



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Taunton and Wellington Parishes Synod Participant Guide



Introduction

The Synod process is about listening deeply to God's voice as we journey together. We begin by listening deeply to the Holy Spirit in prayer before sharing together. We invite you to spend some time in prayer, perhaps using the scripture passages and synod prayer at the end of this guide before reflecting on the questions. Each question has some space where you can write your thoughts. You are then invited to share your thoughts with others at our parish synod meeting. If you're unable to come to the meeting, we would still love to hear from you. Please email in your thoughts to the parish office.

The Synod process in our parishes has three main objectives. Firstly, and most importantly, it is an experience of journeying together, listening to the Holy Spirit. This will then lead to the production of a report by our parish synod delegates which will be sent to our Diocese and be part of the worldwide Synod consultation.

Secondly, it is an opportunity for us to think about how we listen and make decisions as a parish. How can we better include the voices of everyone in doing this? The feedback from the synod process will help us think about how we can continue to listen and involve everyone in our mission as parishes, developing structures that enable us to continue to ensure everyone's voice is heard.

Thirdly, the process will help us to listen to the dreams and visions of all in our parish to help us begin to discern and draw up a mission plan that will guide us in the years ahead.

Overview of Synodal Process

The entire Catholic Church is called to participate in the upcoming Synod of Bishops! The upcoming Synod is entitled: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission." Synod is a Greek word (synodos) meaning a meeting or assembly. The two Greek words that make up Synod are syn meaning together and hodos meaning way or journey.

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! This Synod is not just another meeting with oral presentations and written reports. This Synod is a process of journeying together. As the Church, we will listen to each other, dialogue with each other, pray together, discern together and make decisions together for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world!

Pope Francis is asking each local diocese to gather together- clergy, religious and laity- to first listen to each other's joys and hopes, and griefs and anxieties (c.f. Gaudium et Spes no. 1). After we listen to each other, we are called to dialogue together on ways we can accompany each other as we seek to grow in holiness. Listening and speaking within the Church always involves prayer. We are listening, dialoguing and praying together so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The "goal" of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and His Church.

Parish Listening Session - The Fundamental Question

In your small group, begin by reflecting on the following core principle and question: A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together."

- How is this "journeying together" happening today in your parish?
- How is the Holy Spirit inviting your parish community to grow in "journeying together"? (Preparatory Document no. 26)

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet. In your reflection on "journeying together," think about:

- What experiences, in your local parish, does this question bring to mind? What are the joys of your parish life?

➤ What are the difficulties and obstacles to active parish life that you have encountered?

Sharing on Listening

“Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.” (Preparatory Document no. 30) “The meaning of the journey to which we are all called is above all that of discovering the face and form of a Synodal Church, in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit.” (Preparatory Document no. 15)

➤ How is God speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst?

➤ How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the peripheries?

➤ What space is there to listen to the voices on the peripheries, especially cultural groups, women, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

Sharing on Speaking Out

All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity. (Preparatory Document no. 30)

“The Pastors, established by God as ‘authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church’ should not be afraid to listen to the flock entrusted to them. The consultation of the People of God does not imply the assumption within the Church of the dynamics of democracy based on the principle of majority because there is, at the basis of participation in every Synodal process, a shared passion for the common mission of evangelization and not the representation of conflicting interests.” (Preparatory Document no. 14)

- What enables or hinders you from speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in your parish and society?
- What space is there in your parish for the voice of people, including active and inactive members of our faith

Sharing on Sharing Responsibility For Our Common Mission and Sharing Authority And Participation

“Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. A Synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.” (Preparatory Document no. 30)

The members of the People of God are united by Baptism, and “if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispenser of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to dignity and to the activity common to all the Faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ.” (Lumen Gentium, no. 32)

- How are the baptized members of your parish able to participate in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel?
- What hinders people from being active in your parish?
- How is authority or governance exercised in your local parish?
- How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local parish?

Sharing on Discerning And Deciding

In a Synodal style, we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. Synodal style of decision-making is to listen first, dialogue, pray, discern, and then the priest makes a decision on behalf of community. A Synodal Church does not make decisions to accomplish pre-identified priorities. "In a Synodal Church, the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely

as possible to God's will." (Vademecum no. 1.4)

- How does your parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions?
- Do the decision-making methods of your parish help you to listen to all members of the community, including those who are on the peripheries of parish life?

Sharing on Celebration

“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles” (Acts 2:42-43).

“Journeying together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. (Preparatory Document no. 30)

- How does prayer and liturgical celebrations, especially Sunday Mass, inspire and guide your parish?

- How does your prayer life and celebration of the Mass inspire and inform your personal decisions and decisions in the parish community?

- How does the parish invite all baptized Catholics, including our ethnic communities, youth, families and persons with disabilities and their families, into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?

➤ What steps may the Holy Spirit be calling us to take, as a parish, on our journey together into God's future?

Small Group Process: Final Question - Sharing on the Holy Spirit

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13) The Holy Spirit sent by Christ and received in our Baptism and Confirmation guides our efforts, breathes life and vitality into the Church, and leads us into a deeper relationship with Jesus and deeper communion with the Church in order to proclaim the Gospel. This Synodal journey is guided by the Holy Spirit (c.f. Vademecum 1.2)

➤ From your small group sharing, name one insight where you heard the voice of the Holy Spirit today

Prayer for the Synod

Adsumus (We Stand Before You)

The Adsumus prayer calls upon the Holy Spirit to guide a Church gathering. Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the bishops and Holy Father praying this prayer. This prayer is attributed to St. Isidore of Seville (c.560- April 4, 636). For the 2021-2023 Synod, the Holy Father is proposing that the entire People of God pray this simplified version of the Adsumus:

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

Additional Scripture Passages which may be used for personal reflection in preparation for the Synod:

Journeying

The Journey to Emmaus : Luke 24:13-35

Listening:

The Story of Bartimaeus : Mark 10:46-52 Hearing Gods call: John 1:35-39

Discernment

Discerning Christ's Call : Mark 1:21-39

Communion

Living as one : Acts 2:42-47

Community synodal Journey : Ephesians 4:1-16, 5:2

The First Council : Acts 15:1-35

Mission

Gifts at the service of the Community: 1 Corinthians 12:1-15,22,25-31)

Go out to the Whole World Mark 16:13-19

Feed and Tend others John 21:1-19

