



Dear session leader,

Thank you for leading this listening session for your community. In this document, you will find helpful resources for facilitating sessions, discussing ground rules with the participants, the topics guide, additional questions for supplementary topics, a template for the session report, and the prayer for the synod.

All your efforts will result in immediate feedback for your community leadership; they will move forward to Cardinal Di Nardo and Bishop Dell'Oro and continue their way to Rome. But most importantly, we hope you find this practice valuable for your community, so we continue the journey of putting the People of God at the center of our beloved Church.

We hope this guide will be helpful for you. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact any member of the Synod Committee of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council. We will be happy to assist you. Many blessings in your journey!



Facilitating the Sessions

Thank you for being willing to help lead your group and make this a great experience for everyone! Here are some things to keep in mind as you do so:

- **Know the topic guide by heart.** Review the contents of the supplementary topics in Addendum A, and discern the best one for your group in consultation with your pastor or group leader. Study the selected contents and intention before the session starts by reviewing the questions and making them your own. This will help you to prompt the group fluidly and deeply when the session takes place.
- **Ensure good hospitality.** Members of your group may be new to a small group experience or the larger community.
- **Start properly.** Begin with prayer. Facilitate introductions and be sure everyone feels welcome. Please go over the ground rules by quickly reviewing them and making sure everyone feels comfortable with them.
- **Start easy.** Pick a simple question and invite the group to respond. Sometimes sharing can be a little awkward, as everyone is waiting for other people to initiate. You can rotate around the circle or try the “popcorn” method. One person starts, and when they are done sharing, they choose another person (who is always allowed to pass and pick another person). We have found that in practice, this works very well, sometimes adding a little fun.
- **Keep the conversation focused.** If necessary, you may need to gently facilitate to keep the group on schedule, remain on-topic, or allow all voices a chance to enter the circle. You may feel timid interrupting someone, but this can be a significant role that helps the whole group. Strive for a good balance of encouraging participation and allowing room for everyone to share.
- **Facilitate answering reflection questions.** Some questions may relate to emotional or life-changing experiences. Let people express their memories and feelings. Listening to others’ narratives with attention and care adds a lot to the richness and purpose of the sessions. If you need to slow down to capture the richness of the contributions, please do so.
- **Listen to the feedback from the group along the way.** Pace the time for the different sections based on the total time available and what works for your group. We recommend that the content in the handouts be read aloud rather than silently. An excellent way to get everyone’s voices heard early on is to simply go around the circle having each participant read one paragraph.



Ground Rules

Here are some guidelines for our gathering.

1. **Purpose.** Our goals are to grow together into a more profound spirituality of communion guided by the Holy Spirit and connect our faith with our daily lives. Keeping this goal in mind will help us get there!
2. **Anonymity.** We will pay attention to the voices and ideas, but we will not keep record of names unless the person who said it asks otherwise. Facilitators will ask for your permission before taking notes and recording the session.
3. **Punctuality.** Start on time—and end on time. Everyone can help by arriving promptly and being attentive to time.
4. **No distractions.** Kindly mute or turn off mobile phones before the session begins. Put your electronic lives on hold for this short time to be fully present to others.
5. **The conversation involves everyone.** Make it possible for everyone – including those naturally quieter or less eloquent – to take part. Ask before sharing for a second time if others have not shared yet. Also, don't feel forced to speak if you don't want to.
6. **Share from your own experience** and speak for yourself. Don't try to problem-solve for another person or tell them what to do, but you can share what you have found helpful in your own life.
7. **Good manners.** Avoid dismissing the thoughts of others, don't laugh at others when they've shared (unless they've just told a joke), and no putdowns of any kind.
8. **It's OK to disagree.** It's just a fact of life that everyone has different opinions. If the group has differing thoughts on an issue, there's no requirement that everyone agrees. Respect everyone's opinions and where they are at in their journey.



Synodality Topic Guide

I. Central Topic. Journeying Together (40 mins)

First, let's talk about our journey together as the Church. How have we been journeying together in **your parish** in the last couple of years?

1. What joint experiences do you recall?
2. Re-read these experiences in greater depth
 - What joys and difficulties have we encountered?
 - What wounds did we reveal?
 - What insights were brought to light?
3. Let's gather the fruit to share
 - Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound?
 - What is the Spirit asking of us?
 - Where do we register a consensus?
 - What paths are opening up for our local Church?

II. Personal engagement moment. (30 mins)

Now, let's share how this journey was significant for each one of us.

How has been your personal experience in journeying together at your community?

4. Mention a special moment where you **felt included** in journeying together with the community,
 - How was it? Describe it physically, emotionally, rationally, spiritually.
 - Mention the person or persons that played a crucial role in your experience.
 - What elements stay with you to this day?
5. Did you at some point **feel excluded**? How was it?
6. If at some point you **were away**, What made you come back?
7. How do you personally **share the message of the Gospel** to ...?
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Neighbors
 - Strangers
 - Enemies

III. Supplementary topic. Select ONE topic from Addendum A, the most beneficial or important for YOUR parish. Use its specific questions as needed. (20 mins)

Finally, let us discuss a specific aspect of journeying together.

8. How has (topic) been meaningful for our journey as a community?

IV. Utilize the Consultation Report template on Addendum B and kindly synthesize and upload your report by February 15.



Addendum A. Supplementary Topics. Select only one.

COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

In the Church and society, we are side by side on the same road. In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

LISTENING

Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

SPEAKING OUT

All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity. What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptised from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding. To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.? How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?



ECUMENISM

The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

DISCERNING AND DECIDING

In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning. 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? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?



Session Report

Event Details

Date	
Parish/Community Name	
Leader Name	
Email	
Phone number	
Consultation name	
# of participants	1-2 3-5 6-10 11-20 21+
Conversation format	Interview Small groups Assembly with breakouts
Participant age group	Children Teenagers Young Adults Adults Seniors
Ethnicity	European Latin American African Asian
Language	English Spanish Vietnamese Egbo Other
Group Centrality	Center Middle ground Peripheries

Central Topic Findings

Describe in one or two paragraphs per question the most important findings, ideas, and learnings you found on the Central Topic.

What are the recalled joint experiences?	
What joys, difficulties, wounds, and insights were present in the journey?	
How did we recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit?	
Where and how did we register consensus?	



<p>What paths are opening for our church? What are the next steps in your journey?</p>	
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Describe the key findings on the personal engagement moment.

<p>What do participants report as their experience of "the feeling of being included"? Who played a significant role? What elements stay to this day?</p>	
<p>Did you at some point feel excluded? How was it?</p>	
<p>If at some point you were away, What made you come back?</p>	
<p>How do people personally share the message of the Gospel?</p>	

Supplementary Topic Findings

Describe your findings on the Supplementary Topic.

<p>Selected topic</p>	
<p>Why is this topic relevant for your community?</p>	
<p>Key finding 1</p>	
<p>Key finding 2</p>	



Additional Comments

Do you have any additional insights or comments you want to share with Cardinal Di Nardo, Bishop Dell'Oro or with the synod of Bishops?

Comment for Cardinal Di Nardo and Bishop Dell'Oro	
Comment for the Bishops at the Synod	

Once you are done, please upload the responses of your consultation at: [\(link\)](#)

Thank you so much for participating in this consultation. We hope that you found this exercise valuable. May your findings and opening paths lead your community closer to Our Lord.

