Diocese of Victoria Consultation Outline  
(To be used as is or to be modified to your particular parish)

I. Music / Sacred Scripture / Gathering Prayer
II. Short remarks by Bishop Cahill (recorded message) or Pastor
III. Explanation of the Purpose, Roles, and Process of Synodality
IV. Actual Consultation with Questions – presented with reflection time
   1. Introduction of Main Questions & Discussion Guidelines
   2. Table Discussions in small groups – depends on size of group
   3. Large Group Feedback
V. Brief Evaluation
VI. Sending Forth Prayer
VII. Parish Feedback Report to Diocese
Preparation for a Consultation:

I. Each pastor is to determine the two (2) groups to invite for consultation:
   1. Representatives of active members in the life of the Church, for example, representatives in the parish of: liturgical groups, catechists of adults/youth, service organizations, faith sharing groups, etc.
   2. Representatives of other groups that are either on the margins of our parish or the pastor feels are not represented in the active group, for example, fallen away Catholics, homebound, widows, divorced, disabled, homeless, etc.

II. Invitations are sent out to each identified group about two weeks before the date of their consultation via phone call, email, or hard copy invitations from the pastor (example attached). Invitation should include:
   1. What the consultation event is: an opportunity to discuss and to discern what the Holy Spirit is calling our parish to focus on in our journey together in Christ’s mission.
   2. Why this person is invited to the consultation, what role do they have in our parish?
   3. The details of the event: date, place, and time of consultation.
   4. The two basic questions to begin pondering:
      a. How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish?
      b. How is the Holy Spirit inviting your parish community to grow in “journeying together”?
SUGGESTED CONTENT OUTLINE FOR CONSULTATION

I. Scripture and Gathering Prayer
   • *Opening Song: An appropriate hymn *optional (list of suggested songs provided)
   • Word of God: Scripture passages from the Synod Handbook and Preparatory Document (provided)
   • Quiet reflection time on the presence of the Holy Spirit within our parish.
   • Prayer for the Synod on Synodality or Prayer to the Holy Spirit (provided)

II. Remarks by Bishop Cahill or Pastor (perhaps in video or audio form)
   • What is this Synod on Synodality, and why is it important? This is a special time of prayer, listening, dialogue, and discerning recommendations for our Church. The Synodal process invites each one of us – the People of God – to recall that we journey together. Moreover, in that journey of faith, we are called to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. (c.f. Preparatory Document no. 27)
   • This is not a process to identify what doctrine should be changed; Truth remains unchanged. This is an opportunity to identify what truths need to be taught or clarified moving forward.
   • Share the Bishop’s personal desire to listen to the people of God share their prayers, works, joys and sufferings and collectively learn how the Holy Spirit is present in our diocese.

III. Explanation of the Purpose, Roles, and Process

Explanation of the Purpose
   • Our synod journey takes place in the midst of where the Church ordinarily lives and works in the day to day lives of the faithful. A synodal Church is one that “journeys together” seeking communion, participation, and mission.
   • This is your opportunity to respond to the request from Pope Francis to dream about the Church we are called to be: one that seeks communion with God and each other, full participation in the life of the Church, and moving forward together to fulfill Christ’s mission.
   • By gathering as a people of faith, we hope to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, to warm hearts, and to restore strength for our common mission, to bring the Good News of God’s Love to those around us.
   • By the end of our time together, we aim to capture your answers to the basic question: What is the Holy Spirit saying to our Church today?
Explanation of the Roles

- Main Facilitator (for large group)
- Main Scribe (reporting on the large group discussion)
- Table Facilitators (for small groups)
- Table Scribes (reporting on table discussions)
- Parish Feedback – synthesized report to Bishop (sent within 2 weeks of consult):
  1. Demographics – Who attended
  2. Context – What type of gathering occurred?
  3. Methodology – How was information collected?
  4. Emerging Themes, Topics, Questions, Recommendations

Explanation of the Process

1. Large Group Main Facilitator:
   1. explains the discussion guidelines
   2. presents the questions for reflection
   3. turns over discussion to table facilitators
2. Table Facilitators and Table Scribes:
   1. facilitates meaningful exchanges between participants about the questions given (encouraging positive focus forward)
   2. ensures silent pauses to process emerging ideas and feelings
   3. table scribes record emerging themes, feelings, suggestions
3. Regather into Larger Group for Conclusion
   1. Table scribes report on small group discussions
   2. Large Group Scribe gathers feedback and gives brief summary
   3. Evaluation forms (attached)
   4. Parish Feedback sent to the Bishop’s office: Deadline May 1, 2022
      (sooner is better)

Sending Forth Prayer  (or use your own)

Leader: Let us take a moment of quiet as we reflect on what we have done here today…
Reader: A reading from the Letter of St. James
        James 1:19-20, 22a
        Know this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of a man does not accomplish the righteousness of God…
        Be doers of the word and not hearers only. (New American Bible, Revised Edition)
Leader: Come Holy Spirit, we ask you, that by your inspiration, may all of our prayers and actions always begin from you and inspire others to know you more deeply. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen
Leader: Let us conclude by sharing a Sign of Peace with our neighbor.
Discussion Guidelines for Consultations *(or make your own rules)*

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 and others listen attentively.

3. We all listen with an open mind.

4. Discernment means speaking, listening, and prayerfully reflecting, so we will be pausing periodically to reflect and pray.

5. Keep your comments reasonably brief, so others have time to participate.

6. We will only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.

7. We will be reporting the themes and experiences that emerge in our conversations to the diocese without indicating the names of individual participants.

8. We will use the Respectful Communication Guidelines (from the USCCB):

   **R:** take **RESPONSIBILITY** for what you say and feel, and use words that others can hear and understand

   **E:** use **EMPATHETIC** listening, not just words but also feelings being expressed, non-verbal language and silence

   **S:** be **SENSITIVE** to differences in communication styles

   **P:** **PONDER** on what you hear and feel before you speak

   **E:** **EXAMINE** your own assumptions and perceptions

   **C:** keep **CONFIDENTIALITY**

   **T:** **TRUST** the process because we are not here to judge who is right or wrong but to experience true dialogue through sincere sharing.
Suggested Script:

Facilitator: The guiding theme of our discussions today is a synodal Church, a Church who listens and “journeys together.” We want to include all of God’s People in our sharing of how we see our “journeying together” in ministry. For example, how do we outreach to the poor and vulnerable? What do our prayer and liturgical celebrations look like? Are conversion experiences and faith sharing experiences occurring within our Church? These are just some of the topics to keep in mind as we strive to reflect upon and answer the questions we will present for table discussions. But before we begin with our table discussions, let us go over the Discussion Guidelines (attached).

Main Questions:

1. How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish?
2. How is the Holy Spirit inviting your parish community to grow in “journeying together”?

Table Discussion Questions:

1. How is this “journeying together” happening today in our parish?

Take a moment to reflect and write down your personal thoughts on each category before we begin our sharing.

- **Communion:** *In the Church and in society we are side-by-side on the same road.*
  1. What experiences are already happening in our parish that illustrate our “journeying together”? (the joys/strengths of our parish life)
  2. What groups or individuals do you feel may be left on the margins?
  3. What obstacles or perceptions may have kept them/you from feeling connected to the parish?

- **Participation:** *The members of the People of God are united by Baptism, and ... “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)
  1. How are the baptized members of our parish able to participate in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel?
  2. How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in our parish?
  3. What do you think hinders people from being active in our parish?

- **Mission:** *A listening Church is at the service of the mission of the Church.*
  1. In what ways is our parish proclaiming the mission of the Church?
  2. What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations?
  3. How does our parish help members who serve society in various ways live out their service to society in a missionary way?
2. How is the Holy Spirit inviting our parish community to grow in “journeying together”?

*In a listening Church, we make decisions through the discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.*

- **Communion:** How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue?

- **Participation:** What types of prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our parish life?

- **Mission:** Since we are all missionary disciples, how are we each called to participate in the mission of the Church?