



Diocese of Wilmington

2022 Diocesan Synodal Consultation



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Listening Session Facilitation Handbook
First Edition Revised – March 7, 2022

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The content contained in this document is adapted from the following:

- [Process for Facilitating Synodal Consultations](#) (Leadership Roundtable)
- [Official Vatican Synod website](#) (Vatican-Holy See Synod Office)
- [USCCB Synod website](#)

The synodal path is not only one of listening but also one of discernment that invites us to “reread” the experiences brought forth in our listening to discover joys and challenges, insights and opportunities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Some of the text in this Introduction is taken from the Vademecum (Synodal Handbook, Vatican)

A. Welcome & Thank you!

Welcome and thank you! We are grateful for your service to this vitally important effort to renew our Church and become better and more passionate disciples of the Lord. This is an opportunity for us in the Diocese of Wilmington to come together and to continue to grow as a Church under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

The material and information in this handbook is designed to assist you in both understanding the Synodal process and helping you to lead effectively as a facilitator for your parish, school, or organization. This handbook provides in-depth information about the meaning and purpose of a synod along with a recommended process for holding a consultation more commonly known as a Listening Session and referred to herein as such. It also offers some practical background materials, handouts, and resources for facilitating the process and then structuring your local report to be submitted online to the diocese. These can be found in the Appendix.

One of the first steps that the parish, school, or organization can do to initiate the planning for the synodal Listening Session is for the pastor or local leader to identify a team of people to organize and facilitate the Listening Session. This includes identifying people to facilitate the process by being small group leaders and additionally, finding reporters who will record the discussion of each small group. Additional information and resources for facilitators can be accessed and viewed at one's convenience online at the diocesan synod webpage: www.cdown.org/synod

As you begin, think of this synod process as a prayerful invitational to you and the member of the body you are serving to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to your hearts, desiring to engage us all in a conversation about the state of our Church, both locally and universally. Inspired and directed by our Lord, it is a moment of conversation and dialogue that seeks to find out what is working, what is not working, what is needed, and to identify the dreams we have as a parish and local community of the faithful moving forward.

And so we invite you, before you go further, to take just a moment, quiet yourself, and ask the Holy Spirit to fully open your heart and your mind as you embark on this journey. The Holy Spirit will guide and direct you in all that you will need to do and accomplish. Know that the prayers of our Holy Father and our Bishop are with all of us as we begin.

B. Answering the Pope's Invitation

Importance of your Experiences and Insights (Vademecum 1.2)

Pope Francis wants to hear from the whole Catholic Church about what is happening in local parishes, schools, Catholic organizations, and even those who are only loosely affiliated with the Church. The Pope and the Bishops would like to know what individuals think should be done to collectively enhance and improve our Church in all of its dimensions. The Pope has proposed a synodal process to accomplish gathering this information. Accordingly, on October 9, 2021, the Holy Father convoked and began the process for the *2021-2023 Synod on Synodality*. The word *synod* means "journeying together" and it

involves listening to the Holy Spirit and to one another. Through this listening encounter, a path will be discerned and made clear for all to journey on together.

We are participating in a world-wide encounter!

Our efforts to hold diocesan and local consultations or *listening sessions*, present an incredible opportunity for parishes, schools, and Catholic institutions to encounter, experience, and live out the synodal journey together. In this process, tools and pathways will be developed to best suit the local context. If this is done right, a new style will emerge and transform the local Church's pathway to synodality — in the end, we will all *journey together* better as a Church.

C. What it means to be a synodal Church and *journey together*?

In creating the opportunity for listening and dialogue on the local level through this Synod, Pope Francis is calling the Church to rediscover its deeply synodal nature. This rediscovery of the synodal roots of the Church will involve a process of humbly learning together how God is calling us to live and function as the Church in the third millennium. The Holy Father emphasizes that a synodal Church possesses three special qualities: **COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, MISSION.**

Communion — Conversations should lead to a conversion or a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Rooted in these conversations is an increased zeal towards a commitment to active participation in the mission handed onto each person by Jesus Christ.

Participation — The people of God are involved and talk to one another, listen, and discern answers to questions together.

Mission — Communion among one another exists for a shared common purpose (given to us by the Church), and mission flows naturally from the experience of communion.

In this context, *synodality* represents the path by which the Church can be renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, listening together to what God has to say to His people. This synodal journey unites all participants more deeply with each other as a people of God, and it sends each person out as a prophetic witness to embrace the entire family of humanity including fellow Christian denominations and other faith traditions (Vademecum 1.4).

D. Mission & Purpose of the Consultation

THIS SYNOD IS A DIFFERENT TYPE OF SYNOD EXPERIENCE

While recent Synods have examined themes such as the new evangelization, the family, young people, and the Amazon, the present Synod focuses on the topic of *synodality* itself, i.e. what a synod is all about. The current Synodal Process is guided by two fundamental questions:

- ***How does this “journeying together” take place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel?***
- ***What steps is the Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?***

In this light, the objective of the current Synod is to listen, as the entire People of God, to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. This is accomplished by:

- ✓ listening together to the Word of God in Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church, and then
- ✓ by listening to one another, and especially to those at the margins, discerning the signs of the times.

In fact, the whole Synodal Process aims at fostering a lived experience of discernment, participation, and co-responsibility, where a diversity of gifts is brought together for the Church's mission in the world. In summary, it is stated that,

In this sense, it is clear that the purpose of this Synod is not to produce more documents. Rather, it is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make peoples' hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission" (PD, 32).

Thus, the objective of this Synodal Process is a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in the third millennium.

It is especially important that this listening process happen in a spiritual setting that supports openness in sharing as well as hearing. For this reason, all are encouraged to root the local experience of the Synodal Process in meditation on Scripture, the liturgy, and prayer. This way, the journey of listening to one another will be an authentic experience of discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit for the Diocese of Wilmington. Authentic discernment is made possible where there is time for deep reflection and a spirit of mutual trust, common faith, and a shared purpose (Vademecum 1.2).

This meeting together is also meant to provide direction for us as the local Church in the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington helping us to improve our own communion, participation, and mission and better journey together!

For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission



II. LISTENING SESSION PROCESS

A. The Recommended Process

This recommended process contained herein is meant to be adapted to fit your particular parish, school, or organization. As you make your preparation, remember that this process at its heart is a spiritual moment of prayer, reflection, discernment, sharing, and most importantly one of listening to God and one another.

In a consultation, otherwise known as a listening session, we encourage people to gather together to reflect, individually respond, listen to each other, and see paths forward. It is recommended that this be done with both individual and group reflections, observations, and recommendations.

While it is best for this discernment and discussion to take place in-person, we know there will be instances (such as pandemic restrictions, health precautions, physical distance) that make face-to-face interaction difficult. In these cases, it is possible to use moderated online discussion groups, self-guided online activities, chat groups, phone calls, and various forms of virtual communication, as well as paper-based and online questionnaires when necessary.

As the diocese and its local communities plan these Listening Sessions, we recommend that prayer materials, biblical reflections, and sacred music, as well as works of art, poetry, and so on, also be used to stimulate reflection and dialogue. Visuals and audio provide powerful means of stimulating reflection and discussion.

For the sake of confidentiality, participants, including the facilitator and reporters, should NOT use electronic recording devices, including a person's cell phone.

The process suggested below combines elements from the Vatican's handbook-Vademecum, resources from the USCCB and suggestions from Leadership Roundtable Synod Handbook.

B. Facilitation Outline & Script

What follows is a general overview of the primary parts of a listening session. This is then followed by recommendations and a more detailed breakdown of each individual part of the sample listening session structure offered here.



Sample Outline for a Synodal Listening Session (Consultation)

- 1. Welcome, Gathering Prayer & Scripture Sharing (25 minutes)**
 - a) Introductory Words of Welcome & Agenda
 - b) Opening Song
 - c) The Synod Prayer to the Holy Spirit
 - d) Explanation of the Purpose
 - e) Listening to God in Prayer
 - f) Scripture Reading
 - g) Scripture Reflection & Small Group Sharing
- 2. Preparatory Remarks - Reflection on Synod Questions (15 minutes)**
 - a) Description of the Process
 - b) Overview of the Sharing Process
 - c) Best Practices for Effective Dialogue & Communication
 - d) Small Group Reflection Outline
- 3. Small Group Reflection & Sharing (60 minutes)**
 - a) Consultation with Questions
- 4. Large Group Sharing (20 minutes)**
- 5. Brief Evaluation (5 minutes)**
- 6. Next Steps & Sending Forth Prayer (10 minutes)**

The overall length of time suggested here for a listening session is a range between 120 to 150 minutes. Each community will need to adjust timing based on the amount of time available for the consultation. Please note, that if all components are included the average time is around 2.5 hours.

The facilitator's script on the following pages is meant to provide parishes, schools, and organizations with a step by step guide to planning, convening, and reporting on the fruits of your synodal consultation. The process suggested below combines elements from the Vatican's Vademecum, resources from the USCCB and suggestions from Leadership Roundtable Synod Handbook. A sample Power-point presentation is provided with slide numbers referenced in the script below.

Practical suggestions for organizing and facilitating the gathering of the local community can be found in Part III of this Handbook.

1. Welcome, Gathering Prayer & Scripture Sharing

(35 minutes, Slides 1-14)

People should be welcomed as they enter the meeting room. Play soft music in the background. Encourage facilitators to make sure the environment is hospitable, warm, and welcoming. The environment should be prayerful, holy.

a) Introductory Words of Welcome & Agenda (Slide 1-3)

- In your own words welcome everyone to the listening session.
- Thank the host of the hosting facility
- Present the Agenda for the Listening Session
 1. Introduction – Welcome, Prayer, & Scripture Reflection
 2. Sharing Process – Overview, Method, & Best Practices
 3. Small Group Reflection & Sharing
 4. Large Group Sharing
 5. Next Steps & Sending Forth Prayer
- If present, Welcome by Bishop or his Welcome Message Video may be shown:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSC7OR5kZZ0>

b) Opening Song (Slide 4)

- Play music - *Come Holy Spirit, Creator Blest* or another appropriate gathering hymn. (See Appendix 5.1)
- Participants are encouraged to listen to the beauty and words of the music
- YouTube Video of *Come Holy Ghost, Creator Blest* without Lyrics:
https://youtu.be/V_AKDFsvrPg
- YouTube Video of *Come Holy Spirit, Creator Blest* with Lyrics:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gVTUA2gfog&t=13>

c) The Synod Prayer to the Holy Spirit (See Appendix 5.2, Slide 5)

- Facilitator leads all in reciting the Synod Prayer found on the participant's worksheet

d) Explanation of the Purpose (Slide 6-8)

- The Facilitator should share with participants some of the points below speaking about the significance of this listening session experience and the meaning it will have for the Catholic Church, our diocese, parish, school, organization, etc.

(1) Purpose – We are *Journeying Together*

- Pope Francis and our Bishop Koenig have invited us to be part of a universal discussion on how we as Church journey together.
- This synodal journey is a special time of prayer, listening, dialogue, and recommendations for us to do together already united in Baptism as members of the Body of Christ, disciples of Jesus, and members of God's Family.
- Called to grow in communion, participation, and mission.
- This is your opportunity to respond to the request from Pope Francis to pray and dream about the Church we are called to be.

(2) Outcomes from *Journeying Together*

- What do we hope to achieve by the end of our time together?
- Spend time in prayer listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking directly to us.
- Listen to one another and the voice of the Holy Spirit speak through those with whom we are now gathered together.
- We aim to capture your answers to the basic questions: Where is the Holy Spirit already with us? What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do as a Church today?
- We will have gained new insights on our mission as Church and a deeper appreciation of the people we are in mission within our parish, school, or Catholic organization.
- The insights we gain from our local gathering can be used by our Bishop, diocese, parish, school, local organization and community to begin strengthening how we journey together!
- 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 know and love Jesus and share His Good News.

(3) Final Report - What will happen to our input from today?

- We will share a summary of our experiences and insights today first with the Bishop and the diocese. All of the listening session summaries for the Diocese of Wilmington will be compiled into a 10 page report by the Diocesan Synod Team. All Listening Session will be completed by May 31, 2022.
- This Diocesan Report is submitted to the USCCB – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops due by August 15, 2022.
- The USCCB will then prepare a 100 page report to send to the Vatican for inclusion with input from around the world for the Synod held by Pope Francis in October of 2023.

e) Listening to God in Prayer (Slide 9-11)

- The Facilitator instructs all about how God speaks to us in prayer and the necessity to make space for moments of silence to hear His voice. The Facilitator reads aloud 1 Kings 19:11-13 where God presents Himself to Elijah. (*See Appendix 5.3.1*)
- The Facilitator then shares that God speaks not through the “wind, earthquake, or fire” but with a “still small voice.” We need to remove the distractions and noise from our life the “winds, earthquakes, and fires” and provide quiet to hear the voice of the Lord.

f) Scripture Reading – *Lectio Divina* (Slide 12-13)

- Using *Lectio Divina*, the prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture the Facilitator will read the chosen passage once slowly.
- Everyone is encouraged to listen for a word, phrase, or image to be impressed upon them by the Lord.
- Facilitator invites all to reflect on the Scripture Reading in these or similar words:
Let us take a moment to let go of where we just came from. May we all enter into this Holy Moment with the presence of our God before our minds in our hearts. Let us open

our ears to listen to the Word of God as we invite the Holy Spirit to begin to speak to us today. May we hear how God in this Scripture Passage how God brings Christians together and touches and moves their very souls. As you listen to this passage from Scripture be attentive to a particular word, phrase, or image that stands out for you.

- Read aloud Acts 2:14-21, Acts 2:1-12, Luke 24:13-35 or another appropriate Scripture Reading. The Bishop favors Pentecost – Acts 2:1-8,11b-12. (See Appendix 5.3.2)

g) Scripture Reflection and Small Group Sharing (Slide 14)

- Allow at least two full minutes for people to sit in silent prayer.
- Facilitator then leads all Small Groups to share among themselves guided by each Small Group Leader:
 1. State your name.
 2. Was there a word, phrase, image that spoke to you as you heard this reading? What did you notice? Hear?
 3. Let the Holy Spirit lead you.
 4. There is no right or wrong way to do this.
 5. Just sit quietly with whatever is happening in your heart and what is touching your soul.
- Let each person speak and share what they heard from the scripture. Each member of the group will listen contemplatively without responding. Just receive and listen to what is shared.
- When everyone is finished sharing, sit quietly with what you have heard. You may wish to invite participants to write down ideas or insights.
- There will not be discussion, only contemplative listening.
- This should take about 5 minutes.
- Reporters do not need to take notes.

2. Preparatory Remarks - Reflection on Synod Questions

(10 minutes, Slides 15-19)

a. Description of the Process

Once the Small Group Sharing on the Scripture is completed. The session transitions now to focus on the reflection and discussion of the Two Primary Questions of the Synod. To prepare the group to do this properly, the Facilitator gives them an overview on how the reflection and sharing on the Two Questions will be conducted.

b. Overview of the Sharing Process (Slide 15-17)

- Prior to breaking into small groups of five to six people, the facilitator reiterates that the guiding theme of the discussions is a synodal Church, a Church that “journeys together” which requires good communication both sharing and listening.
- The Facilitator outlines the sharing process as follows:
 - a. The group focus for reflection will be on the Two Primary Question posed by the Holy Father.
 - b. The participants should have a worksheet in place that they will use which contains the Two Primary Questions and provides space for them to write down their own thoughts.
 - c. The content for sharing after a time of prayerful reflection will be the personal experiences and insights inspired by your prayer with the Holy Spirit.
 - d. The total length of sharing will be as follows:
 - i. The group will first reflect on the First Question for four minutes of Silent Prayer and then share together for 25 minutes.
 - ii. There will be a break for 10 minutes. During this time voluntary sharing with the group can continue if desired and the Reporters ensure that three Strengths and three Challenges have been recorded.
 - iii. The group will then reflect on the Second Question for four minutes of Silent Prayer and then share together for 25 minutes.
 - e. A specific outline of the Sharing Process is provided below under *iv. Small Group Reflection Outline*. This describes all of the steps in a detailed fashion and is solely provided to inform the Facilitator and the Leader about the actual process that needs to occur. This level of detail does not need to be shared with the group at-large.
- The Facilitator explains there are three Special Roles within each group as follows:
 - a. The Leader who facilitates the sharing, keeps time for the group, and helps the group to stay on topic and on track.
 - b. The Reporter takes notes and the records on the Small Group Report Form the summary findings from the Small Group Sharing.
 - c. Observers as the Bishop, Pastors, Priests, Deacons, Chaplains or Diocesan Officials are there simply to listen and not to share.
 - d. It may be useful for the Facilitator to identify that all Leaders and Reporters are present by having them raise their hands. This would be the opportunity to remedy the issue if a Leader or Reporter is not present in a small group.

- e. The Small Group Sharing requires a designated Small Group Leader and a Reporter. It is recommended that each of these roles be predetermined for each small group before the listening session begins. (*See Section III. Implementation for a detailed description of both roles*)
- The Facilitator also explains that the group must discern and summarize the main points from their sharing identifying as follows:
 - a. Three Strengths and three Challenges in response to the reflection and sharing regarding the First Primary Question.
 - b. Six Action Steps in response to the reflection and sharing regarding the Second Primary Question.
 - c. The small group should help the Reporter determine and identify these.
- The Facilitator may also choose to emphasize some of the following points separately, all of which are covered in the Best Practices below:
 - a. What is said in both the small group and large group sharing should not be attributed to any individual. Confidentiality is most important so everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas and experiences.
 - b. In our sharing of experiences we must always be aware of and sensitive to the diversity within our local community. Background, experiences, maturity, and knowledge will all vary widely among group members be sensitive as to where others are coming from.
 - c. It helps to set the ground rules and expectations at the start of the consultation by emphasizing the need for broad participation and a comfortable listening space.
 - d. **Reminder: For the sake of confidentiality, participants including the facilitator and reporters should NOT use electronic recording devices, including a person's cell phone.**

c. Best Practices for Effective Dialogue & Communication (Slide 18-19)

- The Facilitator may desire to have the group stand at this point as they would have been sitting down for a long period time.
- The Facilitator then reviews aloud the recommended Best Practices for Small Group Sharing as follows:
 - 1) This consultation is a safe place to talk – we treat each other and what anyone has to say with reverence, respect, dignity, and confidentiality.
 - 2) We allow one person to speak at a time and we listen with an open mind, even if we do not agree with his or her perspective.
 - 3) Since our conversation is to promote dialogue:
 - a) When I speak, my purpose is to advance the conversation.
 - b) I will strive to understand that everyone's experience is different, and I will be acutely aware of my attitude and tone of voice in all interactions.
 - 4) I will be prudent and limit how long I speak so that everyone has time to share.
 - 5) I only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.
 - 6) As a participant, when I tell others of our experience of the consultation, I will not attribute anything we share to a particular person or group.

- 7) I will not use any recording devices to capture our sharing.
- 8) I will remember this is not the time for a diatribe or debate.

d. Small Group Reflection Outline

The following represent a detailed outline for the Facilitator on how the Small Group reflection and sharing on the Two Primary Questions is to be conducted.

- **1st Question: Reflect** – The Small Group Leader begins by slowly reading the *First Question* along with its adjoining questions. The Leader then invites the group to pray and reflect in silence for about 4 minutes. Silence can be uncomfortable, but is necessary to hear the voice of the Lord.
- **1st Question: Sharing** - After the period of silent prayer, the Leader then invites the members of the group one-by-one to share their responses to the First Question. The Leader should also share his/her own response. Each person should be given about 3 to 5 minutes to respond and share their thoughts; depending on the size of the group more or less time could be given to each person.
- **1st Question: Summarize** - The Leader should then help the Reporter to discern and identify the three primary *Strengths* and the primary *Challenges* that surfaced as a result of everyone's responses in the small group sharing for this *First Question*. This can be done by asking the group which points that were brought forward resonated with other members. The Reporter will then record these three *Strengths* and the three *Challenges* on the appropriate form for the group.
- **2nd Question: Reflect** - Once everyone has had the opportunity to share their response for the *First Question* and the Reporter's work is finished, the leader then repeats the process and slowly reads the *Second Question* along with its adjoining questions. The Leader then invites the group to pray and reflect in silence for about 4 more minutes.
- **2nd Question: Sharing** - After the period of silent prayer, as before, the Leader then invites the members of the group again one-by-one to share their response to the *Second Question*. The Leader should again share his/her own response. Each person should be given about 3 to 5 minutes to respond. The Leader should continue to keep time and ensure that the sharing moves along and no one speaks excessively or inappropriately.
- **2nd Question: Summarize** - The Leader should then help the Reporter to discern and identify at least one but no more than six *Action Steps* that were generated as a result of everyone's responses in the small group sharing for the *Second Question*. This again can be done by consulting the group about which points were brought forward and resonated with the other members. The Reporter will then record these three to six *Action Steps* on the appropriate form for the group.

3. Small Group Reflection & Sharing

(60 minutes, Slides 20-21)

a) Large group breaks into Smaller Groups

- To save time, it is recommended that at a large group gathering the small groups are predetermined and the Small Group Leaders and Reporters for each group are aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- If the small groups are not already at their small group tables, the main facilitator invites people to break out into their small groups.
- The ideal small group size is between five and no more than six people.
- Once people are in their table groups, the Small Group Leader should welcome everyone, make sure introductions have been made if not already done at the outset by the main Facilitator.

b) Moving into the Discussion Questions

Having fully explained the process that will occur for the Small Group Reflection and Sharing, the Facilitator now introduces to the entire assembly the First Primary Question along with the adjoining focusing questions. The First Primary Question and its focusing questions as follows should be read aloud to the group accordingly:

FIRST QUESTION: The Church in announcing the Gospel *journeys together*.

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church?

In thinking about our *Strengths*:

- What are our positive experiences of journeying together in our local Church?
- What joys did those experiences bring?

In thinking about our *Challenges*:

- What difficulties and obstacles have we encountered?
- What wounds did those experiences reveal?
- What voices are missing or not present among us?
- What insights have those experiences elicited?

The main Facilitator then invites all gathered to spend 4 minutes in silent prayer inviting the group to write down on their worksheets any insights they may have. The main Facilitator keeps time for the group.

Once the period of silent prayer has concluded the Facilitator invites all of the Small Group Leaders to begin to lead the sharing on the First Question within the groups. The sharing will last for 25 minutes. The Facilitator should keep time for the entire assembly, letting them know when they have only two minutes left for their sharing.

After the sharing has concluded for the First Question, it is recommended that the group take a 10 minute break. During this time groups may wish to continue their sharing. Also during the break Reporters may catch-up on recording their three Strengths and three Challenges on the Report Form for the group.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The entire group should be prepared to answer the Second Question. Based on their experience and involvement in the Catholic Church some participants could be frustrated in trying to identify Action Steps for the Church. The small groups should be encouraged to do their best in praying and reflecting upon Action Steps that could be taken in response to the Second Question. While up to six Actions Steps would be ideal, even one well formulated Action Step would be sufficient for the small group to report and recommend.

After the break and explaining the above, the small groups return and the Second Primary Question and its focusing questions follows and should be read aloud to the group accordingly:

SECOND QUESTION: What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

In thinking about some *Action Steps* we could take:

- What pathways forward are opening up for our local Church (i.e. diocese, parish, school, or organization)?
- Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound?
- In what way is the Spirit calling us to reach out and how?
- What are the areas for change for our Church and what steps can be taken?

The Facilitator then again invites all gathered to spend 4 minutes in silent prayer inviting the group to write down on their worksheets any insights they may have. The main Facilitator keeps time for the group.

Once the period of silent prayer has concluded the Facilitator invites all of the Small Group Leaders to begin to lead the sharing on the Second Question within the groups. The sharing will last for 25 minutes. The Facilitator should keep time for the entire assembly, letting them know when they have only two minutes left for their sharing.

c) Small Group Report Form

- Reporters should work with the Leader and the small group to identify the three primary *Strengths, Challenges*, and up to but no more than six *Actions Steps* that will be submitted to the main Facilitator on the Small Group Report Form.
- Reporters are asked to use less than 200 characters or one sentence to complete each answer. A well-developed bullet point is acceptable as a response.
- See the separate document *Small Group Report Form.pdf* on the diocesan website for the official Listening Session report form that should be used both by the Small Group Reporters as well as the Main Group Reporter.
- All Small Group Report Forms should be turned into the main Facilitator before leaving for the day.

4. Large Group Sharing (20 minutes, Slide 22)

Once everyone has had the opportunity to share their response for both *Primary Questions* within their small group, the Facilitator for the Listening Session will call all participants back to attention.

(1) Outline of Large Group Sharing

- The Facilitator may then invite the Leaders of some or all of the small groups to share a *Strength, Challenge, and/or Action Step* with the gathering at-large.
- One recommended strategy is to have the Leaders share one of each: a Strength, a Challenge, and then an Action Step. Then as necessary, this provides the Reporters more time to complete filling out the Report Form during the time of the Large Group Sharing.
- Once the Large Group Sharing is completed, the Reporter is to ensure that the *Small Group Report Form* is completed properly and submitted to the main Facilitator before leaving the Listening Session for that day.
- After this is done, and depending on the time remaining, the Facilitator can invite individuals to give their personal feedback to the larger group.

(2) SUBMISSION OF LISTENING SESSION RESULTS

- Once the Listening Session has been completed, it is the responsibility for the Facilitator to collect all of the Small Group Report Forms.
- The Facilitator then needs to review all of these forms and then look for common trends across the reports and any unique insights. These should then be captured on a new Small Group Report Form and submitted online to the diocese at:

<https://www.cognitoforms.com/CDOW1/synodgrouplistingessionreportform>

5. Brief Evaluation (*Optional*)

Participants can be asked to complete a brief evaluation of the process. It can be done before leaving the consultation or sent to them electronically to fill out online afterwards. The participants will have been together now for an extended period of time so conducting an evaluation in-person is optional.

(A) Sample Evaluation Questions (no more than 6 are recommended)

- 1) How well has this consultation allowed you the opportunity to listen and share your own experience of Church?
- 2) What are your hopes for the Church as we “journey together” in terms of communion, participation and mission?
- 3) What practical suggestions do you have for your faith community to continue this synodal journey and be a more listening, discerning, and participatory Church?
- 4) What did you enjoy most about this Listening Session experience?
- 5) Where do you see room for improvement for this Listening Session experience?
- 6) How would you rate this Listening Session experience overall?

(B) Diocesan Post-Listening Session Online Survey

Participants may also share their feedback, evaluating the Listening Session by completing the following online survey form provided by the diocese:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/CDOW1/synodpostlisteningsessionsurvey>

6. Next Steps & Sending Forth Prayer (10 minutes, Slide 23-24)

The Facilitator provides some final concluding remarks and then leads all in the sending forth prayer. The Main Facilitator concludes the Listening Session by sharing with the group the Next Steps that are being taken as a Diocese along with some recommendations as follows:

(1) Next Steps after Large Group Sharing (Slide 23)

- The Facilitator explains that the information from the groups will be combined into a report that will be sent to the diocese.
- Every effort will be made to faithfully report what was expressed (including any contentious or complex issues) so as to respect the trust and communion experienced during the time together.
- Local communities can also use these insights and experiences to provide direction for the ministry of the parish, school or Catholic organization.
- Focus Groups will be consulted across the Diocese until May 31st
- Anyone can participate via a Recorded Listening Session for Individuals that will be made available on the Diocesan Website. Individuals can watch a virtual session and then submit their input on an online form.
- Participants have now gained insight and experience on how to conduct a Listening Session and can support their leadership in hosting one for their parish, school, or organization.
- A **Facilitator's Toolkit** is available on the Diocesan Synod website: www.cdow.org/synod
- There will be a Pre-Synod Gathering with the Bishop on Wednesday, June 22 @ 6:00pm in Holy Cross Church in Dover.

(2) Sending Forth Prayer (Slide 24)

The Facilitator then ends the Listening Session in prayer as follow:

Leader: Let us take a moment of quiet as we reflect on what we have done here today and give thanks for the opportunity to have spent this time together with the Lord and with one another.

Leader: Dearest brothers and sisters, in his letter St. James tells us, "Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only..." (James 1:21b-22a).

Leader: *Let us pray.*

All: *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, that we may all lovingly journey together side-by-side to your heavenly kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Leader: Let us go forth by offering those around us a sign of Christ's peace.
(All exchange a sign of peace.)

III. IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the diocesan facilitation guide seeks to provide some practical and organizational suggestions and observations for those planning and leading your community's synodal consultation. These can and should be adapted based on the particular needs of the participants for a given Listening Session. It is important that the cultural and language needs of the various parish, school and organizations be considered.

It is important that care be given identifying the Facilitator of the Listening Session as well as the Small Group Leaders and the Small Group Reporters that will be participating.

The following suggestions combine elements from the Vatican's Vademecum, resources from the USCCB and suggestions from Leadership Roundtable Synod Handbook.

A. Roles & Responsibilities

For each parish or group consultation there are several roles and responsibilities suggested to help you organize and implement a successful Listening Session. Consider identifying people in advance for the following tasks:

- **Facilitator** – to facilitate the meeting of the parish, school or organization. This person organizes and leads the entire Listening Session.
- **Large Group Reporter** — to listen to large group discussion and help to develop local community report based on the Small Group Report Forms collected. This Reporter submits the online Report Form Summary. The Main Facilitator may also take on this role for the group at-large.
- **Small Group Leader** – to facilitate discussion within the small group. A separate document has been created which details the role and responsibilities of the Small Group Leader entitled *Instructions for Small Group Leader*. This can be found on the Diocesan Website and given to Small Group Leaders to understand their role and duties in a Listening Session. See *Appendix 2.1* for tips and additional reflections and recommendations for the Small Group Leader to consider.
- **Small Group Reporter** – to take notes on the sharing and submit the Small Group Report Form to the Main Facilitator/Large Group Reporter. A separate document has been created which details the role and responsibilities of the Small Group Reporter entitled *Instructions for Reporters*. This can be found on the diocesan website and given to Small Group Reporters to understand their role and duties in a Listening Session. See *Appendix 2.2* for tips and additional reflections and recommendations for the Reporter to consider.

B. Listening Session Environment & Setup

1. Selecting the Right Meeting Space

When selecting the appropriate space to conduct your Listening Session the following criteria are recommended and should be taken into account:

- (1) Microphone
- (2) Audio System that the whole room can hear
- (3) Large Screen & Projector (check in advance your laptop/tablet/device connects to the projector properly)
- (4) Sufficient number of tables and chairs (recommend no more than 8 people per table)
 - a. Round tables are ideal for sharing and discussion
- (5) Enough room to spread out tables so that each table can have a discussion
- (6) Bathroom Facilities
- (7) Table/Place for any Refreshments
- (8) Internet Access – check in advance whether or not there is internet access and what the password is as necessary

2. Listening Session Environment Setup

Prepare the following items and have them setup at least 30 minutes in advance of your start time for your Listening Session as follows:

- (1) Table cloths and/or some sort of table centerpiece
- (2) Provide a copy of the **Listening Session Participant Worksheet** at every place setting on the tables
 - a. This document can be found at www.cdow.org/synod
 - b. It is recommended that it is printed double sided on an 11X17 sheet of paper
- (3) Provide a writing utensil at each place setting
- (4) One copy of the **Small Group Report Form** for each table
 - a. This document can be found at www.cdow.org/synod
- (5) Three sheets of blank copy paper for the Reporter to take notes
- (6) Tent Cards showing Group Names/Numbers on each table if specific Small Groups have been predetermined
- (7) A print out of the Slides for the PowerPoint Presentation in the event that technology fails
- (8) Refreshments – Coffee, Tea, Water bottles and small items to snack on; refreshments can be offered to create a welcoming environment.
- (9) Name tags & markers for people to write their names to identify themselves
- (10) Greeters - People should be greeted by parish or community group hosts and provided name tags.
- (11) Participants - Can be assigned to diverse small groups of approximately five to six members using a random method at the event itself or if there is a registration and a larger number of participants, then prior assigning can save time.
- (12) Designated Small Group Leaders & Reporters – Identify who the group Leaders and Reporters will be in advance when possible. Instructions should be given to them.

C. Communication Suggestions

The Listening Session can be as broad or narrow as the leadership of the church, school, or organization would like it to be. Having people register in advance is highly recommended to make sure that sufficient space and materials are in place as well as the needed Small Group Leaders and Reporters. Collecting participants email addresses is very useful in helping to communicate information both before and after the Listening Session.

Advertisement should occur about one month in advance. The organizing body should also create a registration system online, by email, or by phone to track registration. The flier on the diocesan website - ***Synod Listening Session – Information for Participants*** can be used to help prospective participants understand what the Listening Session is about and to assist in gaining interest.

To advertise use your website, email communications, social media, mail letters, post fliers, promote at gatherings, meetings, during Mass, include in bulletins and other forms of media. The Vatican Website has excellent communication tools that can be adapted for local use: [COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT \(synod.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/communication-toolkit/synod.va)

Before the Listening Session, make sure that the Small Group Leaders and Reporters are aware of their responsibilities. About a week in advance, communicate to participants the following:

(1) Arrival Time - Your Listening Session is scheduled for this ???. Please **arrive by ???** so that we may start on time. Each table will have a card with your parish/school/group name on it. ***Please find and go directly to your assigned table and be seated there. There will not be any registration or check-in.***

(2) Where - Your Listening Session will be held in ???. ***Provide specific direction about where they can locate the gathering space.***

(3) Address - If you have never been to ??? before the physical address ???. Parking is located at ???.

(4) Length of Time - The Listening Session will take approximately **2 hours** in length. However, you will see the time goes very quickly and the session will keep moving along at a very good pace.

(5) Mask Usage - We would like our gathering to be a low risk and safe environment and to maintain that, we recommend wearing a mask during our time together. We will be in the same space together for a long period of time.

(6) What to Bring - An open heart and open ears! Remember this is an opportunity to pray and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to you and also speaking through one another. Our Listening Session together is meant in the strict sense to provide a

time and forum for listening. God will provide His grace to facilitate this and all other necessary materials will be provided for you.

(7) Small Group Leaders - For our designated Small Group Leaders, please make sure to familiarize yourself and read again the *Instructions for Small Group Leaders* so that the small group sharing will be fluid and go well. You should also bring a copy with you for your reference; it has been attached for your convenience.

(8) Small Group Reporters - For our designated Small Group Reporters, please make sure to familiarize yourself and read again the *Instructions for Small Group Reporters* so that you are prepared to take notes and record the results appropriately. You should also bring a copy with you for your reference; it has been attached for your convenience.

You may also want to bring your own favorite writing utensil and a pad of paper to help you take notes on the sharing. However, paper, pens, and a copy of the Report Form will all be provided for you. The *Small Group Report Form* is intended only for the Reporter to have and fill out. There is only one per parish small group.

(9) Observers - Some small groups will have an Observer accompany them as either their pastor, priest, deacon, chaplain, or diocesan staff. They will simply be present only to listen and not to participate. They will all have other opportunities to participate in other Listening Sessions.

(10) Pray! - Please pray for the success of our Listening Session together and for all of the ones that will be held in our diocese and throughout the world. The Prayer for the Synod is a great one and we recommend its use to you: <https://www.usccb.org/prayers/prayer-synod-synodality>

Preparing and communicating these items in advance will help your Listening Session to be organized and to run smoothly.

Resources and Helpful Links

[Official Vatican Synod website](#)

[Vatican Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops](#)

[USCCB Synod website](#)

[Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry \(English\) and Español](#)

[Journeying Together: A National Catholic Intercultural Encounter for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults](#)

[Creating a Culture of Encounter: A Guide for Joyful Missionary Disciples \(Bilingual\)](#)

BACKGROUND RESOURCES

APPENDIX 1: BACKGROUND ON SYNODALITY

Vademecum 1.2

The International Theological Commission (ITC) describes synodality this way:

‘Synod’ is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church, whose meaning draws on the deepest themes of Revelation [...] It indicates the path along which the People of God walk together.

Equally, it refers to the Lord Jesus, who presents Himself as ‘the way, the truth and the life’ (Jn 14, 6), and to the fact that Christians, His followers, were originally called ‘followers of the Way’ (cf. Acts 9,2; 19, 9; 19, 23; 22,4; 24,14; 24. 22).

First and foremost, synodality denotes the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church’s ordinary way of living and working.

In this sense, synodality enables the entire People of God to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion that Christ establishes between us. Ultimately, this path of walking together is the most effective way of manifesting and putting into practice the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God (PD, 1).

The entire People of God shares a common dignity and vocation through Baptism. All of us are called by virtue of our Baptism to actively participate in the life of the Church. All are invited to listen to one another to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit— parishes, small Christian communities, lay movements, religious communities, women, men, young people, the elderly, and other forms of communion. The Holy Spirit comes to guide our human efforts all the while breathing life and vitality into the Church in addition to leading us into deeper communion for our mission and our world.

As the Church embarks on this synodal journey, we must strive to ground ourselves in experiences of authentic listening and discernment on the path of becoming the Church that God calls us to be. The Church recognizes that synodality is an integral part of her very nature.

The mission of the Church requires the entire People of God to be on a journey together, with each member playing his or her crucial role, united with each other. A synodal Church walks forward in communion to pursue a common mission through the participation of each and every one of her members.

Through the Synodal Process, God leads us on the common path of conversion by what we experience with one another. God reaches us through others and he reaches others through us, often in surprising ways. In order for this to happen, it is necessary to make significant efforts.

The heart of the synodal experience is listening to God through listening to one another, inspired by the Word of God. We listen to each other in order to better hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in our world today.

The Ten Key Elements of Synodality- from Synod Handbook

1. Be companions to each other on the journey
2. Listening to the Spirit and each other
3. Speaking out
4. Celebrating together
5. Sharing responsibility for our common mission
6. Joining dialogue in Church and in wider society
7. Participating in ecumenism
8. Each claiming their proper authority and participation
9. Being part of discerning and deciding
10. Forming ourselves in synodality

APPENDIX 2:

FACILITATING A SMALL GROUP REFLECTION

(FACILITATING A SYNODAL PROCESS, Leadership Roundtable Handbook)

The contained here within *Appendix 2* combine elements from the Vatican's *Vademecum*, resources from the USCCB and suggestions from Leadership Roundtable Synod Handbook.

1. Small Group Leader Tips *(Leadership Roundtable Facilitation Guide)*

As Small Group Leader you will be asked to:

- Establish clear boundaries of time and topic for speakers.
- Gently interrupt a speaker who talks disproportionately more than others.
- Gently interrupt and redirect a speaker who gets off topic.
- Gently re-focus a speaker who is preoccupied with an issue that is not pertinent to the topic or inhibits the participation of others in the group.

Ground Rules - Practical Suggestions for Successful Facilitation

1. It helps to set ground rules and expectations at the start of the consultation by emphasizing the need for broad participation and safety. Some examples of boundary-related ground rules are:

- 1) One person speaks at a time and the others listen attentively.
Discernment means speaking, listening, and prayerfully reflecting so pausing in silence between speakers to consider what is said is a good approach.
- 2) Speak when you can add to the conversation, not when you are trying to intentionally end it.
- 3) Stay on topic.
- 4) Keep your comments reasonably brief so others have time to participate.
- 5) This is a forward-leaning conversation, that is, we hope local communities do suggest workable and creative solutions.
- 6) If someone offers a comment in the form of a complaint, ask the person to reframe her/his comment in the form of a hope or aspiration.

2. If you have to interrupt a speaker, it helps to acknowledge their contribution by providing a brief synthesis of what you heard them say and thank them for their contribution.

3. Remember: For the sake of confidentiality, participants, including the facilitator and reporters should NOT use electronic recording devices, including a person's cell phone.

NOTES FOR GOOD FACILITATING & GROUP DISCUSSION

As facilitator, you will help the group engage in dialogue on the topic until they make an explicit decision to move into discussion. It is okay for you as facilitator to ask the group to stop talking for a short period of time in order to reflect and pray about the dialogue before moving to discussion.

- A facilitator can help stimulate discussion by offering to synthesize the comments made from time to time or when the flow of conversation seems to be stuck.

- A facilitator helps the group by holding them in discussion until a pattern of recurring themes are emerging and making an explicit decision to move into prayerful discernment.
- Discernment begins in prayer: “Your will, not mine.”
- A facilitator can call the group to prayer for guidance by the Spirit, to share reflections on what they see as emerging in the dialogue and discussion.
- A facilitator can call upon the group to share the themes that they hear surfacing and that they believe should persist into the future of the local and universal Church as a result of this consultation.
- Likewise, a facilitator can call upon the group to name ideas or topics they have heard that they believe should not persist into the future local and universal Church.
- A facilitator can name any yet unresolved issues or topics that may need to remain unresolved.
- A facilitator can call upon the participants to:
 - Identify their own insights as a result of the consultation,
 - Ways to be in stronger communion with one another,
 - Ways to participate more fully in the life of the Church, or
 - Ways to be more missionary.

FACILITATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

There may be times when members of the small group discussion engage in some difficult conversations. These suggestions are offered for consideration.

- Set clear expectations with the group of the process and purpose early and keep on topic.
- Set the tone as prayerful and reflective.
- Be clear that our purpose is to help form a more synodal and listening Church and that means keeping an open mind so the Spirit can work in all of us.
- Don’t let our personal agendas limit our conversations.
- What may be reported out of the synodal consultation is not what we all agree upon, but what we discern as having potential to be the will of God for the Church in the future. Even conflicting perspectives can be reported.
- Be clear that the synodal consultations are not equipped to provide the support that those who suffered abuse need, and at the same time we need to hear those who choose to raise the abuses by the Church as pertinent to our considerations of a future Church.

DIALOGUE, DISCUSSION AND DISCERNMENT: A REFLECTION FOR FACILITATORS

Below is a reflection on dialogue, discussion and discernment that might be helpful for the facilitator to reflect on prior to the consultation. [David W. Angel \(2016\)](#) shares “The Four Types of Conversations: Debate, Dialogue, Discourse, and Diatribe.”

Dialogue is the foundation of all synodal consultations. Dialogue does not happen when there is arguing or diatribe. However, conflicting perspectives may be presented.

We may not all agree upon what is discussed in the synodal consultation, but we all acknowledge that what we discern through this process has the potential to be the will of God for the Church in the future.

Dialogue, Discussion, Debate and Diatribe:

It is helpful to distinguish between the different types of exchanges:

- **Dialogue:** Two way, cooperative, and its purpose is to build relationships and exchange perspectives.
 - **Discussion:** A process of talking about something in order to reach a decision or to exchange ideas.
 - **Debate:** Two way and competitive, where the purpose is to convince another.
 - **Diatribes:** One way and its purpose is to browbeat, inspire, shame or emote.
- Dialogue comes before discussion in synodal exchanges. These two activities can lead to true discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying and leading.
 - Dialogue expands possibilities and insight into possibilities.
 - Discussion holds those possibilities against one another, helping to reflect upon them, and narrowing toward realistic, doable solutions, and steps forward.

2. Small Group Reporter Tips *(Leadership Roundtable Facilitation Guide)*

Reporting the responses of the synodal consultations

Reporting is both horizontal — reporting to the participants and community — and vertical — reporting to the diocese, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and to the Holy Father via the Synod of Bishops in Rome. Following the consultation, the main facilitator should work with others to pull out some themes from the consultation and report that information back to participants, pastoral councils, pastoral staff, and the faith community as a whole. Using a standardized format or template provided by the diocese, this should also be compiled into a final report to be sent to the diocese for inclusion in the diocesan report.

Being a Group or Small Group Reporter

It is important to select and train reporters for this listening process. Strong reporters are people who:

- Are at home with their Catholic faith
- Are prayerful and reflective
- Have strong listening skills
- Can write well
- Are able to capture and synthesize a conversation
- Are willing participants in the synodal process
- Are able to maintain a “big picture” view without injecting their personal agenda

Reporting on a synodal consultation is characterized by

- Reporting does **not** include everything that is said.
- Reporting is **not** a verbatim account of the consultation.
- Use bullet points as much as possible.
- Record the points people made in the consultation without adding your own biases, emotions or experiences connected to content.
- Provide quotes where appropriate, without attribution to a particular person or group.
- Do not attribute comments to specific individuals for purposes of confidentiality.
- Record areas of agreement, whether that agreement is formally or informally established.

After the local consultation is over, it would be helpful for the main reporter to create a list of points made during the consultation of directions the Church needs to take, the elements that should be seen in a future Church.

To create a final report of the consultation:

The Large Group Reporter working together with the - Facilitator and if possible, the Small Group Reporters, will need to summarize the information from the consultation in order to report to the diocese. This may require a follow up meeting between the Small Group Reporters and the Facilitator. Another option could be for the main facilitator to redact the notes of the Small Group Reporters into a draft report and ask the Small Group Reporters to review and edit the report.

The report from the local parish, school or Catholic organization is then entered into the diocesan report form at www.cdow.org/synod

The summary should be done with great respect and concern that the promptings of the Holy Spirit are faithfully represented in the final report. The work should be initiated with prayer, with the realization that the work to be undertaken is holy in nature and should not be influenced by bias or personal agenda, however well-intentioned they may be.

Small Group Reporters will be provided a form to use to take notes based on the questions proposed by the Vatican and diocese.

Reporters are asked to use less than 200 characters/words or one sentence to complete each answer.

The online site can be accessed via: www.cdow.org/synod

APPENDIX 3:

SAMPLE HANDOUT/MAILING PREPARING FOR LISTENING SESSION

Date-Time-Place

Father xxxxx and the parish staff (school staff, organizational leadership) are thankful that you have accepted the invitation of our bishop and Pope Francis to participate in our synodal consultation. This consultation, a sharing of ideas and time of listening to others, will take place on xxxxxx at xxxx in room xxxxx.

Purpose of Consultation

Pope Francis wants to hear from the whole Church about what is happening in local parishes and communities of faith. He and the bishops would like to know what individuals think we should all be doing to help make our parishes better. The way he has proposed doing this is a synodal process.

Synod means “journeying together” and it involves listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other in order to discern the path we are called to walk together. The synod "is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.” (Vademecum, 1.2)

Agenda – Timeline Overview

1. Introduction – Welcome, Prayer, & Scripture Reflection
2. Sharing Process – Overview, Method, & Best Practices
3. Small Group Reflection & Sharing on Primary Questions
4. Large Group Reporting & Reflection
5. Next Steps & Sending Forth Prayer

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Prior to our gathering we invite you to reflect on and think about the following two fundamental questions for the synod discussion. Feel free to write down your personal reflections and experiences:

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”

- ✓ **How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church?**
 - What are our experiences of journeying together in our local Church? (Our strengths)
 - What joys did those experiences bring? (Our strengths)
 - What difficulties and obstacles have we encountered? (Our challenges)
 - What wounds did those experiences reveal? (Our challenges)
 - What voices are missing or not present among us? (Our challenges)
 - What insights have those experiences elicited? (Our opportunities for ministry)

- ✓ **What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?** (PD, 26)
 - What paths forward are opening up for our local Church?
 - Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound?
 - In what way is the Spirit calling us to reach out and how?
 - What are the areas for change for our Church and what steps can be taken?

Ground Rules: Listening and Sharing

As you prepare for the synodal consultation we ask all participants to embrace the following ground rules for our conversation. In this way we can model being a synodal community, together on the journey.

Best practices for effective sharing and listening

1. This consultation is a safe place to talk – we treat each other and what anyone has to say with reverence, respect, dignity, and confidentiality.
2. We allow one person to speak at a time and we listen with an open mind, even if we do not agree with their perspective.
3. Since our conversation is to promote dialogue:
 - a. When I speak my purpose is to advance the conversation.
 - b. I will strive to understand that everyone’s experience is different, and I will be acutely aware of my attitude and tone of voice in all interactions.
4. I will be prudent and limit how long I speak so that everyone has time to share.
5. I only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.
6. As a participant, when I tell others of our experience of the consultation, I will not attribute anything we share to a particular person or group.

For the sake of confidentiality, participants, including the facilitator/s and reporters should NOT use electronic recording devices, including a person’s cell phone.

APPENDIX 4

SMALL GROUP LEADER & REPORTER ROLES

There are two key roles for each table or small group setting: The Small Group Leader and the Small Group Reporter. These roles and responsibilities should be identified prior to the Listening Session.

The Small Group Leader

The role of the table or Small Group Leader at the parish, school or group being consulted is key to a successful and prayerful Listening Session.

Leaders will be asked to:

- Establish clear boundaries of time and topic for speakers.
- Gently interrupt a speaker who talks disproportionately more than others.
- Gently interrupt and redirect a speaker who gets off topic.
- Gently re-focus a speaker who is preoccupied with an issue that is not pertinent to the topic or inhibits the participation of others in the group.
- Make sure that only one person speaks at a time and the others listen attentively.
- Encourage participants to keep comments reasonably brief so others have time to participate.
- If someone offers a comment in the form of a complaint, ask the person to reframe her/his comment in the form of a hope or aspiration.

The Small Group Reporter

Each small group or table should have a pre-designated person who will not only participate in the conversation but will also take notes and report on the table dialogue.

Reporting on a synodal consultation is characterized by

- Reporting does **not** include everything that is said.
- Reporting is **not** a verbatim account of the consultation.
- Use bullet points as much as possible.
- Record the points people made in the consultation without adding your own biases, emotions or experiences connected to content.
- Provide quotes where appropriate, without attribution to a particular person or group.
- Do not attribute comments to specific individuals for purposes of confidentiality.
- Record areas of agreement, whether that agreement is formally or informally established.

Small Group Reporters will be provided a form to use to take notes based on the questions proposed by the Vatican and diocese. Reporters are asked to use less than 200 characters/words or one sentence to complete each answer.

APPENDIX 5: MUSIC, SYNOD PRAYER, & SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

5.1 Suggested Opening Hymn

Come Holy Spirit, Creator Bless (Veni, Creator Spiritus)

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest,
and in our souls take up Thy rest;
come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.
O comforter, to Thee we cry,
O heavenly gift of God Most High,
O fount of life and fire of love,
and sweet anointing from above.

Thou in Thy sevenfold gifts are known;
Thou, finger of God's hand we own;
Thou, promise of the Father, Thou
Who dost the tongue with power imbue.

Kindle our sense from above,
and make our hearts o'erflow with love;
with patience firm and virtue high
the weakness of our flesh supply.

Far from us drive the foe we dread,
and grant us Thy peace instead;
so shall we not, with Thee for guide,
turn from the path of life aside.

Oh, may Thy grace on us bestow
the Father and the Son to know;
and Thee, through endless times confessed,
of both the eternal Spirit blest.

Now to the Father and the Son,
Who rose from death, be glory given,
with Thou, O Holy Comforter,
henceforth by all in earth and heaven. Amen.

5.2 The Synod Prayer to the Holy Spirit

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.***

The *Adsumus Prayer* calls upon the Holy Spirit to guide a Church gathering.

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the bishops and Holy Father praying this prayer. This prayer is attributed to St. Isidore of Seville (c.560- April 4, 636).

For the 2021-2023 Synod, the Holy Father is proposing that the entire People of God pray this simplified version of the *Adsumus Prayer*:

Click here to learn more about the prayer:

<https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/document/common/adsumus/EN-ADSUMUS.pdf>

5.3.1 Scripture Passage for *Listening to God in Prayer*

Taken from the RSV Catholic Edition:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Kings+19%3A11-13&version=RSVCE>

Option #1 – 1 Kings 19:11-13

A reading from the first book of Kings

And he said, “Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;

and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him, and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

The word of the Lord.

5.3.2 Scripture Passages for *Opening Reflection*

Taken from the New American Bible, revised edition:

Option #1 - Acts 2:14-21

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, “You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. These people are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning.

No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

‘It will come to pass in the last days,’ God says,
‘that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your young men shall see visions,
your old men shall dream dreams.

Indeed, upon my servants and my handmaids
I will pour out a portion of my spirit in those days,
and they shall prophesy.

And I will work wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below:
blood, fire, and a cloud of smoke.

The sun shall be turned to darkness,
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the great and splendid day of the Lord,
and it shall be that everyone shall be saved who calls on
the name of the Lord.’

The word of the Lord.

Option #2 - Acts 2:1-8, 11b-12

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together.

And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were.

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,* which parted and came to rest on each one of them.

And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.

At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?"

Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language?

[Y]et we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, "What does this mean?"

The word of the Lord.

Option #3 – Luke 24:13-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles* from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?”

They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” And he replied to them, “What sort of things?” They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see.”

And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer* these things and enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther.

But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.