

A Synodal Church is a Listening Church

SYNODAL LISTENING INTERIM PHASE GUIDE FOR LEADER / PASTOR



ARCHDIOCESE
OF NEW YORK



WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE SYNOD?

The Synod got underway in the Fall of 2021, with the consultation of the faithful around the world, including the Archdiocese of New York. That listening helped shape the themes and questions considered at the Synod Assembly in October 2023. The Synod concludes this October with a second Synod Assembly. During this interim phase between the two Synod Assemblies, the Vatican has invited us to take a second consultation, this time on the theme of the co-responsibility of the baptized. “As members of the faithful People of God, all the baptized are co-responsible for mission, each according to his or her vocation, competence and experience.

“Therefore, all contribute to imagining and discerning steps to reform Christian communities and the Church as a whole.” (*A Synodal Church on Mission*, 3c)

HOW ARE THE PARISHES INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Two main sessions will be held at St. Joseph’s Seminary in Yonkers on Saturday, March 23 from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM for English speakers and 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM for Spanish speakers. Parishes throughout the archdiocese are invited to hold additional remote sessions that can connect through a livestream connection to the main sessions. It is our hope that a remote session will take place in each deanery.

All are welcome to participate in this phase of the consultation. In particular, we are asked to consider ways to listen to groups who did not participate extensively in the previous consultation.

WHO LEADS THE SESSIONS?

Synodal listening happens in small groups of 4-6. Each group needs a note taker and a small group facilitator. In this consultation, we will use the Conversation in the Spirit model which was used at the Rome Synod Assembly of October 2023.

IS TRAINING AVAILABLE?

More information on training for small group facilitators to come.

HOW WILL FEEDBACK BE PROCESSED?

Since our archdiocesan synodal report is due Monday, April 8, feedback from each session will be collected immediately at the end of the listening session for chancery staff to review and synthesize. Chancery staff will recruit a volunteer to attend each remote session to collect feedback and return it to the chancery offices. We will scan and email copies of each session to the person you appoint.

SAMPLE PROGRAM FOR LEADER / PASTOR

OPENING PRAYER

Leader welcomes and invites everyone to a moment of quiet reflection. After about 30 seconds, the leader opens the session in prayer. Here is a sample prayer:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Gracious and loving God, we gather in your presence, seeking Your guidance and inspiration as we continue this journey of synodality. Open our hearts and minds to the movement of your Holy Spirit among us, that we may listen attentively and discern your will for our community. May our conversations be filled with Your grace, and may our actions reflect Your love. We entrust this time to you, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reader proclaims the Scripture reading.

Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

You may choose to read both reflections or one of your choosing.

The Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve. She is the normal, desired, most immediate and most visible fruit of this activity: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations.” Now, “they accepted what he said and were baptized. That very day about three thousand were added to their number... Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.” Having been born consequently out of being sent, the Church in her turn is sent by Jesus. The Church remains in the world when the Lord of glory returns to the Father. She remains as a sign – simultaneously obscure and luminous – of a new presence of Jesus, of His departure and of His permanent presence. She prolongs and continues Him. And it is above all His mission and His condition of being an evangelizer that she is called

upon to continue. For the Christian community is never closed in upon itself. The intimate life of this community – the life of listening to the Word and the apostles’ teaching, charity lived in a fraternal way, the sharing of bread this intimate life only acquires its full meaning when it becomes a witness, when it evokes admiration and conversion, and when it becomes the preaching and proclamation of the Good News. Thus it is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize, and the work of each individual member is important for the whole.

Pope Paul VI Evangelii Nuntiandi

Through the Sacrament of Baptism we enter into the life of Jesus, and “Are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.” (CCC 1213)

...this People of God in the Body of Christ...must no longer be viewed as “collaborators” of the clergy but truly recognized as “co-responsible,” for the Church’s being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity...to prevent them from losing their identity and vigour they must be taught to listen prayerfully to the word of God through the practice of *lectio divina*, as the recent Synod of Bishops ardently hoped. Let us truly draw nourishment from listening, from meditating on the word of God. Our communities must not lack the knowledge that they are “Church”, because Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, convokes them and makes them his People.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the theme, “Church Membership and Pastoral Co-responsibility”

INTRODUCTION TO THE SYNODAL PROCESS

Leader invites all to join in the Adsumus prayer, and provides instructions on the next steps of the listening session and synodal process.

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.

Sample script: “The word *Synod* literally means ‘together on the way.’ Synodality is a practice of prayer and listening which goes back to the earliest days of the Church. Pope Francis is inviting us to reclaim this ancient practice and make it part of the way the Church operates at every level. As Pope Francis has emphasized, the protagonist of the Synod is the Holy Spirit. This process is about taking time to listen to one another and to the Holy Spirit. The listening we did back in 2022 helped prepare the way for the Synod Assembly of October 2023, in which about 400 delegates from around the world – including His Eminence Cardinal Dolan – participated. Now, we’re being invited to undertake a second consultation, this time, on the theme of the call of the baptized to participate fully in the mission of the Church – our co-responsibility for carrying out the mission of Christ.”

SYNODAL LISTENING IN SMALL GROUPS

Approximately 96 minutes total. In groups of 4–6, small group facilitators explain the Conversation in the Spirit model and choose a note taker. Below is an outline.

Question 1 – Round 1

Each person has two minutes to share.

Where have I seen or experienced successes within the Church’s structure(s) / organization / leadership / life that encourage the mission? How can we expand on that?

Sample script: “In this first round, each person will have two minutes to share. Do your best to stay within your allotted time. Please note, if you go over your time, someone else may not have a chance to share.”

Question 1 – Round 2

Five minutes

What did you hear in round 1? Very briefly, just a word, a phrase, a sentence.

Sample script: “Thank you for sharing. Now let us take a time of silence to reflect on what we have heard, and where we sense the Holy Spirit moving in our midst today.”

[After one to two minutes of silence:] “Now I invite each person to share, very briefly, just a word, a phrase, a sentence about what is staying with you from the sharing in round 1. It can be a theme you hear emerging, or a thought that is staying with you.”

Question 1 – Round 3

Each person has two minutes to share.

What did you hear in round 2? Is there a common theme or word that Holy Spirit is bringing forward?

Sample script: “Thank you for sharing. Once again, let us take a time of silence to reflect on what we have heard, and where we sense the Holy Spirit moving in our midst today.” Is there a common theme or word that Holy Spirit is bringing forward? *[After one to two minutes of silence:]* “Now I invite each person to share, very briefly, just a word, a phrase, a sentence about what is staying with you. It can be a theme you hear emerging, or a thought that is staying with you.”

Question 2 – Round 1

Each person has two minutes to share.

How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy in Christ?

Sample script: “In this first round, each person will have two minutes to share. Do your best to stay within your allotted time. Please note, if you go over your time, someone else may not have a chance to share.”

Question 2 – Round 2

Five minutes

What did you hear in round 1? Very briefly, just a word, a phrase, a sentence.

Sample script: “Thank you for sharing. Now let us take a time of silence to reflect on what we have heard, and where we sense the Holy Spirit moving in our midst today.” *[After one to two minutes of silence:]* “Now I invite each person to share, very briefly, just a word, a phrase, a sentence about what is staying with you from the sharing in round 1. It can be a theme you hear emerging, or a thought that is staying with you.”

Question 2 – Round 3

Each person has two minutes to share.

What did you hear in round 2? Is there a common theme or word that Holy Spirit is bringing forward?

Sample script: “Thank you for sharing. Once again, let us take a time of silence to reflect on what we have heard, and where we sense the Holy Spirit moving in our midst today.” Is there a common theme or word that Holy Spirit is bringing forward? *[After one to two minutes of silence:]* “Now I invite each person to share, very briefly, just a word, a phrase, a sentence about what is staying with you. It can be a theme you hear emerging, or a thought that is staying with you.”

Group sharing

Thirty minutes

Representatives from the small groups talk about what their group shared. Each group representative has two minutes to share.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Five minutes

Leader Reflection: In the spirit of synodality, let us reflect on the unity we share as members of the Body of Christ. Synodality invites us to walk together, embracing diversity and seeking our Lord together.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, we thank you for the gift of synodality, which invites us to journey together in faith and communion. As we go forth today may your Holy Spirit continue to guide us and inspire us to be faithful witnesses to your Gospel. Grant us the grace to seek unity and grow in charity. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CLOSING SONG



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



ARCHDIOCESE
OF NEW YORK

archny.org/synod