



DIOCESE OF OAKLAND



Facilitator's Guide 2021-2023 Synod Listening Sessions Full Parish Session

Summary

The Diocese of Oakland is interested in your contribution to the Holy Father's call for a Synod on Synodality. We have produced separate guides for a full parish session, youth/young adult session, and a ministry/catholic organization session. This is the guide for the full parish session.

The guide provides a timeline for a two-hour session with a Phase One dedicated to Prayer and Phase Two dedicated to listening. To properly prepare for the session, we are offering some suggestions to make your work go smoothly.

Goal: We have been reminded that what is most important is the process of synodality not the reporting. The most important goal is to listen, pray and journey together. We want Catholics to recall their experiences and discern the voice of the Holy Spirit and where it is leading us. How is our journeying together realized today in the Church?

Outcome: At the end of the Diocesan process, the Synod Core team will present a report to Bishop Michael Barber, S.J. the report will then be shared with the USCCB and ultimately delivered to the Vatican.

Timeline: The general Diocesan timeline is included in the attached resources. Listening sessions must be conducted between Mid-January through Mid-March, with final reports submitted no later than March 31, 2022.

Recommendations: Please make sure that the information gathered during the listening sessions is submitted to your Parish Recorder no later than March 15, 2022. The Parish Recorder will incorporate your information into a final report that will be approved by the parish priest/administrator and submitted to the diocese by March 31, 2022. The Synodality Core Team will review and summarize all the information submitted for a presentation to Bishop Barber, and upon his approval, the final report to the Vatican will be published for all to see.

Before you begin your session, we recommend that you gather your team (facilitators, lectors, scribes) and walk through the session agenda. At each session, please have paper and pencils on hand for personal reflections. Many people may be shy about sharing in a group, yet their voices are important to be included. Additional resources you might consider are:

- Welcoming video from the Synod Core Team: <https://vimeo.com/651681877>

- Powerpoint presentation sharing the sequence of the listening session. This can be located and downloaded at <https://oakdiocese.org/synod-resources>
- Vatican resources: <https://www.synod.va/en.html>
- USCCB: <https://www.usccb.org/synod>

Hopefully there will be space to have breakout rooms outside of the sanctuary, but if not, clearly conclude the Adoration and send groups to different parts of the sanctuary for their sessions, before returning to the larger group.

Suggested Roles for a Listening Session, Note that these roles may be combined, for example the Lector could also be a scribe, scribes may take notes in a small session as well as a larger session.

- Head Facilitator (this may be the Pastor or his delegate) Opens session, makes introductions, leads Adoration, gives directions to small group breakouts, brings group back, leads discussion, submits final report
- Lector: Proclaims the Scripture.
- Small group facilitators: Leads breakout groups, distributes paper & pens
- Scribe for larger sessions: Takes notes when the participants are together as a group
- Scribes for breakout session: does summary to larger group after breakout sessions

Expectations for Small Group Facilitators

- Select Lay-Leaders who are excellent at encouraging sharing, are kind listeners, and genuinely values the input of others.
- They must have a clear understanding of the purpose of the synod, and how the listening session fits within the synod process.
- Facilitators must be prepared to share the questions for the listening session and reword them as necessary to draw out answers.
- The Listening Session is a time to receive information, not debate or discuss. Some sharers may provide answers that are unexpected, or may seem irrelevant, however it is important to affirm everyone's ability to share their answer.
- If one sharer contests another sharers answer, the facilitator should be able to kindly refocus the group to the objective of the question.

Vatican Resource:

<https://www.synod.va/en/documents/tools-for-facilitating-synodal-consultation.html>

Expectations for Participants

- Ask your participants to bring the following attitudes:
 - Active Listening
 - Invite them to embrace the action of the Holy Spirit
 - Allow God to Lead
 - Focus on Others

- Leave behind
 - Self-centeredness
 - Division and discord
 - Fear and self-doubt

Checklist

1. Identify Your Team (Facilitators, Lectors, Scribes) and hold a Planning Session
2. Schedule Listening Sessions
3. Advertise in Bulletin, at Mass, Facebook, etc.
4. Bring supplies, including pens, papers, waters, flip-chart, Facilitator Reporting Form
5. Conduct Listening Sessions & Thank Participants
6. Compile Comments and Enter Into Reporting Form (Make sure to collect Demographic/Age information for each session)
7. Submit Report from your Listening Session to Parish Reporter
8. Parish Reporter submits approved Parish Report to the Diocese using the Reporting Form located at oakdiocese.org/synod-listening-session-reporting-form
9. Share results with parishioners



DIOCESE OF OAKLAND



Synod Listening Session Full Parish Session

Facilitator Introduction

Hello and welcome. We are here to journey together in the Synod. Our Synod themes are communion, participation, and mission. We will spend time together in prayer, Adoration, listening and talking among ourselves to discern our responses to the question asked of us by the Synod Core Team and reviewed by our shepherd, Bishop Barber.

The purpose of the Synod, and the listening sessions, 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. FRANCIS, Address at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People (3 October 2018).

The voice of everyone here is so important and valued. With us we have me as facilitator, our scribe, our pastor (if present) and individuals who will lead our smaller group sessions.

We will pray together and then break into small groups, share reflections, and ultimately report back to the larger group. Either myself or our pastor will deliver our comments to a confidential Diocesan email. The Synod Core team will then collect all the listening session reports and prepare a report for Bishop Barber and ultimately the Vatican.

Background on the Synod on Synodality. (syn*od*ality)

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, opened the Synod on October 10, 2021. The Synod is a process rooted in the history of the Catholic Church. Synod can be interpreted as walking together or as the path along which the People of God walk together.

Our Synod process will gather groups from our parishes, schools and Catholic organizations to prayerfully discern and explore our relationship with our church and our Lord Jesus Christ. After these listening sessions, responses will be collected, presented to Bishop Barber and sent to the Vatican. The final process will culminate in a gathering of bishops from throughout the world in 2023.

PHASE ONE: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (One Hour)

Come Holy Spirit (song, see lyrics in attached resource material)

1. Synod Opening Prayer

*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.*

2. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

3. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (20 mins)

4. Reading of the Word of God JN 14: 15-27 (see resource)

5. Quiet reflection (5 mins)

6. Preview: questions introduced and quiet reflection (10 mins)

The Catholic Church's mission is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ (Mk 16:15). Each member of the Church is called by baptism to play an active part in the mission of the Church. A synodal approach to doing this means that we "journey together" as we listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit in carrying out our mission. Please consider and provide us feedback on the following questions.

- What are some things you are facing in life right now that you hope the Church will accompany you in?
- How do you see yourself sharing in the Church work of being Christ's life and love for the whole world?

- What are the joys in carrying out journeying together? What helps or hinders us in this?
- How and where is the Holy Spirit calling us to grow in journeying with one another?

7. Benediction

After a period of meditation and reflection all join in singing the *Tantum Ergo*.

*Down in adoration falling, This great Sacrament we hail; Over ancient forms of worship Newer rites of grace prevail;
Faith will tell us Christ is present, When our human senses fail.
To the everlasting Father, And the Son who made us free, And the Spirit, God proceeding
From them Each eternally, Be salvation, honor, blessing,
Might and endless majesty. Amen.*

*Tantum ergo Sacramentum Veneremur cernui,
Et antiquum documentum Novo cedat ritui;
Praestet fides supplementum Sensuum defectui.
Genitori Gentioque Laus et jubilatio,
Salus, honor, virtus quoque Sit et benedictio; Procedenti ab utroque Compar sit laudatio. Amen*

8. Reposition

Divine Praises:

Blessed be God.

Blessed be his holy name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

Blessed be the name of Jesus.

Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be his most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and Mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in his angels and in his saints.

Amen.

PHASE TWO PARISH MODEL: Listening to the Holy Spirit

BREAK INTO SMALL GROUPS (To ensure that everyone is able to share, we recommend groups no larger than five per small group, but do what works best for your situation)

Introduction of the small group facilitator and ask for a volunteer scribe. Distribute paper and pens.

Facilitator reads question(s):

- What are some things you are facing in life right now that you hope the Church will accompany you in?
- How do you see yourself sharing in the Church work of being Christ's life and love for the whole world?
- What are the joys in carrying out journeying together? What helps or hinders us in this?
- How and where is the Holy Spirit calling us to grow in journeying with one another?

The Scribe can write these question in a place where participants can see, or the Facilitator can request participants to take note of all questions.

Invite every person to speak or write their thoughts down. Reminder, not everyone is comfortable speaking, so writing thoughts down will be welcome. The group's scribe takes notes and reports back the larger group, with a summary of responses that emerged through the conversation.

Reporting Process: Please submit your feedback to your Parish Recorder no later than March 15, 2022. The Parish Recorder will incorporate your feedback into a final report to the diocese by March 31, 2022. The Synodality Core Team will review and summarize all feedback for a presentation to Bishop Barber and upon his approval, the final report to the Vatican will be published for all to see.

Thank you for participating in the Oakland diocese Synod on Synodality. We are excited to listen to your feedback as we seek to "walk together" in our mission to bring Jesus Christ to the hearts and souls of our diocese.

Facilitator Guide Resources

Lyrics, Come Holy Spirit (to be sung at opening of main session)

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest,
And in our hearts take up your rest;
Come with your grace and heav'nly aid
To fill the hearts which you have made,
To fill the hearts which you have made.

O Comforter, to you we cry,
The heav'nly gift of God most high;
The fount of life and fire of love,
And sweet anointing from above,
And sweet anointing from above.

To ev'ry sense your light impart,
And shed your love in ev'ry heart.
To our weak flesh your strength supply:
Unfailing courage from on high,
Unfailing courage from on high.

O grant that we through you may come
To know the Father and the Son,
And hold with firm, unchanging faith
That you are Spirit of them both,
That you are Spirit of them both.

Now let us praise Father and Son,
And Holy Spirit, with them one;
And may the Son on us bestow
The gifts that from the Spirit flow,
The gifts that from the Spirit flow.

JN: 14: 15-27 The Advocate.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you.

I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live.

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.

Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”

Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him, “Master, [then] what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.

Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

“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.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

The Gospel of the Lord

DIOCESAN TIMELINE

Synod Timeline

