeting on the Synod on Synodality,
may we listen to the voice of your Holy Spirit,
as we learn about the Holy Father's call to find the way
to proclaim the Gospel in our time
and continue your mission on earth.

All Give us courage and vision. Amen

Universal Prayer

Suggested General Intercessions – Some or all may be used.

From the Synod of Bishops

Synod 2021-2023 “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.”

Inspired by the 10 thematic nuclei of the Preparatory Document (§30)

1. For the Church; that we may journey as companions, side by side one another on the same road. We pray:
2. For listening ears; that our hearts and minds be open to listening to others without prejudice. We pray:
3. For the gift of speaking out; that we be encouraged in this Synod journey to speak with courage and *parrhesia**, integrating freedom, truth, and love. We pray:
4. For a Church that celebrates; that our journey together will be based on listening together to the Word of God and the celebration on the Eucharist in the communion of the People of God. We pray:
5. For our participation in the Mission of Christ; that through our Synodal journey together, we may grow in our shared responsibility of the mission that is entrusted to us. We pray:
6. For true dialogue in the Church and in Society; that through a path of perseverance, patience, and mutual understanding, we may be attentive to the experience of persons and peoples. We pray:
7. For the unity of Christians; that dialogue between Christians of different denominations, united by one Baptism, may radiate with new brightness on this Synodal journey. We pray:
8. For the exercise of authority and participation in the People of God; that the Synodal roots of the Church will bear fruit in new ways of being at the service of one another at all levels of the Body of Christ. We pray:
9. For our discernment to be led by the Holy Spirit; that all decisions made on this Synodal path may be discerned through a consensus that flows from our common obedience to the Holy Spirit. We pray:
10. For a spirituality of journeying together; that we may be formed as disciples of Christ, as families, as communities, and as human beings, through our experience of this Synodal journey. We pray:

* The biblical term “parrhesia” (cf. Acts 4:13; Eph 3:12; Heb 3:6) can be substituted for “boldness” for pastoral reasons.

1. Por la Iglesia; para que caminemos como compañeros, uno al lado del otro en el mismo camino. Oremos al Señor.
2. Por oídos que escuchan; para que nuestros corazones y mentes estén abiertos a escuchar a los demás sin prejuicios. Oremos al Señor.
3. Por el don de la palabra; para que en este camino del Sínodo nos animemos a hablar con valentía y parrhesía, integrando la libertad, la verdad y el amor. Oremos al Señor.
4. Por una Iglesia que celebra; para que nuestro camino juntos en los próximos meses se base en la escucha conjunta de la Palabra de Dios y en la celebración de la Eucaristía en la comunión del Pueblo de Dios. Oremos al Señor.
5. Por nuestra participación en la Misión de Cristo; para que a través de nuestro camino Sinodal juntos, crezcamos en nuestra responsabilidad compartida de la misión que se nos ha confiado. Oremos al Señor.
6. Por un verdadero diálogo en la Iglesia y en la sociedad; para que, por un camino de perseverancia, paciencia y comprensión mutua, estemos atentos a la experiencia de las personas y de los pueblos. Oremos al Señor.
7. Por la unidad de los cristianos; para que el diálogo entre cristianos de distintas confesiones, unidos por un mismo Bautismo, irradie con nuevo brillo en este camino Sinodal. Oremos al Señor.
8. Por el ejercicio de la autoridad y la participación en el Pueblo de Dios; para que las raíces Sinodales de la Iglesia fructifiquen en nuevos modos de estar al servicio de los demás en todos los niveles del Cuerpo de Cristo. Oremos al Señor.
9. Para que nuestro discernimiento sea guiado por el Espíritu Santo; que todas las decisiones tomadas en este camino Sinodal sean alcanzadas por discernimiento a través de un consenso que surja de nuestra obediencia común al Espíritu Santo. Oremos al Señor.
10. Por una espiritualidad del caminar juntos; para que nos formemos como discípulos de Cristo, como familias, como comunidades y como seres humanos, a través de nuestra experiencia de este camino Sinodal. Oremos al Señor.

Universal Prayers for Synod and Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs

As we prepare to reflect on the reality of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as Roman Catholics let us keep in mind the Christian Churches of the East, the Orthodox, the Armenian, the Coptic, and the Byzantine. May we learn from their rich experience of worship.

During the Synodal process let us call to mind the divisions of the Christian Church of the West, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed, Evangelical, and Protestant. Let us seek paths to unity and harmony as we reflect on our neighbors of faith.

During the process of Synod let us be aware of the other People of the Book, our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters. May we recall our common faith from Abraham. May we strive to understand and comprehend those we consider followers of the God who is ONE.

During our journey to define our role as Church in a complex world may we bring to mind the followers of the world's faiths and religions. May we learn from the rich traditions and strive to honor and bless all God's people.



PREACHING THE SYNOD

Not every homily needs to refer to the Synod, and a connection between the readings and liturgy to the synodal journey ought not to be forced. At the same time, the readings and prayers of the liturgy often reflect the three key elements of the Synod: Communion, Participation, and Mission. What follows are some “hints” or “prompts” that can help connect the readings and this synodal journey we are on....

- ❖ **Communion:** Emphasis our unity-in-diversity. Key messages include: “We are spread out across our entire diocese (and parish and world) but God unites us as one”; “The aim is not for all of us to be the same, but to walk forward together, sharing a common path and embracing our diversity”; “The communion that God builds in our midst is stronger than any divisions”; “Amidst our many differences, we are united in our common baptism, as members of the Body of Christ.”
- ❖ **Participation:** Throughout the synodal journey, efforts should also be made to include those who may sometimes be excluded, including members of other Christian denominations and other religions, people who experience poverty and marginalization, people who live with a handicap, young people, women, etc.
- ❖ **Mission:** The many gifts and charisms of the People of God in the parish and diocese can be emphasized. Key messages to convey are: “Every Christian has a vital role to play in the mission of the Church”; “All the baptized are living stones in building up the Body of Christ”; “No one is excluded from the joy of the Gospel”; “Lay people have a special mission in witnessing to the Gospel in all parts of human society”; “As disciples of Jesus, we are leaven in the midst of humanity so that the kingdom of God may rise across the entire world.”

Day	Readings	One way to connect to the Synod...
10/24/21 30 th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jer 31:7-9 Ps 126 Heb 5:1-6 Mk 10:46-52	Bartimaeus (Mk) lives on the margins, in exile; yet Jesus hears his voice... listens deeply to his needs... and responds. On this synodal journey, to whom are we being called to listen? Who are those we normally don't see or hear? How are we being called to respond, to cooperate with the God who does great things (Ps) and frees the exile (Jer)?
10/31/21 31 st Sunday in Ordinary Time	Deut 6:2-6 Ps 18 Heb 7:23-28 Mk 12:28b-34	"Hear" (Dt)! Listen! That's what's at the heart of the synodal process. In Deut, Moses urges the people to listen to the heart of the law: Love God with your whole being. Jesus echoes those words (Mk), adding the text from Leviticus (19:18) to love our neighbor as our self. One way we love is to listen closely to one another. Perhaps, through synodal listening, we will discover the ways we are being called to love even more deeply.
11/7/21 32 nd Sunday in Ordinary Time	1 Kgs 17:10-16 Ps 146 Heb 9:24-28 Mk 12:38-44	The first reading and gospel both refer to a poor widow who gives all she has. While there are many ways to preach on these readings, perhaps one way to connect to the synodal process is to encourage our listeners – who may feel that they have nothing to offer on the journey, who may even be cynical about the what we're undertaking – to offer what "little" they think they have... remembering that the Spirit can take that seemingly small gift and multiply it greatly. Wisdom is found in the most hidden of places. Take part!
11/14/21 33 rd Sunday in Ordinary Time	Dn 12:1-3 Ps 16 Heb 10:11-14, 18 Mk 13:24-32	As we approach the end of the liturgical year, the readings take an eschatological turn—and so are more difficult to connect to the synodal path we are on. Perhaps we can find some solace in the psalm: if in the midst of tribulations, we are not abandoned, how much more might we have confidence that the Spirit travels with us on thus synodal journey!
11/21/21 Solemnity of Christ the King	Dn 7:13-14 Ps 93 Rv 1:5-8 Jn 18:33b-37	"King" is not a common—or comfortable—metaphor for us. We prize our personal freedom and sovereignty; nobody will tell us what to do! My body, my choice! A Synodal Church rejects such an approach to life: we are saved together, or not at all. This feast asks us: to whom are we ultimately accountable? To whom do we owe ultimate allegiance? Christ the King? If so, then the synodal journey invites us to explore together what such a commitment means here and now.

On November 28, we begin a new liturgical year – and a new liturgical season: **Advent**. Advent begins with an eschatological focus (first three Sundays) and then ends with intentional preparation for the nativity (fourth Sunday). We “prepare” for Christ’s return at the end of time as we “prepare” to remember his coming in time. The season is marked by a “devout and joyful expectation.” Might we approach our synodal participation with that same spirit?

Day	Readings	One way to connect to the Synod...
11/28/21 First Sunday of Advent	Jer 33:14-16 Ps 25 1 Thes 3:12-4:2 Lk 21:25-28, 34-36	Perhaps, for some, in the light of the “anxieties of life,” this synodal process might look like a waste of time. Or, for others, it fills them with fear: what will happen? How might the Church change? How will I be asked to change? Jesus tells us that neither approach is helpful. These are the times we live in. Be vigilant: watch, listen, for the movement of the Spirit. That’s what being a synodal Church is about. Paul prays that the Thessalonians would abound in love. As we undertake this synodal journey, may that be our prayer as well.
12/5/21 Second Sunday of Advent	Bar 5:1-9 Ps 126 Phil 1:4-6, 8-11 Lk 3:1-6	The prophet Baruch encourages us to take off our “robe of mourning” – to be filled with joy because of the great things God has done for us (Ps). Among these “great things” is calling us to baptism—a baptism which makes all of us co-responsible for the Church, partners for the gospel (Phil). That’s what synodality is all about. We journey together. Paul prays that the Church at Philippi might increase in love, and be a discerning people, that God might bring to completion the good work that God had begun in them. What a perfect prayer for a synodal Church! What a perfect prayer for us!
12/8/21 Immaculate Conception	Gn 3:9-15, 20 Ps 98 Eph 1:3-6, 11-12 Lk 1:26-38	Mary listened to the messenger, Gabriel. On this synodal journey we are invited to listen just as attentively, just as respectfully, to one another. Perhaps our neighbor, too, is bearing God’s word to us? Entrusting the Synodal Process to God, through the maternal intercession of Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church, we can make the words of the Handbook for the Synod our own: <i>May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church, intercede for us as we journey together on the path that God sets before us. As in the Upper Room at Pentecost, may her maternal care and intercession accompany us as we build up our communion with one another and carry out our mission in the world. With her, we say together as the People of God: “Let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).</i>
12/12/21 Third Sunday of Advent	Zep 3:14-18a Is 12:2-6 Phil 4:4-7 Lk 3:10-18	“Shout for joy” (Zep)! “Cry out with joy and gladness” (Resp). Rejoice always (Phil)! Should that not be the spirit that imbues our synodal journey? The Holy One (Is) journeys with us! Are we filled with expectation (Lk) for what might come from this journey? Are we hopeful? Or have we let hope and joy die in the flames of cynicism and fear?
12/19/21 Fourth Sunday of Advent	Mi 5:1-4a Ps 80 Heb 10:5-10 Lk 1:39-45	Bethlehem (Mi) is too small; but the Promised One will come from there. Mary is a pregnant teen; yet she makes a journey to her also-miraculously-pregnant relative (Lk). Two women—one unmarried and one known as barren. Not the expected bearers of divine favor. Who are those who we also push to the margins, prejudging them as unfit to “bear” the Lord to us? They are the ones we need to be “journeying with” so God’s word might be fulfilled.

The purpose of **Christmastime** is to remember “Christ’s birth and early manifestations.” Our task as preachers is not to treat these feasts simply as a recollection of past events, but as ongoing manifestations of Christ’s redemptive work for us. The synodal journey that we are on is one manifestation of Christ’s ongoing presence and work on our behalf. The Incarnation reminds us that God is present in the messiness of created stuff and daily life, in the messiness of parish life, a diocesan church, a synodal process. Yet, there is where we find Christ: in one another. And so the call, as we gather in synod, to listen to each other as we would to Christ: with deep respect and humility.

Day	Readings	One way to connect to the Synod...
12/25/21 Solemnity of the Nativity	Multiple sets of readings, depending on the Mass.	OK. Christmas really isn’t the right day to preach about the Synod... the feast itself ought to take precedence. <i>However...</i> this is also a day when many who don’t frequent our parishes <i>do</i> come to Mass... so it is the perfect time to extend an invitation to those who might feel like outsiders (like the Shepherd) or foreigners (like the Magi) to take part in the synodal process. But let’s do so in a way that’s welcoming, rather than subtly (or not so subtly) passes judgment on them!
12/26/21 Feast of the Holy Family	Sir 3:2-6,12-14 Ps 128 or 84 Col 3:12-17(21) OR 1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24 Lk 2:41-52	The scandal, the mystery, of the Incarnation continues: God allowed God’s self to be part of a human family—with all the risk that entailed (such as getting separated, teens pushing boundaries, anxieties and broken hearts). Family life is filled with challenges; the question isn’t why we’re not more like some saccharine version of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—the question is seeing our families, warts and all, as also being incarnational realities, loci of encounter with (and expressions of) the Divine. Therefore, why not explore the idea of family life as an example of synodality? We “journey with” each other; we are called to respectful listening (and not just children to their parents) as well as to bold speaking (not just parents to their children). Marriage is about <i>mutual</i> self-giving. Any one-sidedness in any of these relationships is toxic. Family life is messy, and God is in the mess. Just like this synodal journey we’re on.
1/2/22 Solemnity of the Epiphany	Is 60:1-6 Ps 72 Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6	The mystery of the incarnation continues to unfold. While in the readings for the Nativity Jesus was placed squarely in the history of Israel, as son of David and Abraham, the field of vision is now widened. Scandalous as it might be, the mystery of God’s love is made manifest for those outside of the Chosen People as well. If that’s the case, then as part of our synodal journey we need to seek out the “religious other” (“gentile”) to hear the wisdom they have to offer.
1/9/22 Baptism of the Lord	Is 42:1-4, 6-7 OR Is 40:1-5. 9-11 Ps 29 or 104 Acts 10:34-38 OR Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7 Lk 3:15-16, 21-22	This feast day offers the opportunity to reflect on our baptisms. Through Baptism (an unmerited gift; see Ti), we are made part of the Body of Christ (unity) and are given the gift of the Holy Spirit (diversity). As such, we have both the right AND the responsibility to participate in the life and mission of the Church—including this synodal process that we’ve undertaken. No one ought to be excluded. At the same time, scandalous as it might be, the mystery of God’s love is made manifest for those we consider outsiders. They, too, ought to have a place on our synodal journey. God’s justice (Is) requires nothing less. God shows no partiality (Acts).

We enter again into **Ordinary Time**. During Year C, we hear the Gospel according to Luke proclaimed. This gospel privileges the marginalized, the outsider; and stresses the compassion of God. Are we doing the same on our synodal journey?

Sunday	Readings	One way to connect to the Synod...
1/16/22 2 nd Sunday in Ordinary Time	Is 62:1-5 Ps 96 1 Cor 12:4-11 Jn 2:1-11	Through this synodal journey, God is doing something new. We are all called to generously share the gifts we have been given, and gratefully welcome the gifts of the other (1 Cor); that is the nature of a synodal Church. Perhaps, through this process, what is feeling “forsaken” and “desolate” (Is) now will bear new fruit. Perhaps the best wine is yet to come (Jn).
1/23/22 3 rd Sunday in Ordinary Time	Neh 8:2-4a,5-6,8-10 Ps 19 1 Cor 12:12-30 Lk 1:1-4, 4:14-21	This is also the Sunday of the Word of God. How appropriate, then, that the psalm response is: “Your word, Lord, are Spirit and life.” A synodal Church is a listening Church. And, yes, that means listening to the Spirit (Lk) at work in each of us, to each part of the Body (1 Cor) for no part is unimportant. It also means, listening together to the word of God (the Scriptures) and the Word of God (Christ).
1/30/22 4 th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jer 1:4-5, 17-19 Ps 71 1 Cor 12:31-13:13 Lk 4:21-30	Paul tells us that the greatest spiritual gift is love (1 Cor). If we are to be a synodal Church, then all our interactions ought to be marked by love as Paul described it: patient, kind, rejoicing in the truth. A synodal Church is not jealous, pompous, inflated, rude, self-interested (or, as Pope Francis might put it, self-referential), or quick-tempered; it does not brood over injury or rejoice over wrongdoing. How are our synodal conversations going? What attitudes mark those conversations? Are we welcoming, even to those who might have challenging words for us (Lk), or do we try to throw them off a cliff?
2/6/22 5 th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Is 6:1-2a, 3-8 Ps 138 1 Cor 15:1-11 Lk 5-11	Only God is Holy. Isaiah cries out that he is “a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips.” Peter confesses: “I am a sinful man.” If we are honest, we ought to make these words our own: we sin. What passes our lips isn’t always edifying! Perhaps in our synodal conversations we have heard—or said—harsh words; hurtful words. Hopefully, we have sought—and given—forgiveness as needed. But that’s the messiness of a synodal Church, a Church made up of human beings. It can be no other way. Yet, God still calls: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” Do we answer, as Isaiah did: “Here I am,” I said; “send me!”
2/13/22 6 th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jer 17:5-8 Ps 1 1 Cor 15:12, 16-20 Lk 6:17, 20-26	To undertake this synodal journey is an act of hope, of trust—in the faithful God who journeys with us (Jer, Ps). While we have also needed to trust in each other, in order to both listen humbly and speak boldly, our ultimate trust has been (hopefully) in the Spirit. The Lukan beatitudes remind us to look for those who are blessed (Spirit-filled) in unexpected places: the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful, the hated. Have we sought their voices during this synodal process? Or have we paid more attention to the rich, powerful, scornful, and popular?

<p>2/20/22 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time</p>	<p>1 Sm 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23 Ps 103 1 Cor 15:45-49 Lk 6:27-38</p>	<p>As our listening sessions begin to draw to a close, perhaps we need to reflect on the conversations that have taken place – and, in light of the gospel, perhaps confess that our listening has not always been humble and our speaking not always gracious. Has someone been hurt in the process? What healing and mercy do they need? What of the one who has done the hurting? What healing and mercy do they need? How have we judged one another? Whom have we run through with the spear of our words, or dared to call enemy instead of sister or brother (cf. 1 Sm)? What do we need to let go of?</p>
<p>2/27/22 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time</p>	<p>Sir 27:4-7 Ps 92 1 Cor 15:54-58 Lk 6:39-45</p>	<p>By now, our formal listening sessions are drawing to a close. We have done a lot of speaking and listening. By doing so, we've made ourselves vulnerable. As Sirach tells us: "When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear; so do one's faults when one speaks." Hopefully, then, we have become more attentive to removing the planks from our own eyes than the splinter in the eyes of others (Lk). As this portion of our journey draws to a close, we hope and pray that the process we have undertaken will bear good fruit. If we have listened and spoken out of the goodness of our hearts, we are promised that it will (Lk).</p>

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2022

Daily Scripture & Prayer Guide

"We saw the star in the east, and we came to worship him." *cf. Matthew 2:2*

Day 1

Raise us up and draw us to your perfect light. "We observed his star in the East."
(*Matthew 2:2*)

Scriptures

2 Timothy 1:7-10.. This grace... has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus.

John 16:7-14... When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

Meditation

In this fragile and uncertain world, we look for a light, a ray of hope from afar. In the midst of evil, we long for goodness. Our confidence rests in the God we worship. God, in wisdom, enabled us to hope for divine intervention; but we had not anticipated that God's intervention would be a person, and that the Lord himself would be the light in our midst. This exceeded all our expectations. God's gift to us is a "spirit of power, and love."

In the midst of humanity's darkness, the star from the East shone. The star's light was not only an illumination at a particular historical moment but it continues to shine and change the face of human history. Despite the vicissitudes of history and the changing of circumstances, the Risen One continues to shine, moving within the flow of history like a beacon guiding all into this perfect light and overcoming the darkness which separates us from one another.

The desire to overcome the darkness that separates us compels us to pray and work for Christian unity.

Prayer

Lord God, illumine our path by the light of Christ who moves us and leads us. Guide us to discover a small manger in our hearts where a great light still sleeps. Creator of light, we thank you for the gift of that unfading Star, Jesus Christ, our Lord and

closer to the Light that we may find our unity in him. Amen.

Day 2

Humble leadership breaks down walls and builds up with love. "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?" (*Matthew 2:2*)

Scriptures

Philippians 2:5-11. Who... did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.

Matthew 20:20-28. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.

Meditation

Jeremiah denounces the bad leadership of the kings of Israel who divided and scattered the people. In contrast, the Lord promises a shepherd-king who will "execute justice and righteousness in the land" and gather together the members of his flock.

Our world craves good leadership and is constantly seeking someone who will fulfill this desire. Only in Christ have we seen the example of a king or leader after God's heart. As we are called to follow him, we are also called to emulate his way of servant-kingship in the world and in the Church. In Christ we encounter one who does not tear down and divide but builds up and makes whole for the glory of God's name. He is one who comes to serve, rather than be served, and his followers are called to do the same.

Today, the Middle East is experiencing the loss of its people to exile as "righteousness and justice" are becoming scarce commodities not only there but throughout the world.

Leaders, both in the world and in the Church, have responsibility to bring together rather than to scatter or divide the people of God. The more faithfully Christians emulate the servant leadership of Christ, the more division in both the world and the Church will be overcome.

"WE SAW THE STAR IN THE EAST, AND
WE CAME TO WORSHIP HIM."

CF. MATTHEW 2:2

Prayer

God, our only refuge and strength, help us to seek our Lord Jesus Christ not in the palaces of the powerful but in the humble manger and to emulate him in his meekness. Encourage us to empty ourselves as we serve each other in obedience to you.

We pray in the name of Christ who with you and with the Holy Spirit reigns forever in glory. Amen.

Day3

The presence of Christ, turning the world upside down. "When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him." (Matthew 2:3)'

Scriptures

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5. But the Lord is faithful, he will strengthen you.

Matthew 2:1-5... He was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

Meditation

Christ's coming disturbs the ways of the world. In contrast to so many political leaders, the Lord comes in humility denouncing the evil of injustice and oppression that accompanies the ambition for power and status. Jesus' presence creates disturbance precisely because He rocks the boat of those rich and the powerful that work only for their own interests and neglect the common good. But, for those who work for peace and unity, Christ's coming brings the light of hope.

We all need to acknowledge the instances when our ways are not God's ways of justice and peace. When Christians work together for justice and peace our efforts are more powerful. And when Christians work together in this way, the answer to our prayer for Christian unity is made visible such that others recognize in us Christ's presence in the world today. The Good News is that God is faithful, and he is always the one strengthening us and protecting us from harm, and inspiring us to work for the good of others, especially

those living in the darkness of suffering, hatred, violence and pain.

Prayer

O Lord, you have illumined the star of hope in our lives. Help us to be united in our commitment to bring about your Reign of love, justice and peace and so to be the light of hope to all those living in the darkness of despair and disillusionment. Shine your light upon us and set our hearts on fire so that your love surrounds us with warmth. Lift us up to you, you who have emptied yourself for our sake, so that our lives may glorify you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day4

Though small and suffering, we lack nothing. "And you, Bethlehem ... are by no means least" (Matthew 2:6)

Scriptures

Micah 5:2-Sa, 7-8.. From you shall come forth... one who is to rule Israel.

Luke 12:32-40... Do not be afraid, little flock.

Meditation

From the small and lowly city of Bethlehem, the Lord, the Son of God, made his entrance into the world. From the womb of a humble village girl, he took human flesh, and chose to live his humanity in obscurity and simplicity. Out of the obscurity has come a ruler, the shepherd and guardian of our souls. And though he is our shepherd, he became the Lamb who carried the sins of the world that we might be healed.

Bethlehem, a name that means the "house of bread", can be a metaphor for the Church that brings to the world the bread of life. The Church continues to be a place where the weak, the powerless and the small are welcome because in her each has a place.

In the midst of political turmoil, Christians, like others in the Middle East, suffer persecution and experience a sense of marginalization, living in fear of violence and injustice. In Christ they find a model of humility, and from him they hear a call to overcome divisions and to be united in one flock.

Though they are few, in their suffering they follow in the steps of the Lamb who suffered for the world's salvation. Though few, they are sure in hope, lacking nothing.

Prayer

Good Shepherd, the fragmentation of the little flock grieves your Holy Spirit. Forgive our weak efforts and slowness in pursuit of your will. Give us wise shepherds after your own heart who recognize the sin of division, and who will lead the churches with righteousness and holiness, to unity in you. We ask you, Lord, to hear our prayer. Amen.

Day5

Guided by the One Lord "Ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising." (Matthew 2:9)

Scriptures

Revelation 22:5-9... For the Lord God will be their light.

Matthew 2:7-10... Ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising.

Meditation

Again and again the scriptures tell us how the Lord God walks with God's people, protects them, and watches over them day and night. In all our journeying through life, we can be confident that God, who neither "sleeps nor slumbers", protects us lest our feet slip and we fall.

Even in the greatest darkness, Christ is the guiding light for all nations, the glory of God in the world, the source of divine life, sealing a new covenant in his blood.

The way ahead into unity with one another, and so into closer union with Christ, is not always clear. In our earnest attempts to build unity ourselves, it is all too easy to lose sight of this fundamental message of the scriptures: God does not abandon God's people even in their failures and divisiveness. As the story of the Magi reminds us, God guides people of all kinds, with the light of the star, to where Christ, the light of the world, is to be found.

God sends the Holy Spirit whose light enables us to see with the eyes of faith the truth of the divine Child, and the call to unity and reconciliation of all things in him. It is this Spirit that leads us from darkness and tragedy into Christ's light and life.

Prayer

O Lord God our Father, increase our hope in you and let us know at all times that you are walking with us, watching over your people. Open our eyes to your Spirit, and encourage us in our faith, so that we may confess that Jesus is Lord, and worship and rejoice in him as the Magi did in Bethlehem. We ask you these blessings in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Day6

Gathered in worship around the One Lord "They saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage." (Matthew 2:11)

Scriptures

Exodus 3:1-6... Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Matthew 28:16-20... When they saw him, they worshipped him.

Meditation

When the Magi arrived at Bethlehem and saw the child with his mother, they worshipped him. Similarly at the sight of the burning bush, Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God. When the disciples saw the risen Christ on the mountain in Galilee, they worshipped him. In the heavenly liturgy, the twenty-four elders fall before him who sits on the throne. Encountering God's presence, we respond thus: gazing, followed by amazement, leading to worship.

Do we see? Are we amazed? Are we truly worshipping? In our narrow vision, too often we see only our tangled disagreements, forgetting that the one Lord has given his saving grace to us all, and that we share in the one Spirit who draws us into unity.

As communities enlivened by the Holy Spirit, our churches call us to walk together towards the Christ Child to offer him homage as one people. The Spirit of compas-

sion guides us to each other, and together guides us to our one Lord.

Prayer

Compassionate God, you gave the blind the insight to recognize you as their Savior, enable us to repent. In your mercy, remove the scales from our eyes and lead us to worship you as our God and Redeemer. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon us, so that together we glorify you in the Spirit's fellowship, and witness to all those around us. Amen.

Day7

The gifts of communion. "Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." (Matthew 2:11)

Scriptures

Hosea 6:1-6... For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice.

Matthew 6:19-21... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Meditation

In our journey to Bethlehem, the city of bread, we contemplate the wise men who came to pay homage to the Christ Child. They opened their treasures, and offered the new-born king their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

What gifts have we prepared to offer the king who comes to illuminate our lives and lead us to the grace of unity? We know that God does not want our riches and burnt offerings, but rather that his power works through our poverty. Let us then prepare for him the gift of a heart full of love. Kneeling in worship requires hearts that are contrite for the sin that divides us and obedient to the One we serve. This obedience revives, heals and reconciles everything that is broken or wounded in us, around us, and among us as Christians.

Prayer

Lord God, you have revealed yourself in the epiphany of your Son both to those who have long awaited for your coming, and to those who were not expecting you. You know the suffering that surrounds us, the pain caused

by our divisions. We ask you to enable our hearts and our minds to know you. As we join the wise men coming from afar, we pray that you open our hearts to your love and to the love of our brothers and sisters around us. Receive our prayer in the name of your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day8

Beyond the familiar routes of separation to God's new paths. "They left for their own country by another road." (Matthew 2:12)

Scriptures

Jeremiah 31:31-34... I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.

Matthew 11:25-30... Because you have hidden these things...

Meditation

We do not know what the wise men thought - they who were experts in astronomy and navigation - when they were warned to return by another road. They may well have been very confused, but the same light that illumined their journey showed them that there was another road, another possibility. They were called to change direction.

God's divine providence is always there to show us that there is another way prepared for us. God is there to renew his covenant and lift us up from the frustration we experience when we meet an obstacle. A fresh start is always possible when we are willing and open to the work of the Spirit.

On the old familiar roads, Christian communities have walked apart from one another. On the new roads to which God calls us, Christians walk together and become pilgrim companions.

Prayer

Gracious God, when we think that all roads are blocked, and we fall into despair, we always find you there. We find you creating a new path before us, one that we did not expect. We thank you because your creative paths open up unforeseen possibilities. Help us to always find you, who

lead us yet by a more excellent way. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, that you will always lead us back to you. Amen.

God of every nation, the Lord Jesus Christ has been made manifest by becoming one of us and one with us. Born in homelessness, he is our King and Lord. The Magi bore witness to the Light of hope coming into the world as they faithfully followed the star. The communion of God with created humanity in Epiphany calls us to a life of solidarity with the homeless, the refugee, the weakest and the rejected. Help us, O gracious Lord, to do this in unity and peace.

As we who bear the name of Christian hold a special place in our hearts for the ancient Christian communities in the land we call holy, remind us of our baptismal commitment to love.

Help your Church, merciful One, to be a light for unity within itself and a beacon of hope for all humanity. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit reign as One God for ever and ever. Amen.

**Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious
Institute Garrison, NY 10524-0300
www.geii.org**

