



How to keep the synodal spirit alive



The Synod brought us together to listen and learn about each other's experiences with church life, so that we may be more closely united on our journey together as children of God. The conversations about who and what we are, are meant to continue after the formal synodal gatherings. In fact, each of us is called and invited to keep those conversations going.

When we come together with open hearts and minds, and focus on truly listening to each other, we are more open to hearing the Holy Spirit and what God is saying to us. Having conversations in the spirit of the synod helps people to understand that they have a voice, and that their Church and their neighbor cares about what they have to say. The synodal experience leaves people with a feeling that they matter to their parish, their diocese, and to the mission of the universal Church.

How can we keep the synodal spirit going? Although we can check to see what our parishes and diocese may be doing, the work truly lies with each of us. We do not need to wait for direction from the pulpit. Pope Francis and our bishop, Bishop David Zubik, have encouraged us to each do our part to seek out ways to build community and unity where we are.

Reflecting and listening to each other through synodal conversations is a way of renewing the Church so that we may carry out her mission of bringing people home to Jesus in the strongest way.

We each have something to learn through listening to one another and the Holy Spirit. Remember, the goal of a synod is not to solve a problem immediately, the goal is to unite people in conversation, so that we have a better understanding of each other, which brings us closer to each other, and to Jesus. Listening is key ingredient for a healthy conversation. Through listening without judgement or debate, we are blessed with hearing what's on someone's heart. We have so much to learn from each other, and through each other, about what God is calling us to do.

Here are 6 ideas for how to keep the synodal spirit alive:

1. Explore what's going on in your parish and the diocese. Look to make new connections by becoming involved in groups and ministries that interest you.
2. Truly listen to those in your care; spouses, parents, teachers, members of the clergy – we all have an opportunity to spend more quality time with those around us and initiate conversations around our experiences with our faith.
3. Leverage your personal relationships. Reach out to those you see in church as well as to those you no longer see.
4. Invite someone to join you for a cup of coffee or tea, a walk, or just to sit and share time and conversation together.
5. If you struggle to find the right way to begin a conversation, consider getting right to the core of the matter by asking, "What fills your heart and what breaks your heart about the Catholic Church?"
6. Pray for the Church. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue to lead and inspire us on this beautiful journey to heaven.