



# Listening Session Guide



ARCHDIOCESE  
of NEWARK

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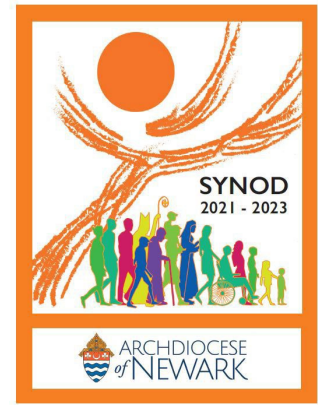
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## SYNOD LISTENING SESSIONS

*An Example for an Evening Session*

*7:00 PM to 9:30 PM or can be adapted to a 3 hour Morning Session*



FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH  
COMMUNION • PARTICIPATION • MISSION

7:00pm **Welcome by Pastor or Leader**

Introductions in the table groups

7:10pm **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.

**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.

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?”

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

## 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?

## Prayer

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.

---

## 7:40pm **Listening Session Process**

**Video by Cardinal Tobin** – What is the Synod on *Synodality* - why it is important  
**Explanation of the process by Main Facilitator**

- Table Facilitator  
*The table facilitator ensures that all participants have the opportunity to dialogue about the questions, taking care to focus on the dynamics of group sharing and listening.*
  - Table Scribe  
*The table scribe records key points of the conversations and all discern what are the key themes to present to the Holy Father through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB)*
  - Feedback  
*A few groups may give feedback toward the end of the session.*
- 

## **Focus of the Synod on Synodality**

**How is the Holy Spirit calling us as a Church in the 21st Century?**

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”

The word “synod” traces its roots to the first centuries of the Church. Coming from Greek words meaning the “same road,” synod and synodality are expressions of the fundamental mystery of the Church: people who are gathered from every corner of the earth to be “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2,9).

---- Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR

As we begin our listening and sharing, all are invited to consider what the Holy Spirit is calling us to, what paths are being opened, and what our "inner spiritual movements" are: joy or sadness, confidence or anxiety, hope or no hope, or other.

### **Table Process Suggestions to Help Participants Focus**

- Facilitator asks all to reflect silently for five minutes, preparing their thoughts on each question.
- Each person can share his/her ideas for a maximum of three minutes.
- All reflect silently again, then sharing for a few minutes what enlightened or resonated with them.

## 7:40pm **Core Question ONE – 45 Minutes**

**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 that you might participate in?**

*Pope Francis talks about “journeying together” or “walking together” down the same road. This means that we collaborate together and share responsibility for the building up of the whole Church and our parish or other ministry through evangelization, participation in worship, social justice, councils, and governance. As you reflect on the questions below, describe about how you have or have not experienced “walking together.”*

- Share a few examples of ways that you have experienced this “walking together” in your parish. What is challenging about participating fully in your parish?  
For example:
  - How are authority or governance, teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local parish?
  - How do you as a parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions about pastoral and financial needs?
  - In what ways do you as a parish invite all baptized Catholics. All the baptized include ethnic and cultural communities, youth, families, persons with disabilities and their families, those living in poverty or social exclusion, and more into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?
- What prevents us from “walking together?” What hinders you from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly?
- Pope Francis encourages us to reach out beyond our active parish community and observe who is in our local area. It is essential to look at who “used to be at our parish,” and who is not here, and those who might feel left out or on the margins.
  - Do we as a parish, reach out collectively or individually to those who are no longer participating in church? What helps or hinders us?
  - What are some ways to find out why they are not participating?
  - What do we have to offer and attract those who are not participating?
- As a result of our discussion, what are three steps we can take in our parish to grow in “walking together”?
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Where in these shared experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit calling us to move forward?

8:35 pm **Core Question TWO – 30 Minutes**

**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 universal Church to take?

PARISH

UNIVERSAL CHURCH

- What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the universal Church?

9:05 **Local Questions – 10 Minutes**

**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**

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*The table scribe records key points of the conversations and all discern what are the key themes to present to the Holy Father through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB)*

**9:15pm**      **Feedback from a few groups**  
Ask two or three groups to give a flavor of their discussions

**9:20 pm**      **Evaluation of the Time spent together**

- How has this discussion given you the opportunity to listen and express and share your own experience of your parish and the universal Church?
- What is one hope you have for the Church as we continue to grow and listen to the Holy Spirit?

**9:30 pm**      **Sending Prayer**  
**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 Saint James      Jas 1:21-22  
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,  
all of our prayers 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.





## PREPARING OUR HEARTS AND VOICES

As we prepare to enter into  
this experience of Church  
we invite you to prepare through  
reflection and prayer.



### For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

"The Synodal Process is first and foremost a spiritual process.  
It is not a mechanical data-gathering exercise or a series of meetings and debates.  
Synodal listening is oriented towards discernment."<sup>6</sup>  
We are being invited to listen to the Holy Spirit in the voices of the faithful.

#### ATTITUDES TO CULTIVATE

##### Listening

We are called to listen humbly and to speak courageously; to listen in a manner that invites others to share authentically while we ourselves share our experiences and hopes with mercy and charity.

##### Newness and Conversion

We are invited to embrace the action of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the ways in which the Spirit inspires us to new views and new ways of being Church.

##### Allowing God to Lead

We are called to allow the Spirit to direct us. To set aside our own expectations so that we can listen more clearly to what God desires of us.

##### Focus on others

"The Synodal Process is an opportunity to open up, to look around us, to see things from other points of view, and to move out in missionary outreach to the peripheries".

#### LEAVE BEHIND

##### Self-centeredness

We need one another. When we set aside self-centeredness "we are able to learn from each other, journey together, and be at the service of one another."

##### Division and Discord

We are challenged to suspend our judgments and ideologies in order to enter into dialogue that promotes mutual understanding and unity.

##### Fear

"For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control." 2 Tim 1-7 We are reminded that change is a necessary part of growth and fear inhibits growth.

##### Self-doubt

The participation of each person is essential for the synodal process to achieve its objective. You are called by virtue of your Baptism, to listen to the Holy Spirit in your life and to share your experience of God and His Church for the good of all His people.

\*Vatican Synod Handbook 2.2 - 2.4

## REFLECT

In what ways do I hear God calling me to listen and embrace the thoughts, desires, struggles and hopes of others, especially those on the margins?

What do I need to leave behind in order to enter this process with an open heart, an open mind, and a willingness to share my experiences boldly and honestly?

In what ways is God inviting me to allow this experience to transform me and to strengthen my relationship with Him and with the Church?

## PRAY

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.

We ask special blessings on the Church of Newark.

May we cherish this opportunity to pray, listen, and discern so that we  
may continue the mission of Christ as missionary disciples.

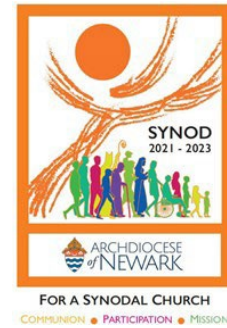
All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

Amen.

For more information visit <https://www.rcan.org/synod2023> or use the QR code

. . . "We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but "to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands" . . .





## SYNOD LISTENING SESSIONS

*An Example for a two-hour Evening Session 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM*

**7:00pm**

### Welcome

By pastor or leader  
Introductions in the table groups

**7:10pm**

**Leader**

### Gathering Prayer

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.

### 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.

[The Word of the Lord](#)

Thanks be to God

### 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?

## Prayer

**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.

## 7:25pm **Listening Session Process**

- **Explanation of the process by Main Facilitator**

### **Roles For the session:**

- **Table Facilitator**

*The table facilitator ensures that all participants have the opportunity to dialogue about the questions, taking care to focus on the dynamics of groupsharing and listening.*

- **Table Scribe**

*The table scribe records key points of the conversations, and all discern what are the key themes to present to the Holy Father through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB)*

- **Feedback**

*A few groups may give feedback toward the end of the session.*

- **Video by Cardinal Tobin – What is the Synod on Synodality and why it is important**

## **Focus of the Synod on Synodality**

### **How is the Holy Spirit calling us as a Church in the 21st Century?**

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”  
The word “synod” traces its roots to the first centuries of the Church. Coming from Greek words meaning the “same road,” synod and synodality are expressions of the fundamental mystery of the Church: people who are gathered from every corner of the earth to be “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2,9).

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR

As we begin our listening and sharing, all are invited to consider what the Holy Spirit is calling us to, what paths are being opened, and what our "inner spiritual movements" are: joy or sadness, confidence or anxiety, hope or no hope, or other.



### Table Process Suggestions to Help Participants Focus

- Facilitator asks all to reflect silently for five minutes, preparing their thoughts on each question.
- Each person can share his/her ideas for a maximum of three minutes.
- All reflect silently again, then sharing for a few minutes what enlightened or resonated with them from the dialogue.

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### 7:30pm Pope Francis' Core Question ONE – 30 Minutes

#### How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish?

*Pope Francis talks about “journeying together” or “walking together” down the same road. This means that we collaborate together and share responsibility for the building up of the whole Church and our parish or other ministry through evangelization, participation in worship, social justice, councils, and governance. As you reflect on the questions below, describe about how you have or have not experienced “walking together.”*

Share a few examples of ways that you have experienced this “walking together” in your parish.

What prevents us or you from “walking together?”

Pope Francis encourages us to reach out beyond our active parish community and observe who is in our local area. For example:

- Who would you identify as individuals or groups who are not present at the parish and/or those who might feel left out or on the margins?
- How do we as a parish, reach out collectively to those individuals and groups? What helps or hinders us?
- What are some ways we can work to discover why they are disconnected from our parish family?
- What do we have to offer and attract those who are not connected to our parish?

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### 8:00 pm Pope Francis' Core Question TWO – 30 Minutes

#### 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 universal Church to take?

IN THE PARISH

## IN THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

- What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the universal Church?

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### 8:30 Local Questions – 10 Minutes

**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

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

- How can your local parish better support you and your family?
- Recalling the themes and topics that have been brought to the surface today, what are three steps your parish can take to move forward in areas where growth is needed?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary:** The table scribe records key points of the conversations and all discern what are the key themes to present to the Holy Father through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB)

**8:40pm Feedback from a few groups**

Ask two or three groups to give a flavor of their discussions

**8:50pm Evaluation of the Time spent together (optional)**

- How has this discussion given you the opportunity to listen and express and share your own experience of your parish and the universal Church?
- What is one hope you have for the Church as we continue to grow and listen to the Holy Spirit?

**8:55pm Sending Prayer**

**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 Saint James

Jas 1:21-22

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,  
all of our prayers 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.



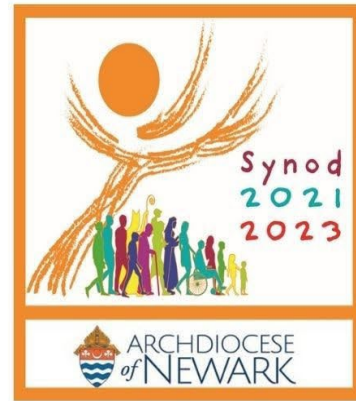
*Thank you for  
your  
participation!*

If you would like to allow more time for discussion of the Core and Local questions, you may choose to invite participants to come together again or have additional Listening Session and to share thoughts for your parish.

Please see all the resources for other groups: catechists, parents, families, youth, and young adults on the Archdiocesan website: [RCAN.org/synod](http://RCAN.org/synod). There are materials in Spanish as well as other languages.

## PREPARING OUR HEARTS AND VOICES

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we invite you to prepare through  
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### For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

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#### ATTITUDES TO CULTIVATE

##### Listening

We are called to listen humbly and to speak courageously; to listen in a manner that invites others to share authentically while we ourselves share our experiences and hopes with mercy and charity.

##### Newness and Conversion

We are invited to embrace the action of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the ways in which the Spirit inspires us to new views and new ways of being Church.

##### Allowing God to Lead

We are called to allow the Spirit to direct us. To set aside our own expectations so that we can listen more clearly to what God desires of us.

##### Focus on others

"The Synodal Process is an opportunity to open up, to look around us, to see things from other points of view, and to move out in missionary outreach to the peripheries".

#### LEAVE BEHIND

##### Self-centeredness

We need one another. When we set aside self-centeredness "we are able to learn from each other, journey together, and be at the service of one another."

##### Division and Discord

We are challenged to suspend our judgments and ideologies in order to enter into dialogue that promotes mutual understanding and unity.

##### Fear

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##### Self-doubt

The participation of each person is essential for the synodal process to achieve its objective. You are called by virtue of your Baptism, to listen to the Holy Spirit in your life and to share your experience of God and His Church for the good of all His people.

\*Vatican Synod Handbook 2.2 - 2.4



## REFLECT

In what ways do I hear God calling me to listen and embrace the thoughts, desires, struggles and hopes of others, especially those on the margins?

What do I need to leave behind in order to enter this process with an open heart, an open mind, and a willingness to share my experiences boldly and honestly?

In what ways is God inviting me to allow this experience to transform me and to strengthen my relationship with Him and with the Church?

## PRAY

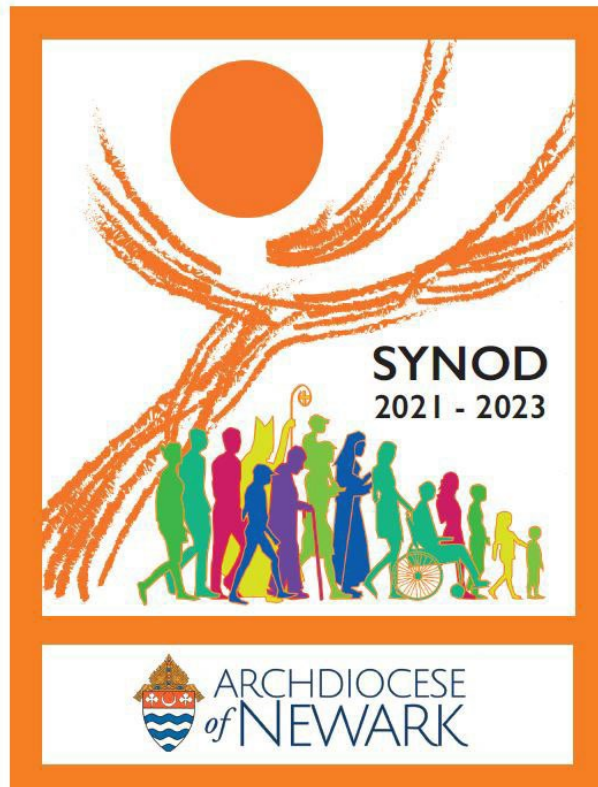
We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.  
 With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
 Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.  
 We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.  
 Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong 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.  
 We ask special blessings on the Church of Newark.  
 May we cherish this opportunity to pray, listen, and discern so that we  
 may continue the mission of Christ as missionary disciples.  
 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 more information visit <https://www.rcan.org/synod2023> or use the QR code

... "We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but "to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands" ...



# Welcome to Our Synod on Synodality Listening Session



FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

COMMUNION ● PARTICIPATION ● MISSION

## Your Parish Name

# The Process: Dialogue and Discernment

## The Purpose of the Listening Session

To **LISTEN** carefully to each other

To **DIALOGUE** about experiences and needs  
in the Church, the people of God

To **DISCERN** what the **Holy Spirit**  
is calling the Church to in  
the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



# 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

- Main Facilitator(s)
- Table Facilitator
- Table Scribe
- Table Discussion & Feedback Handouts

## 4. The Core Questions from Pope Francis

- Discussion at Tables
- Table Groups Choose Main Points for Reporting to Archdiocese

## 5. Thank you and Sending Prayer





## Synod Message from Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR



## 7:40pm **Core Question ONE – approximately 45 Minutes**

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish community?

(or campus ministry, university, school, youth group, religious congregation, or other area of Church life that you might participate in?)

**Share a few examples of ways that you have experienced this “walking together” in your parish. What is challenging about participating fully in your parish?**

### **For example:**

- **How are authority or governance, teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local parish?**
- **How do you as a parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions about pastoral and financial needs?**
- **In what ways do you as a parish invite all baptized Catholics? All the baptized include ethnic and cultural communities, youth, families, persons with disabilities and their families, those living in poverty or social exclusion, and more into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?**

## **Core Question ONE, cont.**

- **What prevents us from “walking together?” What hinders you from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly?**
- **Pope Francis encourages us to reach out beyond our active parish community and observe who is in our local area. It is essential to look at who “used to be at our parish,” and who is not here, and those who might feel left out or on the margins.**
  - **Do we as a parish, reach out collectively or individually to those who are no longer participating in church? What helps or hinders us?**
  - **What are some ways to find out why they are not participating?**
  - **What do we have to offer and attract those who are not participating?**

## **8:35 pm Core Question TWO – approx. 30 Minutes**

**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?**

- **By our deep listening today, what actions do you hear the Holy Spirit asking our parish and the universal Church to take?**

**PARISH**

**UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

- **What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the universal Church?**



9:05 pm **Local Questions – 10 Minutes**

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?

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# If there is time...

## **9:15pm**      **Feedback from a few groups**

**Ask two or three groups to give a flavor of their discussions**

## **9:20 pm**      **Evaluation of the Time spent together**

- **How has this discussion given you the opportunity to listen and express and share your own experience of your parish and the universal Church?**
- **What is one hope you have for the Church as we continue to grow and listen to the Holy Spirit?**

9:30 pm **Sending Prayer**

**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 Saint James Jas 1:21-22  
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,  
all of our prayers 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.



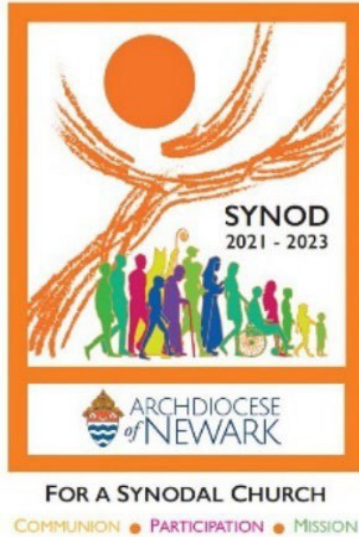


*Thank  
You*

**For coming and  
prayerfully reflecting on  
how we might grow as a  
parish and Church**

**TOGETHER**

**to share in the  
Mission of Christ**



## Parish Listening Session Scribe Table Notes

The table scribe records key points of the conversation. You are trying to capture the essence of the conversation, not all the details. You may want to jot notes down on a blank sheet of paper as the conversation unfolds and then fill in the form after. Please write as neatly as possible and organize the thoughts presented. Work with the table facilitator and table participants to discern what are the key themes from your table. Each table will submit their notes to the main session facilitator and the parish will compile everything received.

To learn more about the Synod process, visit [rcan.org/synod2023](http://rcan.org/synod2023)

Date of Session \_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of people at your table \_\_\_\_\_

Providing the following information is voluntary:

What is the age ranges of participants?

\_\_\_\_ 14 – 17      \_\_\_\_ 40 - 55  
 \_\_\_\_ 18 – 25      \_\_\_\_ 56 - 74  
 \_\_\_\_ 26 – 39      \_\_\_\_ 75 +

Who is at the table?

Male (#) \_\_\_\_\_ Female (#) \_\_\_\_\_

How often do they attend Mass?

- Daily
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Special occasion (i.e. holiday, wedding)
- Rarely
- Never

Select all that apply to those at the table.

\_\_\_\_ Youth      \_\_\_\_ Young Adult  
 \_\_\_\_ Single      \_\_\_\_ Married  
 \_\_\_\_ Separated      \_\_\_\_ Divorced  
 \_\_\_\_ Remarried      \_\_\_\_ Widowed  
 \_\_\_\_ Religious (Sr., Br., Fr., Dcn.)

What is the race and/or ethnicity of those at your table? *(Check all that apply)*

- Caucasian
- African-American or Black
- Asian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other *(please specify)* \_\_\_\_\_

Do people at your table participate in a Catholic affiliated group *(Identify the type)*

- Religious education
- Catholic school
- Youth group
- Campus ministry
- Faith sharing group
- Charismatic community
- Prayer group
- Liturgical Minister
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Core Question ONE

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your community?

#### Table Discussion

- Share 3 examples of “walking together” in your community.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

● What prevents us from “walking together?” What hinders you from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pope Francis encourages us to reach out beyond our active parish community and observe who is in our local area. It is essential to look at who “used to be at our parish,” and who is not here, and those who might feel left out or on the margins.

- Do we as a parish, reach out collectively or individually to those who are no longer participating in church? What helps or hinders us?
  
- What are some ways to find out why they are not participating?
  
- What do we have to offer and attract those who are not participating?
  
- As a result of our discussion, what are three steps we can take in our parish to grow in “walking together”?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Core 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 universal Church to take?

For the PARISH

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

For the UNIVERSAL CHURCH

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the universal Church?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Table Discussion

- How can the Archdiocese of Newark support you in your local parish?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

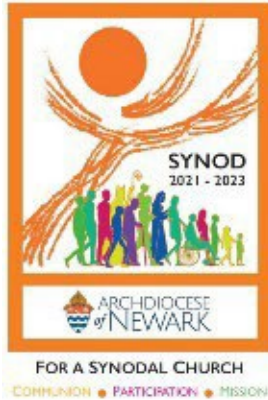
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- What are 3 steps we can take in our Archdiocese to grow more collaboratively for the future?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Instructions

## How to Synthesize and Compile Information from Your Listening Session(s)

Please complete one report per parish by April 15, 2022.

Follow the link below for submission of your parish report

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeVwulmRKmOnEUzj1urvtX4kGTJ\\_Kd7D1zYOWoWOCs89E5bBQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeVwulmRKmOnEUzj1urvtX4kGTJ_Kd7D1zYOWoWOCs89E5bBQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

Thank you for collecting the notes from each table at your session(s). The next step is to compile them into one report for practical use by your parish AND the Archdiocese. PLEASE read all of the information in this publication as it will help focus your efforts to synthesize and compile all the information you have gathered.

### Prior to Compiling Notes - Assemble a Reporting Team

Assemble a small working group of **3-5 individuals** to help compile the parish report. Avoid creating a very large committee. Keep in mind that writing a report with too many individuals becomes inefficient and unproductive. Members of this working group may include the Synod parish coordinator, the main facilitator(s) of listening session, some members of the parish pastoral council, and/or some table facilitators. As you select this group, think about the skills which might be helpful. Some good skills to have on your reporting team might be:

- Experience gathering data or doing research.
- The ability to see the trends in conversation and make the connections to the “big picture”
- Good writing skills

If you would like input from a broader group of people, the committee can always draft the report and circulate it seeking comments before it is submitted to the Archdiocese. You may select to share the draft with the rest of the parish council, parish staff, etc. for additional feedback prior to finalizing the report.

The Archdiocesan Synod Team encourages the parish to share its final report with the entire parish community.

### STEPS for Synthesizing Feedback from Listening Sessions

Some parishioners or parish staff may have previous experience in gathering data and writing reports. However, here are some suggestions.

## **BEFORE Meeting as a Reporting Team**

### **Step 1 – Collect the Notes:**

Collect the notes from all the table scribes from every parish listening session. Share copies of the notes with the team. Please keep in mind that we are asking for one report from each parish or organization. If your parish hosted more than one session, please compile everything into one report.

### **Step 2 – Individual Preparation of Team Members:**

It is important that team members prepare ahead of time by reading through all the notes in order to become familiar with them and to begin to discern common themes, etc.. Your time together will be better spent reaching consensus rather than reading the notes in detail.

## **GATHER as a Reporting Team**

### **Step 3 – Begin with Prayer:**

**Since the Synodal journey is designed to be one of prayerful experiences, open your Reporting Team’s working session with prayer.** The Synod Prayer is a good option. See [www.rcan.org/prayer-resources](http://www.rcan.org/prayer-resources)

### **Step 4 – Review the Goals:**

Review the Synod goals with your Reporting Team and use it as a guide to focus as you compile everything. The Goals are to:

- **To engage as many people as possible in conversation and discernment on what the Holy Spirit is asking of the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**
- **To discern and provide prayerful response to the pastoral concerns of the Church today.**

**Ultimately, you want to identify:**

- What did we learn from these sessions?
- What do we hope will be the impact on our parish community, the local Archdiocesan Church as well as the Universal Church?

### **Step 5: Collate all the demographics:**

It is important to understand who was present at your sessions and, perhaps more importantly, who was not present. There is a worksheet to help you compile the data. (See **Synod Listening Session Worksheet 1**)

Teams can compile the data from all the parish listening sessions. That information is then entered into the online Parish Report Form that will be submitted to the Archdiocese.

### Step 6: Review and Organize the notes:

Team members should have already read through the notes from all the parish scribes/groups.

- Together, you can reread the notes from each table, being attentive to the patterns that begin to emerge.
- You will begin to notice common trends. You want to focus on recurring themes or commonalities, not one-off comments. Which ideas and topics kept surfacing?
- Use the “**Synod Listening Session Worksheet 2**” at the end of these instructions to help you organize the information. You can write the common themes and quantify how many tables talked about that same theme.
- You can also begin to prioritize the topics accordingly.

**Beware of “Confirmation Bias”** - It is paramount to keep an open mind during synthesis. While you and/or members of your Reporting Team may have a desired outcome, remember to take time to reflect and listen to the Holy Spirit as you all review the notes.

“Confirmation Bias” is the tendency to search for or favor information in a way that confirms one’s preexisting ideas or beliefs. Be attentive to the perspective you and the members of your Reporting Team bring to this process. We sometimes presume we know the answer before we even ask the question and so we look to confirm what we think we know! We might like to think we have an open mind, but in fact, based on our life experiences, we all have biases. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and your Reporting Team see more clearly and to consider other perspectives without bias.

## WRITING and SUBMITTING THE REPORT

### Step 7: Use the parish report form provided by the Archdiocesan to submit your report.

The form is online and may be accessed through the Synod webpage.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeVwulmRKmOnEUzj1urvtX4kGTJ\\_Kd7D1zYOWoWOCs89E5bBQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeVwulmRKmOnEUzj1urvtX4kGTJ_Kd7D1zYOWoWOCs89E5bBQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

With great cultural diversity, over 200 parishes in our Archdiocese, in addition to schools, religious communities and many other Catholic organizations, the Archdiocese will be collecting a vast amount of information from Listening Sessions. In order to make sure all voices from your parish are heard, we ask you to use the form provided. We also ask you to be as concise as possible in your answers. Each parish should provide one report, not one report for each session hosted. However, if you conducted a session with youth or a school, there are separate forms where you may share detailed information about those sessions. In your parish report you may also wish to reflect some of what was heard in those sessions, but it should be an overview of what was discussed. We are grateful for your cooperation in this.

### Step 8: Offer an Overview of the Listening Sessions:

In no more than two paragraphs share with us how the session(s) at your parish went? Share any and all feedback possible about what this experience was like for your parish.

These questions may help you reflect on your experience:

- What blessing did you find in this synodal experience?
- What joy did you find in coming together to listen?
- What was challenging about listening?
- Were the questions stated clearly enough or did you need to explain them more fully?
- Was your time together an uplifting and positive experience, or was it simply a time to complain without helpful suggestions? (The first step is often just facing an unpleasant reality before later moving to action.)

### Step 9: Enter the Summarized Information and Submit:

By now, you have identified, sorted, and prioritized the insights from your listening sessions and most of the information should be summarized in the **“Synod Listening Session Worksheet 2”**. In your parish report you do not need to tell us everything from the sessions. Rather, set about your key findings. Highlight the main takeaways. We ask you to share perhaps the top three themes or the top three answers to each question.

This is not merely about majority rules. You may find some pivotal ideas or perspectives which might be mentioned only a few times but are really incredible insights which are worth sharing. We encourage you to include these in your reports. If some of the themes are unclear, the parish may want to conduct additional research later. At the end of these instructions, we offer some suggestions that may help you to continue this conversation at the parish level.

### For Further Parish Reflection by Parish Staff and Parish Pastoral Council

Listening, and gathering insights from this synodal process will help our parishes, schools and Catholic organizations to understand the needs in their community. We expect that this time of reflection, prayer, and listening will inspire fruitful action in each community.

While the Archdiocese would like a summary of your key take-aways from the listening sessions, your pastor, parish/school staff, and parish pastoral council might want more detailed findings with compelling quotes, and examples for future pastoral planning.

You may want to begin by examining the demographic data collected. (See Worksheet 1) Whose voices were we hearing in these summary notes? Who was missing from the discussion? Given the timeline and concerns about the rise of COVID cases, it may not have been possible to reach out to all the groups in your local neighborhoods. Are there additional opportunities for the parish to engage people in conversation?

In particular, there were some questions discussed at the tables that are important questions for the parish community but not necessary to report to Archdiocese. Some of the questions critical for your parish pastoral planning include:

- Were we talking to a broad group of people? Did we have a large enough group of people?
- What other questions might we want to ask as a follow-up?
- Do we as a parish, reach out to those who are no longer participating in church?
- What are some ways to find out why they are not participating?
- What do we have to offer and attract those who are not participating?
- What are three steps we can take in our parish to grow in “walking together”?
- By our deep listening, what actions do you hear the Holy Spirit asking our parish to take?

## WORKSHEETS TO HELP YOU SYNTHESIZE YOUR PARISH INFORMATION

**There are two blank worksheets to use as tools. You do not need to submit your worksheets. EXAMPLE of how to use the Synod Listening Session Worksheet 2 to sort through table notes.**

**Core Question ONE How is this “journeying together” happening today in your community?**

Share 3 examples of “walking together” in your community.

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas
hospitality	Many people feel welcome here; sense that they belong to the community; need to do more to reach out to others; who doesn't feel welcome	5 of the ten tables	Table 2 had a great story to illustrate this
youth	Need more to engage them in parish life; how is Church relevant to their lives?	9 of ten tables	See ideas from table 4
marginalized	Who is not present in our community? How can we reach out?	10 of ten tables	Table 7 listed the marginalized groups; Table 3 discussed parish ideas; Table 8 talked about partnerships in the diocese; Table 10 addressed Universal Church





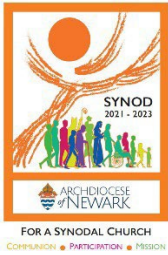


Table number	Youth	Young Adult	Single	Married	Separated	Divorced	Remarried	Widowed	Religious (Fr., Sr., Br., Dcn.)
Describe the participants									
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

Table number	Daily	Once a week	Once a month	Special Occasion	Rarely	Never

How often do participants attend Mass?						
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						





## Synod Listening Session Worksheet 2

### Compiling Notes from Our Listening Session(s)

Date of Session(s)

Online or in-person (select)

### Core Question ONE

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your community?

Share 3 examples of “walking together” in your community.

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas

What prevents us from “walking together?”

What hinders people from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly?

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas

### Reaching out beyond our parish community – also refer to the section Pastoral Planning at the end

Who is not present? Who feels left out on the margins?

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas



## Core 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?

By our deep listening, what actions do you hear the Holy Spirit asking the universal Church to take? (Note that parish practical steps should be addressed in the last section Parish Pastoral Planning.)

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas

What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the universal Church?

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas

How can the Archdiocese of Newark support you in your local parish?

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas

What are 3 steps we can take in our Archdiocese to grow more collaboratively for the future?

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas

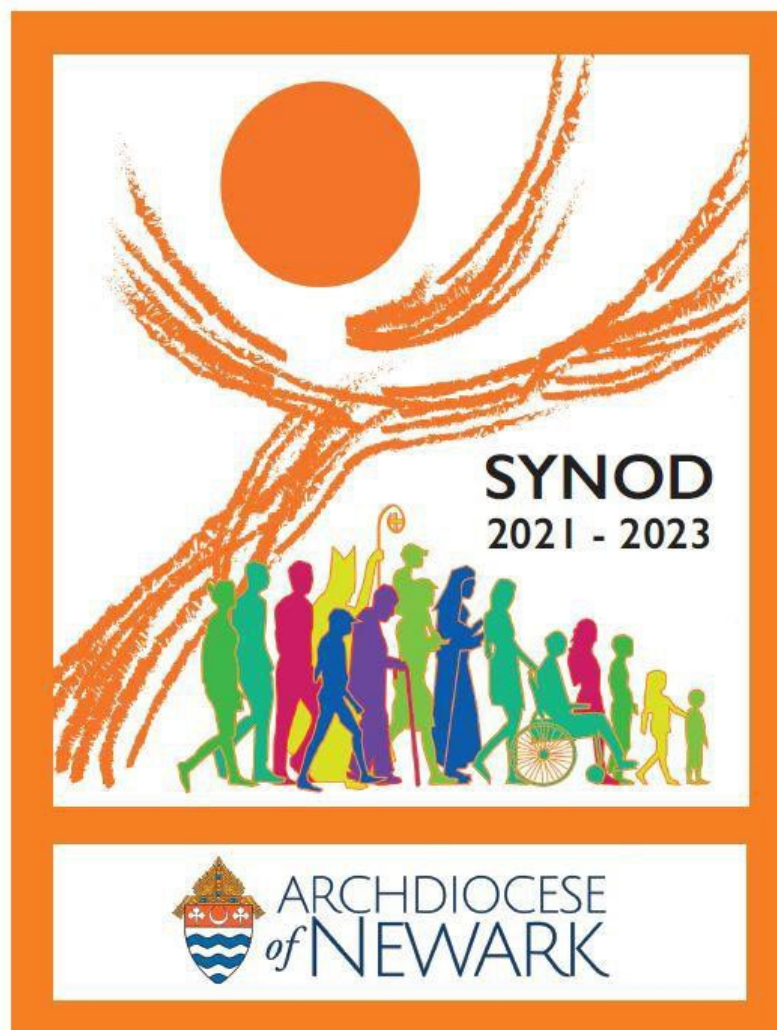
## IMPORTANT FOR OUR PARISH

### Parish Pastoral Planning

These are the questions critical for our parish pastoral planning:

- Do we as a parish, reach out to those who are no longer participating in church? What helps or hinders us?
- What are some ways to find out why they are not participating?
- What do we have to offer and attract those who are not participating?
- As a result of the discussions, what are three steps we can take in our parish to grow in “walking together”?
- By our deep listening, what actions do you hear the Holy Spirit asking our parish to take?

Reoccurring theme	Brief explanation	How many noted this in conversation?	Compelling quote, story or ideas



FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

COMMUNION ● PARTICIPATION ● MISSION

# Listening Session

## *Facilitator Guide*

*Walking together, inspired by the Holy Spirit*

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## Facilitators' Guide for Listening Sessions

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*Thank you for being a facilitator!*

The role of the facilitator is essential to lead a group and to ensure full participation of all in attendance. We offer these suggestions to help you facilitate your listening sessions whether in a parish, campus ministry, religious congregation, youth setting or other ways that you are gathering people to join in the Synod on Synodality listening process.

Each Listening Session needs two types of facilitators and a scribe:

### 1. MAIN FACILITATOR or CO-FACILITATORS

to guide the entire group in the prayer, reflection and conversations that will be summarized and sent to the Bishops' Conference (USCCB) and eventually to the Vatican synod coordinators. These facilitators should be experienced in running meetings such as these which require feedback and synthesizing collected answers.

### 2. SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR

Each discussion group needs a facilitator. The facilitator's role is simple: to ensure that the group has what it needs to pray and reflect during the Listening Session. The facilitator does not need to be the expert in the group, but rather one who keeps the group focused and moving. At the same time, the facilitator is a participant but must take care to engage people in conversation, not dominate.

### 3. TABLE SCRIBE

The table scribe will take notes on the conversations and work with the participants to present a synthesized list of the key points of the discussion on the questions. Following the Listening Sessions, the scribes will work with the Listening Session coordinators to present a common document that will be sent to the Archdiocese of Newark coordinating team.

## Inviting Facilitators

---

Facilitating is a great opportunity to invite people to lead others in these synodal conversations and discernment. It is important to invite facilitators ahead of time so that they have an idea about the goals of the Listening Sessions. The qualities you want to look for in a facilitator are:

- creates a welcoming and prayerful atmosphere
- leads a group without dominating
- has the ability to draw out others
- keeps people on the topic
- possesses a genuine concern to build community among the members

## Background - Being a Synodal Church

---

Pope Francis has asked the whole world to engage in prayer, attentive listening and reflection, and conversation on how the Holy Spirit is calling the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to proclaim the Gospel and mission of Jesus in today's world. He believes that this can be a way to be creative and renewed through this Synod on Synodality, just as the Church has done over the centuries.

Synod is a combination of two Greek words meaning, walking or journeying the same road together. We know from experience in our families, ministries, religious communities, businesses, etc., that if we are not walking together, we don't achieve harmony, creativity, and the goals we set out to accomplish.

To Pope Francis, the practice of living as a synodal Church means three things:

- **Communion**

Prayer, attentive listening and reflection, and conversation lead to conversion to Christ and commitment to active participation as disciples in the mission of Christ.

- **Participation**

The people of God speak with one another and listen to one another about questions and experiences that matter in their living as disciples in the Church – and sometimes the conversations can be affirming and sometimes difficult.

- **Mission**

The communion of Jesus exists for a common purpose. Mission flows naturally from the experience of communion through collaborative ministry, recognizing our baptismal call as disciples of Christ.

Through these listening sessions, Pope Francis hopes that we will take a “long, loving, look” at our reality in the Universal Church, our parishes, religious congregations, ministries, among the young, the voices and needs of those on the margins and socially excluded – all of God's people. The focus is on renewal and outreach to all. But first we must confront the difficult topics. Some of those topics may be parish leadership, roles of women, outreach to the poor and the marginalized, inward looking rather than outward looking, clericalism, the role of the Church in contemporary society, the divorced and remarried, persons with disabilities, and more. We are to be a listening Church – to each other and the Holy Spirit at work in our world to meet the needs of our time.

That is why this Synod on Synodality is so important today. It is the opportunity for all people to speak frankly and listen carefully to each other and to what the Holy Spirit is asking of us. A tall order and a wonderful opportunity!

## Goals of the Synod on Synodality

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The Goals of the synod:

- To engage as many people as possible in conversation and discernment on what the Holy Spirit is asking of the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- To give prayerful input on the needs of the Church today and the way to speak about the mission of Christ to all people in the world we live in today.

## Practical Arrangements

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### Room Preparation by the parish, ministry, or organization

- If possible, the meeting room should be set with tables for 5-6 (including table facilitator and scribe.)
- On tables, please have pens and the listening sessions questions. They can also be projected on a screen with PowerPoint.

- Set a liturgical focus in the front of the room such as a tablecloth, candle, bible, seasonal flowers or other decoration.
- If possible, choose table facilitators and scribes ahead of time and meet with them for 30 minutes before the sessions to brief them on their task.

## Choosing Facilitators

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Good facilitation has participants engaging with one another in meaningful dialogue on the given topic or question. The facilitator is not the center of conversation but rather a guide for the conversation. It is important to select and train excellent facilitators for this listening process. Strong facilitators are people who:

- Are at home with their Catholic faith
- Are prayerful and reflective
- Have strong interpersonal skills
- Have effective communication skills
- Are willing participants in the synodal process
- Are able to maintain a big picture view without injecting their personal agenda
- Can focus a conversation
- Can connect participants with each other without becoming the center of the conversation.

## Dialogue, Discussion and Discernment for Facilitators

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**Dialogue is the foundation of all synodal consultations.** Dialogue does not happen when there is arguing or diatribe. However, conflicting perspectives may be presented. We may not all agree upon what is discussed in the synodal consultation, but we all acknowledge that what we discern through this process has the potential to be the will of God for the Church in the future. It is helpful to distinguish between the different types of exchanges:

**Dialogue** is two way, cooperative, and its purpose is to build relationship and exchange perspectives between participants

**Discussion** is a process of talking about something, in order to reach a decision or to exchange ideas

**Debate** is two way and competitive, where the purpose is to convince another

**Diatribe** is one way, and its purpose is to browbeat, inspire, shame, or emote

- Dialogue comes before discussion in synodal exchanges. These two activities can lead to true discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying and leading.
- Dialogue expands possibilities and insight into possibilities
- Discussion holds those possibilities against one another, helping to reflect upon them, and narrowing toward realistic, doable solutions, and steps forward

## Table Discussion Set-Up

---

Participants should be assigned to diverse small groups of approximately five to six members using a random method. Each group should have an assigned table facilitator and scribe who are also invited to enter the discussion. If possible, the group should be seated at a table together for the small group facilitated conversation.

## At the Meeting

---

### Welcome Participants by Parish Volunteers

- Have registration hosts who will welcome and check people in
- Provide name tags for participants
- If feasible, assign people to groups to allow for more people to get to know each other
- Ask participants to turn off and put away cell phones in order to fully concentrate on the synodal process
- Provide simple refreshments in case people are coming directly from work

### Main Facilitator(s) for Listening Sessions

For each listening session there should be a main facilitator or co-facilitators. The facilitator will explain each step of the process and make groups aware of the length of discussion time. The facilitator will give a five-minute warning as the groups move toward the next steps.

### Welcome by Pastor or Leader

The pastor or pastoral leader welcomes the participants and introduces the main facilitator(s).

The main facilitator gives a welcome to the whole group and asks the table facilitators and scribes to introduce themselves and then have table members introduce themselves.

### Gathering Prayer

- Choose a prayer leader and a reader for the scripture
- After the prayer, state the faith sharing questions
- Allow 5 minutes for sharing by twos or threes at the tables
- After the final prayer, lead the participants into the listening session

### Facilitating a Synodal Consultation

As facilitator you will be asked to:

- Encourage, affirm, support, challenge. Create an open atmosphere where the Lord's presence can be felt.
- Establish clear boundaries of time for each topic and discussion for table sharing.
- Gently interrupt a speaker who talks disproportionately more than others, for example, "You've really thought about that - let's hear what others have to add..."
- Keep the members on the topic. Gently re-focus a speaker who is preoccupied with an issue that is not pertinent to the topic or inhibits the participation of others in the group: "Let's look at the question (or topic) again to see if we are really getting to the heart of the matter."



- The table facilitator and scribe are participants as well as group leaders. You might need to lead off with input to a question but do not dominate and make sure that all have the opportunity to speak.

### **Practical Suggestions for Successful Facilitation**

1. It helps to set ground rules and expectations at the start of the listening session by emphasizing the need for participation of all and that this is a safe place to speak.
2. A facilitator can help stimulate discussion by offering to synthesize the comments made from time to time, when participants are not quite sure of the question, or when the flow of conversation seems to be stalled.
3. If it is necessary to interrupt a speaker, it helps to acknowledge their contribution by providing a brief synthesis of what you heard them say, thank them for their contribution and move on through the discussion.

### **Ground Rules for Synodal Consultations – Group Etiquette**

1. Discernment is a key part of the process. Discernment means speaking, listening, and prayerfully reflecting, so pausing in silence between speakers to consider what is said is helpful.
2. This consultation is a safe place to talk — we will treat each other and what anyone says with reverence and respect.
3. One person speaks at a time and each person limits how long he/she speaks so that everyone has time to share.
4. We all will listen with an open mind – listening for understanding rather than listening to make a response.
5. We may pause the conversation at certain intervals to reflect and pray.
6. Our primary mode is dialogue: When we speak, our purpose is to have a robust conversation that leads to ways to move forward.
7. Avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda.
8. We only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.
9. We will be reporting our themes and discussion to the Archdiocese, who will forward to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).
10. No names of individual participants or groups will be shared in a document.
11. As participants, when we tell others of our experience of the consultation, we will not attribute anything we share to particular people or groups.

### **Synthesizing the Discussion**

Table facilitators and scribes, along with the participants, identify the major themes which arose from the discussion questions. Topics need to be categorized under the two core questions from the Synod:

1. How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish community, campus ministry, university, school, youth group, religious congregation or other?
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?

Some examples of topics may be youth and young adults, faith formation, need for more participation in parish life, roles of women in leadership and governance of parish and larger church, ability to give input

in parish planning, caring for and inclusion of the poor and marginalized, the elderly, etc. The synthesis from each table will be given to the Synod Committee to further synthesize, collate and send to the Archdiocesan Synod coordinating team via an electronic document.

### **Using the Recalling of Our Experiences Approach**

The main facilitator can give the instruction to recall the key points of the discussion at each table. The table facilitator and scribe will focus the recalling. The following questions may serve as a guide:

- What are our experiences of journeying together in communion, participation, mission (Synodality) in our local Church?
- What joys did those experiences bring?
- What difficulties and obstacles have we encountered?
- What wounds did those experiences reveal?
- What insights have those experiences elicited?

Gather the key topics the table participants want to share:

- What paths forward are opening up for our local Church?
- Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound?
- What are the areas for change for our Church and what steps can be taken?

## **After the Synodal Consultation**

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### **Reporting the fruits of your synodal consultations**

Reporting is both horizontal reporting to the participants and community and vertical reporting to the diocese, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and to the Holy Father and Synod of Bishops in Rome. It would be helpful if the main facilitator could work with others to pull out some themes from the consultation and report that information back to participants, pastoral councils, pastoral staff, and the faith community as a whole. Table reporting is sent to the diocese for inclusion in the diocesan report using a standardized format or template provided by the diocese.



The Road to Emmaus by Gisele Bausch

Thank you to the Leadership Roundtable for sharing facilitator ideas with RCAN.

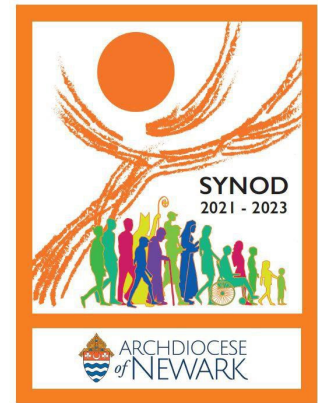
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## SYNOD LISTENING SESSIONS

*An Example for an Evening Session*

*7:00 PM to 9:30 PM or can be adapted to a 3 hour Morning Session*



FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH  
COMMUNION • PARTICIPATION • MISSION

### 7:00pm **Welcome by Pastor or Leader**

Introductions in the table groups

### 7:10pm **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.

### **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.

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?”

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

## 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?

## Prayer

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.

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## 7:40pm **Listening Session Process**

**Video by Cardinal Tobin** – What is the Synod on *Synodality* - why it is important  
**Explanation of the process by Main Facilitator**

- Table Facilitator  
*The table facilitator ensures that all participants have the opportunity to dialogue about the questions, taking care to focus on the dynamics of group sharing and listening.*
  - Table Scribe  
*The table scribe records key points of the conversations and all discern what are the key themes to present to the Holy Father through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB)*
  - Feedback  
*A few groups may give feedback toward the end of the session.*
- 

## **Focus of the Synod on Synodality**

**How is the Holy Spirit calling us as a Church in the 21st Century?**

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”

The word “synod” traces its roots to the first centuries of the Church. Coming from Greek words meaning the “same road,” synod and synodality are expressions of the fundamental mystery of the Church: people who are gathered from every corner of the earth to be “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2,9).

---- Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR

As we begin our listening and sharing, all are invited to consider what the Holy Spirit is calling us to, what paths are being opened, and what our "inner spiritual movements" are: joy or sadness, confidence or anxiety, hope or no hope, or other.

### **Table Process Suggestions to Help Participants Focus**

- Facilitator asks all to reflect silently for five minutes, preparing their thoughts on each question.
- Each person can share his/her ideas for a maximum of three minutes.
- All reflect silently again, then sharing for a few minutes what enlightened or resonated with them.

## 7:40pm **Core Question ONE – 45 Minutes**

**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 that you might participate in?**

*Pope Francis talks about “journeying together” or “walking together” down the same road. This means that we collaborate together and share responsibility for the building up of the whole Church and our parish or other ministry through evangelization, participation in worship, social justice, councils, and governance. As you reflect on the questions below, describe about how you have or have not experienced “walking together.”*

- Share a few examples of ways that you have experienced this “walking together” in your parish. What is challenging about participating fully in your parish?  
For example:
  - How are authority or governance, teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local parish?
  - How do you as a parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions about pastoral and financial needs?
  - In what ways do you as a parish invite all baptized Catholics. All the baptized include ethnic and cultural communities, youth, families, persons with disabilities and their families, those living in poverty or social exclusion, and more into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?
- What prevents us from “walking together?” What hinders you from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly?
- Pope Francis encourages us to reach out beyond our active parish community and observe who is in our local area. It is essential to look at who “used to be at our parish,” and who is not here, and those who might feel left out or on the margins.
  - Do we as a parish, reach out collectively or individually to those who are no longer participating in church? What helps or hinders us?
  - What are some ways to find out why they are not participating?
  - What do we have to offer and attract those who are not participating?
- As a result of our discussion, what are three steps we can take in our parish to grow in “walking together”?
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Where in these shared experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit calling us to move forward?

### 8:35 pm **Core Question TWO – 30 Minutes**

**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 universal Church to take?

PARISH

UNIVERSAL CHURCH

- What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the universal Church?

### 9:05 **Local Questions – 10 Minutes**

**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**

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

*The table scribe records key points of the conversations and all discern what are the key themes to present to the Holy Father through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB)*

**9:15pm**      **Feedback from a few groups**  
Ask two or three groups to give a flavor of their discussions

**9:20 pm**      **Evaluation of the Time spent together**

- How has this discussion given you the opportunity to listen and express and share your own experience of your parish and the universal Church?
- What is one hope you have for the Church as we continue to grow and listen to the Holy Spirit?

**9:30 pm**      **Sending Prayer**  
**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 Saint James      Jas 1:21-22  
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,  
all of our prayers 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.

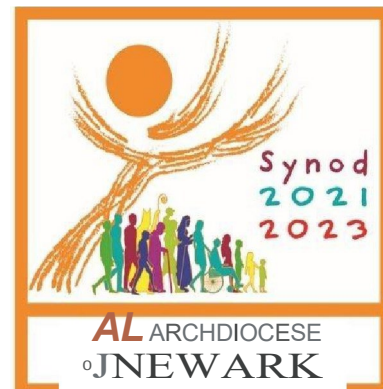




## PREPARE OUR HEARTS

### At VOICES

*As we prepare to enter into this experience of Church we invite you to prepare through reflection and prayer.*



## For a synodal Church

community | participation | mission

"The Synodal Process is first and foremost a spiritual process.

It is not a mechanical data-gathering exercise or a series of meetings and debates.

Synodal listening is oriented towards discernment."

We are being invited to listen to the Holy Spirit in the voices of the faithful.

### ATTITUDES TO CULTIVATE

#### Listening

We are called to listen humbly and to speak courageously; to listen in a manner that invites others to share authentically while we ourselves share our experiences and hopes with mercy and charity.

#### Newness and Conversion

We are invited to embrace the action of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the ways in which the Spirit inspires us to new views and new ways of being Church.

#### Allowing God to Lead

We are called to allow the Spirit to direct us. To set aside our own expectations so that we can listen more clearly to what God desires of us.

#### Focus on others

"The Synodal Process is an opportunity to open up, to look around us, to see things from other points of view, and to move out in missionary outreach to the peripheries."

### LEAVE BEHIND

#### Self-centeredness

We need one another. When we set aside self-centeredness "we are able to learn from each other. Journey together, and be at the service of one another."

#### Division and Discord

We are challenged to suspend our judgments and ideologies in order to enter into dialogue that promotes mutual understanding and unity.

#### Fear

"For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control." 2 Tim 1:7 We are reminded that change is a necessary part of growth and fear inhibits growth.

#### Self-doubt

The participation of each person is essential for the synodal process to achieve its objective. You are called by virtue of your Baptism, to listen to the Holy Spirit in your life and to share your experience of God and His Church for the good of all His people.

## REFLECT

In what ways do I hear God calling me to listen and embrace the thoughts, desires, struggles and hopes of others, especially those on the margins?

What do I need to leave behind in order to enter this process with an open heart, an open mind, and a willingness to share my experiences boldly and honestly?

In what ways is God inviting me to allow this experience to transform me and to strengthen my relationship with Him and with the Church?

## PRAY

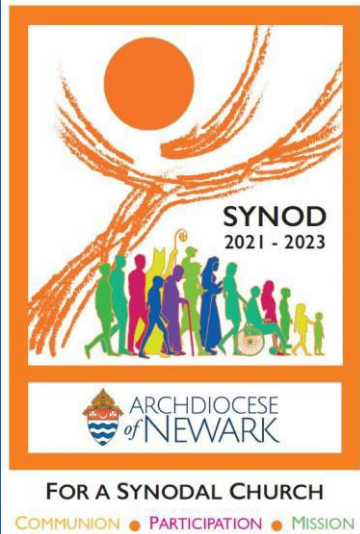
We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.  
 With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
 Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.  
 We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.  
 Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong 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.  
 We ask special blessings on the Church of Newark.  
 May we cherish this opportunity to pray, listen, and discern so that we  
 may continue the mission of Christ as missionary disciples.  
 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 more information visit <https://www.rcan.org/synod2023> or use the QR code

. . . "We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but "to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands" . . .



# Guidelines for Table Sharing



Be Aware of the Time Allotted for the Process

Pause Briefly between Speakers

Provide an Opening for Others to Share

Speak Clearly and with Respect

Be an Open-minded Listener

Be Attentive & Reflective at the Table