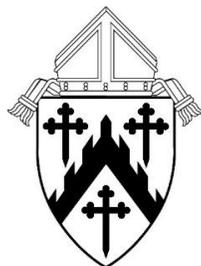




Guidebook for the Synod on Synodality in the Diocese of Davenport

October 2021 – June 2022



www.davenportdiocese.org/synod-2023

Table of Contents

<i>Adsumus prayer to the Holy Spirit</i>	1
General Introduction.....	2
Timeline	3
The <i>See—Judge—Act</i> Method in the <i>Synod on Synodality</i>	4
9 Values for the Synod	5
Hopes and Dreams for the Synod	7
Ways to Live out the Synod	8
Implementing the Synod.....	9
6 Steps of the Synod	10
Lists for Discernment – Reflection Sheet	12
A Synodal Spirit for Leaders in Listening	14
Small Group Listening Sessions.....	15
Example Outline for a Listening Session	16
The Questions to be Asked during Listening Sessions	18
Recording Sheet for a Synod Listening Session	19
Examples of Biased vs. Non-Biased Recording of Listening Sessions	21
58,000 Cups of Coffee Initiative.....	21
Appendices.....	25
Materials from Leadership Roundtable	26
3 Themes of the Synod – Personal Reflection Sheet	28

Adsumus prayer to the Holy Spirit

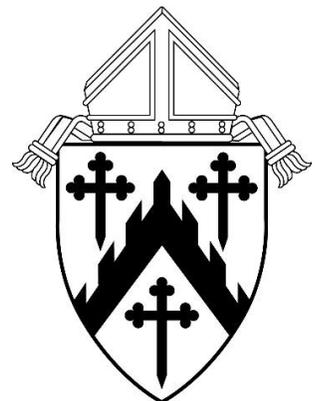
Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, the first word of the Latin original meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, being attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we are called to embrace this synodal path of the Synod 2021-2023, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to operate within us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synod 2021-2023, we propose to use this simplified version, so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray more easily.

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.

This prayer can be found here: <https://www.synod.va/en/documents/adsumus.html>



General Introduction



Timeline

Local Diocesan Phase

Synod Mass and Opening Session
Diocese preparation and train parish representatives
Listening sessions across the diocese
Reports due to the Chancery
Diocesan report due to USCCB

October 2021 – April 2022

October 17th
October – November
Advent – April 29, 2022
April 30, 2022
June 30, 2022

Entire Synod Process

Diocesan Phase
National Conference reports due to Vatican
Continental phase
Synod of Bishops in Rome

October 2021 – October 2023

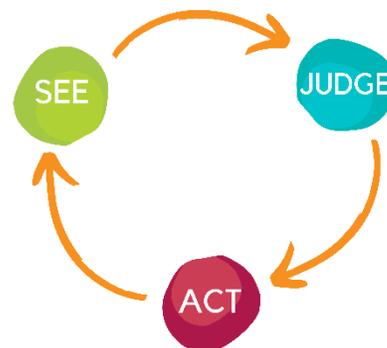
October 2021 – June 2022
August 15, 2022
September 2022 – March 2023
October 2023



The *See—Judge—Act* Method in the *Synod on Synodality*

What is the *See—Judge—Act* method?

The method of *See—Judge—Act* is important in the Catholic Tradition. In this method a person or community 1) “*sees*” a situation, 2) makes “*judgments*” about that situation in light of the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, and 3) “*acts*” to promote love and justice in the situation. The process of *See—Judge—Act* is repetitive and ongoing.



How does this method relate to the Synod?

The Synod’s principal emphasis is that of genuine and humble listening.

This is the first step of the method—to “see.” Having engaged in genuine and humble listening, we will then be well equipped to make sounder *judgments* and take more responsible *actions*.

See—Judge—Act in the global synodal process

The global synod process has its own trajectory of the *See—Judge—Act* method. Listening sessions are taking place around the world. This Synod is the single largest listening process in human history. This listening is a global process of “*seeing*.” Through various processes, the findings from listening sessions will be synthesized at the diocesan, national, continental, and finally global level. Synthesizing the findings are “*judgments*” about what experiences and themes emerge from the Synod process. Finally, the Synod will culminate in the “*act*” of the Synod of Bishops gathering in Rome in October 2023, which will likely be followed by another “*act*” in the publication of a papal teaching document.

See—Judge—Act in the local synodal process

While we are part of the global synodal process, activities in our diocese are similarly informed by the *See—Judge—Act* method. So too are the activities of each parish, school, religious congregation, or other Catholic organization participating in the Synod. It is especially important that we are patient with the listening process. While there may be a desire to see results and decisions come as quickly as possible from the synodal process, the importance of the “*see*” phase cannot be overstated.

As we synthesize the experience of the listening sessions in the individual listening session reports and the diocesan synthesis report to be sent to the USCCB, we will be listening for common themes, joys and sorrows. What particular stories touch us most deeply? Where is the Spirit at work in what we are hearing? These questions aim at making “*judgments*” about the present state of the Church.

“*Actions*,” especially those involving more comprehensive institutional initiatives, will follow later.

9 Values for the Synod

“The Protagonist of the Synod is the Holy Spirit.” (Pope Francis)

A renewed encounter with Jesus

The Christian life is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea. It is the result of an encounter with the loving and living God. Our relationship with God, a relationship of ever deepening love, is the foundation of our faith and the driving force of our lives. The Synod is a moment for renewed encounter with the person of Jesus marked by joy and openness to how the Holy Spirit is calling us anew today.

Humble listening

The Synod is not a debate or opinion poll. It is not about ideologies, partisan politics, or pushing an agenda. It is about listening with humility and a sense of curiosity, wonder, and awe at the person whose story we are hearing. Even if we may disagree with something that is said, the person we are listening to is made in the image and likeness of God. Humble listening is a transformative experience for everyone involved. It means listening without judgment and investing in the conversation and the person with genuine curiosity. These conversations may plant seeds of faith for the Holy Spirit to work that can create a genuine and lasting impact.

Discernment

Discernment is an essential practice of the Christian life. Rooted in prayer and community, discernment is about determining what is and what is not of the Spirit. In the two Synod documents from the Vatican, the term discern/discerning/discernment occurs 79 times! Therefore, the notion of discernment is fundamental to the Synod. Individual and communal discernment must be at the center of all we do.

Openness to new possibilities

We should not expect a transformation of Church teaching as a result of the Synod. For example, after the Synod, the Church will not teach that Jesus is no longer the second person of the Trinity. And yet, the Holy Spirit cannot be kept in a box. Think of the call of Abraham in Genesis 12. God called Abraham to leave his country, his people, and his father’s household. He was called to leave behind everything he knew for an unknown destination—and just look at the journey God took him on! We too must be open to a journey that we cannot anticipate, to new ways of *being* a more synodal Church.

Learning by doing

The Synod is not a neat and tidy process. Pope Francis himself has said that it will be “messy.” It does not include a simple checklist of tasks to complete. Rather, it is an open and dynamic process, born from the very heart of the Church—it is a way of *being* Church. For St. John Chrysostom, the terms “Church” and “synod” were synonymous. We will learn how to better be synodal by practicing it, by the very act of *doing* the synod.

Nimbleness in the process

The Synod is a framework for individual and communal discernment, not a 10-step plan. This means that as we live out the Synod we will discover new and richer ways the Holy Spirit is calling us to be Church in our local context. We must be open to such newness and take such steps in stride.

Emphasis on the local

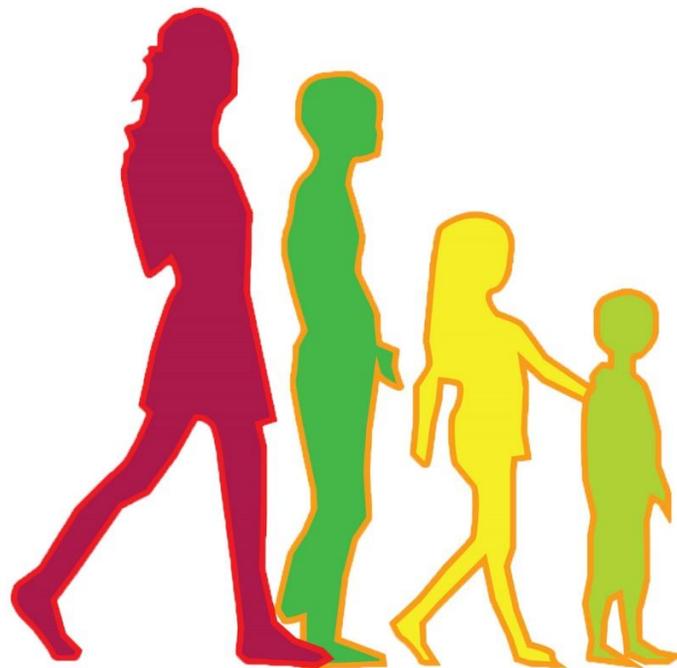
In keeping with the Catholic Social Tradition's emphasis on subsidiarity, we believe in equipping and encouraging efforts at the most local level possible. This includes parishes, schools, and other Catholic organizations. It also includes family life and friendships. The more focused we can be on our concrete experience of our local context, the more fruitful the synod process will be.

Evangelization

Our faith lives must always be outward facing. We must bring faith into all areas of our lives. We do this by drawing on the joy that we experience from our relationship with God. The mission of the Church, the people of God, is evangelization. The Synod process is an opportunity for evangelization.

Hear the Unheard

Over 5,000 parishioners from around the diocese responded to the Rediscovering Sunday survey during the summer. This is remarkable! Most of the voices that we heard from are regularly practicing Catholics. There are many voices we did not hear from in that survey. For example, we generally did not hear from youth and young adult Catholics. There are also many on the margins of society that we did not hear from. This synod is an opportunity to reach out to those we do not typically hear from. The Synod invites us to give voice to the voiceless, to hear the unheard.



Hopes and Dreams for the Synod

Full Parish Participation

We invite all parishes in the diocese to participate in the synodal process by listening to: 1) those in our pews now, 2) those who at some point in the past were in our pews but no longer are, and 3) those who have never encountered, or have not had a substantial encounter with, our faith communities.

Full School Participation

We invite all Catholic schools in the diocese to participate in the synodal process by listening to school staff, students, and parents of students in our Catholic schools.

Full Chancery Office Participation

We invite all Chancery offices to participate in the Synod. The different offices of the Chancery engage and serve various groups throughout the diocese. Each Chancery office, individually or in partnership with another office(s), can facilitate listening sessions for those groups.

Participation by other Catholic Organizations

There are many Catholic organizations, such as religious communities, in the diocese that are not parishes, schools, or chancery offices. Their participation in the Synod process is vital.

Ecumenical and Interreligious Outreach

To be synodal is also to listen attentively to those who do not share our faith. We are being asked to reach out to those who share our faith in Jesus Christ, to members of other religious traditions, and to those with no religious affiliation.

Learning a way of *being* Church that extends beyond the Synod timeline

The Synod is not a one-time event. Its relevance to our faith lives does not conclude with the completion of a listening session or the submission of our diocesan report to the USCCB. Rather, synodality is central to the identity of the Church. It should become integral to how we *are* and *do* Church in the future.

Ways to Live out the Synod

(1) Organized listening sessions (a top-down effort coordinated within Church structures)

Our schools, parishes, religious communities, and other Catholic organizations are able to organize formal listening sessions.

(2) 58,000 Cups of Coffee Initiative (a bottom-up efforts on the part of individuals)

This is a ground-up and organic initiative that we invite all to partake in. Everyone who is currently in our pews is invited and encouraged to have at least one synodal conversation with 1) one person who is already in our pews, 2) one person who used to be in our pews but hasn't been since the pandemic, and 3) one person who has either never been a part of or left the Catholic faith long ago.

We have received the annual diocesan "Mass counts" for 2021. There are just over 19,000 Catholics in our pews across the diocese. This is just over 60% of the 30,000+ people in our pews in 2019, pre-pandemic. Two things are true about this: 1) we are not content with this reality, and 2) everyone can do something about it. If we take 19,000 x 3, we get 58,000.

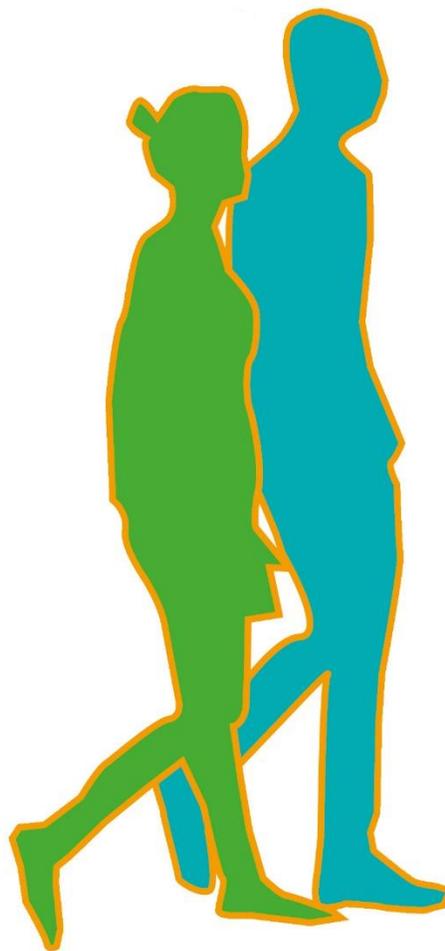
There is further information in this guidebook about this initiative, beginning on page 22. Be sure to share your experience of these conversations through the diocesan website—that way we know when we reach our goal of 58,000!

(3) Submitting Individual Listening Session Reports to the Diocese

We ask each parish, school, and other Catholic organization to submit a report following each listening session via the diocesan synod website. The reporting form on the website corresponds to the listening session recording form on page 19.

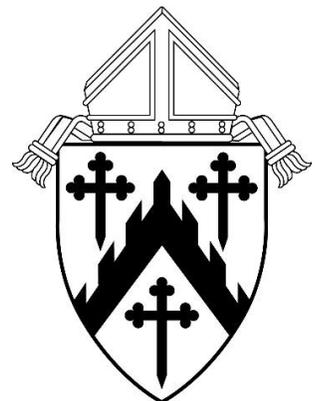
(4) Synthesis Document

The diocese must submit a 10-page synthesis document, along with supporting materials, to the USCCB by June 30, 2022. This document will share the fruits of the synodal process. It will be made public for everyone to view.





Implementing the Synod



6 Steps of the Synod

Living out the Synod will look different, depending on the setting. Discernment, patience, creativity, and concrete action should be attended to in all settings as we are intentional in reaching out to persons whose voices often go unheard both inside and outside our faith communities. In what follows, we speak of parishes, but the same principles hold true for other institutions in the diocese.

Step One: identify parish representatives and additional leaders

Pastors should identify 1-2 parish representatives who can serve in a leadership, consultative, and liaison capacity for the synod. Parish representatives do not need to be persons who are highly involved in the parish already, nor do they need to be lay directors or current leaders in the parish. However, they should be truly representative of the parish. They should also be spiritually mature, active listeners, natural collaborators, and have a heart for getting outside the four walls of the parish and the Church's mission of evangelization. In discerning how to live out the synod, additional persons may be identified to join in the efforts.

Step Two: identify already existing parish structures

With a leadership team in place, engage in prayer, discernment, and dialogue to identify the already existing structures within the parish that might play a key role in this synodal journey. For example, a Parish Council could be *listened to* in a listening session. A Parish Council could also be a group who *facilitates* the listening session of another group or demographic inside or outside the parish. Parish Councils, Parish Evangelization Committees, prayer groups, volunteer networks, Parish Mentors, and others are good leaders and structures to engage in leading the synod process. A central goal of the synod is to listen to people we don't normally hear from. These are people who have never been a part of our faith communities or who left years ago. Inviting such persons to share their experience of the Catholic Church will often require creativity and personal invitation. Please consult page 12 in this Guidebook ("Lists for Discernment – Reflection Sheet") for further ideas.

Step Three: train the listeners

Listening with humility requires being intentional. The task before us is to listen in order to understand, not in order to respond. The Synod is not a parliament or a structure for debate, it is a mechanism for listening humbly and speaking prayerfully so that we might discern the movement of the Holy Spirit among us. It is strongly recommended that parish representatives who did not attend a live training session watch the recording of a training session on the diocesan website. Those who facilitate listening sessions should be deeply familiar with this Guidebook.

Step Four: prepare for the listening session(s)

Please consult page 12 in this Guidebook ("Lists for Discernment – Reflection Sheet") to help discern:

- 1) who will facilitate the listening session(s),
- 2) who will be gathered for the listening session(s), and

Lists for Discernment – Reflection Sheet

These lists are for your reflection, especially as it relates to the Synod’s theme of participation. These lists are merely a starting point—they are not comprehensive. Consider this excerpt from the Vatican Synod Handbook (*Vademecum*) as you discern who to include on this synodal journey:

“Participation: A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit. In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God’s will. Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.”

Listener Suggestions

These may be fruitful Catholic structures and organizations to engage the synodal process as leaders in listening. This is merely a starting point for further discernment and conversation.

- Charismatic prayer groups
- Catholic charitable organizations
- Catholic schools
- Catholic Worker House (Iowa City; Davenport)
- Chancery offices, commissions, and committees
- Deaneries
- Knights of Columbus/Catholic Daughters
- L’Arche (Clinton)
- Newman Center (Iowa City)
- Parishes
- Religious Congregations (Clinton Franciscans; Carmelites, Sisters of Humility)
- Significant subgroups in parishes
- St. Ambrose University

Speaker (Demographic/Population) Suggestions

As you discern who you might be intentional in reaching out to listen to, the following list has been compiled for your reflection. Through the synodal process, Pope Francis has urged us to reach out to those on the peripheries and engage in humble listening. Consider listening to:

- Christians of other traditions (e.g. Jan 18-25 is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity)
- Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and other religious persons
- Ecumenical and interreligious groups

- Committed atheists and agnostics, as well as passive non-believing people
- Community College students
- Elderly and homebound persons
- Ethnic minorities
- Troubled youth in group homes
- Healthcare workers and first responders
- Homeschooled youth
- Immigrant populations
- Persons served by in-home daycares run by Catholics
- Minority business owners
- Parents of school students and religious education students
- Persons with disabilities
- Persons who are socio-economically marginalized
- Young people (parish religious education students, Catholic schools students, etc.)

Location Suggestions

Consider the following list of locations where you might try to host listening sessions. Holding a listening session in a parish hall is more likely to draw folks who belong to the parish. This is important. Also important is going out and meeting people who are less likely to come to the parish in the spaces and places where they gather. Consider the following:

- Catholic-owned restaurants/businesses
- Community colleges; Catholic schools
- Community outreach centers
- Day centers for adults with disabilities; day centers for older adults
- Family resource centers
- Food pantries
- Gatherings of small business owners
- Group homes for troubled youth
- Homeless shelters
- Jails; prisons; juvenile justice centers
- Malls/shopping centers
- Nursing homes/independent senior living facilities
- Shelters for victims of domestic/intimate partner abuse
- Spaces, guilds, or organizations where local artists and musicians gather
- Sporting or gaming events
- Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFWs) facilities
- YMCA/YWCAs

A Synodal Spirit for Leaders in Listening

Local leaders for the Synod at the level of parish, school, and other Catholic entities are not “in charge” of the Synod. Like all ministry, this role is a ministry of service. These persons assist in the coordination of local efforts. We ask pastors to lead the Synod rollout process through facilitating and encouraging communal discernment.

We ask Synod Parish Representatives to:

- Submit report forms to the diocese online which share the fruits of listening sessions
- Promote the Synod to various committees, councils, boards, and organizations at the parish
- Assist with the discernment of additional leadership for implementing the Synod and how existing parishes structures and interpersonal relationships can be leveraged for the purpose of the Synod
- Discern in an ongoing way how the parish, school, or entity can reflect a more synodal Church

Qualities of Synodal Leadership

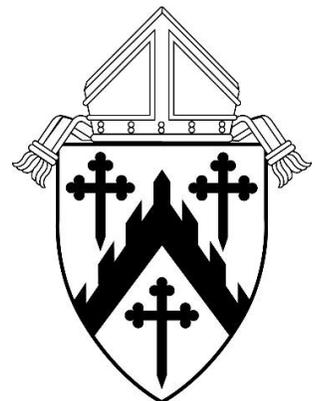
In addition to what has been stated above, leaders should exhibit the following qualities:

- A spiritually mature person with a living faith
- A heart for evangelization and going to the margins
- A spirit for engaging with those outside the four walls of the church
- A natural collaborator
- An effective communicator
- The ability to synthesize a variety of information
- The ability to interact well with people of diverse cultural, generational, and ecclesial backgrounds
- Familiarity with parish structures and processes
- Prior experience working in collaborative initiatives
- Humble in working with a co-leader and/or team; gracious in being open to the insights and gifts of others, and to try new ways of proceeding





Small Group Listening Sessions



Example Outline for a Listening Session

(Duration: approximately 90 minutes)

I. Opening Prayer and Introduction

(5-10 minutes)

You may want to begin with the Adsumus prayer to the Holy Spirit on page 1 of this Guidebook. A number of other prayer options are available on our website. Offer some brief opening comments about the reason for gathering, the process that will take place, ground rules for listening, etc. Orient participants to the questions they will be responding to and remind people that this is an occasion to reflect, share, and be enriched by hearing the experience of others. This is the necessary foundation for discerning the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The facilitator may want to use these or similar words to introduce the listening session:

Thank you for being here today/tonight, and taking part in the Synod.

“Synod” isn’t a word that we use very often. But it means “to walk together”. So, when the Church gathers for a synod, it means that we are gathering to walk together in faith, into the future. What does that mean?

Many of us may be used to thinking about the Church like a pyramid: a top-down institution, where the pope and bishops and priests and deacons do the talking and teaching, and the rest of us do the listening. Instead of a pyramid, a synodal church looks like a circle: we’re gathered together in Christian fraternity for conversation. While visiting with one another and listening to one another, we listen together to the Holy Spirit. Trying to figure out what the Spirit is asking of us is called discernment, and it’s something that the whole Church is called to do together.

We are part of that today/tonight. We are learning what it means to be a listening and discerning, or synodal, parish/school/etc. by listening and discerning together.

Pope Francis has asked us to think about and reflect on what it means to be a Church that listens to one another. In what ways do we do that now? How might we do so better?

In particular, we would like to invite you to ponder these questions: When you think about your experience of your parish, our diocese, and the global Catholic Church, what breaks your heart? And what fills your heart?

Before we continue, I’d like to go over some “ground rules” for our time together:

- Be Here Now – Give full attention to each other as you pay attention to the movements of your heart and listen for the Spirit of God (Let’s put our phones away!). Settle into the space.
- Listen for Understanding – Take to heart what is expressed by others, and thoughtfully consider and express what you want to say.
- One at a Time – 1 person speaks; everyone else gives the gift of listening without judgment.
- Everyone Speaks Once before Anyone Speaks Again – you may pass and speak later.
- Speak what is True to Your Experience, and Let Others do the Same – Say “I am, I think, I feel, etc.” instead of “They are, they think, they feel, etc.” This is not a time for discussion, feedback,

or comments after each person speaks. There will be moments of silence in the conversation to digest what has been expressed and how it relates to our own thoughts and feelings.

Because this is about listening to one another, we'll start by briefly introducing ourselves.

And then, because this is about listening to the Spirit, we'll continue in prayer.

II. Break up into small groups of about 4 people (60 minutes)

This is the bulk of the time together. We recommend having groups no larger than 4-5 people (e.g. split 20 people into 5 groups of 4 people). This gives everyone enough time to reflect and share their experiences. Ask one person at each table to be the recorder and one person to be the conversation facilitator. You may want to train facilitators ahead of time. If so, we recommend watching the training video on the diocesan synod website.

*It is the role of the **conversation facilitator** to aid the small group conversation. The Synod is not an occasion for people to try to push through an agenda. It is an opportunity to grow in community and discern the Holy Spirit. The emphasis should be on people sharing their concrete experience.*

*It is the role of the **note taker** at each table to capture what people share in a non-biased way that is true to what was said. Use this front and back recording sheet to write down what people share. We ask that a typed version of the notes be submitted via the diocesan website by parish synod leaders.*

III. Share the fruits of small group conversation with the large group (5-10 minutes)

If there is time, and if it seems appropriate, ask people to share some of the insights and experiences that people shared at their tables which the large group may benefit from hearing. This is a judgment call. Comments should be for the enrichment of the large group and should be brief. The person recording at each table could be the person who summarizes what was shared at the table.

IV. Invitation to further discernment and engagement in the Synod (5-10 minutes)

The Synod is not meant to be a one-and-done occasion. Being synodal is fundamentally a way of being Church. With the concrete experience of sharing faith with one another, invite people into further participation. For example, the "58,000 Cups of Coffee Initiative" is a concrete way to live out the Synod. Furthermore, you could invite people to help with listening sessions outside of the parish. No one—Catholic, or otherwise—is to be left out of the synodal process. This is an occasion for creativity and listening to the Holy Spirit. Who is not present here? Who should we be hearing from? How can we be intentional about listening to them? Where is the Holy Spirit calling us next?

V. Closing prayer and invitation to further discernment and engagement in the Synod (5-10 minutes)

You may want to close with an extemporaneous prayer, thanking God for the fellowship shared, for the presence of the Holy Spirit, and for the ongoing discernment of each person present. Praying the Lord's Prayer, or another commonly known prayer, together to close the session is also appropriate.

The Question to be Asked during Listening Sessions

The Synod has been called so that we focus on listening and journeying together. In light of this focus, we want to attend to people's concrete experience of the Church. With the question below in mind, we are not asking about what people hear on the news or read on social media. Rather, through the synodal process, we hope to discern the calling of the Holy Spirit by reflecting on people's concrete experience of the Church.

To hear and unpack people's experience of the Church, we would like to hear people's response to this question: ***based on your personal experience, what fills your heart and what breaks your heart about the Catholic Church (e.g. in your parish and beyond your parish)?***

With this question we hope conversations will be about people's personal experience. This is an occasion for people to reflect on their own experience of the Catholic Church and to hear the experience of others. If it is helpful in aiding the conversation, in part depending on who is gathered, facilitators could mention that people's experience of the Church is has many layers. For example, a person's experience of the Church may include experience of their current parish and previous parish(es), the diocesan Church, the global Catholic Church, a Catholic school system, or a religious community. These specific settings do not necessarily need to be addressed during a listening session. They are simply named here in case they are helpful in aiding reflection and conversation.



Recording Sheet for a Synod Listening Session

DESCRIPTION OF MEETING

Date: _____ Location: _____ # of people present: _____

Please describe the group attending (e.g.: parishioners, finance council, confirmation students, members of ecumenical alliance, men's prayer group, women's Bible study, clients at food bank, etc.):

Ages of people present (check all that apply):

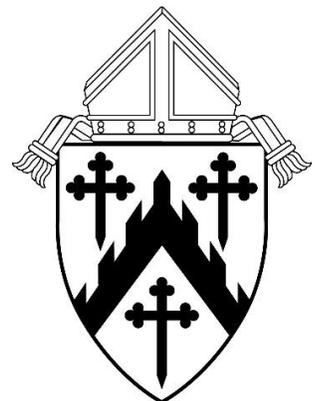
- Grade School Middle School High School College Age / Young Adult (19-26)
 Adults 26-44 Adults 45-59 Adults 60-75 Adults >75

The question for discussion: based on your personal experience, what fills your heart and what breaks your heart about the Catholic Church (e.g. in your parish and beyond your parish)?





58,000 Cups of Coffee Initiative



58,000 Cups of Coffee Initiative

Summary

This initiative is a ground-up and organic initiative that we invite all Catholics in the diocese to take part in. While other efforts are organized from the “top-down,” this is truly a “bottom-up” effort.

The annual diocesan “Mass counts” for 2021 have been submitted. There were just over 19,000 Catholics in our pews across the diocese in 2021. This is just over 60% of the 30,000+ people in our pews in 2019, pre-pandemic. Two things are true about this: 1) we are not content with this reality, and 2) everyone can do something about it. If we take the number of people in our pews and multiply it by three (19,000 x 3), we get 58,000.

The “58,000 Cups of Coffee Initiative” is a synodal initiative in our diocese. We are inviting everyone who is currently in our pews to have at least one synodal conversation with:

- 1) one person who is already in our pews,
- 2) one person who used to be in our pews but hasn't been since the pandemic, and
- 3) one person who has either never been a part of a faith community or stopped practicing religion at some point.

There is no reason to limit yourself to 3 conversations! If there are several people you know who you could talk to about faith, then by all means please have as many conversations as you can. May this opportunity generate a ground-up enthusiasm for the faith in our faith communities!

Who to talk to

- 1) Someone already in our pews

This way you can begin with a conversation that may be more comfortable and familiar.

- 2) Someone who used to be in our pews but hasn't been since the pandemic

Many of us know people who haven't returned to Mass since the pandemic. There may be very good and legitimate reasons for this. This goal is not to convince them to come back to Mass. If you sense they would benefit from being invited, then certainly invite them. The main goal is simply to listen, to understand, and to get to know the person's experience of the Catholic Church better. Such genuine listening can open doors for conversation down the road.

- 3) Someone who has never been a part of a Catholic faith community or stopped practicing religion at some point along the way

Let's spread our wings! Many of us know people who are disaffiliated from the Church or who have never practiced religion. This is an opportunity to lead with a sense of curiosity to hear about the person's experience of the Catholic Church. Again, we're not trying to convince, argue, or debate with someone. We just want to hear their experience.

The Conversation

Once you've invited someone to grab a cup of coffee (or something else, such as breakfast, or whatever suits you), here are some helpful tips:

Preparation

Spend some time in prayer in the days leading up to the conversation reflecting on how you feel about it. What do you anticipate? Are you nervous or anxious about something? Are you excited? Why is that the case? Name this to God in prayer. It is important that we set aside ulterior motives (like, "I'll finally convince him that he's wrong!" or "she'll see how genuinely invested I am in my faith because I'm doing this"). People can sense ulterior motives. We all experience them from time to time. The most important thing to do is to name them in prayer and set them aside. The simple goal of the conversation is to listen with genuine curiosity in order to understand their experience of the Church.

The key question to ask

As with the Synod in general, ask: ***As you think about your experience of the Catholic Church, what fills your heart and what breaks your heart?***

You could begin by telling them a little about the Synod. It is the largest process of listening sessions in human history. Pope Francis wants no one to be left out. Thank them for sharing their experience with you.

Once the conversation is rolling, the questions that you ask should always build on what the person has been telling you. Though these are generic, phrases like this can help you dive deeper into the experience the person is sharing:

- "That is really interesting, could you say more about that?"
- "Oh, I never knew that, could you share more about that experience?"

If it feels like the conversation is stuck, you could try asking these kinds of questions:

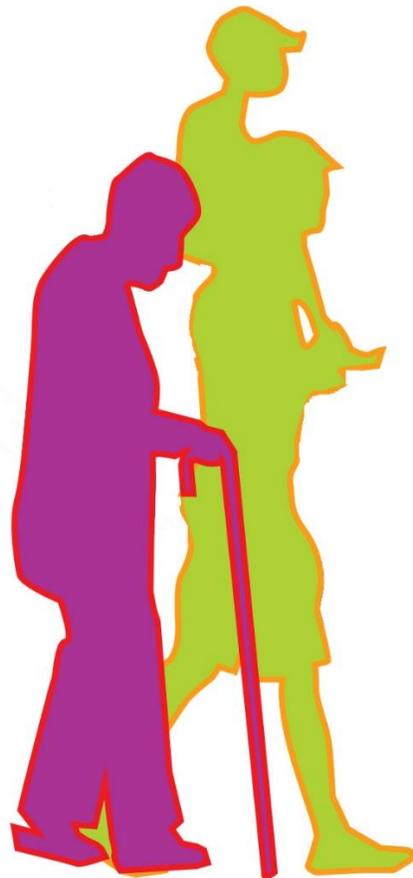
- "Did your family practice religion when you were a kid? Could you talk about how that impacted you? "
- "What do you think of the Catholic Church today?"
- "What do you think the Catholic Church of the future will look like?"
- Does the Catholic Church have a visible presence in your community?"

As you can imagine, some of these questions may be better for conversations with people who are currently attending Mass, while others might be better for a conversation with someone who has not practiced religion for the last 10 years.

The most important thing is to really engage with what the person is telling you. A helpful analogy might be improvisational theatre—the only rule is to say “yes, and...” In this way, the conversation builds organically and the person gets to share their story with you.

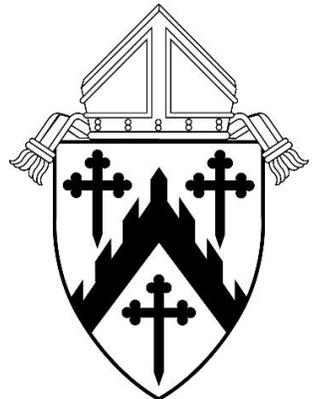
Post-conversation

- 1) **Reflect on how you might engage with this person in the future.** Was this a one-time conversation? Might you have another conversation a few weeks or months from now? Maybe in the days following the conversation a few more questions came to mind, or you became more curious about the person’s story and how God is working in their life. If so, invite them for another cup of coffee! If the conversation really stirred something in you, it may be fruitful for both of you to have another conversation.
- 2) **We want to hear about your conversation!** Please let us know how the conversation went via the diocesan Synod website (www.davenportdiocese.org/synod-2023). There are a few short questions. Most of them are check-the-box questions. In particular, we’d love to hear what fills or breaks the hearts of your conversation partners about their experience of the Church. Help us reach the goal of 58,000!





Appendices



Material from Leadership Roundtable

Examples of Ground Rules for Synodal Consultations

1. This consultation is a safe place to talk — we will treat each other and what anyone says with reverence and respect.
2. One person speaks at a time.
3. We all will listen with an open mind.
4. We will be stopping the conversation at certain intervals to reflect and pray.
5. Our primary mode is dialogue: When we speak our purpose is to advance the conversation. Please avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda.
6. We limit how long we speak so that everyone has time to share.
7. We only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.
8. We will be reporting the themes and experiences to the diocese and bishop's conference as they emerge from the consultation discussions without indicating the names of individual participants.
9. As participants, when we tell others of our experience of the consultation, we will not attribute anything we share to particular people or groups.

Facilitating a Synodal Consultation

As facilitator you will be asked to:

- Establish clear boundaries of time and topic for speakers
- Gently interrupt a speaker who talks disproportionately more than others
- Gently interrupt and redirect a speaker who gets off 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

Practical Suggestions for Successful Facilitation

1. It helps to set ground rules and expectations at the start of the consultation by emphasizing the need for broad participation and safety. Some examples of boundary-related ground rules are:
 - One person speaks at a time and the others listen attentively
 - Discernment means speaking, listening and prayerfully reflecting so pausing in silence between speakers to consider what is said is a good approach
 - Speak when you can add to the conversation, not when you are trying to intentionally end it
 - Stay on topic
 - Keep your comments reasonably brief so others have time to participate
 - This is a forward-leaning conversation, so lean toward solutions
 - If someone offers a comment in the form of a complaint, ask the person to reframe her/his comment in the form of a hope or aspiration.
2. If you have to interrupt a speaker, it helps to acknowledge their contribution by providing a brief synthesis of what you heard them say and thank them for their contribution.

Responding to a speaker who talks of the trauma of abuse by a minister of the Church

Tragically, some consultation participants will have had traumatic experiences of Church.

Facilitators must take into account that those traumas are real and deserve our compassion above all. It is also true that the synodal consultation is not the place for long discourses on those tragedies. It is the place to recall and acknowledge that they happened; that they had a severe negative impact on individuals, families, faith communities, and the Church as a whole; and that they need to be prevented. For example, it is appropriate to recall that those tragedies happened and to talk about, for example, how a synodal Church might help prevent them from happening again.

What can a facilitator do when an abuse survivor speaks?

- a) Acknowledge the trauma is real and deep.
- b) Thank the speaker for their courage, and acknowledge the depth of hurt you hear as they speak.
- c) Set a boundary such as “I’m glad you had the courage to bring this tragedy up. While we cannot go deeply into personal stories in this consultation, we do need to acknowledge the pain those abusers and coverups by Church leaders caused.”
- d) Set a direction such as “Those tragedies must be part of our considerations in these synodal consultations, which are looking forward at a renewed Church where such things cannot happen. As we consider the direction the Church needs to go, please keep the survivors and their families in mind. We do not want that abuse to continue.”

Responding to people with agendas

It may happen that either individuals or groups who attend synodal consultations come with particular agendas. When a facilitator recognizes this, there are approaches that may help keep the conversation on track.

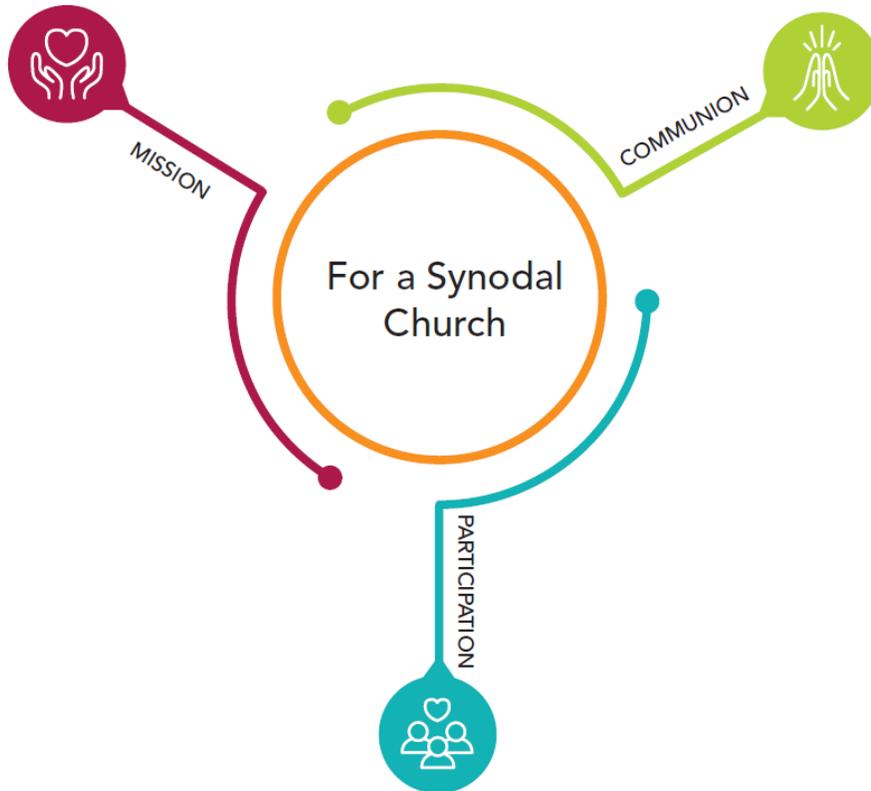
When an individual or group expresses absolute certainty, a facilitator can respond with curiosity: “Help me understand...,” “I am wondering whether/if...,” or “I have a question...”

When an individual or group blames others, a facilitator can respond by inviting other perspectives and developing consensus: “How could any of us make a difference here?” “Are there some steps we would agree on that would be helpful here?” “How could all of us be part of the solution?”

Sometimes it is also necessary to restate the purpose and nature of the synodal consultation. “The synodal consultation is forward looking, envisioning the Church of the future, and we are approaching this in a reflective, prayerful manner, keeping an open mind so the Spirit can surface the direction forward for our Church.”¹

¹ https://leadershiproundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Process-for-Facilitating-Synodal-Consultations_Oct-2021_FINAL.pdf

3 Themes for the Synod – Personal Reflection Sheet



COMMUNION

“By his gracious will, God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, through the covenant that he offers to his people. The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church, and grounded in the *sensus fidei* (sense of the faith) that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God’s call to his people.”²

- How and with whom do you experience communion? Are there persons or groups in your community with whom you experience only a marginal degree of communion?
- The Trinity is itself a communion of divine persons. The relationship is one of self-gift, and is a model for our relationships. How does the model of the Trinity help you understand your relationships? How can your relationships better reflect the Trinity?

² Except for the reflection questions, the content of this section is from the Synod Handbook, 1.4 (Vademecum)

PARTICIPATION

“A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit. In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God’s will. Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.”

- No one is to be left out of the synodal process – no one. Who are those who might typically be involved in Church activities, and who are those who might typically feel excluded? How can you be intentional about inviting them into the synodal process?
- The Holy Spirit is active in all of our lives—we have each received gifts from the Holy Spirit. Humbly listening to one another helps us to recognize the Holy Spirit in our midst, present and active in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. How do you experience the Holy Spirit in your life? How do you see the Holy Spirit active in the lives of others?

MISSION

“The Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centered on ourselves. Our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This synodal process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially to those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God’s kingdom.”

- The mission of the Church is evangelization, and so our personal mission is evangelization. What does evangelization mean to you? What positive images or models of evangelization do you have, and what negative images or models of evangelization do you have? How can you adapt these positive images or models to your own faith life?
- There are many who are on the “spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world.” Reflect on each of these dimensions. Through the Synod, how can we reach out and grow in relationship with people on these various peripheries?