



Parish Listening Sessions

Participant Guide

Dear Participant,
On behalf of Bishop Cotta and the Diocesan Synod Planning Committee, thank you for being present at this listening session to pray, reflect and share your experience and wisdom so that together we can help form a more synodal and listening church.

“The Synodal journey is “both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, to open Herself to mission” (Preparatory Document 1).

Together we begin this Synodal journey. To assist with the table sharing, the facilitator will guide you through the questions allowing time for reflection and dialogue. It is so important to speak your truth and to listen to those at your table speak their truth without judgement...to speak without judgement and to listen without judgement...a difficult task, but one that will allow one another to speak their truth without fear and to truly listen and to hear the Holy Spirit guiding us into a future church.

The note taker will record the three main points from your dialogue. These reports will be given to the Synodal Planning Committee who will synthesis the reports from all the parishes, give them to Bishop Cotta who will then send them on to the USCCB and then on to Rome. Bishop Cotta will use the diocesan synthesis for the Church of Stockton.

Come, Holy Spirit! You inspire new tongues and place words of life on our lips... Come among us, so that in this synodal experience we will not lose our enthusiasm, dilute the power of prophecy, or descend into useless and unproductive discussions.

*Come, Spirit of love, open our hearts to hear your voice!
Come, Holy Spirit of holiness, renew the holy and faithful
People of God! Come, Creator Spirit, renew the face of the
earth! Amen.*

(Pope Francis on the opening of the synod, October 9, 2021)



DIocese of Stockton

Listening Session Agenda

Time Frame: 2 hours

Format: Small Group Discussion

7:00 a.m. - 7:05 a.m.	Welcome and Introduction (5 min)
7:05 a.m. - 7:10 a.m.	Opening Prayer (5 min)
7:10 a.m. - 7:25 a.m.	Overview of Purpose and Process (15 min)
7:25 a.m. - 7:43 a.m.	Question 1—Listening & Journeying (18 min)
7:43 a.m. - 8:01 a.m.	Question 2—Listening to All of God's People (18 min)
8:01 a.m. - 8:19 a.m.	Question 3—Listening & Inviting (18 min)
8:19 a.m. - 8:37 a.m.	Question 4—Listening & Connecting (18 min)
8:37 a.m. - 8:55 a.m.	Question 5—Listening to the Holy Spirit (18 min)
8:55 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Thank You & Closing Prayer (5 min)

Key Elements of the Synod

Communion

- We are spread out across our entire diocese, but God unites us as one
- The aim is not for all of us to be the same, but to walk forward together, sharing a common path and embracing our diversity within the rule of faith
- The communion that God builds in our midst is stronger than any divisions

Participation

- The lay faithful have a true participation in the life of the Church.
- What are the practices of teamwork and co-responsibility which could lead to greater participation within our hierarchically structured communities?
- How are lay ministries and the assumption of responsibility by the faithful promoted?

Mission

- Every Christian has a vital role to play in the mission of the Church
- All the baptized are living stones in building up the Body of Christ
- No one is excluded from the joy of the Gospel • Lay people have a special mission in witnessing to the Gospel in all parts of human society
- As disciples of Jesus, we are leaven in the midst of humanity so that the kingdom of God may rise across the entire world.



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Listening Session Welcome & Opening Prayer



Welcome message from Bishop Myron J. Cotta:

Brothers and Sisters,

It is with much joy and gratitude that I welcome you to this Synod listening session. This session along with all the listening sessions that are being held throughout the world, are fundamental to the 2023 Synod.

Pope Francis has invited the universal Catholic Church to participate in the Synod of Bishops scheduled to take place in Rome in October 2023. His Holiness is inviting the

People of God to journey together, in **Communion, Participation and Mission**.

Together as the Body of Christ, we will listen to one another, dialogue, pray, and discern what the Spirit is saying to us in these gatherings. We do this as the Body of Christ who journey together for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

These listening sessions will have an impact throughout the Diocese of Stockton. Over the past several years, the Pastoral Staff has begun working with parishes throughout the diocese to implement the vision entitled **AS ONE**. It is a vision for our diocese that encourages all to work together for the common good by sharing insights, best practices, and resources to create a unified and vibrant diocesan faith community. With your input in these listening sessions, we will be able to bring this vision of **AS ONE** to fruition.

I thank you for participating in this session of open dialogue and attentive listening. Listening to each other's experience and listening to the movement of the Spirit amongst you is vital. Pope Francis said that the Synod "...is a grace filled event, a process of healing, guided by the Spirit."

Please know that my prayers are with you as we journey together sharing your wisdom for the healing and future of the Church throughout the Diocese of Stockton and the world. Let us take the Spirit's lead!

In the Peace of Christ,

Leader: Let Us Pray

L: Come, Holy Spirit

R: Fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love

L: Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R: and you shall renew the face of the earth

L: O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructed the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Spirit we may know what is right and always rejoice in his consolation, through Christ our Lord.

R: Amen



DIocese of Stockton

Leader: The Spirit of God, who illuminates and vivifies this “journeying together” of the Churches, is the same Spirit who works in the mission of Jesus, promised to the Apostles and to the generations of disciples who hear God’s Word and put it into practice. The Spirit, according to the Lord’s promise, does not limit himself to confirming the continuity of the Gospel of Jesus, but will illuminate the ever-new depths of his Revelation and inspire the decisions necessary to sustain the church’s journey. (PD 16)

Reader: Brothers and sisters let us listen to the Word of God (Jn 14:25-26, 15:26-27, 16:12-15)

“I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you.” (Pause)

“When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.” (Pause)

“I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.

Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.”

Silent Reflection

Leader: Now let us say the official prayer of the Synod together.

*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

Table Sharing Question 1 – Listening & Journeying

The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and for evermore. Psalms 121:8 (English Standard Version)

Question 1: Listening & Journeying - A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in our parish? What are additional ways we need to adopt to communicate with more people of God and invite their participation?

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflections in your booklet.

Table Sharing Guidelines

Be Attentive/Reflective at the table	Provide Opening for Others to Share	Speak Clearly and with Respect	Be aware of Time Allotted for the process	Be an Open Minded Listener	Pause Briefly between Speakers
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Key convictions for a Synodal Church

- Listen to one another in order to listen to the Holy Spirit
- In a spirit of prayer, grounded in the liturgy and the Word of God
- An experience shared with one another, not just filling out a questionnaire
- A process, not a one-time event
- Discerning together so that the decisions made are for the good of all

Question 2 – Listening to All of God’s People

“Know this, my beloved: let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.”
James 1:19 (English Standard Version)

Question 2: Listening to All of God’s People – How does our parish intentionally listen to the voices that are in our midst including those voices on the peripheries, especially cultural groups, women, youth, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalization or social exclusion? Whose wisdom might we be missing?

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflections.

Question 3 – Listening & Inviting

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us.”
Hebrews 12:1 (New American Revised Edition)

Question 3: Listening & Inviting – How well do we listen to those persons who currently share their gifts in our parish ministries? (Liturgical ministries, outreach to the homebound, religious education, and services to the poor.) How might we better invite and train the faithful to become involved in our vital parish ministries?

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflections.

Question 4 - Listening & Connecting

“And the glory which you have given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” John 17:22 (American Standard Version)

Question 4: Listening & Connecting- Our diocese is working toward a vision of being an As One Church envisioning a unified and vibrant diocesan faith-community of laity, religious and clergy working closely together. How might our parish make better connections with our neighboring parishes, the Diocese of Stockton and the universal Church?

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflections.

Question 5 – Listening to the Holy Spirit

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Romans 15:13 (English Standard)

Question 5: Listening to the Holy Spirit- After everything we have heard today, what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together” As One?

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflections.

Closing Prayer

*Loving God of beginnings and endings,
as we prepare to conclude this listening session,
we once again lift our hearts to You, the Divine Source of All Life.*

*We thank You for the gifts that have been present;
the gifts of fellowship and understanding, of mutual respect and shared vision,
the gifts of perseverance and of insight into the common concerns we share.
For these and all the graces of which we are unaware, we thank You.*

*As You have blessed our coming together,
now bless our departure and journeys homeward with Your abiding presence.
Amen.*

Thank you for being here! Please encourage your family and friends, especially those not active in a parish, to participate in the Synod by attending a Parish Listening Session or by going to [Synod 2021-2023 - Diocese of Stockton - Stockton, CA \(stocktondiocese.org\)](https://stocktondiocese.org/synod) to complete an individual survey. If you have additional input you would like to provide to Bishop Cotta you may complete an individual survey also.

