

2021 Synod 2023

For a synodal Church

Ground Rules for Participants

- We will create an environment in which all persons and viewpoints are welcome and respected and in which no one should fear repercussions for any thoughts, ideas, or feelings that are shared.
- We will openly communicate how the Holy Spirit is speaking to us.
- We will not debate Church politics or Church doctrine that comes from the Living Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium; nor will we debate secular politics.
- We will not attempt to convert others to our way of thinking.
- We will not set specific goals or strategies.

Good Communication Begins with Good Listening

• To fully address this two-part question together first requires listening to the Holy Spirit, who like the wind “blows where it wills; you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes” (Jn 3:8).

- Listening is transactional, not a passive activity. We are sending messages, while at the same time, we are receiving messages.
- Suspend judgment. Our instinctive judging capacity can cause us to be closed to ideas and feelings that differ from our own. Often, because we perceive that another person does not hold the same viewpoint as we do, we pass judgment on that person, which usually involves stereotyping.
- Be a responsive listener by using appropriate facial expressions: nodding and smiling [unless a sad story is being shared]; a blank face indicates a lack of interest.
- Resist “cross talk” and “stage-hogging.”
- Avoid selective and insulated listening.
- Resist defensive listening—taking others’ comments as personal attacks. Be charitable toward your sisters and brothers and assume their intention is not to offend.



Responsible Speaking Leads to Good Communication

- Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your words and trust what follows.
- Speak purposefully and authentically. Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the questions at hand and be conscious of sharing time with other participants.
- Take responsibility for your personal ideas and feelings by using “I” language. No one person can speak for an entire group of people. If you are the designated person to share results of a group consultation, then use “we” language. Avoid starting sentences with “it” because that evades responsibility and avoid “you” language.
- Tell your story to the degree that you feel comfortable.
- Avoid powerless language. Instead of saying, “I am kind of disappointed,” say, “I am disappointed.” Do not begin a thought with, “I probably shouldn’t say this, but...” Say what you need to say; you have been asked to share.

Be Aware that Not Everybody Communicates in the Same Way, and Take Responsibility for Personal Needs.